

With improved learning in mind [CA-ON] ^[1]

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Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Aug 2006

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Tuesday morning, more than 2 million elementary and secondary students in Ontario will return to school. Many equipped with new backpacks and iPods, most with new pencils, sharpeners, erasers and notebooks, they will arrive with a full range of feelings, from anticipation and excitement to various shades of anxiety. This emotional continuum likely holds true for our many outstanding teachers, who are key to ensuring a quality learning experience for our students.

...

The early years of learning — including the crucially important availability of child-care opportunities and parenting — combined with the first few years of formal schooling, are when we create the building blocks for a lifetime of learning and successful and affectionate pursuit of answers to the questions of a curious mind.

...

The good news is that we are achieving considerable progress in Ontario in helping our children to develop these essential skills. Today, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) released the results of the most recent round of province-wide testing in the milestone years of Grades 3, 6 and 9. Compared with last year's results, the number of students performing at or better than the provincial standard improved — from a range of one to eight percentage points — in all of the subjects and in each of the grades for both English- and French-language students.

Far from being a one-year wonder, we are now seeing a significant trend toward better learning skills across the board. The number of students succeeding in Grade 3 reading, for example, has improved by 12 percentage points over the past four years.

...

In my view, the province has made education a priority by focusing on literacy and numeracy, as well as addressing conditions that contribute to successful learning, such as class size, teacher training and investment in new resources. As well, its Best Start program, which aims to provide early learning and child-care programs in schools, is critical and needs to be seen and funded as an extension of publicly funded education.

With the new school year at hand and with learning in mind, it's a good time to remind ourselves that a good education yields both personal success stories of lives well-lived and a collective contribution to a future for all of us that will be healthier, safer and more just and prosperous. Whether we have children in school or not, all taxpayers contribute to this investment. While there are many challenges facing our publicly funded schools, with too many students still falling through cracks of a system still under reconstruction, it is important to note that the trends are pointing upward. This augurs well for a happier new year of formal learning for more and more of Ontario's elementary and secondary students.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Canada ^[2]

Ontario ^[3]

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