All Superintendents of Schools:

I am writing to follow-up on my letter dated February 22, 2008, regarding findings of the Child Death Review Unit (CDRU) of the BC Coroners Service, which reviewed the deaths of 244 children in the province between 2003 and 2006. In their report, the CDRU recommended that the Ministry of Education “have all school districts review policies related to suicide risk assessments to ensure they include the identification and assessment of any acute crises presenting in the child’s life.”

Since that time, the Ministry of Education has been working with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to make available additional information about suicide prevention that we hope will be of assistance to your district in reviewing your policies and practices. This material can be found on the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s Preventing Youth Suicide website: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/suicide_prevention/index.htm.

The information assembled, which was created specifically for child and youth mental health practitioners working in British Columbia, will be of relevance to school personnel and other youth-serving practitioners who are interested in youth suicide prevention. Also, the BC Council for Families has been developing suicide prevention programs and materials for schools since 1990. Their Postvention is Prevention program, developed in 2006, helps communities work together to create local comprehensive plans to prevent youth suicide.

Information about how your community can access BC Council for Families programs is available on their website: http://www.bccf.bc.ca/hm/. Click on “Programs and Activities” and scroll down to Suicide Postvention is Prevention under Community Building.

I appreciate your efforts to address this serious issue, and I hope these resources will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely yours,

James Gorman
Deputy Minister