

Unequal access to assessments

Wileman, Susie. **Montreal Gazette**; Montreal, Que. [Montreal, Que]. 08 Jan 2022: A.11.

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Letters to the Editor

Unequal Access to Assessments

Susie Wileman

Re: "EMSB discriminated against child, rights commission says" (Montreal Gazette, Jan. 6) Your report on the Quebec Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission's determination that the English Montreal School Board discriminated against a young student for failing to provide a psycho-educational learning assessment focuses on a long-standing and significant gap in our education system.

As a retired professional who worked in the college sector providing services to students with disabilities, I am all too familiar with the impact of unequal access to psycho-educational evaluations for students.

The bottom line: This lack of access creates two classes of students with disabilities in Quebec. Those who have learning disabilities and medical documentation to back it up get services. Those who don't have access to expensive testing in the private sector get sidelined. The result? Students with little support in primary and secondary school end up with fewer choices, and less chance of achieving their goals, including higher education.

Providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities is a right that must be respected. Students who cannot afford expensive psycho-educational evaluations to prove they have a learning disability are denied access to services, which impinges on their basic rights.

Sadly, the Education Ministry is well aware of this situation but has chosen to underfund professional services in schools for many years.

Bravo to the Kuhn family for standing up for their rights, and to the Gazette for shedding light on this serious disparity.