



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-10

MS Teams

Thursday, June 17, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

### Land Acknowledgement

The Grand Erie District School Board recognizes the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people, as the traditional peoples of this territory. We acknowledge and give gratitude to the Indigenous peoples for sharing these lands in order for us to continue our work here today.

### AGENDA

Time	Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
<b>A-1 Opening</b>					
6:00	(a) Welcome/ Land Acknowledgement Statement				W. Rose/K. Mertins
	(b) Roll Call			√	P. Curran
	(c) Agenda Additions/ Deletions/ Approvals		√	√	W. Rose
<b>B-1 Timed Items</b>					
	(a) A Day in the Life of the Complex Behaviour Intervention Team (CBIT) *				L. Sheppard/B. Shuttleworth/S. Kuva
<b>C-1 Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings</b>					
	(a) Ratification of Minutes May 20, 2021*			√	W. Rose
	(b) K-12 Education Standards Development Committee, Initial Recommendations Report, March 2021*	√	√		K. Mertins
	(c) FASD Letters i. February 15, 2019 Grand Erie SEAC to Hon Lisa Thompson * ii. April 30, 2018 Minister of Education to Grand Erie SEAC * iii. March 9, 2018 Grand Erie SEAC to Hon Indira Naidoo-Harris * iv. September 9, 2015 G Anderson to Grand Erie SEAC * v. September 2015 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Provincial Roundtable Report *				W. Rose
<b>D-1 New Business</b>					
	(a) SEAC Meeting Dates and Locations 2021-22*	√	√	√	W. Rose
	(b) K-12 Education Standards, SEAC Working Group	√	√	√	P. Boutis
	(c) i. Anxiety Tip Sheet * ii. Understanding Anxiety *	√	√		P. Bagchee



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-10

MS Teams

Thursday, June 17, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Time	Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
<b>E-1 Other Business</b>					
	(a) RSEC Update	√			K. Mertins/J. White/L. Thompson
<b>F-1 Standing Items</b>					
	(a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment - None	√			P. Curran
<b>G-1 Information Items</b>					
	(a) May 2021 Mental Health Leadership Meeting Summary i) 2021-22 MH Plan Template *	√	√		P. Bagchee
<b>H-1 Community Updates</b>					
	(a)				
<b>I-1 Correspondence</b>					
	(a) PAAC Letter to Education Minister May 21, 2021 *	√	√		P. Boutis
	(b) Ltr - Renfrew County CDSB March 30, 2021 *	√	√		W. Rose
	(c) LDAO SEAC Circular – June 2021 *				
	(d) Ltr – Brant Haldimand Norfolk CDSB - May 26, 2021 *				
<b>J-1 Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning</b>					
	(a)		√		W. Rose
<b>K-1 Next Meeting</b>					
	TBD	√			W. Rose
<b>L-1 Adjournment</b>					
	Meeting adjourned at            p.m.			√	W. Rose

### Note: Column Abbreviations

\* Attachments to the agenda

Info. Item for information only

Dia. Item for dialogue

Res. Item for resolution or recommendation

SEMT Special Education Management Team

### AGENDA ITEM(S)

#### Standing:

- LDAO SEAC Circular September, November, February, April and June (as available).

# COMPLEX BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION TEAM (CBIT)

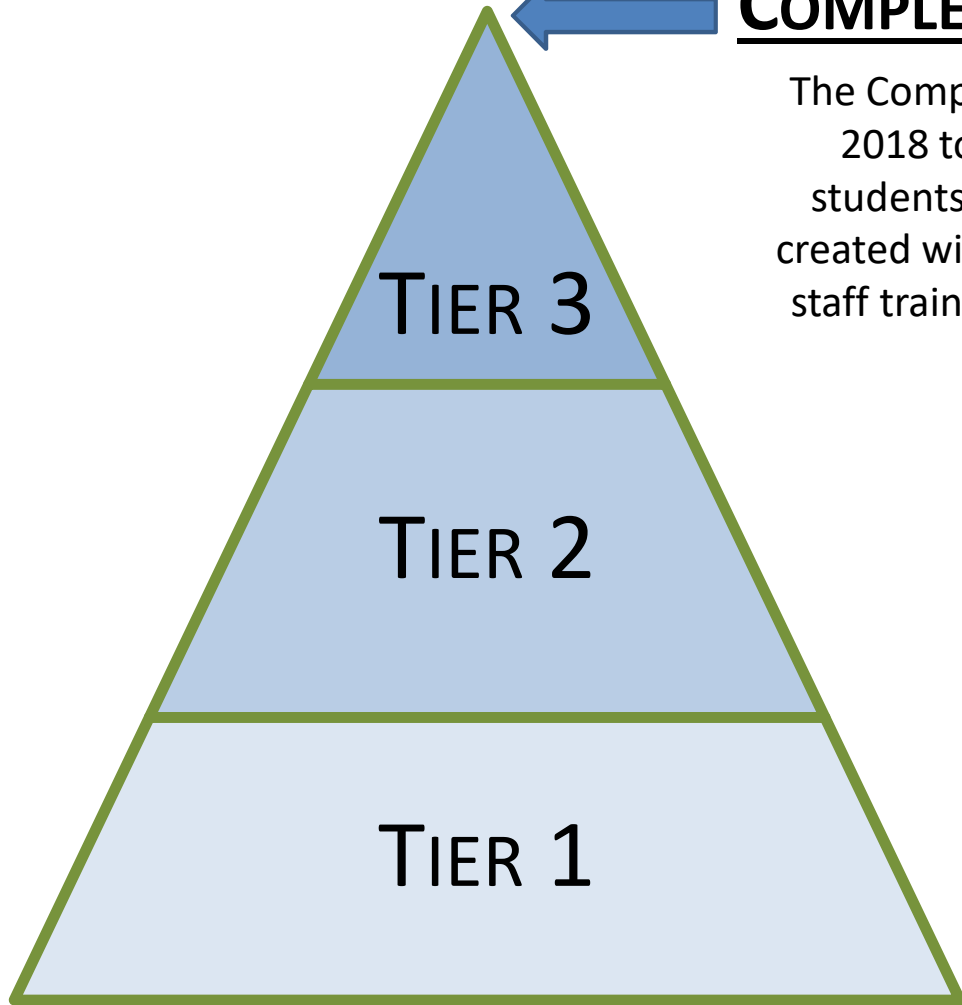
## DAY IN THE LIFE



*SUCCESS* for Every Student



# TIERED MODEL



## COMPLEX BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION TEAM

The Complex Behaviour Intervention Team was established in 2018 to meet a need for intensive behaviour support for students with significant problem behaviour. The team was created with an emphasis on direct student support, structured staff training, and collaboration with a multi-disciplinary team including community partners.

## COMPLEX BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION TEAM (CBIT)



### **WHO WE ARE:**

CBIT consists of; two Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBA), four Lead Educational Assistants (Lead EA) and the ABA Coordinator. Our area of expertise is applied behaviour analysis (ABA). ABA uses the principles of learning in a systematic way to bring about meaningful and positive changes in behaviour. We provide Tier 3 support as we work with school teams, parents, and students.

### **POPULATION WE SUPPORT – STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX BEHAVIOUR NEEDS**

We define “complex behaviour needs” as when students engage in problem behaviour that poses a significant safety risk to themselves or others, despite the use of many Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions. CBIT provides intensive behavioural support for these students, and the staff who support them, regardless of student age, diagnosis, identification, or class placement.

### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES:**

- Updated BeSafe Plan, Functional Behaviour Assessment Report, and Behaviour Support Plans (when needed).
- Student’s problem behaviour has stabilized, and safety risks have minimized.
- School staff have participated in training and report that they are more prepared and have a better understanding of how to prevent and reduce problem behaviour for the student.

### **CBIT PROCESS:**

**1) Referral from Special Education Department**

[CBIT NEW Graphic \(April 2021\).docx](#)

# HOW MANY STUDENTS DO WE WORK WITH IN A WEEK?

- The strength of our team is the intensity of our intervention. We work with students that have not responded to less intensive models of support (Tier 1, 2 & 3).
- With this level of intensity, we can usually support **2 to 4 students** and **6 to 40 staff members** each week.
- Each of these students receives an average of **10 to 35 hours of direct support** weekly. Typically, students require both a BCBA and Lead EA at this level of intensity.
- A significant component of our work is providing staff training to those working with these students. We do this using Behaviour Skills Training (BST).



*SUCCESS* for Every Student

# HOW MANY STUDENTS DO WE WORK WITH IN A YEAR?

- Typically, we work with 10 to 12 students each year.
- The length of our intervention varies between 4 weeks and several months.
- Once a student's behaviour has stabilized, we fade our support and scaffold the intervention back to school staff.
- In a few very complex cases, due to ongoing student and staffing needs, CBIT continues to provide long term support at varying intensities.



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## **DESCRIBE A DAY IN YOUR WORK LIFE?**

Our days vary depending on where we are in our process. The bulk of our time with a student is spent implementing FBA recommendations.

A day in this phase looks like:

- We meet with staff at the start of each day. We often need to wear PPE (helmets, Kevlar jackets) to minimize risk and are prepared to assess and manage severe problem behaviour throughout the day.
- Our goal each day is to implement BSP's with a focus on improving both student engagement and staff/student safety. We are prepared to quickly adjust our intervention based on how the student presents throughout the school day.
- We meet with staff at the end of the day to debrief, discuss next steps, complete documentation and update recommendations accordingly.
- As a CBIT member we communicate directly and often daily with all members of a student's a multi-disciplinary team, e.g., teacher, principal, parent, LRT, Principal Leader, community partners, physicians.



