

Ministry of Education

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Ministère de l'Éducation

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MEMORANDUM TO: **Directors of Education**
Director of the Provincial Schools Branch
Supervisory Officer of Centre Jules-Léger
Secretary Treasurer, James Bay Lowlands School Authority

FROM: **George Zegarac**
Assistant Deputy Minister
Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs Division

Dominic Giroux
Assistant Deputy Minister
French-Language Education and Educational Operations Division

DATE: **January 15, 2008**

SUBJECT: **Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Request for Applications**
2008-09

We are pleased to provide you with information about the Ministry of Education's plans for further implementation of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) and to invite district school boards, in collaboration with their business and postsecondary education and training partners, to submit an application to offer a SHSM program in 2008-09.

The SHSM program aligns with the government's strategic goals to improve student success in secondary education and increase access to and participation in postsecondary education, training and employment opportunities. The overarching goal for the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy is to increase the secondary school graduation rate to 85% by 2010-11.

First launched in 2006-07, the SHSM is a specialized career-focussed program option for students within the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). As such, the career focus and SHSM requirement for pathways to apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace also support the strategic goals of the Reaching Higher initiative of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to increase student participation and success in postsecondary

education and training. In 2007-08, student access to these specialized programs increased significantly as more than 6000 students participated in 153 pilot SHSMs in 67 boards across Ontario. A planned expansion of the number of boards and schools participating in SHSMs will result in greater accessibility for senior students in schools across the province to customize their learning to suit their individual interests, strengths and needs.

Priorities for 2008-09

The Ministry of Education's priorities for 2008-09 are to ensure consistent high quality SHSM programs and to support expansion of SHSM learning opportunities for students through:

- SHSM programs in all eligible school boards plus one school authority and provincial schools if applications meet the SHSM criteria;
- continued support for the current 67 boards to refine and expand their existing SHSM programs and/or add new SHSM(s);
- an increased number of SHSM programs with an approved dual credit component, through alignment with the separate School College Work Initiative (SCWI) application process, administered by the SCWI co-management team;
- an increased number of SHSM programs delivered through partnerships between French-language school boards and schools in order to increase the number of programs and services that could impact positively on student retention and success in the French-language system
- an increased number of SHSM programs offered by partnerships of co-terminous and/or neighbouring boards; and
- development of SHSMs in 2-3 new sectors, in addition to the 12 sectors launched in 2006-08.

An additional priority is to align ministry applications with board planning timelines and staffing processes. Last year the invitation to submit an application to offer a SHSM was sent to boards in April. The earlier release of this request for applications will assist boards to better prepare for the 2008-09 academic year; specifically, by allowing a more integrated and coherent approach to scheduling and resourcing the SHSM in the regular staffing cycle.

Applying for a Specialist High Skills Major Program

Boards have the opportunity to submit SHSM applications in twelve (12) established sectors: agriculture, arts and culture, business, construction, environment, forestry, health and wellness, horticulture and landscaping, hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, mining, transportation.

In addition, we are inviting expressions of interest in different sectors based upon other specialized programs that schools have developed to support students. New sectors, such as energy (e.g. energy use, sustainability, and alternatives), communications and information technology, community and emergency services (e.g. armed forces, police and fire services), and/or others, will be considered in the application process.

By virtue of applying, boards are committing that the required components as outlined in the sector-specific guides, are met in their program. Over a two-year period, boards must ensure that their SHSM programs provide opportunities for students pursuing all four postsecondary pathways. The required components are as follows:

- 1) a bundle of 8–10 required credits with pathways to the four destinations of apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace. Each bundle of credits, regardless of sector, consists of:
 - 4 major credits
 - 2 to 4 other required credits
 - 2 cooperative education credits
- 2) compulsory certification and training course/programs;
- 3) experiential learning such as job shadowing, job twinning, and work experience;
- 4) ‘reach ahead’ opportunities where students participate in authentic experiences in their postsecondary option of choice, whether in apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace;
- 5) development of Essential Skills and work habits and the use of the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) for purposes of documentation.

