

Ministry of Education

The Literacy and Numeracy
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MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education

FROM: Mary Jean Gallagher
Chief Executive Officer &
Chief Student Achievement Officer
The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

DATE: November 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Schools Helping Schools- Networks for Learning

Research has clearly shown the power of networks of educators working together to improve instructional practice. Lorna Earl and Steven Katz conducted an evaluation of England's networked Learning Communities Program in 2004 and they found that when educators work together, they create new knowledge and spread it to others.¹ This is what is needed in Ontario in order to facilitate the sharing and consistent implementation of effective instructional strategies. Many boards have already established networks that enable teachers and principals to not only work in collaboration within their own schools, but across schools in order to share practice and create new knowledge.

We need to effectively link more of our schools in order to share successful practices learned through OFIP, Schools on the Move, and board based initiatives. Many board and school leaders have said to us that all of our students deserve the opportunity to benefit from these good practices. Knowing what research and our own evidence of success teaches us, it is our moral responsibility to ensure greater consistency across schools in the implementation of these practices.

As we travel across the province we see promising practice that is resulting in improved student achievement. We have learned powerful lessons about what works and are now looking for effective ways to share these successful practices and lessons learned. An effective practice that many boards have initiated over the past year is the implementation of teaching learning pathways. We have seen that the implementation of teaching learning pathways is an effective strategy for ensuring improvement efforts are focused on the greatest area of need for students. We have evidence that shows that when school administrators and teachers work together in a network to implement teaching learning

¹ Katz, Steven and Earl, Lorna. "Creating New Knowledge: Evaluating Networked Learning Communities". Education Canada: Canadian Education Association.

pathways student achievement improves. When schools work within and across schools to improve instruction improved achievement is sustainable.

As mentioned in the memo dated October 23, 2008, we are committed to providing boards with funding to assist them with the costs of release time when developing networks to share successful practices. Clustering like schools with different levels of performance so that high performing schools can assist low achieving schools will enable boards to leverage lessons learned so that all schools benefit. Boards that are implementing the teaching learning critical pathways may use some of these funds to assist with costs for release time. Boards will be expected to use this funding to facilitate networks and/ or the implementation of the teaching learning pathways model.

Funding has been determined based on the enrolment of the board. The attached chart shows the funding allocation for each board. Directors will be asked to complete the attached form if they wish to access these funds for the intended purpose as outlined in this memo. The form should be e-mailed to Nina Chahal (nina.chahal@ontario.ca).

Thank you for your leadership in establishing opportunities for staff in your board to work together to share successful practice and learn from one another. Such opportunities will ensure continuous improvement in achievement across Ontario.

Sincerely,



Mary Jean Gallagher

Cc: EDU Deputy Minister
EDU Assistant Deputy Ministers
Senior Business Officials
Regional Managers
SAO Field Team Leaders