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## **How does your role support students in the classroom?**

- We identify what students need to be successful at school.
- Our intervention allows students to attend school and more fully participate in their educational program.
- Staff and students are safer because risks associated with student problem behaviour has been minimized.
- Staff confidence increases with the stabilization of student behaviour and the addition of consistent and effective behaviour support and safety plans.
- We increase communication between parents, school staff, and community agencies.
- Our team is mindful of the physical and emotional stress that staff face when working with students with severe problem behaviour. Our work also focuses on staff wellness as it impacts student success.



*SUCCESS* for Every Student



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

### MINUTES

#### SEAC Members

**Present:** Chair W. Rose, L. Boswell, P. Boutis, C. Brady, T. Buchanan, A. Csoff, L. DeJong, A. Detmar, M. Gatopoulos, K. Jones, L. Nydam, T. Sault, L. Scott, C.A. Sloat, J. Trovato, T. Waldschmidt, T. Wilson.

**Regrets:** R. Collver.

**Recorder:** P. Curran.

#### Resource Staff

**Present:** P. Bagchee, K. Mertins, L. Sheppard, L. Thompson, J. White.

#### Guests:

**Present:** J. Gemmill, ITS Staff, J. Cassidy, Behaviour Counsellor, R. Staats, Principal Leader of Indigenous Education and Equity.

**A-1 Opening** **W. Rose**

(a) Welcome

Chair Rose welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order at 6:03 and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

(b) Agenda Additions / Deletions / Approvals W. Rose

Moved by: C. Brady  
Seconded by K. Jones

**THAT** the SEAC 20-09 Agenda for Thursday, May 20, 2021 be approved as circulated.

**CARRIED**

**B-1 Timed Items** **W. Rose**

(a) System Principal Leader of Indigenous Education and Equity R. Staats

Ms. Staats introduced herself to the Committee and gave a brief overview of her professional experience. She noted her excitement and happiness at joining the Grand Erie team and invited committee members to reach out to her for indigenous topics related to special education. She is very pleased to see the level of support Indigenous students are receiving across the district. She thanked everyone for inviting her and wished all a wonderful meeting.



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

(b) A Day in the Life of the Behaviour Counsellor (BC) J. Cassidy / J. White

Ms. White introduced J. Cassidy, who will speak about her role as a Behaviour Counsellor.

There are five BC who are aligned with the school resource teams that each provide support to approximately 15 schools.

Ms. Cassidy shared the tiered model of intervention for BC and explained that a toolkit was developed for Tier One generalized interventions and some professional development was also provided for classroom staff including Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) Training. All BC receive this training and teach approved and safe containment interventions as well as prevention and positive support strategies. BMS

Students who are still struggling are brought to the attention of the Resource Team which is attended by BC. At these meetings, behaviour and BeSafe plans are developed as well as leveled responses to student behaviour and. BC will model and assist with implementation of strategies. At times BC will work with Lead Education Assistants to assist school staff in carrying out these plans.

May set up a class wide reward that all students can earn for changed behaviour and no student is identified as requiring modification strategies.

Behaviour Counsellors attend all resource team meetings

Integral to understanding student behaviour is the identification of which behaviour function is underlying the student's actions. Students exhibit certain behaviours to get their needs met by seeking social attention, to gain access to tangible items or preferred activities, to escape or avoid demands and activities and to seek or avoid sensory input.

When introducing something new it is important to recognize students may initially resist. BC help classroom staff understand this and work through the transition.

Student behaviour does not remain static but fluctuates in response to what is happening in that student's life. This may cause students to move between tiers as their personal situations change and / or their life situation becomes less safe. BC role is to help students problem-solve to increase their stability and enhance achievement and hopefully reduce the escalation of situations.

1. How Many Students Do You Support in a Week?

Ms. Cassidy noted BC typically, provide Tier 2 Support to 7 or 8 students weekly, but it depends on the time of year and how many referrals they currently have on their caseload



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

At the Tier 3 level they may work with 1 to 3 students with behaviour needs in one week. Depending on the complexity of the situation, they may stay at the school, working with the student for the week modelling and modifying the strategies.

### 2. How Many Students Do You Support in a Year?

Ms. Cassidy noted In the Tier 2 category there are usually 35-40 in a year, but this number fluctuates through various years.

Due to changes in the Special Education model, BC have inspired the building of classroom capacity and encouraged teachers or special education staff to pose questions to BC, typically in the Tier 1 level. This is a proactive approach and generally reduces the escalation to Tier 2 strategies. However, when necessary, approximately 20-25 students are referred to the Resource Team annually.

### 3. How Do Schools Access Your Support?

Ms. Cassidy advised schools request BC services through a Resource Team meeting although urgent situations arising at a school could also prompt a referral.

Team members will offer suggestions to assist with the student and the situation.

Staff ensures they collect as much information as possible from parents.

Schools may also contact BC to obtain a direct consultation for school staff regarding advice or suggestions on behaviour management.

### 4. Describe a Day in Your Work Life

Ms. Cassidy explained the day begins with developing a schedule for the day, while maintaining flexibility for last minute school meetings or school requests for help.

Typical activities include:

- Calling or emailing parents, schools, community resource agencies, etc.;
- Classroom visits to observe and gather data;
- Developing recommendations and behaviour support plans;
- Creating materials to support implementation of strategies and plans;
- Meeting with parents, school staff;
- Participating in the implementation of new plans alongside staff using a gradual release model;
- Providing Professional Development for school staff and provide Behaviour Management Systems Training;



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

- Developing resources that staff can access through the Staff Special Education Professional Learning Environment.

### 5. How Does your Role Support Students in the Classroom?

Ms. Cassidy noted BC determine how they can help students learn Self Regulation and the importance of following rules which impacts the feeling of group inclusion.

They help teachers understand the function of behaviour that students use to get their needs met, so teachers realize the actions are not personal. It helps create a calmer classroom environment.

BC support the development of effective behaviour as when the classroom stress is lower it creates a learning environment where everyone feels more comfortable, safe and engaged.

An Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence (ABC) Function chart is used for collecting information on a short-term basis, usually no more than 10 days.

Chair Rose thanked Ms. Cassidy for attending and sharing this important information with Committee members.

### C-1 Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings

W. Rose

#### (a) Ratification of Minutes April 22, 2021

Moved by: J. Trovato  
Seconded by: M. Gatopoulos

**THAT** the minutes for SEAC 20-08 be approved as circulated.  
**CARRIED**

#### (b) Grand Erie's Special Education Plan 2020-21 – Final

L. Thompson

Superintendent Thompson responded to several suggestions previously provided by P. Boutis.

- i. Develop a guide to the Special Education Plan to help parents more easily navigate the document. It was suggested that SEAC members could work on this task if they wished to create a document such as this.
- ii. Standard 3 - The option for parents to pay for their own assessments arose from a previous suggestion from SEAC so will remain in the document.
- iii. Standard 4 –The words “above or” were removed from this statement as the board does not modify subjects or courses above the actual curriculum. However, the statement will be modified to make it more accurate.



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

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The link on page 33 to the Ministry's special education page, will be more meaningful if moved to the beginning of the Standard.

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html)

- iv. Standard 7 – the chart listing specialized health support service agencies is somewhat unwieldy. The Recording Secretary will reformat it to correct the places where words were broken.
- v. Standard 8 – the word “allowable” with respect to the categories of exceptionalities is old language and will be removed.
- vi. Standard 9 – the second paragraph was deleted as it referred to specific special education placements as the P1 Guiding Principles for Special Education will be changing. A new overarching statement may be developed to replace the deleted paragraph.
- vii. Standard 10 – with respect to including the phrase “as applicable” in reference to an IPRC decision, the language will be reviewed and amended if necessary.

Trustee Sloat noted P1 Special Education Guiding Principles is currently out for review as listed on our agenda for comments to be returned by May 27, 2021.

Superintendent Thompson will remove the list of Guiding Principles and replace it with a live link to the policy.

Members would like to have a future discussion on the parent guide that was mentioned above.

Trustee Sloat mentioned the London District office gave Grand Erie's Special Education Plan a glowing review and we have kept it current over the years. There is a Green Guide Book available from 2017.  
[http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools\\_2017e.pdf](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools_2017e.pdf)

Moved by: L. Boswell  
 Seconded by: K. Jones

**“THAT** SEAC recommends the Board approve the 2020-21 Special Education Plan, as amended, for submission to the Ministry and uploading to the Board's website.”

**CARRIED**



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

(c) SEAC Committee Member Input – Survey Monkey Feedback

W. Rose

Chair Rose thanked everyone for their input and noted she had put together a chart which she and Vice-Chair will review with Superintendent Thompson and the Special Education Management Team (SEMT) to create a road map for next year.

