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: Mary Jean Gallagher  
Chief Student Achievement Officer of Ontario  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Student Achievement Division

DATE: May 13, 2009

SUBJECT: Student Achievement Division

As the 2008/09 school year moves into its final months, I know you and your senior staff are working to plan carefully for 2009/10. As Directors, you have been key leaders in our educational success across Ontario. You have helped cultivate steady progress and a sense of promise within our schools. Our students need this to continue. We know our work makes all the difference in the world to our young people and the communities in which they live.

Some time ago, I asked you what we could do to make a difference in terms of our efforts and you let us know. We were asked not to compartmentalize government divisions into K-6 (Literacy and Numeracy) and 7 to 12 (Student Success/Learning to 18). We have heard you and that’s why this memo comes to you through the newly created Student Achievement Division.

We know that over the past five years, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has provided guidance, resources and supports that assisted the significant work being done in schools and boards to improve results for students in reading, writing and mathematics. We recognize the progress that has been made as more students achieve high standards in these key foundational areas. We also know that with deep implementation of our Student Success strategy we are making gains in helping students find their place and forge a pathway towards graduation. We all can take pride in the positive report from the Canadian Council of Learning who conducted an external evaluation of our student success strategy. I encourage you to read this report.
Even with these extraordinary achievements and impressive gains, the reality is that much more remains to be done to achieve our goals for the system.

When I took on the role of Chief Student Achievement Officer of Ontario last October, I commented that we must find ways to share successful practices widely if we were to build on our legacy of success. It is up to all of us to relentlessly and urgently pursue consistent implementation of the things which make a difference for our students and their success.

To help you in your work, I felt it was timely to provide an overview of our initiatives for the year ahead. These are organized under the headings: Literacy and Numeracy; Program Pathways (including Adult and Continuing Education); Community, Culture and Caring; Leadership; and Resources; and are cross-referenced numerically to the funding chart that is appended.

**Literacy and Numeracy**

**OFIP K-6 (1.0)**

The Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) provides support for boards and elementary schools in general and more intense support for under-performing and static schools. OFIP improvement strategies focus on the implementation of evidence-based classroom and assessment practices that have the most significant impact on student learning. Boards have focused their efforts on closing achievement gaps and providing interventions for specific populations of students who are underperforming. Student Achievement Officers will continue to work closely with you as elementary schools revise their improvement plans based on the results of school self-assessments and regular review of student achievement data. Funds are provided for teacher release time to support this work.

**OFIP Tutoring (2.0)**

The OFIP Tutoring Initiative will continue, allowing boards to initiate or expand before and after school tutoring programs, including a provision for summer support. As board leaders you are encouraged, where possible, to work with non-profit community partners to continue to support primary and junior students who are not at the provincial standard in reading, writing or mathematics.

**Tutors in the Classroom (3.0)**

We will continue to fund boards to partner with the Student Achievement Division to provide tutors to support literacy and numeracy in primary and junior grades. The program will continue to assist school boards to hire post-secondary students enrolled in Ontario colleges and universities to participate as tutors in elementary classrooms in local schools. The tutors will support the work of classroom teachers through tutoring activities and direct contact with students. This not only assists teachers with reinforcing skills and concepts, it also helps these post-secondary students understand firsthand what is happening in elementary classrooms.
**Schools Helping Schools (4.0)**

Emerging research indicates that one of the new roles for school leaders is to work with other schools and other school leaders to collaborate and learn with and from each other. David Hopkins says that “we have to develop systems of learning transfer and of distributed leadership across groups of schools if we are going to see more schools become outstanding schools.” Through OFIP and Schools on the Move we have identified effective strategies that have been shown to improve student achievement. When schools work within and across schools to improve instruction improved achievement is sustainable. Clustering like schools with different levels of performance so that high performing schools can assist low achieving schools will enable boards to leverage lessons learned so that all schools benefit.

All boards are receiving funding to support schools helping schools and Student Achievement Officers will continue to work with schools in hubs and networks. Additionally, we intend to continue to support pilot projects. Our existing Leader to Leader and Triads projects will continue through to December with the same groups of schools. The Schools Helping Schools - Triads project will involve new schools, selected in the fall once EQAO results are known.

**Schools on the Move (5.0)**

To further the opportunities for inter-board and inter-school sharing of promising and effective classroom practices, we will continue with the Schools on the Move. As you know, this program recognizes those schools that are making sustained progress in student achievement in literacy and numeracy. For 2009/10, our Schools on the Move program will identify schools achieving success in challenging circumstances. There will be opportunities for schools and districts to learn from one another and to share strategies between schools and boards with similar challenges.

