MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education

FROM: Grant Clarke
Assistant Deputy Minister
Learning & Curriculum Division

DATE: June 29, 2011

SUBJECT: Provincial e-Learning Strategy Update

The purpose of this memo is to share information about five supports for the provincial e-learning strategy and reaching Ontario’s students through digital learning.

Learning Management System
The ministry has signed a multiyear contract with Desire2Learn of Kitchener, Ontario to continue providing a Learning Management System (LMS) to school boards as part of the provincial e-learning strategy. This will provide school boards with a stable and secure e-learning environment that supports 21st century teaching and learning practices across the province. Boards will experience uninterrupted LMS service as the ministry migrates to the new contract.

In addition to the LMS features that boards currently enjoy, students and teachers will now have access to many new tools including e-Portfolio and Mobile Learning. Board staff will also have better tools for integrating the LMS with the board’s Student Information Systems.

Blended Learning
As a result of the new LMS contract, boards will now have the ability to use the LMS tools for blended learning. This means that tools such as discussion threads, chats and dropboxes will be available for students enrolled in traditional face-to-face classes. The ministry’s e-Learning Ontario unit will be working with boards in the fall to plan the roll-out of blended learning. It is anticipated that over the next three years students from kindergarten to grade 12 will be able to access the LMS tools for blended learning in a safe and customized environment.

Homework Help
Currently over 236,000 Grade 7 to 10 math students in 31 pilot boards have access to live, interactive online math help. Students can log in to the Independent Learning Centre’s Homework Help website from any internet-connected computer Sunday to Thursday, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. EST, to receive individualized, confidential math help from certified Ontario teachers. Videos of best tutorials and commonly asked questions are available anytime. Other online math resources include math games and a virtual locker where students can save their work. For more information visit www.ontario.ca/homeworkhelp
Ontario Educational Software Service
As requested by the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC), the ministry will provide more opportunities for the sharing of implementation and professional learning strategies around licensed software and web services. Today over 11 web services (e.g. Career Cruising, Grolier Online, Bitstrips) and a hundred software titles (e.g. Geometer’s Sketchpad, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Clicker 5) are available at no cost to school boards through OSAPAC licenses. By updating the Ontario Educational Software Service (OESS) sublicense agreements, the ministry will ensure web services are included as part of the agreements.

eLearning Contacts
To support boards with the implementation of programs like Homework Help and the new LMS (in particular blended learning), as well as the use of ministry-provided digital resources, the ministry will provide funding for one eLearning Contact (eLC) per board for the 2011-12 school year.

The purpose of the eLC position will be to ensure that there is coordination and leadership in boards for the implementation of the provincial e-learning strategy, blended learning, Homework Help, and the distribution of digital resources and tools provided by the ministry.

Further details around each of these five items will be made available shortly.

The provincial e-learning strategy strives to reach Ontario students through digital learning. It consists of the ministry providing school boards with the supports needed to deliver e-learning (e.g. LMS, standards, course and resource development, and professional development). School boards have responsibility for all aspects of e-learning delivery similar to any other mode of delivery (e.g. program direction, hiring staff, registering students, teaching students, and granting credits).

Additional information about eLearning Ontario can be found at www.ontario.ca/elearning.

Specific inquiries regarding the provincial e-learning strategy may be directed to Peter Sovran, Manager, eLearning Ontario at 416.325.0394 or peter.sovran@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to ensure student success.

Grant Clarke
Assistant Deputy Minister
Learning and Curriculum Division

c: Regional Office Managers
Regional eLearning Contacts