

Ministry of Education
Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministre de l'Éducation
Édifice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



MEMORANDUM TO: **Directors of Education**
Director of the Provincial Schools Branch
Supervisory Officer of Centre Jules-Léger
Secretary Treasurer, James Bay Lowlands School Authority

FROM: **Grant Clarke**
Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting)
Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs
Division

Dominic Giroux
Assistant Deputy Minister
French-Language Education and Educational Operations
Division

DATE: **February 2, 2009**

SUBJECT: **Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Application for 2009-10**

We are pleased to provide you with information about the Ministry of Education's plans for further implementation of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program and to invite district school boards, in collaboration with their business and postsecondary education and training partners, to submit an application to offer SHSM programs in 2009-10. In the upcoming weeks, you and each of your secondary schools will receive a set of the current 14 sector guides to assist you with implementation and more specifically with the application process.

The SHSM program aligns with the government's strategic goals to improve student success in secondary education and increase access to and participation in postsecondary education, training and employment opportunities. The overarching goal for the Student Success/ Learning to 18 Strategy is to increase the secondary school graduation rate to 85%.

The SHSM is a specialized career-focussed program option for students to customize their learning to suit their individual interests, strengths and needs while meeting the high standards and requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). As such, the career focus and SHSM requirement for pathways to apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace also support the strategic goals of the Reaching Higher initiative of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to increase student participation and success in postsecondary education and training. In 2008-09, student access to these specialized programs increased significantly reaching approximately 14,000 students. You and your schools are to be commended for this expansion effort which is currently offering 485 SHSM programs in 335 secondary schools, with every board offering at least one SHSM program.

Priorities for SHSMs in 2009-10

The Ministry of Education's priorities for 2009-10 are to ensure high quality SHSM programs and to support the expansion of SHSM programs to:

- deepen implementation in all participating boards, provincial schools and the school authority (where applications qualify);
- continue support for current SHSM programs;
- promote alignment between approved SHSM pathway programs and approved dual credit programs, managed under the separately administered School College Work Initiative;
- support partnerships between French-language school boards and schools in order to increase the number of programs and services that could impact positively on student retention and success in the French-language education system;
- promote partnerships of co-terminous and/or neighbouring boards;
- expand the initiative into new sectors in addition to the 14 sectors currently offered.

Applying for a Specialist High Skills Major Program

Boards have the opportunity to submit SHSM applications in fourteen (14) established sectors: agriculture, arts and culture, business, community safety and emergency services, construction, the environment, forestry, health and wellness, horticulture and landscaping, hospitality and tourism, information and communications technology, manufacturing, mining, and transportation.

In addition, we are inviting expressions of interest in different sectors based upon other specialized programs that schools have developed to support students. New sectors, such as energy (e.g. energy use, sustainability, and alternatives) will be considered.

By virtue of applying, boards are committing that the required components as outlined in the sector-specific guides, are met in their programs. Once approved, boards must ensure, over the two-year implementation period, that their SHSM programs provide opportunities for students pursuing all four postsecondary pathways and offer the required components:

1. a bundle of 8-10 required credits with pathways to the four destinations: apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace. Each bundle of credits consists of:
 - 4 major credits
 - 2 to 4 other required credits
 - 2 cooperative education credits;
2. compulsory certification and training courses/programs;
3. career exploration and experiential learning such as job shadowing, job twinning, and work experience;
4. 'reach ahead' opportunities where students participate in authentic experiences in their postsecondary option of choice, whether in apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace;
5. development of Essential Skills and work habits and the use of the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) for purposes of documentation.

In addition, approved SHSM programs must be offered in partnership with local business, industry, and/or community organizations, and where applicable, public postsecondary educational institutions and training centres.

Application Details

In all cases, the Ministry of Education's approval is required to offer an SHSM and to enable students to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with the SHSM designation.

- Boards are requested to submit one application
 - to continue to offer their current SHSM(s); and
 - to add new schools to existing SHSM sectors; and/or
 - to offer SHSMs in new and/or different sectors.
- Board applications will be pre-populated and sent electronically, in a separate communication, to each board's SHSM lead. Further instructions are on page 1 of the Excel application.
- Submit the board's application to irina.buyanova@ontario.ca no later than March 12, 2009, copy your Student Success Leader and copy the education officer with the lead on the SHSM at the board's Ministry of Education Regional Office.
- Deliverables will include reports and the development of contextualized learning activities.

Key dates in the application/approval process for 2009-10:

- February 2 - memo and sample application sent to boards
- February 9-13 - teleconferences on SHSM application for interested boards
- February 12 - pre-populated application sent electronically to each SHSM board lead
- February 17-20 - teleconference on SHSM application on technical aspects for boards
- March 12 - applications due (electronically) to the ministry
- April/May 2009 - boards informed of approved SHSMs to be offered in 2009-10
- May 2009 - boards confirm approved SHSMs for 2009-10
- June 2009 - transfer agreements signed by boards

Funding available to support the launch of SHSM programs is subject to the ministry's confirmed budget for 2009-10, and will be based on factors such as the total number of qualifying pathway program applications, the breadth and depth of SHSM implementation in the board and across the province. The ministry also may give consideration to other related Student Success board performance data in making its SHSM funding allocations. Please note, that as in the past, boards continue to have the flexibility to use a portion of the funding provided for Student Success through the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) to support the implementation of SHSM programs.

Dual Credit Programs and the SHSM Application

Students in approved Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) sites may benefit from access to dual credit learning opportunities in college courses and apprenticeship programs related to their majors. Boards applying to the Ministry of Education to offer an SHSM in 2009-10 may wish to consider submitting a proposal to the School College Work Initiative (SCWI) for the SHSM's college and/or apprenticeship pathways' components in order to offer dual credit learning opportunities within their proposed SHSM sites. The timing of both the SHSM and dual credit application processes have been coordinated to facilitate alignment opportunities where appropriate. For further information on the SCWI Dual Credit RFP, please contact Frank Kelly, Project Manager.

For further information, please contact Audrey Cartile at (416) 326-0552, audrey.cartile@ontario.ca, or Aldo Cianfrini at (416) 325-2669, aldo.cianfrini@ontario.ca

Thank you for your commitment to the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy. We look forward to receiving your application for further development and expansion of SHSM programs.

Original signed by:

Grant Clarke
Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting)
Strategic Planning and Elementary
Programs Division

Original signed by:

Dominic Giroux
Assistant Deputy Minister
French-Language Education Secondary
and Education Operations Division

Copy to: Marie-Lison Fougère, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Programs
Division, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Kevin French, Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour Market Training Division
Richard Franz, Acting Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation,
Strategic Policy Branch
Ginette Plourde, Director, French-Language Education Policy and Programs
Kirsten Parker, Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation, Training
and Evaluation Branch
Alayne Bigwin, Director, Aboriginal Education Office
Patti Redmond, Director, Programs Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and
Universities
Kit Rankin, Director, Field Services Branch
Regional Office Managers
Regional Office Leads for SHSM
Student Success Leaders
SHSM Leaders