MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
               Secretary Treasurers of School Authorities

FROM: Kevin Costante
       Deputy Minister
       Ministry of Education

DATE: October 25, 2010

SUBJECT: Safe Schools Teams

As you settle in to a new school year, I would like to take this opportunity to remind your board about the requirement that every school have a safe schools team in place. Providing students with opportunities to learn and develop in a safe and respectful environment is a shared responsibility in which school boards and schools play an important role.

A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. In order to promote a positive school climate, some schools may need to address complex student safety issues. Because the issues, as well as the needs of students and parents, vary from school to school they should be addressed through the cooperative efforts of the school, parents, students and community partners. A safe schools team in every school will help schools respond to some of the challenges that they face.

Policy/Program Memorandum No.144 “Bullying Prevention and Intervention”, found at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.html, requires that each school have in place a safe schools team responsible for school safety that is composed of at least one student (where appropriate), one parent, one teacher, one non-teaching staff member, one community partner, and the principal. An existing school committee (e.g. the healthy schools committee) can assume this role. The chair of this team must be a staff member.

Schools are also required to conduct anonymous school climate surveys of their students every two years and to share the results of the surveys with their safe schools teams. This requirement is outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 145, “Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour”, found at www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.html.
I am asking you to ensure that all your schools have functioning safe schools teams in place to help among other things, plan prevention programming, and to review school climate survey results.

If you have any concerns about ensuring the appropriate membership on these teams or questions related to the role of these teams, please contact the Ministry’s Safe Schools Coordinator, Norman Stormes at Norman.Stormes@ontario.ca or at (416) 325-7531.

I would like to thank you for your ongoing efforts to provide a safe environment in which students can learn, grow and succeed.

____________________
Kevin Costante