**Strategies to Support Instruction (6.0)**

Deeper implementation of existing initiatives will include sustaining our focus on professional learning to improve student achievement in literacy and mathematics.

For kindergarten to grade 6, we will continue to develop capacity and leadership in literacy and mathematics instruction by providing opportunities for focussed collaborative inquiry (face-to-face, web conference, teleconference) for instructional leaders in every region. We will develop and distribute print and multi-media resources to support implementation of effective literacy and numeracy strategies. In numeracy, additional district school boards (co-terminous) will participate in the Collaborative Inquiry for Learning initiative to develop and implement lateral capacity building strategies within self generating professional learning communities for mathematical teaching and learning. All of our capacity building work will be grounded in collaborative inquiry and informed by current research and data from Ontario schools.
For grades 7 – 12, we will continue the work of integrating Literacy (the use of resources targeting Boys’ Literacy), Mathematics (Coaching for Math GAINS through the support of mathematics-knowledgeable educators), Student Engagement, Transitions, and DI/Assessment for Learning (AfL) to support students at risk. Our work in this area will facilitate and support school-based, job-embedded professional learning through a combination of coaching/mentoring, classroom observations, peer planning, and supporting teachers in the use of school and classroom level data to inform daily practices.

Program Pathways

A key focus for 2009-10, is to make Reaching Every Student a reality for all students in every classroom and program. This requires sustained efforts at every level to improve student achievement K-12. To continue our progress, we must be unrelenting in the focus on implementation of successful and innovative programming that engages students in our schools and alternative sites. We need to ensure that personalized, precise supports and interventions are provided when and where students need them.

While credit accumulation is increasing and graduation rates have improved from 68% (2003-4) to 77% (2007-8), we continue to work towards our goal of 85% and beyond. We must keep up the momentum to expand program choice and the drive to deeper implementation of strategies that recognize student strengths, improve instruction and support effective transitions.

Key elements include the involvement of all school staff to support struggling students; focused support on applied courses, specifically mathematics; engaging, quality programs with four strong pathways; and support for the development of solid literacy and numeracy skills. Programs such as credit recovery, credit rescue and transition supports help students when they are struggling. I am pleased to re-affirm the ministry’s commitment to continue its investments in these innovative programs so that access keeps expanding to more and more students.

Experiential Learning (7.0)

Dual credits, Specialist High Skills Majors and co-operative education programs help to engage students, who are more successful when they see the relevance of what they are learning to their interests and future plans. The response by boards and board partners, including colleges, to the 2009-10 application processes to offer ministry-approved dual credit and Specialist High Skills Majors programs is indeed impressive. Funding decisions will be finalized in the coming weeks. Thanks to your efforts and those of your staff to continuously expand student access to these programs, we fully expect to see significantly more students enrolled in these programs during the 2009-10 school year.

The Ministry teams will continue their focus in 2009-10 on leading and supporting deeper implementation, conducting site visits to observe programs in schools and to meet with board/Regional Planning Team officials, working with and providing literacy resources to dual credit teachers (teachers in the “designated role”), examining the data and supporting professional dialogue about effective practices and programs and promising approaches such as the “school-within-a-college” dual credit model.
Look for sector-specific guides to be developed and issued for two new Specialist High Skills Majors in Energy and Aerospace and Aviation in 2009-10 (to add to the current 14 sectors distributed to boards and schools previously and available on the ministry’s website.). The Ministry is planning to host one provincial meeting for board SHSM leads in fall 2009, with a focus on refining 2009-10 implementation plans and sharing effective and best practices.

**Adult and Continuing Education**

The literacy spectrum includes adult literacy and we must continue to be committed to increasing opportunities for adult Ontarians to acquire the basic education and foundation skills training they need. This preparation will prepare them for successful participation in community and family life, satisfying employment and further learning.

In 2008-09 the government increased salary benchmarks for adult and continuing education by over 11% compared to 2007-08, through an increase in the average daily enrolment (ADE) rate to $2,962 from $2,660. In 2009-10 the ADE rate will increase to $3,153 for Adult and Continuing Education. Almost $70M in funding was provided to 55 school boards to deliver adult and continuing education and PLAR for mature students in 2008-09, an increase of $5M over 2007-08. In 2009-10, funding is projected to increase by $3.6M compared to 2008-09.

