APPENDIX A

What We Have Learned:
A Summary of the 2012-2013 Year-End Report Backs (YERB)

This document highlights what the LNS has learned from the 2012-2013 YERB data collection, and how it aligns with our joint focus areas for the current 2013-2014 school year.

Working in partnership with district schools boards (DSBs), promoting innovation, and increasing transparency are key pillars of the ‘learning as we go’ theory of action. Operationalizing these has allowed the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) along with DSB partners and stakeholders to create positive, trusting, and collaborative learning environments. These environments are essential for the successful implementation of coherent, aligned, sustainable, and scalable LNS-supported initiatives, which promote engagement of educators and students. Improving achievement is only possible through the efforts of dedicated and engaged educators and students.

Foci for 2012-13
The priority foci for 2012-2013 have been integrated into the Ministry’s three goals as follows:

**Higher Levels of Student Achievement**
- Focus on precision and success as we approach the goal of 75% of students achieving the provincial standard in reading, writing and mathematics and 85% of students graduating from high school.
- Increased attention to excellence, innovation and higher order thinking
- Increasing student achievement through increasingly precise actions, particularly in the following areas:
  - Primary reading
  - Mathematics

**Reduced Gaps in Student Achievement**
- Precision and attention in our identification and support for groups of students, schools, and boards facing additional achievement challenges.

**Public Confidence in Publicly Funded Education**
- Strengthening collaborative approaches to working with partners, and across our communities, will accelerate progress towards our goal of achieving better outcomes for all learners.

Five themes anchored the approach to the work of 2012-13:

**Asset Orientation**
- For all partners in education, including learners, educators, parents & leaders: Relationships matter; trust matters; and respecting diverse skill sets and strengths matters.
Collaboration and Inquiry
• Effective collaborative inquiry involves three essential components: Integrating collaborative dialogue and classroom experience, studying student learning and experience, and building pedagogical content knowledge.

Relevant and Engaging Learning Experiences
• Students benefit when their learning opportunities are relevant and engaging.

Coherence and Alignment
• Where alignment supports efficiency of implementation, coherence enhances effectiveness of what is being implemented. Coherence improves student outcomes by:
  - Mobilizing and building knowledge of successful practices through information sharing among networked leadership and through school strategies
  - Leveraging and sustaining effective improvement processes to the widest possible benefit, and
  - Making activity manageable and scalable.

Understanding Impact
• Regardless of role, everyone is responsible for understanding impact. What is the impact we aim for? What difference are our actions making? How do we know?

What We Have Learned from the Work in 2012-2013

With a sustained focus on literacy since 2004, Ontario’s English-language schools have now reached the goal of having 75% of students achieving or exceeding provincial standard in all literacy assessment areas, with the exception of primary reading. French-language schools have now reached or exceeded the 75% goal in all literacy assessment areas.

In terms of mathematics, research shows that Ontario performs well compared to other Canadian provinces and international jurisdictions, however in the last few years mathematics achievement in Ontario has seen a slight decline. Since 2011-12, EQAO results show that although students in French language school boards continue to demonstrate high achievement results in 2012-13 on both primary and junior mathematics assessments, results for students in English-language district school boards have declined in both primary and junior mathematics by 1% from the previous year.

Despite declines in achievement on elementary EQAO mathematics assessments, results from the 2012-13 EQAO student questionnaires suggest overall increases in efficacy and engagement in mathematics. When responding to the prompts ‘I like mathematics’ and ‘I am good at mathematics’, the percentages of students responding ‘Most of the time’ (the highest available response) increased in both Grades 3 and 6 in both English- and French-language boards. It should also be noted that there were some school boards that saw sustained improvement in mathematics achievement. The Ministry is working with these
school boards/schools to identify and help spread these practices as we look to increase math achievement in all districts and for all students.

In reporting back with respect to LNS specific initiatives, school boards predominately reported that the focus of their work was with classroom teachers within a job embedded context. Analysis of school boards’ reports showed a focus on the classroom and collaborative work between classroom teachers. Engagement and involvement of those outside the classroom (school and system leaders, parents) is much less frequently a focus of implementation. While collaborative, job embedded work amongst teachers has been a key achievement in Ontario’s large scale change efforts, the capacity of school and district leaders are also an essential element in building sustainable responsive, reflective practices across local school systems. Analysis also suggests that a board’s implementation of an initiative typically focuses on either literacy or numeracy, but not both.

Overall, 3,620 out of 4,010 elementary schools, or 90%, participated in LNS initiatives in 2012-13; up from 84% in 2011-12. Of participating schools, 2,834 of 3,620, or 78%, participated in two or more LNS initiatives. Schools that participated in LNS literacy initiatives showed, on average, greater gains in achievement compared to schools that did not. Furthermore, participation in two or more LNS literacy initiatives showed even greater average year-over-year achievement for schools. This level of engagement and the increase indicate an active focus on improvement planning and engagement in professional learning. The LNS continues to prioritize the collaborative approach partnering more intensely with school boards to support student learning and achievement in mathematics.

**Going Forward**
The LNS will continue to focus on supporting the priorities of the Ministry of Education through coherent, aligned, sustainable, and scalable initiatives, through collaborative partnerships with DSBs. The following elements identified and articulated in September 2012 are currently the foci of our joint work this year:

1. Coherent implementation
2. Establishing pedagogical content knowledge, especially with respect to mathematics
3. Instructional leadership
4. Building capacity for research and evaluation
5. Partners in education

**Background: About the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat**
Formed in 2004, the LNS plays a key role in the successful implementation of Ontario’s education strategy for improved outcomes for students. Ontario’s renewed Education Strategy, *Achieving Excellence: A renewed vision for Education in Ontario*, builds on the education system's three current priorities: increasing student achievement, closing gaps in student achievement and increasing public confidence in publicly funded education. It encompasses these goals and reaches deeper and broader, raising expectations both for the system and for the potential of our children and students.

Our renewed goals for education are:

- **Achieving Excellence**: Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good
citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.

- **Ensuring Equity**: All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting Well-Being**: All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.
- **Enhancing Public Confidence**: Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

These four goals are interconnected – success in one contributes to success in the others. Our progress over the last 10 years tells us that when educators, students, parents and guardians, and our many other partners focus on a small number of clearly defined goals, those goals can be achieved.

The LNS incorporates central and regional teams of Student Achievement Officers (SAOs) that are instrumental in differentiating support for LNS initiatives. These teams provide: support relating to evidence-based practices; using data and the planning cycle; improving achievement; adaptive implementation; as well as regionally specific educational content expertise.

The LNS’s role within the province's literacy and numeracy strategy is to work directly with schools and school boards across the province in various initiatives that support or target four interrelated approaches to achieving the ministry’s three goals:

- professional learning through collaborative inquiry;
- building capacity for sophisticated use of evidence;
- direct support for targeted schools; and
- the identification, adaptation and spread of effective practices.