

Ministry of Education

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Memorandum To: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers of School Authorities
Executive Director, Provincial and Demonstration Schools
Branch

From: Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister

Date: May 1, 2018

Subject: Final Report – Review and assessment of Ontario school
board policies and procedures on outdoor
education/excursions involving water-related activities

I am writing to update you on the third party review of school board policies and procedures for safety during outdoor education excursions involving water-related activities. Thank you for your participation in the review. Deloitte Inc. (Deloitte) relayed that they encountered overwhelming support from you and your staff during their data collection, and that the passion and dedication of school board staff for delivering safe outdoor education opportunities to students was evident throughout the review process.

Deloitte has completed its work for the ministry and has submitted a final report. The Executive Summary of this report and a presentation on the findings and recommendations are attached. The full report will be sent to you once it has been translated by the end of May.

As you know, this review was initiated in response to the tragic death of a student during an excursion in Algonquin Park in July 2017. The purpose of the review was to determine:

- whether school boards have policies and procedures in place that meet the minimum standards for risk management during outdoor education/excursions with water-related activities; and
- how school boards monitor implementation and ensure compliance with existing policies and procedures.

The report outlines that the majority of school boards that responded to Deloitte's online survey have policies and/or procedures in place. I would like to emphasize that the ministry's expectation is for **all** school boards to ensure that they have outdoor education/excursion policies and/or procedures in place that meet or exceed the minimum standards laid out in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines managed by Ophea.

We also expect that boards are reviewing and updating these policies and/or procedures regularly. I urge you to review your existing policies and procedures in light of this report and consider whether any enhancements are needed, for example to include considerations related to the diversity of your board's student population.

As a critical part of this review, please consider opportunities to further support board and school staff with the implementation of policies and/or procedures, including the need to strengthen monitoring and compliance activities.

Next Steps

The Ministry of Education accepts the recommendations in the Deloitte report and is committed to addressing them collaboratively with our school boards and other partners. For instance, the report's findings indicate there is a desire for greater training, guidance, and resources for school boards and schools. In response, the ministry will develop or enhance training modules related to safety during outdoor education/excursions, explore opportunities for more centralized online hosting of resources related to outdoor education/excursions, and facilitate a community of practice to support ongoing information sharing between school boards. We will engage with school boards in the coming months to further discuss a detailed plan to respond to the recommendations.

We recognize the need for cooperation across the sector as we work to address these recommendations and prioritize student safety during all curriculum-linked learning experiences, including outdoor excursions. Where possible, we will leverage existing opportunities and align efforts related to student injury prevention to enhance a culture of safety-mindedness for everyone in the school environment. Further actions may be identified when the Ontario Provincial Police and Coroner investigations into the incident last summer are complete.

Webinar

As an immediate step, the Safe and Healthy Schools, Program Implementation, and French-Language Teaching and Learning branches are offering a series of webinars to discuss the funding model and reporting tool for outdoor education. We will also solicit initial feedback to help us prioritize the types of resources and/or training modules related to safety during outdoor education/excursions that would be most useful for boards.

Outdoor education leads in English-language boards can join one of the following two webinars:

- May 7th from 1:00pm – 3:00pm.
- May 8th from 10:00am – 12:00pm.

Outdoor education leads in French-language boards can join the following webinar:

- May 8th from 1:00pm – 3:00pm.

Details on the webinars and registration will be sent to your board's outdoor education lead in the coming days.

We look forward to working together as we address the recommendations to support the delivery of safe outdoor education opportunities for all students.

If you have any questions about the report or next steps, please contact Debbie Thompson, Director of the Safe and Healthy Schools Branch, at debbie.thompson@ontario.ca or (416) 325-7645.



Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister

Attachments:

- Executive Summary of Deloitte Report
- PowerPoint Slide Presentation prepared by Deloitte

c: Denise Dwyer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division
Denys Giguère, Assistant Deputy Minister, French-Language Teaching, Learning and Achievement Division
Martyn Beckett, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division
Debra Cormier, Director, Field Services Branch
Council of Ontario Directors of Education