MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers
of School Authorities
Director of Provincial Schools
Supervisory Officer of Centre Jules-Léger

FROM: Ben Levin
Deputy Minister

DATE: March 1, 2007


On Friday February 23, 2007, the government released its response to the report of the Reference Group on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Although the government’s news release provided a clear message regarding immediate and future actions to be taken in response to the report, questions have arisen resulting from some of the reporting in the media.

Let me start by stating that the Ministry of Education recognizes the many successful educational practices being used across the province in support of the complex needs of students with ASD. These learning needs vary markedly and your efforts to meet these needs are known and appreciated.

Building upon your work and in support of the recommendations of the reference group the Ministry will soon release a PPM on the use of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) in schools. The focus of this PPM will be ABA teaching practices and not Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) that is used by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services’ Autism Intervention Program.

ABA is a relatively common practice now in schools and its methods may be used at varying levels of intensity along a student learning continuum. Learning more about ABA and its potential benefit for all students, especially students with ASD, will be part of a ministry sponsored training plan that will be made available to school teams this spring. This team approach will include principals, vice principals and other staff. The purpose of the plan is to ensure a broader understanding of the needs of students with ASD as well as educational practices that support these needs.

An integral part of the training plan will be the integration of parents of children with ASD into interdisciplinary teams designed to inform both IEP and IPRC processes. The fact that many parents are already involved in these processes is not in question. We need to encourage appropriate school and community professionals, who work with students with ASD, to engage more effectively with parents in
these processes. This involvement will improve everyone’s understanding and enable smoother transitions for these students – an area of particular difficulty for many.

Later this spring, the Ministry will also provide a comprehensive resource guide to support the delivery of effective educational practices for students with ASD. As well, relevant research on autism will be posted on the Ministry website from time to time to keep everyone informed of the latest knowledge on instructional practices for students with ASD. Each of these actions will provide direct supports for teachers and teaching assistants to facilitate improved learning and achievement for students.

Many students with ASD possess a number of needs that intrude on their ability to learn regardless of the school and board placement options, and educational practices available to them. The Reference Group on ASD report provides a conceptual framework for the delivery of integrated services to support the learning needs of students with ASD. Ministries will continue to work together in order to create meaningful partnerships in response to this recommended framework and involve school boards in these decisions.

I trust this memo clarifies the Ministry’s initial response to the recommendations of the Reference Group on ASD. Once again, I thank you for your dedication to all students in Ontario particularly, in this instance, for students with ASD. More information and support will follow this spring.

Please share this memorandum with the chair of your Special Education Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

Ben Levin
Deputy Minister