The document <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R78MD8H> will remain open for SEAC members who may like to submit an idea over the summer. Alternately please send mail to her directly at [dee.rose@me.com](mailto:dee.rose@me.com)

Topics that have come forth to date include:

1. Parent and school partnerships and student education.
2. Transition for students with special education needs who are
  - a) Just entering elementary school
  - b) Just entering secondary school
  - c) Just leaving secondary school for the community, post-secondary education or the workplace.
3. Experiential Workplace opportunities and Preparation for Employment.
4. Transition for youth who are finishing school.
5. Human Rights Code
6. Developmental coordination disorder and its impact

(d) Special Education & Mental Health Summer Program Offerings – Update L. Sheppard

1. In Person Summer Programs Review

- i. Summer School Transition Program (SK to Grade 3)
- ii. Hello Classroom Program (Autism and Life Skills Self Contained)
- iii. This is My New School Program (JK/SK with Autism and/or pervasive needs)

2. Introduction of Virtual Summer Programs

School staff may nominate students to any of these programs which each require a minimum of eight students to run. The board has summer literacy funding to support these programs, but there is also some additional SEA funding that will allow any interested student to be accommodated.

i. Assistive Technology Leadership Camp (G 4-12, grouped by division)

This is a five-day camp implemented through LearnStyle scheduled for mid-August which includes two hours of daily instruction aimed at increasing students' independence, confidence and self-advocacy. Students will create a personal profile website which will house all their own aha discoveries about technology and learning strategies. The





## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

benefits they have gleaned will transition with them back to the classroom.

ii. Technology Journeys in Math (Grades 4-8)

This program is also hosted by LearnStyle and runs for two hours each day for five days at the end of August. The overall goal is to help students increase independence, confidence and self-esteem while developing positive outlooks towards math. Students will build a private math journal website where they will record their strategies, technology tools, digital manipulatives they've learned and some self reflection, all of which they will be able to take back to the classroom.

iii. High School Transition Program (Grade 8)

Also hosted by LearnStyle, this five-day program runs two hours each day. The goal is to help students learn how to manage their workload and how to stay on top of their responsibilities and tasks and how to become more proficient at reading and writing. Students explore tools and strategies that will help them have more success at high school. They will have opportunities to investigate tools around organization. Family support is important to staff collaborates with families to ensure student willingness to participate is evident. The program runs through the summer.

iv. High School Assistive Technology Drop-Ins (Grades 9-12)

This is a one-hour micro sessions provided by LearnStyle that occur over a two-week period. Designed to equip secondary students with strategies to utilize assistive technology to increase their independence. Geared to students involved in technology and approximately 10 programs are offered including job seeking, resume creation, creating / delivering presentations, study skills, creative writing, research, etc.

v. Reading Skills Development through LEXIA (Grades 2-8)

Some Grand Erie students already use LEXIA, but this summer specific teachers will be hired to monitor those in the Reading Skills Development program. They will check in on the work students have done. The program is geared to students who indicate a gap in their reading skills and will run through the summer so requires a solid commitment from families for their children to participate.

Members were very supportive of these programs that will assist students prepare for September and it was noted by Ms. Staats noted Lexia is administered daily by EA's in all Six Nations elementary schools.





## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

### 3. Summer Mental Health Support Programs

P. Bagchee

As discussed at the last meeting, Social Workers will provide short term counselling over the summer. Attendance Counsellors will return to work earlier this year to allow them to reach out to families/students virtually and in person where chronic absences were noted.

Also developing a series of family support resource presentations available toward the end of August. Currently, three have been developed "Heading Back to School – Make it Successful, Make it Fun" (elementary); "Heading Back to School – Tackling Anxiety – Elementary" and "Heading Back to School – Tackling Anxiety – Secondary"

The "Focus on Youth" program supports mental health for students who have credit gaps or may require help developing employment skills.

Over the summer Educational Assistants will have an opportunity to learn the Shanker Self Reg Framework.

Ms. Bagchee clarified the understanding the presentations will take into account both adaptive anxiety and problematic anxiety and will include school-based strategies, home-based strategies and connections to community resources.

### D-1 New Business

W. Rose

#### (a) Special Education Funding 2021-22 – GSN Highlights

L. Thompson

##### i. Priorities & Partnership Funding (PPF, Previously Transfer Payment Agreements)

PPF are specified short term one-time funds not included under Grants for Student Needs. For the 2021-22 school year, Grand Erie received \$214,179 for special education supports and \$337,220 for mental health supports.

These funds are allocated for continued COVID 19 funding support. School boards are limited to spending only one half the allocation at the beginning of the year and must wait for government approval before spending the other half, if deemed appropriate or notification that it will be taken back. The funds may be used in any way to offset COVID impact, e.g., staffing, resources. Staff are still in discussion as to the best use of this funding.

##### ii. Grants for Student Needs (GSN)

In previous years, mental health funding was in the form of an annual PPF (TPA) which left uncertainty as to continuation. Beginning in 2021-22 school year, Mental Health and Wellbeing will be built into the GSN



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

so will be permanent funding in the amount of \$374,449. Under the new funding model it is now called “Supporting Student Mental Health” and has flexibility in how it can be spent.

The After School Skill Development program for students identified on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was on hold for two years due to disruptions from labour disputes and COVID restrictions. This funding which is just over \$80,000 was also previously in the form of a PPF (TPA) and is now built into the GSN and will help support some of the summer programming that was previously discussed.

Contract Settlement Funding provides \$96,990 specific to the Professional Student Support Personnel to hire or rehire staff.

Ms. White also shared that the CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) allocated funding equivalent to hiring 18 ½ additional Educational Assistants.

Additional GSN funding also allowed the increase of Learning Resource Teachers and the addition of another Self-Contained class. Further investigation will be the hiring of a Teacher Consultant for technology supporting students on alternative programming. Also looking at a secondary position to support those students on alternative programming with experiential learning opportunities and work preparation. Grand Erie will also be rolling out an Alternative Curriculum Guide.

The Board will also be implementing a virtual class to serve the entire board that offers opportunities for gifted and talented students. The process has not yet been fully developed.

All budget amounts and details will be posted to the board’s website once approved by Trustees.

Trustee Sloat asked about a new classroom in Multi-Handicapped classroom at Lynndale Heights School. Ms. White confirmed and noted the decision was made after the board report was sent in. Superintendent Thompson will follow up with next steps.

### E-1 Other Business

W. Rose

- (a) Membership Update – New Member  
Chair Rose introduced Lisa Nydam who agreed to be the Native Representative for Grand Erie SEAC.

W. Rose

Ms. Nydam expressed her pleasure at returning to the table, noting she had been a member briefly but had to resign due to personal challenges. She shared she is the Office Manager of the Ontario Disability Support Program in Simcoe and for 17 years also was a Child Protection Worker.



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

She invited members with any questions about either topic to please contact her.

### **F-1 Standing Items W. Rose**

#### **(a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment P. Curran**

Members were advised to send any comments about current policy/procedures out for comment to [kathryn.giannini@granderie.ca](mailto:kathryn.giannini@granderie.ca) by May 27, 2021.

#### **(b) Trustee Update – Current Board Activities T. Waldschmidt / CA. Sloat**

##### **1. T. Waldschmidt**

- Welcomed everyone and especially Ms. Nydam, our newest member.
- Senior Management is working on the Multi-Year Plan and budgets

##### **2. CA. Sloat**

- The next budget meeting is Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup> for anyone wants to follow
- The board received \$10,000,000 to update air flow systems.
- Two open concept schools will have walls installed.
- Awaiting Ministry decision in June as to the option of a virtual school for September. A different model will be used where the virtual school will operate from each school rather than as a separate academy.
- Some larger schools will likely use the quadmester system again.

### **G-1 Information Items W. Rose**

#### **(a) None**

### **H-1 Community Updates W. Rose**

#### **(a) None**

### **I-1 Correspondence W. Rose**

#### **(a) LDAO Circular – May 2021**

Highlights include the notice that graduating students will be exempt from the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) and a discussion on the disruption to learning of which we have learned Grand Erie's response to this concern.



## Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-09

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

- (b) Ltr – Dr. C. Montgomery re: EQAO & OSSLT  
Assistive Technology – May 12, 2021

W. Rose / J. White

Ms. White noted alternatives were not provided at the time although our Information Technology staff also tried to find a work around. This information may be new so SEMT will certainly look into these claims.

Chair Rose asked that SEMT keep SEAC informed and advised if necessary, we will continue to raise the issue.

### J-1 Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning

W. Rose

- (a) SEAC Goal Setting

W. Rose

Chair Rose thanked the Special Education Management Team and noted the anticipation of meeting for the purpose of planning.

### K-1 Next Meeting

W. Rose

- (a) Thursday, June 17, 2021 | MS Teams | 6:00 PM

### L-1 Adjournment

W. Rose

Moved by: M. Gatopoulos

Seconded By: T. Waldschmidt

“**THAT** the SEAC 20-09 meeting of May 20, 2021 meeting be adjourned at 7:49 p.m.”

**CARRIED**

Stay at home except for essential travel and follow the [restrictions and public health measures](#).



# Development of proposed Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) education standards – 2021 initial recommendations report

Read the initial recommendations from the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee. The committee works to ensure education is more accessible to people with disabilities.

[Submit your feedback](#)

## Letter from the chair

The Honourable Raymond Cho  
Minister for Seniors and Accessibility  
777 Bay Street  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1S5

Dear Minister,

The K-12 Education Standards Development Committee (the Committee) has completed the first phase of our work on the development of new accessibility standards for K-12 education.

As Chair and on behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to submit to you our Initial Recommendations Report.