Consultation on collecting and reporting adult and continuing education student level data to the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) will continue so that school boards and the ministry can begin to move towards clear outcome data to support continuous improvement of adult and continuing education programs.

The Ministry is providing one-time funding for school boards offering adult secondary school credit programs to create and/or update information about their adult credit program in the Employment Ontario website “Find Services in Your Area” portal. This project will enhance information and referral services for adult learners at the local level.

The Ministers’ Committee on Adult Education (EDU, TCU, MCI) chaired by the Minister of Education, continues to meet regularly to focus on potential areas for improved policy alignment and coordination of programs that will facilitate learner pathways and transitions across ministry programs. Through EDU, MCI, and TCU, the government invests close to $200 million annually and supports more than 90,000 adult learners in adult literacy, language training and adult credit programs.

The Ministers’ Committee recently approved the release of a Call for Expressions of Interest inviting participation in the first stage of a two-stage approach leading to the establishment of a small number of Adult Learning Centre demonstration projects in September 2009. The Ministry of Education, supported by its partners, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, is seeking innovative community solutions that demonstrate how collaborative partnerships can result in innovative ways to deliver better coordinated, more widely accessible and more effective adult education and training programs and services.
In 2009-10 look for the following new resources in support of adult literacy:

- **PLAR for Mature Students’ First Language Challenge Assessment Support Package** in French and English (Fall 2009)
- **First Language Online Challenge Assessment** in seven International Languages available through the boards’ Learning Management System (Fall 2009)
- **Starting Point - A Primer for the Adult and Continuing Education Principal DVD**

Curriculum Services Canada (CSC) and the Centre canadien de leadership en évaluation inc. (CLE) are conducting an environmental scan with a selection of representative Boards across the province. The report will help the Ministry determine whether to proceed with the development and production of online equivalency assessment packages for PLAR for Mature Students – Grades 9 and 10.

**Community, Culture and Caring**

**Character Education** (8.0)

The Character Development Initiative has helped create learning environments that are safe and respectful for students, teachers, administrators and support staff. Students have adopted the essence of the program readily, inculcating a sense of responsibility toward the initiative’s aims. These activities help create school environments which support student learning, and so funding of this initiative will continue but at revised levels.

**Transitions Planning** (9.0)

The focus of the Grade 8 to 9 Transitions Planning and Implementation Initiative is to provide specific supports for students as they move from Grade 8 to 9, with emphasis on building protective factors and lessening risk factors for all students with attention to those who may be at risk. In 2009-10, Transitions strategies will include preparing virtual/electronic and session-based modules for professional learning of school teams and administrators and extending use of discussion tools to implement protective factors at the classroom level.
Monitoring and Supporting our Students for Success (9.0)

Our focus on the monitoring, tracking and supporting of students in Grades 7-12 is a high priority. We are proud of the work of our Student Success School Teams and want to ensure that tracking and monitoring of individual student progress continues through to the completion of diploma requirements, and that supports and interventions are put in place to assist students in completing the mandatory academic and non-academic graduation requirements. It is a priority in 2009-10 to ensure that all senior students begin the school year with a document outlining their accumulated credits and completion of other graduation requirements with specific identification of those still to be met, and assistance in developing a plan to meet their outstanding requirements.

Student Voice (10.0)

Speak Up, Ontario’s student voice initiative (K-12) was launched in October 2008 and immediately began making an important contribution to energizing Ontario schools. In 2009-10, Speak Up will continue as an initiative that responds to students’ ideas about what helps strengthen their engagement in their learning communities. Once again grants will be made available for student-led projects in classrooms. The Minister’s Student Advisory Council and regional student forums will serve as important forums where students are invited to use their voice and be heard as they help make all our schools great.

Leadership

Leadership Positions (11.0)

To assist boards in improving outcomes for our students, we will continue to rely upon the ongoing leadership of School Effectiveness Leads and Student Success Leaders – we will continue to fund two full time positions in each board. As our Student Achievement Division continues to examine progress through a K-12 lens, our expectation is that these two key leaders will work more closely together to do the same within boards and regional networks. These leaders report to the Director and assist with the development and implementation of board improvement plans and the use of the school effectiveness framework by school and district professional learning teams.

