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MEMORANDUM TO: Roger Lawler
Director of Education
Waterloo Catholic District School Board

FROM: Sue Durst
Director
Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch

Patricia Manson
Senior Executive Officer
The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

DATE: June 4, 2009

SUBJECT: **Steps to English Proficiency (STEP)**
Invitation to Participate in the 2009 - 2010 Field Test

A key goal of the Ministry of Education is to ensure that all students, including students who are in the process of learning English as an additional language, can achieve social and academic success.

The release of the English Language Learner Policy, *English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Programs and Services, Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*, as well as a series of new resource documents, monographs and videos all mark steps in the strategy to ensure teachers and students have the supports they need in order to improve student achievement.

To provide further support for English language learners, the ministry has developed *Steps to English Proficiency (STEP)*. STEP is a resource to assess the language proficiency of English language learners. The document includes the following key components:

- A continua of second (additional) language acquisition to be applied to Ontario students in grades 1-12 who are English language learners under the policy:
- A set of resources that describes:
 - the continua levels
 - initial and ongoing STEP assessments
 - effective teaching strategies according to STEP levels.

The purpose of this letter is to invite your school board to participate in a field test from Fall 2009 to Spring 2010. Feedback from the work done in school boards will be used for the final revision of STEP prior to implementation in 2010-2011. It will also be an opportunity for participating school boards and schools to build capacity in the use of STEP.

STEP Field Test 2009-2010 Overview

The purpose is to:

- implement the revised version of STEP
- further develop the capacity of educators in using STEP
- field test STEP in an environment that approaches full implementation.

Participating school boards will:

- field test STEP system wide or within a family of schools
- develop a STEP Team to guide and support the field test
- register their STEP Team in a professional learning session in the fall of 2009
- participate in capacity building and feedback sessions during 2009-2010
- use STEP for initial assessments if they have reception and/or assessment centres.

Attached is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of those who participate in the field test.

If you wish to be involved in the STEP Field Test, please complete and return the attached Response Form by June 22nd, 2009 to Cheska Solorzano (cheska.solorzano@ontario.ca).

We believe this will be a valuable learning experience for participants, as they will develop capacity in the use of this assessment tool and determine strategies for implementation. For additional information or clarification, please contact Burns Wattie, Education Officer at (416) 325-2514 or burns.wattie@ontario.ca.

Original signed by:

Sue Durst
Director, Curriculum and Assessment
Policy Branch

Patricia Manson
Senior Executive Officer, Literacy and
Numeracy Secretariat

STEP Field Test 2009 - 2010 Overview

The *ministry* will:

- train the STEP Team at a two-day professional learning session early in the fall
- provide release time and cover travel expenses for those participating in the professional learning session
- provide copies of STEP resource material for each participating teacher
- provide ongoing support with online conferences and web-based capacity building resources
- transfer \$12,000 to each board to cover the cost of release time for professional learning outside of the initial two-day learning session.

Participating *school boards* will:

- identify a STEP Lead and supervisory officer as contacts for the project
- provide a venue for the two-day professional learning session
- submit an invoice for expenses related to the fall professional learning session by December 2009
- submit a report on the use of the funds provided to support the field test.

Designated *STEP Leads* will:

- identify the schools participating in the field test
- develop a STEP Team to guide and support the field test
- work collaboratively with ministry staff to develop a learning plan that is responsive to the needs of the participants involved in the field test
- organize and lead the professional learning for participating teachers
- provide ongoing communication with educators in participating schools
- provide feedback to the ministry to inform the provincial implementation plan.

The STEP Team will:

- participate in the two-day professional learning session held in the fall
- coach teachers at their school or work site to effectively use STEP
- use STEP for initial and/or on-going assessments as appropriate to their assignment
- provide feedback to the ministry to inform the provincial implementation plan.

School-based teachers will:

- work collaboratively with the designated member of the STEP Team at their work site to effectively use STEP
- participate in professional learning related to STEP
- use STEP for initial and/or ongoing assessments as appropriate to their assignment
- maintain portfolios of students' work and track students' progress using STEP tracking forms
- provide feedback to the ministry to inform the provincial implementation plan.

Reception and Assessment Centre teachers will:

- conduct initial assessments using STEP with all newcomer students
- participate in professional learning related to STEP
- provide feedback to the ministry to inform the provincial implementation plan.