



The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat  
Le Secrétariat de la littératie et de la numératie

# The LNS Communiqué

Summer 2007

*Dear Colleagues:*

*As the current school year comes to an end, we would like to thank you for all the work you do collectively to improve learning for Ontario's students. We are experiencing steady improvement across the province and are optimistic that this trend will continue. At the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS), we continue to focus our efforts on providing human, material and financial support for the important work that you do for students every day.*

*In the first issue of The LNS Communiqué, we highlighted our strategy in an effort to bring you up to date on our work. We believe it is critical to maintain an open communication between education workers in the field and LNS. This second issue addresses some of your questions about our strategy and the support we provide to Ontario's students and schools. We hope you find this issue informative and invite you to engage with us about how we can work together to support student achievement in Ontario.*

*On behalf of our LNS team, we thank you, once again, for your dedication to providing the best possible education for our students. Please enjoy your well-deserved summer holidays.*

*Sincerely,*

**Avis E. Glaze**

*Chief Student Achievement Officer and CEO*

*The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat*

## Questions You Have Asked

- 1. I've heard that LNS believes that only student work from Levels 3 and 4 should be displayed in classrooms. Is this true?**

No, this is not the case. We believe that all students, regardless of where they are on the learning continuum, should have the opportunity to see their best work displayed. There are many reasons why teachers display students' work in classrooms – to celebrate new learning, to demonstrate a range of thinking, to model a variety of problem-solving approaches and to help students understand assessment

criteria. The quality and type of work displayed should match its intended purpose.

Over time, every student should see his or her best work displayed on the walls of the classroom and in the halls of the school. Students who see their ideas and work affirmed come to understand that they are valued members of the learning community. Every child is at a different point in his or her learning and needs to see that his or her writing and ideas are honoured and are part of the learning environment. Wall space should also be used to provide models of what good work looks like.

## RESOURCES

All resources may be accessed online at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca). Simply select **Literacy and Numeracy** from the **Popular Topics** menu.

### Webcasts and Web Conferences

Expert insights on current issues and effective practices for all educators.

Web conferences feature key experts from webcasts.

#### 2005–06 Webcasts:

- Dr. Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education
- Achieving Large Scale Reform
- The Honourable Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education
- One Mission, One Opportunity and Three Metaphors
- Making the Pieces Fit: Solving the Puzzle of Literacy Success
- Literacy for All
- Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching
- La Politique d'aménagement linguistique : le mandat des écoles de langue française
- Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Ontario
- Successful Practices in the Education of Black Students
- Differentiated Instruction
- Unlocking the Potential of Aboriginal Students
- Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind
- Leading Learning Through Professional Learning Communities

(Continued)

Exemplars, rubrics and descriptors should also be on display to guide students as they work. In fact, the most effective learning models or exemplars are generated with students through their actual work.

## 2. Why is LNS promoting character development when you have told us that our full focus should be on improving student achievement?

Education is about more than reading, writing, mathematics and creating good workers. It is also about developing well-rounded citizens who possess the attributes to build a strong, caring and compassionate society. Character development goes hand in hand with a strong academic program. By nurturing the qualities of good citizenship, we create a school environment where student engagement, civic responsibility and academic achievement thrive. We all know that good teachers have always been good character developers.

Character development contributes to safe, healthy and orderly school environments, which are prerequisites to learning. Schools with a focus on character development find that educational workers spend less time disciplining and more time doing what they do best, namely teaching.

Education at its best is holistic in nature, focusing on the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of learning. Our publicly funded education system must continue to show leadership by promoting the universal values that Ontarians share, such as respect, fairness, honesty and responsibility. In fact, the *Education Act* states that it is the duty of a teacher to teach values.

Character development is not a new curriculum. It is not an add-on. It is embedded in all that schools do – in their policies, programs, practices and interactions. It is a way of life. This initiative allows us, within our increasingly diverse schools and communities, to find common ground.

## 3. I've heard that LNS is saying that classroom teachers should only focus on students in Level 2 in an effort to move them to Level 3. Is this true?

The philosophy of LNS is that all students have a right to the best possible education with numerous opportunities for improvement. The work of LNS is guided by the moral imperative that all students should be supported in their efforts to achieve excellent outcomes.

It is true that if we focused only on students performing at Level 2, a significant number of students would advance to Level 3 and improve Ontario's provincial results. Our primary focus is to support all students in their learning. We strongly believe students can learn and achieve high standards with the appropriate supports.