I want to thank you for the privilege of chairing this Committee, one with such dedicated and passionate members. The diversity of lived, community and education sector experience in our membership has been invaluable to the work of this Committee.

As well, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic brought on many challenges to our work, as changed our meeting format and voting processes to an entirely on-line format, but with the support of your Ministry, we were able to do so successfully.

COVID-19 has also had a significant impact on the education system in our province, impacting students with disabilities and their families to a great degree. With that in mind, our Committee's Planning for Emergencies and Safety working group submitted a report to Education Minister Lecce and I in July 2020, outlining advice and recommendations on emergency planning and safety for students with disabilities in K-12 education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report was posted on your Ministry's website in August 2020.

As requested in your mandate letter, and as set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* in this initial report we have defined the long-term objective of the proposed K-12 Education standards and each of the measures, policies, practices and requirements which we propose to be implemented before January 1, 2025, as well as the timeframe for their implementation. Our work was informed by the lived experience of

people with disabilities, as well as the responses to the survey conducted by Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, Ministry for Education and Ministry for Colleges and Universities in 2017. <sup>C-1 (b)</sup>

As you wisely requested, a joint technical sub committee was established, with membership from both the K-12 and Postsecondary Education Committees, to consider areas of commonality, with a special focus on transition planning. A separate [set of recommendations](#) has been developed by that sub committee.

Through many thoughtful discussions, our committee has chosen to focus our recommendations on the following eight barrier areas: Attitudes, Behaviours, Perceptions, and Assumptions; Awareness and Training; Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Digital Learning and Technology; Organizational Barriers; Social Realms; Physical and Architectural Barriers; and Emergency Planning. There was also a member group that focused on accountability measures and timelines for each of the Committee's recommendations.

The Committee worked hard to focus on solutions when drafting this Initial Recommendations Report. Implementing these recommendations and removing barriers to accessibility in K-12 education also requires changing the hearts and minds of Ontarians. Attitude is a significant barrier to this change, accessibility is a benefit to everyone, and every child matters in Ontario.

As school boards, educators and the disability community read these recommendations they will be able to identify and celebrate their own ongoing efforts to advancing accessible and inclusive education. We encourage the public to read it with a mindset that embraces change and recognizes the opportunity for progress. The recommendations of the Committee will help build an education system that is accessible for persons with disabilities, and in turn help prepare them for a lifetime of the fullest possible self-reliance, resilience, and participation as citizens. This is aligned with both the 2020 Ontario Budget's "recovery" pillar and the government's commitment to the province's long-term economic sustainability.

Ensuring that we move forward on these recommendations will bring transformational change in the sector. This will be a change that embraces equitable education for students of all abilities. All decisions made regarding accessibility and students with disabilities should be made with the input of advocates and the disability community, bolstered by the central principle of *nothing about us without us*. Every child has the right to learn and grow in an accessible and inclusive environment, and we are confident that our work is a step towards that reality.

We look forward to receiving public feedback on these recommendations and meeting with you and Minister Lecce to discuss this report.

Sincerely,

Lynn Ziraldo  
Chair of the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee

## Background

The [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (the act) became law in 2005. Its stated goal is the creation of an accessible Ontario by 2025, through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards that apply to the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

The accessibility standards under the act are laws that businesses and organizations with one or more employees in Ontario must follow so they can identify, remove and prevent barriers faced by persons with disabilities. These standards are part of the act's *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11* (the regulation). Currently, there are five accessibility standards that apply to key areas of day-to-day life for Ontarians. These are:

- information and communications

- employment
- transportation
- design of public spaces
- customer service

The act requires an independent review every three years in order to ensure it is working as intended. Both the second and third legislative reviews of the act (conducted in 2014 and 2019 respectively) emphasized the importance of removing accessibility barriers in the area of education and urged government to consider this a priority area.

Prior to establishing the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee (the committee), a survey was developed in partnership with the Ministries of Education and Colleges and Universities. The survey was conducted to inform potential focus areas for a new education standard. The survey received a total of 2,988 responses. The survey asked respondents to comment on barriers and best practices in five key areas:

1. accessibility awareness and training
2. awareness of accessibility accommodations (policies, processes, programs)
3. information, communication, and inclusive decision-making
4. transition planning
5. inclusive and accessible learning spaces

In 2017, two standards development committees were established to address barriers facing students: one focused on Kindergarten through Grade 12, and another focused on postsecondary education. The committees were asked to work in tandem to address barriers across the publicly funded education system in Ontario.

## Mandate of the committee

The role of the Standards Development Committee for K-12 Education is to provide recommendations to government on removing and preventing accessibility barriers in the publicly funded education system. These recommendations would inform the government's work on proposed new accessibility standards for education.

To develop these standards, members of the committee are required to:

- define the long-range objective of the proposed standards
- determine the measures, policies, practices and requirements to be implemented on or before January 1, 2025, and the timeframe for their implementation
- develop proposed standards that the committee deems advisable for public comment (initial recommendation report)
- make such changes it considers advisable to the proposed accessibility standards based on comments received and make recommendations to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and the Minister of Education

The minister requested that the committee:

- develop recommendations to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in K-12 education
- work with the postsecondary committee to consider areas of commonality, in particular, transitions (for example, K-12 to postsecondary) through a Joint [Technical Sub-Committee](#)

## Committee members

The committee is composed of 20 members, who have the power to vote on recommendations to submit to the minister. There is one non-voting member who represents the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education and Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility provide information and secretariat support to the committee as it



considers its proposed recommendations. The voting members are made up of persons with disabilities<sup>C-1 (b)</sup> or their representatives, education sector, students and community organizations ([See list of Member names and job titles](#))

## Purpose of the initial recommendations report

This document sets out the committee's initial recommendations for proposed education accessibility standards. As required under the act, the report is being made available for public comment. Following the public posting period, the committee will consider all comments received and make any changes to the proposed accessibility standards it considers advisable. Once finalized, the committee will submit its final recommendations for new proposed standards to the minister. As outlined by the act, the minister may adopt the recommendations in whole, in part, or with modifications.

## Introduction

Students with disabilities continue to confront numerous barriers in Ontario's publicly funded school system. Such barriers impede students with disabilities from fully participating in and benefitting from an accessible, equitable, and inclusive education system in Ontario. As such, the Ontario Government is enacting Education Accessibility Standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Under the act, accessibility standards are regulations that spell out the barriers that are to be removed or prevented, what must be done to remove or prevent them, and the timelines required for these actions. The call for Education Accessibility Standards to be developed and enacted under the act initially came from the disability community. This call eventually achieved bi-partisan support by all three Ontario political parties, and support from key labour unions representing many of those working on the front lines of Ontario's education system.

In 2017, two Standards Development Committees were established by the Ontario Government to make recommendations on what Education Accessibility Standards should include. The K-12 Education Standards Development Committee was responsible for making recommendations on what the accessibility standards should include to address barriers in Ontario's publicly funded schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee was appointed to make recommendations on what the accessibility standards should include to address barriers in Ontario's postsecondary education institutions (for example, colleges and universities). Each committee has developed their own initial recommendations report to address their specific area but still have communicated and coordinated their recommendations throughout the process.

In this report, the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee brings forward for public comment and feedback a comprehensive series of initial recommendations on what the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards should include. It is the result of the extensive joint efforts of government-appointed representatives from the disability community and the education sector to identify the barriers that students with disabilities face and the measures needed to remove and prevent them.

The committee's work has been informed by global, national, and provincial research and evidence-based practices in education. Furthermore, an emphasis was placed on gathering information and research from the lived experiences of students, families and community members living with disabilities. To be sure, their voices were essential in informing the initial recommendations. The committee also recognized how important it was to address the intersections of disability with race, culture, religion, language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation and other dimensions of student/family identity when making recommendations on advancing a barrier-free education for all.

As school boards and diverse school communities read these initial recommendations, they will likely be able to identify and celebrate their own ongoing efforts at advancing accessible and inclusive education for students with disabilities. This document is intended to help identify where they are, and what else they need to do to prevent and remove barriers that impede access and inclusion in educational life for all students.



These initial recommendations are intended to help educators ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate in and be on a footing of equality from all that Ontario's education system has to offer. They aim to help school boards save the cost of having to re-invent the wheel when it comes to accessibility, and the cost of leaving barriers in place that disadvantage students with disabilities. They seek to ensure that in Ontario's education system, public money is never used to create new barriers that negatively impact students with disabilities or to perpetuate existing barriers.

These initial recommendations also aim to implement the rights of students with disabilities to equity and equality in education, guaranteed to them since 1982 by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In addition to students with disabilities, there are others who will substantially benefit from these initial recommendations. For example, they will help parents, siblings, grandparents and other family members who have disabilities, teachers and other school staff and volunteers who have disabilities, and any members of the public with disabilities who might wish to interact with and benefit from Ontario's education system.

The K-12 Education Standards Development Committee hopes that the promised Education Accessibility Standards will achieve a real change in the practices and culture regarding accessibility within the school system. This will unleash both the potential of all students with disabilities and of the professionals employed to educate them.

