

Ministry of Education

Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister
Indigenous Education and Well Being
Division

13 Floor, Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation

Bureau de la Sous-ministre adjointe
Division de l'éducation autochtone et
du bien-être

13^e étage, édifice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

**Memorandum to:**

Directors of Education
Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities
Executive Director, Provincial and Demonstration Schools
Branch

From:

Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister
Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division

Date:

December 13, 2017

Subject

Policy Review: Safety during Outdoor Education
Excursions involving Water-Related Activities

I am writing to provide you with an update on the Minister's August 2017 announcement of a third party review of school board policies and procedures for safety during outdoor education excursions involving water-related activities.

As you will recall, this announcement was in response to the tragic death of a student participating in an outdoor education excursion this summer. To help prevent accidents like this from happening again, the Minister directed the ministry to retain a third party to conduct a review of school boards' policies and procedures (including school authorities, Provincial and Demonstration Schools).

The purpose of the review is to determine whether existing policies and procedures meet the minimum standards for risk management practices on excursions that include water-related activities (i.e., Ophea's Ontario Safety Guidelines), including swim test requirements, supervision ratios, and instructor certification. The review will also examine how school boards monitor implementation and ensure compliance with existing policies and procedures.

Successful Vendor: Deloitte Inc.

Deloitte Inc. was the successful vendor through a Request for Services competitive procurement process and will begin the review in December.

Next Steps:

- December - Deloitte will begin its outreach to school boards, school authorities, and the Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch to schedule focus groups and one-on-one interviews to be held in January 2018.

- January - starting mid-January, Deloitte will continue its outreach, hold focus groups meetings and one-on-one interviews, and conduct an online survey across all boards.

As the review is targeted for completion by the end of February/early March 2018, I thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation as Deloitte undertakes this important work.

The intention is to ensure that all school boards have robust policies and procedures that follow best practices and that these policies and procedures are being implemented consistently. We also expect that the results of this review will help to inform the ministry's next steps for broader student injury prevention policy development. As such, we will communicate the results of the review with school boards when available.

Ongoing Funding and Support for Outdoor Education and Injury Prevention

Learning in the outdoors remains an invaluable opportunity for students. Each year, school boards receive outdoor education funding through the Student Achievement Envelope within each board's Grants for Student Needs Learning Opportunity Grant. While the review is underway, the ministry expects that all school boards will continue to monitor the implementation of policies and safety procedures related to all outdoor education excursions in an effort to promote the well-being and safety of all students in Ontario.

I encourage you to continue to work within your school boards to ensure that student injury prevention is given high priority, and that a culture of safety-mindedness is continuously enhanced in all Ontario schools. OSIP.ca has been launched to further support school boards in this area, including the implementation of the plans that were developed as part of the third phase of the Student Injury Prevention Initiative. I also encourage you and your teams to take full advantage of this resource.

If you have any questions, please contact Guylaine Rheault at guylaine.rheault@ontario.ca or (416) 212-1347 or Heather Peters at heather.i.peters@ontario.ca or (416) 325-1348.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of all of Ontario's students.

Sincerely,

Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister
Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division

c: Cathy Montreuil, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division
Shawn Moynihan (A), Director, Field Services Branch
Council of Ontario Directors of Education