In addition, approved SHSM programs must be offered in partnership with:

- local business, industry, and/or community organizations
- where applicable, public postsecondary educational institutions and training centres.

In all cases, the Ministry of Education’s approval is required to offer a SHSM which enables students to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with the SHSM designation.

Application Details

- Boards are requested to submit only one application. This application can address several SHSM launch sites and sectors:
 - boards must apply to continue to offer their current SHSM project(s); and/or
 - boards must apply to add new schools to existing SHSM programs; and/or
 - boards may apply to offer SHSMs in new and/or different sectors.

- Further instructions are on page 1 of the application (Excel file). See enclosure 1;
- Submit the board's application to Angela Hurlock, angela.hurlock@ontario.ca no later than February 8, 2008 with a copy to the education officer at your ministry Regional Office;
- Deliverables will include reports consisting of budget/expenditure details, pathways charts, specified data collection (including student achievement data and student stories), plus development of contextualized learning activities.

Key dates in the application process:

- January 15, 2008 - memo with SHSM application sent to boards
- January 21, 22, 23 - teleconferences on SHSMs for interested boards and schools (details to follow for board SHSM leads)
- January 29/30 - SHSM Symposium: opportunity for additional Qs and As
- February 8 - applications due (ONLY electronically) to the ministry
- Week of February 25 - boards informed of approval of SHSMs to be offered in 08-09
- April - transfer agreements signed by boards
- May 20, 21, 22 - orientation/implementation symposium
- Weeks of July 7 & 14 - writing teams to develop sector-specific guides for the new Majors, to edit sector-specific guides for existing Majors, to review and edit CLAs

Funding available to support the launch of SHSM programs will be based on the number of boards that apply and the number of pathways programs that meet the SHSM criteria, and will be subject to the ministry's confirmed budget of 2008-09. Further to the memos of the spring of 2007 outlining divisional focuses for the current school year, please note that boards have the flexibility to use a portion of the funding provided for Student Success through the Learning Opportunities Grants (LOG) to support the implementation of SHSM programs.

Dual Credit Programs and the SHSM

Students in approved Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) launch sites may benefit from access to **dual credit learning opportunities** in college courses and apprenticeship programs related to their majors. Boards applying to the Ministry of Education to offer an SHSM in 2008-09 may wish to consider submitting a proposal to the School College Work Initiative (SCWI) for the SHSM's college and/or apprenticeship pathway component in order to offer dual credit learning opportunities within their proposed SHSM launch sites.

Orientation/Implementation Symposia

The Ministry of Education will host an orientation/implementation symposium in Toronto for boards with approved SHSMs in May 2008.

- May 20, 2008: all boards with approved Majors in arts and culture, forestry, manufacturing, environment

- May 21, 2008: all boards with approved Majors in business, construction, health and wellness, and any approved new sectors
- May 22, 2008: all boards with approved Majors in transportation, horticulture and landscaping, agriculture, hospitality and tourism, and mining.

Regional symposia will be held to allow boards to collaborate as professional learning communities on implementation issues of a regional as well as sectoral nature in the 2008-2009 school year.

For further information, please contact Audrey Cartile at (416) 326-0552, audrey.cartile@ontario.ca, Aldo Cianfrini at (416) 325-2669, aldo.cianfrini@ontario.ca, or Nancy Lerman at (416) 325-2508, nancy.lerman@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your commitment to the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy. We look forward to hearing about your plans for further development and expansion of SHSM programs.

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French-Language Education Secondary
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Copy to: Marie-Lison Fougère, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Programs Division, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Kevin French, Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour Market Training Division
Grant Clarke, Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation, Strategic Policy Branch
Ginette Plourde, Director, French-Language Education Policy and Programs
Kirsten Parker, Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation, Training and Evaluation Branch
Patti Redmond, Director, Programs Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Kit Rankin, Director, Field Services Branch
Regional Office Managers
Regional Office Leads for Student Success
Student Success Leaders

Encl. (1)