## Methodology

The committee spent their initial meetings discussing and identifying barriers to accessible education in the K-12 sector. Committee members considered a wide range of barriers upon which to focus their work. As a result of many thoughtful discussions, nine main categories of barriers emerged:

1. attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and assumptions
2. awareness and training
3. curriculum, instruction and assessment
4. digital learning and technology
5. organizational barriers
6. social realms
7. physical and architectural barriers
8. planning for emergency and safety
9. timelines and accountability

Based on the nine agreed upon themes, committee members were divided into corresponding small groups based on expertise and personal background. The chair asked each small group to draft recommendations to remove accessibility barriers from their assigned barrier area. The small groups met over the course of several months to draft their recommendations.

Teams then brought forward initial recommendations to the full committee for discussion and review before final voting. The committee members were collaborative, engaged and dedicated throughout their experience of working together in small groups and as a full committee.

## Education Joint Technical Sub-Committee

In order to ensure that the work of both the K-12 and Postsecondary Education Committees remains aligned, the minister asked both chairs to form a joint technical sub-committee representing members from both sectors and from the disability community. The Education Joint Technical Sub-Committee is made up of members from both the K-12 and postsecondary committees. The sub-committee is responsible for sharing information across the

two committees and for considering areas of commonality, in addition to considering the area of transition <sup>C-1(b)</sup> planning as a priority.

## Vision for an accessible student-centred education system

### Context

The act requires Standards Development Committees to establish long-term objectives to inform the development of accessibility standards. The establishment of long-term objectives at the beginning of the standards development process helps guide and inform Standards Development Committees in determining which accessibility requirements will help achieve the identified goals. Long-term objectives summarize the intended outcome of the standards and are subject to review together with the final standards under the act.

### Initial proposed long-term objective

That by 2025, the publicly funded K-12 education system will be fully accessible, equitable, inclusive and learner-centred:

- A. by removing and preventing accessibility barriers impeding students with disabilities from fully participating in, and fully benefitting from all aspects of the education system.
- B. by providing a prompt, accessible, fair, effective and user-friendly process to learn about and seek programs, services, supports, accommodations and placements tailored to the individual strengths and needs of each student with disabilities.

### An Ontario public education system K-12 characterized by equity, accessibility and inclusion, and participation:

We envision an Ontario public education system K-12 where learning environments are barrier free and fully inclusive of learners with disabilities. All learners with disabilities will have full access to meaningful education and relevant learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports.

### Guiding principles statements

The guiding principles emphasize: dignity, respect, belonging, self-determination, equality of opportunity, independence, access and inclusion, student and family-centred engagement and participation, and non-discriminatory practices and are informed by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* Alliance October 10, 2019 Proposed Framework for the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards, Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines and frameworks (for example, Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, Learning for All) the committee work to date, and other relevant documents.

It is important to address “ableism” when aspiring to remove barriers for students with disabilities. Ableism is a belief system that continues to widely influence perceptions of learners with disabilities. This belief system sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others.

1. Students with disabilities have the right to dignity, respect, equality, choice, voice and full participation in a barrier-free public education system K-12, regardless of race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation or any other factor(s).

2. Students, parents/caregivers, educators, administrators, trustees and community members are valued and partners in creating and maintaining inclusive and equitable school communities, working together to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and biases from school systems to allow full access to a high-quality education and full participation for students with disabilities.
3. Schools are places where diverse voices, talents and skills are recognized, where equity, equality, inclusion and human rights are well understood and applied, positively impacting educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Classroom, school and system practices are reflective of and responsive to the diversity of students with disabilities.
4. Changing attitudes, beliefs and practices are facilitated through accessible education and training related to equity, equality, inclusion and human rights. Principles of equity, equality and inclusive education should be embedded throughout all training, programs, practices and policies.
5. Inter-ministerial collaboration, planning and accountability is essential to providing supports and services to students with very high or complex needs who are marginalized or fully excluded from meaningful participation in their schools and communities.
6. Cultures of high expectations are created for all learners through an accessible and culturally responsive curriculum, appropriate instructional supports, and meaningful and relevant learning experiences. Systems and practices for assessment of quality learning are in place that better respond to students' diversity and needs related to disability.
7. Universal design for learning should be to support the development of universally accessible curriculum instruction, and assessment methods, learning activities in classrooms, experiential experiences, online learning environments, physical spaces and multiple pathways to achieving growth and success as a learner.
8. There is intentional collection, analysis and use of relevant data to fully understand learners' strengths and needs, to identify and remove barriers, to support effective interventions, and to design accessible quality education for all.
9. Families have access to information in readily accessible, multiple formats in different places, including ministry and school board websites, and flexible opportunities and mechanisms for full participation in decision-making processes.
10. Effective transition planning in schools is informed through collaborative relationships with families living with disabilities and cross-sector collaboration with community partners for integrated transition planning.
11. Research-informed, evidence-based programs, pedagogies and policies facilitate a culture of respect for equity, equality, access and inclusion in all schools, and ensure evidence of impact across the education system for students with disabilities. Research-informed, evidence-based professional learning designs on accessible education within a human rights framework are created and delivered within and school boards by transdisciplinary teams of professionals including persons with disabilities.
12. Laws, policies and programs in the education system should fully and effectively serve students with all disabilities within the meaning of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and/or the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and that the needs of students with low-incidence disability not be marginalized, sidelined or de-prioritized.

## Personal sentiments from the committee

It's a new day for students with disabilities in Ontario. I am so proud of this report and the recommendations contained in it. This report is a product of three years of hard work and a multitude of dedicated people coming together and working across political and ideological differences for the betterment of students and our education system. The recommendations contained in the report are proven to work, achievable and will make a real difference for students with disabilities and their family. There is no longer any excuse for any student to get left behind in Ontario. Indeed, our education system in Ontario is one of the crown jewels of publicly funded education anywhere in the world and it's our job now to put these recommendations to action to ensure we support every child and reach every student.

This committee and the process of writing the report has exemplified the importance of having student voice and lived experience centred and included at all levels of decision-making. Improving educational accessibility in Ontario is impossible without the continued contributions of young people's lived experience as expertise in creating innovative ways forward towards an accessible and anti-ableist educational future for everyone.

*Rana Nasrazadani*

## Barrier area narratives and recommendations

### Section one: Attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and assumptions

Both lived and professional experiences from the perspective of a person with a disability were used. We need a blend of voices to ensure a balanced approach. Also, research and perspectives from persons with disabilities are important when making decisions. Our work was informed by key research and policy planning in the sectors of education pedagogy, human and organizational behaviour and human rights. The research-based practice is a must as it validates evidence-based practices to be implemented.

Five key recommendations issued reflect how attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and assumptions underpin the work of all other small groups, given human and organizational behaviour. Referencing human and organizational behaviour is important for barriers are systemic and must be addressed at the macro and micro level simultaneously. To optimize consistency for provincial equality and acknowledge District School Boards jurisdiction, recommendations targeted overarching actions at the level of the Ministry of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers, with implementation at the school board level around using such resources to deliver on the recommendation's intent. Important to identify and respect jurisdictional decision making. Definitions were approached carefully in order to ensure consistent understanding across all involved ministries/sectors and avoid unintentionally reducing any options in a continuum of inclusion. Definitions are essential to provide clarity. The various stakeholders must have a clear direction in their responsibilities. Words may be interpreted differently unless the message is crystal clear.

#### Section one recommendations:

1. **Preamble:** Persons with disabilities (students, educators, employees, etc.) should be directly involved in designing and reviewing policies, programs, curriculum, as well as participating in speaking opportunities to students and educators at the school level, school board level, and ministry level, in K-12 Education and whereas the Ministry of Education should play a role in ensuring that students and professionals with disabilities are involved with provincial and system planning. The committee recommends that:
  - 1.1. each school board set up and maintain a network of teachers and other staff with disabilities, and a network of students with disabilities, to get input on accessibility issues at the school board and to get advice on barriers.
  - 1.2. the Ministry of Education provide open and accessible opportunities for these student and school staff networks to share information and ideas.

**Timeline:** two years

2. **Preamble:** Specific strategies need to be taught so that teacher candidates and future teachers are instructed to ensure inclusive, accessible, equitable education and that there be consistency in the delivery of all Special Education Additional Qualifications. The committee recommends that:

- 2.1. the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education require that, to graduate with a degree<sup>G-1 (b)</sup> in education and to qualify to teach in an Ontario school, teachers receive specific curriculum and training, as part of their university program in education, on the need for our education system to be inclusive and accessible for students with disabilities, and on how to teach curriculum to all students on this topic
- 2.2. the Ontario College of Teachers review the initial teacher education program to enhance the quality and content of the Special Education Core Content, by revising the Accreditation Resource Guide and monitor the delivery of all Special Education Additional Qualifications courses, so they are delivered as accredited, reflecting the current Additional Qualification guidelines.

**Timeline:** two years

3. **Preamble:** All education staff need to be in-serviced in the philosophy of equity, accessibility and the inclusion of and full participation by students with disabilities, so they are equipped to model inclusive behaviours and attitudes, and to ensure that differences are accepted as a part of life. The committee recommends:
  - 3.1. each school board provide specific training to all school board staff who deal with parents or students, on the importance of the inclusion of and full participation by students with disabilities, and on effective strategies for teaching and designing lesson plans in this area.
  - 3.2. the Ministry of Education develop and make available to school boards and the public, sample or model programs for training school board staff on teaching in this area.

