MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of District School Boards/ School Authorities Cluster Leads

DATE: June 15, 2011

FROM: Barry Pervin Assistant Deputy Minister Instruction and Leadership Development Division Ministry of Education

SUBJECT: Student Support Leadership Initiative Year 5 (2011-12)

I am pleased to write to you on behalf of my colleagues from the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing to inform you of the direction for the upcoming year of the Student Support Leadership Initiative (SSLI).

As you know, the SSLI began in 2008 as a part of the government’s Safe Schools Strategy with multi-year funding of $3 million per year provided by the Ministry of Education. The SSLI is also aligned with A Shared Responsibility: Ontario’s Policy Framework for Child and Youth Mental Health. In September 2011 the SSLI Clusters will begin Year 5 of the six year project.

Education, child and youth mental health and health sectors have worked together over the past four years to deepen partnerships and improve referral pathways for student supports and services. Last year the SSLI Cluster leaders and members expanded to include appropriate health sector partners as well as Section 23 partners (education programs for students in care, treatment or custody facilities). We have received positive feedback from Clusters but have also heard that the plan and approval processes have been arduous and time consuming, delaying the start of SSLI work each year. We have therefore streamlined the processes this year so that work may begin in September 2011.

Year 5 of SSLI (2011-12) continues to build and expand on Cluster achievements. This year Clusters are asked to focus their work on the prevention of behaviours that may lead to suspension and expulsion and to promote the well-being of students. Maximizing opportunities to foster life skills that contribute to the mental health and emotional well-being of students will be a focus for 2011-12.
This year Clusters are asked to invite municipal service representatives such as Public Health and Parks and Recreation that offer programs for all children and youth to join the initiative. Municipal services offer important programs and services that contribute to the prevention of unsafe and inappropriate behaviours, and promote the wellbeing of children and youth. Clusters are asked to work with local municipal services to establish or enhance local partnerships and protocols.

As you may know, in the 2011 Budget announcement the government committed to investing in a comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, starting with children and youth. That strategy will focus on strengthening services for children and youth, creating a more integrated and responsive system, and building awareness and capacity within the education system to support students and their families.

SSLI continues to be foundational to work being done at the local level on the Mental Health Strategy, as this initiative has provided, and continues to provide, a forum for leaders of organizations that promote child and youth mental health to work together. Further details will be sent to lead boards on the direction and objectives for SSLI Year 5 in the Project Agreement. Lead boards will be provided with the information in the Project Agreement including information that will be shared with all Cluster members. Clusters will continue to use the geographic boundaries established with the 29 Clusters. Should you have any questions regarding the SSLI, please contact Charmaine Perera, Senior Policy Coordinator (A), Ministry of Education at (416) 325-2515 or charmaine.perera@ontario.ca.

We would like to thank Cluster members for their leadership and integrated approaches to service delivery to improve outcomes for students and their families. Clusters have increased mental health awareness, knowledge and access to services and activities for students. Over the past four years the SSLI has increased opportunities for learning about optimal mental health for children and youth.

On behalf of my colleagues, we look forward to continued and new partnerships to be developed in the upcoming year. Thank you for your creative and successful collaborations and commitment to help Ontario students reach their full potential.

Barry Pervin

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Aryeh Gitterman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Development and Program Design Division, Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Dana Richardson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Local Government and Planning Policy, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Vasanthi Srinivasan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health System Strategy Division, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Kira Heineck, Executive Director, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association
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