

**Ministry of Education**

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**Ministère de l'Éducation**

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**MEMORANDUM TO:** Directors of Education, District School Boards  
Supervisory Officers and Secretary Treasurers of School Authorities  
Director of Provincial Schools Branch

**FROM:** George Zegarac  
Deputy Minister (A)  
Ministry of Education

**DATE:** November 24, 2008

**SUBJECT:** **Principal Congress – Update and Request for Participant Nominations**

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Further to Steve Marshall's October memo on the Ontario Leadership Strategy, I am writing now to provide you with details about the Principal Congress and to ask for your support in identifying principals who you believe best meet the selection criteria set out in the *Principal Congress Nomination Form* (attached). The inaugural session of the congress will be held in Toronto on February 10, 2009 with a second follow-up session scheduled in the spring 2009.

**Principal Congress**

The Principal Congress is one of several new engagement opportunities integral to the leadership strategy. It will bring together innovative principals with their education partners in a forum where they can share their perspectives and insights. The primary purpose of the congress is to strengthen the voice of principals in ministry initiatives and advance the cause of sustaining school improvement, enhancing student learning and moving the system to new heights of success.

I believe that, among education leaders, school leaders have a unique and profoundly important role to play in shaping both their own school communities and the quality of the education system. We have all heard that the school leader is second only to the teacher in influencing student outcomes in the school setting. I also understand that school leadership is a complex and demanding role and the support and guidance principals receive from system leaders contributes significantly to the success of principals.

Through the Ontario Leadership Strategy, the ministry has made a strong commitment to leadership development and to supporting principals in their quest to improve Ontario's schools. Conversations I have had with principals across the province strengthen my conviction that we will continue to work and learn our way forward through genuine collaboration and dialogue. It is with this in mind that the Principal Congress has been established.

The 250-member congress is a tri-level, collaborative forum for Ontario's principals, directors of education, supervisory officers, ministry officials and education partners, including representatives from the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, the provincial principal and supervisory officer associations, and the Institute for Education Leadership. Congress participants will be for the most part practicing principals who will be identified either by their directors of education or their provincial principal association. A representative number of directors of education and supervisory officers will also be invited to participate.

The congress will build on the good practices and networks already in place across the province. It will complement existing opportunities for conversation and interaction with principals including the Premier's Leader-to-Leader initiative, the Minister's Principal Reference Group, Student Success Leaders' Symposia, Leading Student Achievement Symposia, regional sessions for Mentoring and Principal Performance Appraisal, *In Conversation* discussion papers, and school visits.

### **Selection Criteria**

I am asking you to nominate principals from your board or school authority who are system thinkers in action, are regarded as influential by their peers, and who:

- have from five to ten years of experience as a principal
- have an improvement and results focus
- demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing their own learning and the learning of others
- display a positive approach to school leadership and a belief in its potential to improve schools, and
- are willing to attend both congress sessions for 2008/09 and to 'rolling up their sleeves' to help contribute to success.

### **Nomination Process – District School Boards**

I am asking school boards to nominate a number of principals; the number of nominees is related to the boards' student population as outlined in the attached nomination form, *Principal Congress – School Board Version*.

### **Nomination Process – School Authorities**

I am asking that school authorities collaborate in advance and identify nominees to represent their region as outlined in the attached nomination form, *Principal Congress – School Authority Version*.

### **Selection Process**

Once all nominations have been received, the ministry will select congress participants in a manner that ensures balanced representation of participants to reflect a range of experience, elementary and secondary panels, school size, Catholic, Public and French-language boards, rural and urban communities, and geographic location.

With this information in mind, please complete and return the appropriate individual nomination form (attached) for each principal you have nominated to Laura Somerville, Senior Specialist Education, Leadership Development Branch at [Laura.Somerville@ontario.ca](mailto:Laura.Somerville@ontario.ca), no later than December 8, 2008. If you have any questions about the above request, please contact your regional education officer.

Thank you in advance for your support of the Principal Congress. I look forward to meeting with educational leaders from across the province to engage in mutual and respectful exchange, one that is based on our collective will to move the system forward towards our common purpose.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

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George Zegarac

Attachment