**Timeline:** two years

4. **Preamble:** School boards must instill accessibility planning into their vision and daily operations to eliminate attitudinal barriers among students, school board employees and families, and whereas they must clearly communicate this accessibility commitment to all families of their students. The committee recommends:
  - 4.1. the Ministry of Education create sample or model curriculum and teaching resources (such as, classroom videos) that a school board can opt to use to deliver this curriculum.
  - 4.2. each school board develop, implement and periodically evaluate a multi-year age-appropriate program/curriculum to teach all students, school board staff and families of school board students about the inclusion of and full participation of students with disabilities. This program shall include the following:
    - a. communication posted in all schools and sent to all families of the school board's students, on the school board's commitment to the inclusion of students with disabilities, and the benefits this brings to all students.
    - b. where possible:
      - i. exercises having students, staff and, where interested, parents/guardians conduct a barrier assessment such as a “barrier scavenger hunt” in the school or nearby community, to catalogue disability barriers and invent suggestions on how these can be removed or prevented.
      - ii. hearing from, meeting and interacting with persons with disabilities (for example, at assemblies and/or via guest presentations).
    - c. online posting of resources on these activities to enable sharing with other school boards.

**Timeline:** two years

5. **Preamble:** Supports needed to change attitudes and behaviours include policy frameworks, resources, opportunities and performance expectations. The committee recommends:
  - 5.1. each school board develop and implement human resources policies targeted at full accessibility and the inclusion of and full participation by students with disabilities, including:

- a. making knowledge and experience on implementing the inclusion of and full participation by students with disabilities an important hiring and promotions criterion especially for principals, vice-principals and teaching staff.
- b. inclusion of and full participation by students with disabilities knowledge and performance in any performance management and performance reviews.

**Timeline:** two years

## Section two: Awareness and training

The group met early on in the process to develop recommendations with respect to gaps in knowledge acquirement for education practitioners based on lived experiences of group members. Central to our discussions was the concept of Universal Design for Learning was absolutely essential for educators to understand and to apply if learners were to succeed. The inclusion of people who self identify as being persons with disabilities is essential in the developments and delivery of any training program for stakeholders in the education sector. Personal gaps in awareness of adaptive technology programs could be achieved using the same model of inclusion as noted above. In order to affect a cultural change within the sector staff, students, parents and community members, must have a clear understanding of what is requested, what is available and how to access it. There must be accommodations that are seamless and part of the school culture. Ultimately as we received our recommendations and those of small group one for final edits it became clear that a few adaptations to the recommendations of group, we could achieve the concepts outlines in our discussions and made those changes.

## Section two Recommendations:

6. **We recommend:** a common Universal Design for Learning training be mandatory for all educators (senior administration, school administration, teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants and Professional Support Staff Personnel members) both at the pre-service level and on-going throughout the school year. This training should not be delivered solely on-line but through a combination of on-line and in-person formats and should be developed in consultation with people who self-identify as having a disability.  
**Timeline:** immediate
7. **We recommend:** the Government of Ontario develop and provide a model training module and template for *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario Human Rights Code*, and Charter of Rights awareness, with a goal of achieving a barrier-free education system. The training module should be developed in consultation with people who self-identify with disabilities and should not only focus on accommodating students but should take into consideration dealing with colleagues, parents and community members who may require some accommodation. The training should include both on-line and in-person components with all materials being available in accessible formats.  
**Timeline:** immediate
8. **We recommend:** school boards develop and deliver adaptive/assistive technology and services training programs at:
  - 8.1 a general awareness level
  - 8.2 more detailed modules for all staff who will need specific training not just special education teachers. This training on how to use, interact with, and support the use of adaptive/assistive technology and services training programs, should be provided at the school level and not on-line.

**Timeline:** immediate

## Section three: Curriculum assessment and instruction

Disability intersects with differing identities, including race, culture, language, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, creed, age and ethnicity. The Curriculum Instruction and Assessment recommendations are

informed by the intersection of discrimination impacting persons with disability. This work includes:<sup>C-1 (b)</sup>

- a. intersectionality of students, staff, family, and community identities and perspectives
- b. intersectionality of curriculum, instruction and assessment and accountability
- c. intersectionality of each disability barrier, socially constructed in systems/ individuals

Concepts are developed through the Education K-12 committee process, survey feedback, lived experiences of persons with disability, review of current empirical literature, commissions (for example, Ontario Human Rights Commission), ongoing research and work of associations, organizations, alliances (for example, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* Alliance October 10, 2019 Proposed Framework for the K-12 Education Accessibility Standard), networks, and educator and working group discernment.

The recommendations focus on standards, actions and accountability measures that ministry, school boards, schools, colleges of education and educators need to address in the review, development, implementation and monitoring of curriculum, assessment and instruction to ensure accessibility, equity and inclusion for all students with disabilities.

The K-12 curriculum, instruction and assessment recommendations consider learning in and beyond the classroom, including learning experiences with family, home, school and the broader community, and are aligned with early preschool and post elementary/ secondary learning. Recommendations are informed by ongoing research, global and local curriculum contexts and the interconnection of learning, identities and wellbeing. Accessibility is person-centred within diverse learning communities resulting in significant intersections across the barriers. The lived experiences and voices of those living within the culture provide input and promote understanding of ongoing strategies and effective outcomes to inform the authentic and relevant curriculum, instruction and assessment design that frame barrier-free accessible education for all.

### **Section three recommendations:**

#### **Diversity and accessibility in design and development recommendations**

Students' cultural contexts are fundamental to their learning. Culture is defined here by a student's identity as well as by their homes, schools and communities. Creating culturally relevant curriculum, assessment practices, and instruction invite students to draw connections between their learning and direct experiences in their communities. To this end, teachers and students should perceive those experiences as valuable assets in all classrooms.

All instruction is culturally responsive. The question is: To which culture is it currently oriented?

*Gloria Ladson-Billings*

Curriculum and curriculum resources (designed, developed and/or procured) require barrier-free accessibility, equity and inclusion for all students with disabilities. Curriculum, assessment and instruction need to be culturally responsive and universally designed to ensure barrier-free education for students with disabilities. As life-long learners and engaged citizens, all students across disabilities need to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling them to participate fully and actively in society.

#### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

9. The design, development and communication of curriculum (resources and lived experiences) ensure the following: full accessibility, equity and inclusion in supporting barrier-free accessibility for students with disabilities, cultural perspectives and responsiveness, Universal Design for Learning, the dignity, developing independence and ongoing learning for each person. This requires:

- 9.1. the Ministry of Education and Boards incorporate Universal Design for Learning in the requirements for curriculum design.
- 9.2. the ministry process for review and renewal of curriculum use principles of accessibility, equity and inclusion in design and development, ensuring full accessibility of curriculum for students with disabilities.
- 9.3. the ministry identify a ministry-designated office or person with lead responsibility for the ongoing review of all provincially mandated curriculum (and secondary resources guidelines offered to school boards) for removal of accessibility barriers.
- 9.4. the ministry mandate a strategy and action plan for continuous review of all curriculum, requiring that all reviewed and new curriculum address accessibility barriers and is barrier free.
- 9.5. curriculum review and renewal in curriculum areas, include specific focus areas, such as:
  - a. science, technology, engineering and mathematics, (STEM)
  - b. science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics
  - c. alternative, expanded curriculum for students with disabilities that is barrier free and addresses relevant life skills
  - d. curriculum that is responsive to cultures, history, experiences and perspectives of students and communities; multiple language-based curriculum such as, non- verbal, sign- American Sign Language, Indigenous languages.
  - e. curriculum that ensures anti-Black racist education; includes and represents diversity, and differing identities that intersect with disabilities
  - f. curriculum design that is: responsive, includes cultural diversity across subject areas, ensures equity, addresses social and cultural perspectives, includes Indigenous ways of knowing.
  - g. new and developing curriculum areas and competencies such as multi-literacies, for example, digital literacy, financial literacy that is designed and integrated within specific courses (for example, career studies, mathematics) and across curriculum.
  - h. curriculum that addresses experiential learning, employability skills development, specialty pathways such as Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) and school-to-work transitions.
  - i. curriculum that focuses on the development of learning skills that specifically address executive functioning skills (for example, emotional and physical self-regulation, working memory, self-monitoring, organizational planning and prioritizing, and task initiation). The development of these skills is critical to accessing learning for all, and student achievement and well-being.
- 9.6. the ministry be responsible for the development and distribution of relevant guidelines and resources that support review and development of equitable barrier-free design, and adaptations to accommodate needs of students with disabilities.
- 9.7. the ministry make public the results of ongoing review of provincial curriculum.
- 9.8. the ministry develop and communicate guidelines that support school boards and staff with action plans and strategies for ongoing local curriculum reviews. These reviews require Boards communicate results of curriculum review, renewal and new curriculum plans ensuring equitable barrier-free accessibility for students with disabilities.
- 9.9. the ministry develop in collaboration with boards and partners resource guidelines and resources to support professional practice in equitable, barrier-free designed learning experiences.

**Timeline:** two years

#### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

10. That educational and clinical school staff engage in culturally responsive (fair) assessment practices that reflect an understanding and respect for perspectives different from our own, and that students have an opportunity to engage in performance assessments that invite them to reflect on and share their personal stories/lived experiences and their identities as learners.