## 4. Why has LNS mandated specific strategies for educators?

LNS does not mandate specific teaching strategies. We are committed to ensuring that educators across the province use effective strategies to improve student achievement. We believe that teachers are professionals who have a repertoire of skills that they can draw upon as required to address the individual needs of students. That being said, there are a number of high-yield, research-based strategies that we know are effective in improving student achievement, for example: differentiating instruction, using blocks of learning time for literacy and numeracy, using data to focus instruction, using student assessment data and developing a comprehensive literacy program.

## 5. Is the gradual release of responsibility a high-yield strategy?

Yes – the gradual release of responsibility is a high-yield strategy that allows teachers to scaffold learning by giving appropriate amounts of support to students based on their needs. Using this approach, the teacher first models a new strategy, then explicitly teaches and works with students. The teacher then coaches students as they attempt to complete tasks on their own. Finally, students work independently with feedback from the teacher. The following instructional approaches, which are key components of a comprehensive literacy program, demonstrate the potential for the gradual release of responsibility:

- Read aloud & modelled writing
- Shared reading & shared writing
- Guided reading & guided writing
- Independent practice with feedback, then transfer of learning to new situations

All of these strategies are supported by valid and reliable research and their effectiveness is confirmed by classroom practice.

### 2006–07 Webcasts:

- Building Upon Our Successes
- Effective Instruction in Reading Comprehension
- Character Development
- Kindergarten Matters: Building Blocks for Learning
- All Children Can Achieve: A Focus on Equity of Outcome
- Making Mathematics Accessible to All Students
- Enseignement différencié : poursuivre le dialogue
- Making Sense of Reading Instruction: Grades 4 to 6
- Leadership Matters
- Culture and Pedagogy in Ontario French Language Schools
- Littératie chez les garçons – Perspectives d'avenir : Lire, c'est conquérir le monde
- Enseignement différencié : poursuivre le dialogue
- Dr. Allan Luke: The New Literacies

### Upcoming Webcasts:

- June 28 Coaching for Student Success in Mathematics
- June 30 Teacher Moderation

## CONTACT US

### The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

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## 6. Does LNS expect teachers to “teach to the test” to get higher scores on provincial assessments?

There is research that indicates that the teaching of study skills contributes to student learning and achievement. In addition, empowering students to understand achievement levels and exemplars prepares them for a wide range of assessments. The purpose of the work of LNS is to ensure that schools, teachers and students get the supports they need to improve student learning.

Some individuals feel that the teaching of test taking, note taking, study skills or learning strategies means “teaching to the test”. The EQAO assessments are based on the Ontario curriculum, which covers a range of expectations and skills, including: reasoning, communication and problem solving. It is the responsibility of teachers to teach these skills as they are an important aspect of a child’s education and will help improve their learning in a wide range of contexts.

## 7. Does LNS ever provide release time for teachers? Does the administration of assessment tools qualify for release time?

Major LNS initiatives provide funding for release time to support the professional learning of teachers. For example, the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) provides some funding for release time for teachers to improve instructional effectiveness.

Professional learning initiatives vary among schools and boards, depending on the specific needs of the educators involved. However, LNS does not provide targeted funding for the administration of assessment tools that are within the scope of regular teaching duties. The funding and implementation of student

evaluative measures, such as PM Benchmarks, continues to be the responsibility of local school boards.

## 8. How can I learn about successful practices and effective resources that other boards and schools are using to improve student achievement?

There are many ways to share in the successful practices being used by boards. For example:

- View LNS webcasts and see successful practices in classrooms across the province
- Read LNS publications such as *What Works? Research into Practice* found on the ministry’s website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)
- Get a copy of the *Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program* and talk with your school team to decide if a visit to one of those schools would be beneficial; if school visits are not possible, you may wish to visit the school’s website
- Visit our coaching website at: [www.curriculum.org/LNS/coaching/index.html](http://www.curriculum.org/LNS/coaching/index.html)

Every school and program department has received the DVD *Comprehending in Action: Inferring* that includes video clips of teachers and students in grades 4 to 6 classrooms teaching and learning with high-yield strategies. This module provides a great starting point for discussion about what effective practice looks and sounds like. LNS has also provided training on differentiating instruction across the province.

Do you have a question that we have not answered in this issue?  
If so, please email us at: [LNS@ontario.ca](mailto:LNS@ontario.ca).