

“The Difference SAC Makes”

By Brittney Barros and Serenity Sturman

Brittney is a SAC Board Member (2018). She told a story with her sister Serenity.

Brittney: How can I focus on education when I can't even get to school?

Serenity: How can I focus on my school work if I keep bouncing around from foster home to foster home?

Brittney: Tardy after tardy. Absences after Absences. The truancy letters piled up on the kitchen counter like a pile of dirty laundry in a hamper. I was only 10 years old at the time and I had no idea of the consequence those letters would have on my life.

Serenity: I just kept moving and moving. One foster home after the next. It was never ending. It felt as if I have been in every school district across the state.

Brittney: 150 days. 150 DAYS I WAS SUSPENDED FOR SOMETHING OUT OF MY CONTROL. I was only 10 years old. Kicked out for missing school.

Serenity: It was hard to retain friends and sense of belonging. There was no point in trying to make friends if I was just gonna move to another school God knows when. I knew it was going to happen. Maybe next week or a couple of months.

Brittney: I remember mommy going to a meeting with the superintendent, the principal, and some other people I didn't know. Those people would be understanding, right?

Serenity: I didn't have parents to get me involved in after school activities. How could I be involved in school when I knew I would just move?

Brittney: Well they weren't. The school that was supposed to be on my side let me down. You see, my brothers had significant disabilities that caused us to be late to school every day. Do you think we received any help?

Serenity: Well that's where the Student Advocacy Center came in! My advocate would come to court and advocate for me to stay in the same school district, have funding to get involved in field hockey, and made sure my IEP was up to date and followed!.

Brittney: Nope. We didn't. I didn't have an advocate. At that meeting the school decided to suspend me for 150 days for truancy. However, because of policy, they were not able to suspend my brothers due to their disability. But because I didn't have that disability, the school was able to get away with getting rid of me. Despite the fact I was a straight A student, never have gotten suspended once, they didn't think I was worth the effort. I was only 10 years old.

Serenity: The Student Advocacy Center helped me out with not only with my education, but with my personal life too! I remember my advocate going to court and telling the judge why I should be out of foster care and reunited with my family. She helped me get back home to where I belonged!

Brittney: I wish the Student Advocacy Center knew about my case. They could have helped advocate so I wouldn't be kicked out of school for something that was beyond my control. This devastating impact of being suspended for 150 days was terrible. I had to transfer schools, this was on my record, and it was an attack on my self-esteem.

Serenity: I'm so thankful for the nice lady at the Student Advocacy Center! She came to my court hearings to tell the judge why I deserved stability, made sure my IEP was completed, and helped me through the toughest times during foster care.

Brittney and Serenity together: And that's the different SAC makes!

Estimated time of Performance: 3 minutes.