Board Improvement Planning

In accordance with a memo sent to you in early May, board improvement plans are due June 30, 2009. Boards may use our recently released updated template or continue to use their own format. The plans should, however, include all of the components specified.
Building Data Capacity

The use of data and information to inform instruction is one key to continued improvement in student performance, which will ultimately result in more students meeting achievement targets and graduating from secondary school. We will continue to support capacity at the school and board levels in data analysis, needs assessment, developing SMART goals, and setting achievement targets, all of which provide the basis for Board Improvement Planning. In partnership with the Principals’ Associations we will continue to develop and deliver web casts to support the professional learning of school administrators.

School Effectiveness Framework

All elementary schools should be involved in a self review process using either the existing review tool or the new draft K-12 framework. Similarly, boards are expected to continue to proceed with their district review processes.

Some boards have begun to involve some secondary schools in a parallel self review process and we support that expansion.

The new K-12 Effectiveness Framework is a draft document. We want to work with boards, as well as elementary and secondary schools, to refine this document and add the indicators and evidence details during 2009/10. Accordingly, we ask that boards complete some elementary and some secondary school self-reviews using the new framework. This will provide useful feedback both to the schools involved and to the Student Achievement Division as we work together to finalize this document in the year ahead.

Student Success School Support Initiative (12)

We will continue to work in specific ways with selected boards building upon the work currently being done with 3 boards and expanding to 3 additional boards to improve performance.

New Leader Publication

In order to ensure that all students receive instruction that enables them to reach high levels of achievement, it is essential that successful strategies be shared within and across schools and within and across boards. That’s why I started New Leader, which has proven to be a most popular communications vehicle. As you know, New Leader is an e-newsletter of successful practices which boasts two editions – one edition sent directly to you as Director, to be shared with your supervisory officers – and the other version sent to principal organizations for dissemination to school principals. In one key article per edition New Leader emphasizes practical, how-to strategies which support student achievement. Most often these are peer written which allow your colleagues across Ontario to share what is working with you.

Resources

Differentiated Instruction
We will continue to invest in supports for implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI) in classrooms, Grades 7-10 as we lay the groundwork for implementing aspects of DI in classrooms, Grades 11-12. Key goals of the Differentiated Instruction Professional Learning Strategy are: to increase the instructional knowledge and skills of intermediate educators so that they can meet the diverse needs of all students; to build awareness of Differentiated Instruction as a framework for planning and implementing effective instruction, assessment and evaluation practices, as outlined in the Ontario curriculum; and to facilitate and support school-based job-embedded professional learning opportunities based on collaborative inquiry.

Capacity Building Resources and Programs

We continue to receive positive feedback for resources developed by the Division which share successful teaching, learning, and leadership practices among boards and schools across Ontario. Through webcasts (www.curriculum.org) and our on-line journal *Inspire: The Journal of Literacy and Numeracy for Ontario* (www.inspirelearning.ca) the Student Achievement Division has been able to share research-based strategies and success stories. We will be continuing to support this sharing by producing appropriate webcasts and articles, both through these publications and through new editions of What Works, Research into Practice, and our Capacity Building series. In keeping with our new K-12 focus, many of these resources will also include reflections on good practices throughout a student’s time in school.

Policy/Program Resource

You will soon receive a copy of a new resource that provides a summary of the changes to secondary school policy, program, and diploma requirements currently described in *Ontario Secondary Schools Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements (1999)* and lists other policy and program changes that impact elementary and secondary schools.

This resource is intended to help bridge the gap until the release of a new Kindergarten to Grade 12 school policy document. On the advice from key stakeholders, we are taking additional time to develop and consult on the new document that will promote further alignment.
Conclusion

This memo is being sent to you so you can see just how far we have come. We will adapt and fine-tune our strategies to meet student achievement needs but rest assured we have been on the right path. As we better align our strategies in support of our students we can move forward with confidence on this path we have laid out. The bold new directions were staked some time ago; now is the time to stay the course and deepen our intent. We move on with confidence thanks in large part to your commitment and your leadership.

Attached to this memo is a summary page reflecting the funding associated with our various initiatives. This is not new information, but I felt it would helpful to you to see it reflected in our consolidated document.

There is a profound clarity of purpose in our shared work and for the last few years an abiding optimism. This optimism has not waned, despite the broad economic challenges to our economy. In many ways, what we do now impacts the economic levers for years to come. It is yet another reason why our shared work is so important; as we work toward successful outcomes for our students, we create successful outcomes for our larger community.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to your schools. Your leadership has meant all the difference to the students you serve.

