



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 14, 2012

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and High School Principals:

SUPPORTING THE DIRECTING CHANGE STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST

The California Department of Education is pleased to support the Directing Change Student Video Contest sponsored by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) as part of a collaborative statewide effort to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and promote the mental health and wellness of students. This statewide contest invites high school students to create a 60-second public service announcement in one of two categories—suicide prevention or mental illness stigma reduction. One winner will be selected in each of the 11 California County Superintendents of Educational Services Association regions, and finalists will advance to a statewide finale and award ceremony in Sacramento, California, at the end of the school year. For each student submission, schools will be entered into a drawing for a free suicide prevention program. Cash prizes will be awarded to the winning student and the school the student attends.

Many California students suffer silently and are often alienated when facing a mental illness. This contest represents a unique opportunity for students to become involved in raising awareness about student mental health issues and helping their peers to become better informed about mental health and wellness, stigma and discrimination, and youth suicide.

I applaud the efforts of Directing Change and the CalMHSA for including students as critical stakeholders in this campaign and for thinking about how lives are altered by mental illness and youth suicide. I encourage all school staff to promote this contest among their students. I am hopeful that students will be inspired to join in the movement to raise awareness about mental health and youth suicide. I have long been committed to preserving the health, safety, and well being of our students, and suicide prevention must be a top priority in our schools. By working together and incorporating the student perspective in this campaign, we will increase awareness of the mental health issues our students face and reduce youth suicide.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Monica Nepomuceno, Education Programs Consultant, Educational Options, Student Support, and American Indian Education Office, by phone at 916-323-2212 or by e-mail at mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Torlakson".

Tom Torlakson

TT: mn