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

FROM: Avis Glaze 
Chief Student Achievement Officer/CEO, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

DATE: November 16, 2006

SUBJECT: The Character Development Initiative 
Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12 
Engaging our students, our schools and our communities

Student success continues to be the fundamental measure of an education system and the ultimate expression of respect for the students in its care. Student success is multi-dimensional. In addition to academic success, Ontarians share a belief in the need to develop character and prepare students for their role in society as engaged, productive and responsible participants.

The Ontario government made a commitment to engage school communities in defining and implementing character development initiatives in each local school board. The concept of character development is rooted in the belief that parents, schools and communities share in the responsibility for, and the benefits of, the development of our young people as caring, empathetic and involved citizens. The Character Development Initiative: Finding Common Ground, focuses on developing the whole student as a learner, as an individual, and as an active member of the school and broader community. It is grounded in the vision of an education system in which students play a pivotal role, and are actively engaged in their own learning and in the life of the school.

The Character Development Initiative is about sharing and further developing our collective knowledge and experiences in helping all students succeed. We recognize the many good practices that currently exist in our boards and schools and the need to build upon them.

A Provincial Symposium was held on October 15th and 16th, 2006 to engage system partners from each board in a dialogue on this initiative. The Symposium highlighted research, innovative programs and current practices in Ontario school boards. It also featured special forums to engage students in the early stages of the development of the initiative.
Selected sessions from the Symposium are being archived for follow-up viewing across the province through the video-on-demand option. Specific details will be posted on the www.curriculum.org website as they become available. We invite you to view these sessions at your leisure.

The Discussion Paper, Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12, which was introduced at the Symposium, is attached for your information. Also outlined are the key beliefs, principles, roles and responsibilities associated with the Character Development Initiative. Information about the Provincial Character Development Resource Teams that have been established to provide assistance at local levels is also included.

We recognize that developing character is not new to educators. To assist with further development and planning, lead time has been provided for boards to engage their students and communities in the development and implementation of the initiative anytime during the 2007 - 2008 school year. By the end of that school year, it is expected that all boards and schools will have programs in place which reflect the components outlined in the paper. Of greatest importance is the expectation that boards will, if they have not already done so, engage their students and communities in inclusive processes to provide input into what character development will look like in that board. Student, parents and communities care about character development in their schools and develop a strong commitment to systems that include their perspectives. This helps to build public confidence in our education system.

Please communicate this information to students, teachers, principals/vice principals, supervisory officers, support staff and school councils. This will ensure that the Character Development Initiative is truly inclusive of the school community. We look forward to receiving feedback as you move forward together in your work.

We invite all educators to join us in our efforts to address this important aspect of student success. Imagine the possibilities of moving forward to guide our province to further strengthen our shared vision of the potential of public education.

Sincerely,

Avis Glaze

Cc: EDU Assistant Deputy Ministers
    EDU District Office Managers
    LNS Student Achievement Officers
    CODE Executive Director
    OPC Executive Director
    CPCO Executive Director
    ADFO Executive Director
    ETFO General Secretaries
    OECTA General Secretaries
    AEFO General Secretaries