

2 LTEs

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Dear Editors,

Every morning as I welcome our children into the school building, I realize that, as their principal, I am a steward—not only of their futures, but of the future of Vermont. That’s a tall order, of course, and a humbling one. But it’s one that we take seriously as educators.

As a faculty, we have recently been studying some of the newest discoveries in neuroscience for guidance on how to create the optimal learning conditions for our students. For example, we now know that the brain is a highly integrated organ, and that all of the developmental domains—cognitive, social, emotional, and physical—are inextricably linked. In other words, our work is as much about helping our students to manage impulsivity and work in teams as it is about teaching them to write topic sentences and add fractions.

Our kindergarten teachers know this very well. They see our students at the beginning of their school careers and can easily tell which children have spent their earliest years in healthy environments, surrounded by a network of caring adults—and which children have not. That’s because nurturing, responsive, stable relationships with parents and other caregivers early in life actually build the brain’s architecture – establishing a strong foundation for all future learning and development.

If we want good, solid, decent kids who will contribute to our communities in the years to come, we must ensure that all children get that strong foundation in the earliest years of life. That’s why we support the Kids Are Priority One coalition, which is working to ensure that all kids can participate in Vermont’s early childhood programs. Help make the future bright for our children and our state by supporting this coalition.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

DAD OF PRE-K KID

Dear Editors,

As parents of a four-year old, my wife and I realize that our daughter is already moving beyond the cocoon of our little family. Not only does she have her own strong opinions, but she has learned so much from the many adults—grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, and teachers—who surround her every day, and who help reinforce the values that are so important to us.

We read an article in our local paper recently that said that neuroscientists are now affirming what our grandparents knew instinctively: that children develop best in an environment of positive relationships like the one our daughter is so lucky to have. According to the article, good relationships in early childhood actually strengthen the physical architecture of the brain, creating a strong base for everything that is to come in a child's life. This enables children to learn well, to develop well—and ultimately to do well in life.

My wife and I are grateful for the blessings we have been given, and that we can pass on to our daughter. But we know that a healthy society depends on providing healthy environments and positive relationships for ALL children in Vermont. And yet gaps in our system prevent many children from getting what they need to thrive. If we want a bright future for our state, we need to build for that right now, beginning with our youngest citizens. That's why we support the Kids Are Priority One coalition. We hope you will, too.

Sincerely,

John Doe