Ontario

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary/Treasurers of School
Authorities

FROM: Alayne Bigwin
Director
Aboriginal Education Office

DATE: April 21, 2008

SUBJECT: **Supports to school boards for the development of policies for
voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification**

In order to enable the Ministry of Education and school boards to focus their efforts on
improvement planning and student achievement for Aboriginal students, it is necessary to have
data gathering mechanisms in place to identify First Nation, Métis and Inuit students who live
within the jurisdictions of Ontario school boards. This type of data is currently not available.

Over the past year and a half, the Aboriginal Education Office has been working with school
boards to assist them in developing policies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-
identification. I am pleased to report that 26 school boards have passed their policies and 34 are
in the process of developing theirs.

Resources Available from the Ministry of Education:

In April 2007, the Ministry of Education released the resource, *Building Bridges to Success for
First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students – Developing Policies for Voluntary, Confidential
Aboriginal Student Self-Identification: Successful Practices for Ontario School Boards* (see
attached). The purpose of the guide is to help Ontario school boards develop effective policies
and practices for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification.

Along with the release of the resource, the Aboriginal Education Office also committed to
provide funding of up to $50,000 per board to district school boards who wish to begin
developing policies for Aboriginal student self-identification. I am pleased to advise that this
funding will continue to be available in 2008-09 for those boards that have not yet accessed
funds to develop their policies.

Funding is available to District School Boards to support a number of key steps in the policy
development process, including:
- consultations with local First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations;

- consultation with Legal counsel;
- in-service for school boards to raise awareness about the initiative and related issues; and
- preparation for data collection and management

Proposals for 2008-09 fiscal year funding will be accepted from District School Boards by the Aboriginal Education Office up until October 1, 2008. I would encourage boards to consider working with their coterminous boards in order to pool resources and avoid duplicating efforts in consultations. The ministry will also provide support to District School Authorities who wish to engage in the policy development process, on a case by case basis.

Please contact your local regional office for more details about the process and submission of funding proposals.

Submission of Aboriginal Student Self-Identification Data to Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO):

As was communicated in a memo to you from Dominic Giroux, Assistant Deputy Minister of French-Language Education and Educational Operations Division, in March 2006, EQAO has agreed to report on the achievement of Aboriginal students to boards that have a self-identification policy in place. Through recent discussions with EQAO, we have come to an arrangement which we hope will help facilitate this type of reporting for boards through a gradual process.

Boards who have passed their policy and have completed their data collection are invited to submit to Benjamin Bagby (Manager of IT at EQAO), an electronic file with individual Ontario Education Numbers (OENs) of Aboriginal students who have self-identified. Benjamin may be reached at: benjamin.bagby@eqao.com, phone: 416-314-6503.

In the Fall of 2007, boards who had begun the data collection process were invited to submit their OENs and relevant data electronically by November 2007. As a result, those boards received from EQAO a secure report providing distinct results from 2007 EQAO assessment for Aboriginal and non Aboriginal students for their board, and aggregated results of other participating boards for benchmarking purposes. This provided boards an opportunity to give feedback to EQAO on the format of the report, giving them meaningful information to plan for improvement of student outcomes, etc. EQAO has undertaken best efforts to provide school-based reports where feasible. No reports have been posted on the website.

EQAO is also supportive of doing the same for 2008, again for all participating boards, with secure reports that will not to be posted on the website, with 2 years of information. I encourage all boards that have implemented the data collection process to contact EQAO about submitting your data to them.

The goal is that by 2009, EQAO results will be fully integrated into normal EQAO provincial, board and school reports, as is currently the case for ESL reports, for instance. 2009 reports would be posted on the website.

During this preliminary two-year reporting period, it will be necessary for you to engage with

your local Aboriginal communities and organizations about these reports to seek their ongoing support and ensure a common understanding of how this data can be used to support student achievement.

I appreciate your ongoing commitment and support as we all work together to create a better future for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in Ontario.

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Alayne Bigwin

C: Senior Management Team, Ministry of Education
        Marguerite Jackson, Chief Executive Officer, EQAO
        Gerry Townsend, A/Director, Field Services Branch
        Ginette Plourde, Director, French-Language Education Policy and Programs
        Don Young, Director, Information Management Branch
        Regional Managers