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

FROM: Dominic Giroux  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
French-Language Education and Educational Operations Division

Avis Glaze  
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Assistant Deputy Minister  
Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs Division

DATE: July 24, 2006

RE: Planning for Two Additional Professional Activity (PA) Days

We want to thank you for your ongoing support of the Ministry’s commitment to high quality professional learning for teachers. To achieve our goals of improving students’ literacy and numeracy skills and graduation rates, Ontario requires a highly skilled, highly motivated teaching workforce for whom continuing in-service learning is a priority. Substantial investments have already been made towards these commitments and we are pleased to share with you the latest development.

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform you that amendments have been made to add two professional activity days to the school year calendar beginning in the 2006-2007 school year. The two days are required to be devoted to the provincial education priorities identified in the regulation. Attached you will find a copy of O. Reg. 360/06 which amends O. Reg. 304.
KEY PURPOSES OF THE TWO ADDITIONAL PA DAYS

The amended Regulation sets out the purpose of these additional PA days as follows:

In preparing a school calendar the board shall ensure that the two new professional activity days satisfy the following criteria:

1. The professional activity days are devoted to the professional development of teachers with respect to,
   i. improving student outcomes in literacy and numeracy, and
   ii. improving student success in making the transition from elementary to secondary school, graduating from secondary school and obtaining employment or attending college or university after graduation.

2. The professional activities on those days,
   i. are designed to improve teachers’ skills and knowledge in a range of instructional and assessment strategies, and
   ii. relate to one or more topics set out in Schedule 1.

RATIONALE

The Ministry recognizes that student achievement is linked to teachers’ knowledge and instructional practices. Additional professional development time is needed for collaborative dialogue to deepen individual understanding and skills and to develop collective efficacy regarding teaching and learning. Improving student learning and closing the achievement gap are key education priorities for Ontario.

To enhance teacher capacity to maximize student learning in these priority areas, boards should ensure that all learning activities on the two additional PA days are based on what research tells us about high yield strategies that improve student achievement. In order to increase credit accumulation and graduation rates, there is a need to establish a positive environment that engages students in their learning. As well, there is a need to develop an understanding of alternative programs and innovative strategies that facilitate transitions and improve student success.

PLANNING AND DELIVERY

The amendments include a transitional provision specifying that any additional professional activity days would not occur prior to November 16, 2006. You are asked to submit an amended school year calendar, approved by your board, indicating the proposed dates of the two new days, no later than November 1, 2006.

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We hope that the two additional PA days will provide an opportunity for your board to reduce both the financial cost and the disruption of classes caused by the release of staff for professional development purposes. If you are currently using “early dismissal” and “late arrival” days, please review this practice in order to minimize the loss of instructional time for students and reduce the potential for disruption for parents and students.

The two additional PA days are distinct from the existing four days in that the topics to be covered during the two days are prescribed in regulation. The topics are listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulation. For the planning and delivery of professional development activities related to these topics boards should:

- Offer targeted professional learning for all educators on at least two of the professional activity days on the topics selected from Schedule 1 of O.Reg. 360/06
- Deliver board-wide and/or approved school-based professional development programs
- Use board and school data as the basis for determining staff learning needs and areas of focus
- Check for alignment of PD programs with policies and expectations outlined in Ministry of Education publications and provincial training sessions
- Utilize best available expertise in the delivery of professional development programs
- Ensure program quality and relevance and gather evidence of knowledge transferability to promote instructional effectiveness
- Collect feedback, monitor impact and report on professional development program effectiveness and include these findings as part of the Director of Education’s annual report
- Integrate the planning (i.e. topics and dates for board-wide and school-based program) for these two days into your board improvement (K-6) and Student Success Action (Grades 7-12) plans and submit these for Ministry approval as per existing reporting parameters. Your board has already developed a board improvement plan, and school improvement plans for literacy and numeracy (K-6) are in place. Your board’s Student Success Action Plan is also in place to improve student engagement and learning in Grades 7-12. It is important to build upon this good work by aligning the additional professional activity days with the existing plans. Regional Office Education Officers and Student Achievement Officers will support your local professional development activities.
It is the Ministry’s expectation that, in light of the two new PA days, school boards should re-examine their budget lines to determine whether any savings may be realized. If any efficiencies are identified, boards have the flexibility to direct these funds to other areas of need. We encourage collaboration among school boards, school authorities and provincial schools.

Thank you for your commitment to professional learning. We know that you share our commitment to ensure that the public has confidence in the effectiveness of the use of these two professional development days.

Dominic Giroux, Assistant Deputy Minister
French-Language Education and Educational Operations Division

Avis Glaze, Chief Student Achievement Officer
Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

George Zegarac, Assistant Deputy Minister
Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs Division

Enclosure

cc. Members of the Minister’s Partnership Table
Regional Managers, Field Services Branch