Sincerely,

Mary Jean Gallagher

cc: EDU Deputy Minister
    EDU Assistant Deputy Ministers
    EDU Regional Managers
## Four Pillars

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy &amp; Numeracy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>GSN 2009-10</th>
<th>EPO 2009-10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.0 OFIP</strong>: The Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership provides supports for boards and schools in general and more intense support for under-performing and static schools. Half of the OFIP funds will be transferred to boards immediately on a per-pupil basis. The other half of the OFIP funds will be transferred after the 2009 EQAO data and all board final 2008-09 OFIP reports are completed. OFIP funds are to be used only for release time for PLCs and networks focused on student work.</td>
<td>$26M</td>
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<td><strong>2.0 OFIP Tutoring</strong>: This Initiative allows boards to initiate or expand before and after school tutoring programs. Boards are encouraged, where possible, to work with non-profit community partners to continue to support students who are not at the provincial standard in reading, writing or mathematics. 25% of funds may be used to provide support over the summer months.</td>
<td>$8M</td>
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<td><strong>3.0 Tutors in the Classroom Program</strong>: Once again funds will be available for boards to partner with The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to provide tutors to support literacy and numeracy development for students in primary and junior grades. This program will continue to assist school boards to hire post-secondary students enrolled in Ontario colleges and universities to participate as tutors in elementary classrooms in local schools.</td>
<td>$1.5M</td>
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<td><strong>4.0 Schools Helping Schools – Networking</strong> Implementation of teaching learning pathways is an effective strategy for ensuring improvement efforts are focused on the greatest area of need for students. When schools work within and across schools to improve instruction improved achievement is sustainable. Boards that are implementing the teaching learning critical pathways may use some of these funds to assist with costs for release time. The funds are to be used for release time to support teachers and principals coming together with a focus on examining student work to ensure that we are developing higher order and critical thinking skills.</td>
<td>$7M</td>
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<td><strong>5.0 Schools on the Move</strong>: To further the opportunities for inter-board and inter-school sharing of promising teaching and learning strategies, we will continue with the Schools on the Move.</td>
<td>$8M</td>
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<td>Program Pathways</td>
<td>Student Success/Learning to 18 (7 – 12)</td>
<td>6.0 Strategies to Support Instruction: Improved instruction, Assessment and Evaluation Practices: Supports for professional learning initiatives and supports for school boards to continue the focus on improving grades 7-12 student achievement</td>
<td>$27M</td>
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<td>Differentiated Instruction – Mentoring/Coaching: enhanced support to boards for professional learning initiatives to support Differentiated Instruction implementation in grades 7-12</td>
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<td>Student Success/Learning to 18</td>
<td>7.0 Experiential Learning</td>
<td><strong>Expansion of Specialist High Skills Major Program Pathways.</strong> Provision of program choices and greater access for all students to Specialist High Skills Majors, dual credits, and school/board pathways program; including cooperative, technological education and OYAP. Support for transportation and investment in technological education to support students at risk. Programs for grade 7 and 8 students for pathway choices</td>
<td>$11M</td>
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<td><strong>Expansion of Dual Credit Program Pathways</strong> to provide more students with dual credit learning opportunities in college courses and apprenticeship programs</td>
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<td>Community, Culture and Caring</td>
<td>K-6 Student Success/Learning to 18</td>
<td>8.0 Character Education: The Character Development initiative is an integral part of developing learning environments that are safe and respectful for students, teachers, administrators and support staff.</td>
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<td><strong>Community Culture &amp; Caring</strong></td>
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<td>9.0 Student Success School and Cross Panel Teams: professional learning opportunities/supports for Student Success School Teams and their elementary colleagues to monitor, track and support grades 7-12 students who are at risk and students transitioning into grade 9 and between schools during the school year.</td>
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<td>10.0 Student Voice – student engagement funding for implementing new student-led projects and Speak Up student council projects</td>
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<td>Leadership K-6 Student Success/Learning to 18</td>
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<td><strong>11.A The School Effectiveness Lead</strong> : The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat will continue to fund the School Effectiveness Lead who supports the implementation of the Framework in elementary schools (JK to grade 8). Funds will also be provided for Release time</td>
<td>$12M</td>
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<td><strong>11.B Student Success Leader</strong> – Supervisory Officer or Principal – to lead deeper implementation of the four pillars of Student Success salary and benefits for a full time dedicated SSL for every school board and school authority</td>
<td>$11.9M</td>
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<td><strong>12.0 Student Success School Support Initiative</strong> - continue to work with initial 3 boards; add 3 additional boards in 2009/10 school year, based on performance and consultation</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$58.9M</strong></td>
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