



## **Kids These Days: Educational Travel Companions**

By Dr. David Rideout

This summer, while cleaning out our attic, I dusted off some old school yearbooks and began thumbing through the pages, wondering about people from the past who had gone with me on my educational journey. Whatever happened to all the students, the teachers, the principals—or even the hardworking custodian who made us leave our wet boots at the door? They were a cast of important characters who inspired, challenged or entertained me on my academic voyage.

As September unfolds, another group of students will embark on their own road of learning, accompanied by a whole new cast of supporting characters. For some, the road is one of excitement and splendor. Decked out in their new clothes and backpacks full of supplies, they look forward to the new school experiences with keen anticipation.

Others may be more fearful as they approach the new year with dread because of past exposure to bullying, trauma, violence, or abuse. Some children may be living in poverty, which makes it difficult to get school supplies - or even to have enough food to eat. These children may need a bit more help along the way. Fortunately, that help can come in the form of caring people like teachers, neighbours, coaches, librarians, church members, scout or cadet leaders—basically, any trusted adult who can provide advice, encouragement and friendship to help them reach their full potential.

For a child in government care, such as those living in a foster or group home, the support of a caring adult can be especially important. Also important are the community groups who provide an array of services to enrich children's lives, like Boys & Girls Clubs. Across our Region, various Parent Link Centres help moms and dads learn about child development and how they can help their children reach developmental milestones.

Once youth in care reach graduation from high school, their education journey need not end there. The Advancing Futures bursary or Metis Bursary can provide significant funding and support to ensure they reach their educational goals at the post-secondary levels. There are also excellent options for them in Apprenticeship programs, and many companies in Alberta provide exceptional training opportunities while on the job.

The journey to education is different for everyone and not everyone takes the same path. I sincerely hope the today's youth can be as privileged as I was to be surrounded by so many supportive traveling companions along the way. If so, I'm sure they will do well.

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