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

FROM: Avis E. Glaze
Chief Student Achievement Officer & CEO
The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

DATE: June 12, 2007

SUBJECT: Progress to Date and Future Directions

As we reflect on the past two and a half years, we are inspired by the dedication and effort you and your staff have put forth to improve student achievement. Thank you for your commitment to continuous improvement. In the past year we have worked together to close gaps and raise student achievement. We celebrate the gains that have been made and renew our commitment to address the challenges that remain.

This memo will provide you with a summary of LNS initiatives over the past year, as well as an overview of priorities for the 2007-2008 school year. Based on the level of commitment that we have seen in the field, we look forward to the possibilities of what we can accomplish together. You have welcomed LNS staff into your boards and schools and made them feel a part of your team. We greatly appreciate your support and encouragement and look forward to continuing to support you in the critical work in which you are engaged.

A few of the key initiatives that were implemented this year include:

- **The Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP)**
  - OFIP provides a range of supports for boards and schools through its two components:
    - The OFIP Board Strategy provides support for all schools with emphasis on “static” and “declining” schools, wherever they are on the achievement continuum. Boards have been asked to focus their efforts on closing achievement gaps and providing interventions for specific populations of students who are underperforming to ensure equity of outcomes.
    - The OFIP School Strategy provides intense support for schools identified as OFIP 1 or OFIP 2 schools.
- **OFIP Investment in Tutoring**
  - $8 million was provided province-wide to enable boards to initiate or extend programs that assist students, beyond their regular school day, to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills.
  - Boards are using this funding to run tutoring or after-school academic support programs for students in JK-Grade 6.

  Boards will submit a brief final report on the OFIP initiative and OFIP Investment in Tutoring by August 30, 2007.

- **Tutors in the Classroom**
  - LNS, again this year, partnered with boards to offer the “Tutors in the Classroom” program.
  - Funds assist boards in hiring post-secondary students enrolled in Ontario colleges and universities to work as tutors in elementary classrooms.
  - Boards will submit a brief final report on this initiative by June 30, 2007.

- **Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program**
  - The Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program was initiated to share successful practices within and across school districts.
  - 23 schools were identified in June 2006 that had demonstrated promising practices and improvement in student achievement over time.
  - Strategies were developed and financial support was provided to facilitate sharing of successful practice.
  - We have now identified 42 more “Schools on the Move” for Phase II. The selected schools, once again, represent the demographic diversity of Ontario.
  - The plan is to have over 100 Schools on the Move across the province.
  - On June 4, 2007, an acknowledgement and celebration of the 42 Phase II schools was held.
  - On June 5, 2007, teams from Phase II schools worked with Phase I schools to share successful practice and to begin the planning of outreach and networking strategies.

- **Junior Learning Resources**
  - In response to needs identified in the field, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat provided $10 million province-wide to increase learning resources available in junior grades.
  - In an effort to reduce the number of reports required of boards, no final report was requested of boards for this funding. Directors were asked to sign a statement related to junior resource expenditures.

- **Leadership Alliance Network for Student Achievement (LANSA)**
  - The purpose of LANSA is to establish a partnership and create a network of selected directors of education to support continuous improvement in school districts. Lessons learned within this network will be shared with directors across the province.
• **Capacity Building**
  - Each month webcasts are produced on a variety of instructional topics in order to provide professional learning opportunities to participants regardless of where they live or work. Archived webcasts can be accessed at [www.curriculum.org](http://www.curriculum.org).
  - Research monographs, entitled “What Works: Research into Action” are being produced in partnership with the Deans of Education in Ontario to provide research findings and their implications for classroom practice.
  - “Combined Grades: Strategies to Reach a Range of Learners in Kindergarten to Grade 6” was developed to provide suggestions for strategies to support teachers and administrators as they work with teachers in Grades 4 to 6 to implement effective instructional practices.
  - Strengthening instructional leadership and classroom practice continues to be a priority for LNS. Projects such as Leading Student Achievement: Our Principle Purpose provide on-going support for school leaders in order to improve student achievement.

• **Character Development**
  - The Character Development Initiative was launched at a provincial symposium held on October 15th and 16th, 2006.
  - A discussion paper titled *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools K-12* was produced.
  - Eight resource teams have been established to share successful practices and provide leadership for boards in implementing and extending their initiatives.
  - Regional forums are being held to engage parents, community and business organizations, and the education sector in sharing responsibility for planning the implementation in their boards.
  - The discussion paper will be revised, incorporating feedback from the field.
  - Concurrent training sessions are being conducted to build capacity and to ensure consistency of implementation across the province.

• **Statistical Neighbours**
  - Statistical neighbours is being developed to provide an innovative, user-friendly system integrating school EQAO performance with school demographic characteristics and school program characteristics. It is our understanding that this is the first system of its kind in Canada.
  - The application enables LNS to match schools based on user-defined performance, demographic and school program criteria.
  - It provides instant school profiles that include performance, demographics and program offerings.
  - To date Statistical Neighbours has been used to:
    - provide decision support for LNS strategic initiatives (Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program, Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership – OFIP)
    - support LNS research, evaluation and data initiatives
    - support SAOs in their on-going collaborative work with school boards and schools to focus and target actions for improvement.
  - It is our plan to investigate further how this tool can be made available to a wider group of individuals.
Future Directions

The initiatives over the past year were intended to provide more precise support to boards and schools. While we have seen progress on many fronts, we know that we still have far to go. We need to ensure that the high-yield strategies we know will improve student achievement are implemented in all schools. Our focus must be on high achievement for all students in Ontario.

As we continue to streamline our focus, we will support fewer initiatives within a narrower band of strategies in our efforts to go deeper and to raise the bar and close the achievement gaps. We will reinforce our commitment to research, evidence-based inquiry and data-informed decision making. We feel that it is important to stay the course on current initiatives in order to implement strategies with more precision and greater depth.

As we sharpen our focus, the emphasis will be on building alliances with supervisory officers to support learning and to ensure that all initiatives have an impact on classroom practice. The Secretariat will work closely with supervisory officers and principals to build capacity to improve instructional effectiveness. Schools and classrooms will be the primary focus of the work for the majority of student achievement officers, while team leaders support board-level strategies. Secretariat staff will provide direct, hands-on coaching and engage teachers and principals in job-embedded professional learning.

Developing and sustaining professional learning communities will be a key strategy to promote collegiality and to reinforce a collective responsibility for student learning. Within a culture of high expectations for students’ learning and achievement, The Secretariat will support teachers in reflective professional inquiry as they develop or reinforce a strong results-orientation and a commitment to the continuous improvement of their schools.

LNS will continue to develop a unifying sense of purpose and a strong spirit of teamwork. Engaging stakeholders in sharing the responsibility for student learning and supporting initiatives geared towards increased student engagement in the learning process will contribute to our achievement agenda. We will continue to reach out to external partners and ministry departments in an effort to create better alignment and coherence of focus.

From what we know about research and from the lessons we have already learned, we will reinforce our commitment to reach higher and to achieve and surpass our achievement goal. Achieving both excellence and equity continues to be our primary purpose.

It is against this backdrop that The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has identified the following as key areas of focus for the 2007-2008 school year. Please be advised that this represents the supports we will provide for you, **not new areas of focus expected of boards.** You already have a board plan with clearly articulated areas of focus. We ask you to stay the course. What we do ask, however, is that you review our list to see if anything can be tweaked in your own priorities. For example, we have on our list cross-curricular, non-fiction writing. If writing is one of your priorities, you may consider making cross-curricular, non-fiction writing a focus, as we now know from the work of individuals like Douglas Reeves that cross-curricular, non-fiction writing versus other forms has a greater impact on achievement in all areas.
The following areas will be the focus for LNS in providing capacity building supports for school boards and outreach to communities:

1. **Capacity Building**
   - High-yield instructional strategies (e.g. uninterrupted blocks of time for literacy and numeracy)
   - Professional learning for teachers:
     - Primary Division – consolidation
     - Junior Division – area of focus
   - Cross-curricular, non-fiction writing
   - Comprehensive literacy programs
   - Differentiated instruction
   - Development of coaching skills
   - Networking strategies (e.g. Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program)
   - Assessment for, as and of learning
   - Teacher moderation of student work
   - Numeracy training
   - Higher-order thinking and critical literacy skills
   - Other areas indicated by the EQAO assessment

2. **Targeted Supports/ Focused Interventions**
   - Low-performing schools (OFIP board and school strategy)
   - Low-performing boards
   - Closing the achievement gap for groups of students not achieving the provincial standards
   - Tutoring programs

3. **Instructional Leadership Development for Principals, Superintendents, and Directors of Education**
   - School self-evaluation and a tool for diagnosis
   - Target setting and board/ school improvement planning
   - Taking professional learning communities to new levels of effectiveness
   - Parent education programs to support student achievement
   - Engaging school councils, communities and business partners to support student achievement
   - Equity of outcome to close achievement gaps

4. **Research, Evaluation and Data Management**
   - Evaluation of the effectiveness of Secretariat strategies
   - Evidence-based research monographs for classroom teachers
   - Research into innovative practices
   - Enhancement and dissemination of Statistical Neighbours analytical tool
5. **Character Development**
   - Full implementation in all Ontario schools

We recently learned that the Secretariat has won the Amethyst Award. This award recognizes teams who have made outstanding contributions in client service, innovation, valuing people and professional achievement. We wanted you to know about this because we feel that you share in this award with us. Your goodwill, cooperation and wonderful support have enabled us, in a true spirit of partnership, to bring about improvement in student achievement. On June 19, 2007 we will accept this award on your behalf.

Your leadership and commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students is critical to reaching high levels of achievement. We are grateful for the progress we have realized together. We thank you for your dedication and hard work over the past year and wish you a restful and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

Avis E. Glaze

cc: EDU Deputy Minister  
    EDU Assistant Deputy Ministers  
    Regional Managers  
    Principals of Elementary Schools  
    Deans of Faculties of Education  
    CODE Executive Director  
    OPC Executive Director  
    CPCO Executive Director  
    ADFO Executive Director  
    ETFO General Secretary  
    OECTA General Secretary