**Timeline:** six months

#### **Learning resources and self-assessment recommendations**



In the end, a true measure of equity, access and inclusion for all in our schools is how well students from diverse backgrounds and with disabilities achieve in schools. This measure needs to include student voices in assessing how they are doing. <sup>6-1(b)</sup>

Learners develop an understanding of themselves through ongoing opportunities for self-reflection, self-regulation and self-monitoring supported by educator's sensitivity to personal needs, culture and development.

Instructional resources and materials need to be reflective and responsive to student identity, culture and learning needs. This requires all those developing resources to ensure design principles of Universal Design for Learning, timely conversion ready access including multiple formats.

### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

11. All learners, including students with disabilities, are ensured every opportunity to fully access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities and curriculum engagement. This includes the timely access, use and the benefits of curriculum materials, goods and services. Instructional learning materials need to be fully accessible through Universal Design for Learning that uses many differing, alternative methods of engaging, representing, expressing and communicating learning. This requires:
  - 11.1. ministry and Boards will ensure the design of instructional materials that are fully accessible on a timely basis for students with disabilities, including for example, materials that are accessible to those with vision and hearing loss, full captioned digital, visual accommodations, and non-verbal formats.
  - 11.2. ministry and Boards will establish procurement procedures requiring any new instructional materials be fully accessible, in timely, quality alternative formats and/or conversion ready.
  - 11.3. ministry and Boards will require that procurement procedures for approved educational resources meet accessibility, barrier-free standards, be transparent, with quality design requiring ongoing timely review, monitoring and communication.
  - 11.4. accountability for compliance of barrier-free accessibility is the responsibility of the individual supplier or vendor.
  - 11.5. procurement practises and use of board or school developed instructional learning materials should include ongoing data gathering on students with disabilities who require accessible instructional materials. This includes data from students, their educators and families, that provides front-line experiences and feedback on timely access to required materials, and potential gaps needing attention. This includes school board procedures for ensuring ongoing surveys and feedback mechanisms from students and their families and educators on their experiences accessing timely instructional materials and input on what is working and required for ongoing individual student learning.
  - 11.6. the ministry and Boards establish dedicated shared resources within and among school boards, to assist efficient and effective, timely conversion ready materials that are in accessible format, where needed. This includes ensuring a board lead for oversight, coordination and response.

**Timeline:** one year

### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

12. Students be instructed in self-assessment methods so that their observations and reflections on their own learning and the experiences and suitability of accessible resources can provide valuable feedback to teachers in refining their instructional plans.

**Timeline:** one year

### **Professional learning and development recommendations**

There is a difference between curriculum and pedagogy. Curriculum is all about what we teach. Pedagogy is about how we teach it.

When addressing Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, there is an explicit relationship between them<sup>G-1(b)</sup>. It is impossible to design curriculum without developing a deep understanding of who the students are through assessment (getting to know them) and ensuring their identities are reflected in the curriculum design and classroom resources, in instructional methods (how do we know how they learn best) and in fair assessment practices.

#### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

13. The Ministry of Education, Boards, schools and Faculties of Education responsible for teacher education and ongoing professional learning and leadership development ensure the principles and practices of Universal Design For Learning and Differentiated Instruction are applied in curriculum, assessment and instruction including procurement requirements and use of instructional resources, optimizing teaching and learning for all.

**Timeline:** immediate

#### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

14. The ministry, Boards and Faculties of Education:

- 14.1. ensure that teacher education programs, in-service and on-going job-embedded professional learning on diagnostic, formative and summative curriculum-based and more formal assessments be provided to educators to inform Differentiated Instruction for all learners.
- 14.2. ensure that school and system leaders in their respective roles guide the design, assessment, evaluation, reporting and monitoring of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction in their schools as it relates to access, equity and inclusion for all learners.

**Timeline:** immediate

#### **Student voice in barrier-free policy and practice recommendations**

The focus for all curriculum-based and clinical assessments should be primarily used to inform Differentiated Instruction for students based on their talents, strengths and needs, and not as a means to prematurely “remove” students from accessing the provincial curriculum/and or age-appropriate regular education classroom based solely on diagnosis and identification. A developmental gap argument based on assessments, continues to be made in schools, resulting in premature narrowing of pathways (alternative curriculum replaces the Ontario curriculum rather than a balance of both where needed) creating barriers to accessing credit-bearing courses, and postsecondary education destinations. Current research (see Parekh & Brown, 2018, 19) provides evidence that racialized minority students are disproportionately segregated in special education classrooms with fewer pathways remaining open to them over the duration of their school careers. Moreover, students with disabilities from racialized cultural minorities are overrepresented in segregated special education classes and disadvantaged through streaming processes.

Assessment expertise by qualified individuals and sensitivity to specific learner needs and disabilities needs to inform the multi/transdisciplinary team planning and monitoring process with regard to appropriate program and placement options (for example, Regular education placements, special class placements, special school placements, secondary pathways).

Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning principles extend beyond formal classroom learning to multiple experiences including outdoor and experiential learning, social and recreational activities, extra-curricular, community engagement and specialized pathways to success.

#### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

15. The Ministry of Education, Boards, schools and Faculties of Education ensure student voice, lived experiences, student participation and engagement in ongoing curriculum learning and assessment experiences, ensuring opportunity to create person-directed learning and transition plans, and full access to pathways/destinations.

**Timeline:** immediate

#### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

16. That the ministry, educational and clinical school board staff commit to policy, processes, and provision of alternative, timely, flexible assessments for students with disabilities to ensure fair, equitable and barrier-free assessment of student performance and learning.
- 16.1. the ministry requires formal assessments, including provincial assessments, fully accessible, barrier free for students with disabilities providing for fair and equitable assessment practices.
  - 16.2. the Board assessment policies provide for fair and equitable, barrier-free accessibility for students with disability.
  - 16.3. ministry and Board ensure fair and equitable assessment policies and practices using non-discriminatory and antiracist indicators in their development, design and application.
  - 16.4. ministry and Boards assessment requirements:
    - a. the ministry ensures all provincial assessments be accessible to and barrier-free for students with disabilities, providing a fair and accurate assessment of learning.
    - b. the Boards ensure fair and equitable, barrier-free assessments for students with disabilities, through policy and procedures that commit to ensuring all assessment of student performance and learning meet these provisions.
    - c. the ministry and Board educator guidelines, resources and professional learning be developed and available to support the design and practice of fair, equitable, barrier-free assessment, and alternative evaluation methods.
    - d. the ministry and Board be required to have ongoing monitoring of fair and equitable, barrier-free assessment practice and design as part of the curriculum and assessment improvement planning.
  - 16.5. boards ensure students have full access to learning opportunities, ongoing feedback and diverse programming experiences offered in and beyond the classroom that are responsive to a wide range of individual and cultural learning needs.
  - 16.6. boards ensure students have access to multiple adaptive pathways, experiential learning and specialized programs whereby admissions, resources, the learning environment, professional learning and supports are planned, openly communicated and monitored for student need and barrier-free participation and engagement.

**Timeline:** one year

#### **Early and on-going assessment for students with disabilities' needs recommendations**

Students with disabilities can face difficulties and significant delays in getting professional assessments, (including but not limited to psycho-educational assessments), where needed, for their disability-related needs. Additionally, there is the potential for unfair/biased assessment for some students with disabilities due to a lack of understanding of the students, their lived experiences and identities and can lead to misinterpretations that create unintentional new barriers to an accessible and inclusive education for students with disabilities. The lack of a necessary assessment can impede their access to needed services, and to effective accommodations of their disabilities.

#### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

17. The Education Accessibility Standard directed through Ministry of Education and Boards establishes measures and processes to address and eliminate administrative and other access barriers that impede or

delay timely and fair/unbiased assessments for the identification of disability related need. These<sup>C-1(b)</sup> assessments include but are not limited to professional and clinical assessments such as psycho-educational, and other educational assessments in the identification of disability related needs.

- 17.1. where there are barriers related to timely access to identification or needs assessments, the board will have a solution-based process to address the assessment needs which may include a plan to access clinical assessments through partnership with external service providers. And where the board provides evidence to the ministry that it is experiencing barriers to timely access of clinical professional services for assessment related to the identification of disability related needs, and the board continues to plan for a clear solutions-based process, the ministry will support the board in securing the necessary assessments.
- 17.2. district school Boards shall identify on an annual basis their unmet professional assessment needs of students with disabilities as evidenced through the Data Collection Standard (Standards Development Committee) and seek timely access to disability related assessments with the support of the Ministry of Education. The ministry shall take action to review and address access barriers to disability related assessments.
- 17.3. pending a necessary assessment, the school board has a duty to accommodate and cannot refuse to accommodate a student's need due to delay in getting an assessment performed that has been requested by the board. There are many educational assessments including on-going evidence-based classroom assessments that can inform how a student learns best.

**Timeline:** one year

## **Interactive Communication in accessible learning environments recommendations**

There is a need to recognize and celebrate students' voice, personal experiences, and family voices as authentic sources of (self) knowledge reflected in co-negotiated program and personalized planning, leading to progressive curriculum, assessment, and instructional design.

The learning environment needs to create spaces for shared learning where all students, including those with diverse learning needs can identify and celebrate their heritage, culture, and identity, for example, ongoing development of provincial curriculum and supports that respect individual disability needs and learning contexts.

The ministries, Boards and public organizations need to have ongoing strategies and procedures that are inclusive and accessible to survey, gather information and create optimal responsive and current learning opportunities for life-long learning for all.

### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

18. Ministry and Boards ensure communication with learners, partners in learning, families, educators, communities and the greater public is open, and fully accessible in preferred formats for persons with disabilities ensuring methods for timely, flexible use and benefit.
  - 18.1. ongoing input, survey feedback and monitoring procedures include open communication, regular policy design and review, and practices that ensure full access, equity and inclusion for a wide range of abilities and needs. This is required by the Ministry of Education, Boards and their partners enabling ongoing lifelong learning for students with disabilities, families and the wider community.

**Timeline:** one year

### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

19. On-line learning environments and on-line resources supported by ministry and Boards facilitate learning and engagement with others:

- 19.1. through alternative mechanisms by which information exchange, collaboration, and learning<sup>C-1(b)</sup> can take place
- 19.2. these learning environments provide accessible curriculum and assessment-informed instructional strategies for a wide range of abilities and needs that students have
- 19.3. the design of these learning spaces be as flexible as possible to accommodate those needs and preferences

**Timeline:** immediate

## **Accessibility hub and shared practice recommendations**

There is a gap in knowing what accessible, equitable, and inclusive curriculum, assessment, and instructional resources have been developed within school boards, but may not yet been shared widely including in multiple, accessible formats. The question that educators need to ask is “Am I designing curriculum to be as accessible as possible with the resources I have or are out there but not yet accessible to me?”

A resource list is appended with an early sampling of potential references.

Inter-agency, inter-ministry transparency, and seamless points of access and policy alignments, enable families, students, and educators the access to early and on-going shared supports and ensures a school has preparedness and readiness for students of varying diverse learning needs.

Ongoing development of universally designed open-source resources, fully accessible and/or conversion-ready shared across boards and agencies, for students, families, board, ministry training, enables greater effective resource use, awareness and capacity building across sectors.

### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

20. A dedicated accessibility hub of continuously updated centrally located (for example, online) resources and research-based initiatives be developed and be openly accessible across education sectors. That the provincial government be responsible for facilitating infrastructure for accessibility hub frameworks across ministries, education sectors, and the public domain and that boards ensure students, families, educators and stakeholders have access to the resources.

**Timeline:** 18 months

### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

21. Research-informed culturally responsive pedagogy and assessment-informed practices be widely shared throughout district school boards through professional learning networks and online knowledge repositories, so that all students can be engaged in a fully accessible and strengths-based education that honours their learner identities.

**Timeline:** immediate

## **Teaching and learning about human rights and disability recommendations**

Students and staff are being taught about Human Rights and Accessible Education in a variety of ways, often in response to particular issues of exclusion and marginalization. A more systemic and integrated approach to embedding Ontario Human Right Code and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* throughout the curriculum, instruction and assessment should provide a barrier-free education for students with disabilities. Access to shared curriculum resources that address lived experiences of those with disability, resources and expertise (for example, inter-ministry, community developed resources, association sources, working documents), helps to develop accessibility and inclusion awareness, knowledge and skills.

## Curriculum and instruction recommendation:

C-1 (b)

22. The ministry and Boards ensure that provincial and alternative curriculum and instruction focused on a fully accessible education for students with disabilities include lived experiences of persons with disabilities, and instruction disability rights, *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* requirements.

**Timeline:** six months

## Assessment and accountability recommendation:

23. Ministry and Board assessment policies and practices ensure the lived experiences of persons with disabilities informs fair, equitable assessment practices connected to the provincial curriculum, core skills, and learning expectations for students and staff.

**Timeline:** six months

## New and specialized programs recommendations

Curriculum is continually being reformed and renewed, responsive to global and local contexts, learning needs and competencies. Education and skill development require accessibility-related design and content, including e-accessibility in curricular experiences. New and emerging programs need to be accessible and barrier-free for inclusion and engagement of students with disabilities.

## Curriculum and instruction recommendation:

24. The ministry and Boards require current and newly developed special programs, for example, French Immersion and Extended French, be open, fully accessible and barrier free for students with disabilities and that the programs be reviewed, monitored and developed utilizing open, transparent processes that provide for timely communication, accessibility and participation by students with disabilities. This requires that:

- 24.1. the ministry set direction and Board required practices that ensure specialized programs are accessible to and effectively accommodate students with disabilities. This requires provision for effective accommodations, accessible locations, instructional materials and program design that is accessible, and barrier free for the needs of students with disabilities.
- 24.2 the Boards develop action plans to ensure specialized programs are open, accessible and barrier free. This includes regular program reviews and evaluation, and public consultation and communications. For example, the plans include data on participation, admission processes, accessible environments, inclusive designs for curriculum and instruction that are responsive to student need.

**Timeline:** six months

## Physical health and wellness, mental health and well-being recommendations

### Physical health and wellness

Regular participation in physical activity develops body composition, skeletal health, and contributes to the prevention or delay of chronic disease. It also improves several aspects of psychological health including self-esteem and promotes social contacts and friendships. It is also an important determinant of health that is associated with a range of physiological benefits in children, including reduced cardiometabolic risk and more preferable body size (Boddy et al., 2014). Physical activity in childhood is also positively associated with mental health (Ahn & Fedewa, 2011) and academic achievement (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011), and it is therefore important that children and young people accrue sufficient physical activity.

Among people with physical disabilities, participation in sport, exercise, and other forms of leisure time <sup>C-1(b)</sup> physical activity (LTPA) has been shown to yield numerous health benefits (Carroll *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, the vast majority of people living with a physical disability do not participate in sufficient PA to achieve health benefits (Carroll *et al.*, 2014). Many children and youth who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) do not exercise sufficiently, play sports, or have access to recreational activities (Foley & McCubbin, 2009; Howie *et al.*, 2012; Pitetti *et al.*, 2009; Rimmer & Rowland, 2008; Whitt-Glover *et al.*, 2006).

## **Mental health and well-being**

Research has called for a push toward school-based mental health resources such that schools and teachers play a significant role in shaping healthy child and youth development (CYAC, 2010). There has been shown a convincing link between mental health problems and difficulties with academic engagement, school achievement, absenteeism, retention/dropout and social relationships (Tolan & Dodge, 2005; Owens *et al.*, 2012; Bradley & Greene, 2013).

## **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

25. The ministry develop a Health and Well-being strategy and action plan that ensures current research and evidence-based practice in physical, cognitive, mental, social and emotional learning and development of all learners, including those with disabilities. This requires human and material supports and resources that are developed, coordinated and financially supported. The ongoing health and well-being of students including those with disabilities requires safe, caring, accepting and inclusive environments, and skill development in social emotional learning such as in healthy relationships, empathy, self-regulation and conflict resolution. This requires that:
  - 25.1. the ministry make available to Boards coordinated resources, guidelines and materials that effectively include students across all disabilities in physical, health and wellness programming within and beyond the school environment (for example, physical education, health education, sports, co-curricular activities). That the resources include disability related sexual health education programming, incorporating training for educators, and that awareness and lived experiences of those with disabilities are part of the overall learning opportunities and content within the inclusive design and education training.
  - 25.2 the Boards incorporate in its physical, health and wellbeing program activities that enable students across all disabilities be included, to participate and engage in healthy physical activity. This includes accessibility for all students through individual engagement in physical activity, co-curricular and participation through necessary communications such as captioning, interpreting and virtual means.
  - 25.3. the ministry, Boards and associated partners collaborate in ongoing review, development and ready access to social, emotional learning resources, approaches and programming that are inclusive for students across all disabilities.
  - 25.4. the ministry and Boards provide Adapted Physical Education (APE) by developing, implementing and monitoring carefully designed physical education programs for students across all disabilities, based on comprehensive assessments, so that students with disabilities develop skills and competencies to enable healthy personal living.
  - 25.5. the ministry and Boards expand the curriculum specifically about mental health to provide balance and connection with physical health and well-being for students with disabilities to support the whole child/whole school approach to student achievement and well-being.
  - 25.6. the ministry and Boards design strengths-based curriculum resources, assessment methods, and professional development for educators with which to assess resiliency needs of all students, including students with disabilities that will promote and enhance their mental health and well-being. These designs will also support students as they mediate the challenges associated with the numerous transitions, they make throughout their school careers.
  - 25.7. this requires that the renewed curriculum and improvement planning address and implement strategies outlined in the School Mental Health Ontario initiative for schools including:
    - a. providing resources, training, and implementation support for evidence-based social-emotional learning that fits within Ontario classrooms.

- b. engaging young people, parents/families and adult allies to develop and share resources for building student mental health literacy at school, home, and in the community.
- c. providing resources, training and implementation support to assist school and system leaders, and school staff, to create and sustain mentally healthy schools and classroom.
- d. providing role-specific resources, training and implementation support to enhance *knowledge, confidence, consistency* and *quality* in responding to mild-moderate student mental health and addiction needs at school.
- e. providing role-specific resources, training and implementation support to respond to serious student mental health and addiction needs in collaboration with system partners.

**Timeline:** one year

## Indigenous education recommendations

The needs of the whole student are the base considerations in Indigenous descriptions of education, and the guiding principle in Indigenous conceptions of student achievement. What matters to Indigenous peoples is that each member of the community is nurtured and challenged in respectful ways. This form of teaching/learning is done through the honouring of the culture, the teachings, the languages and the gifts of each Nation (Hinton, 2011; Zitzer-Comfort, 2008).

### Curriculum and instruction recommendation:

26. The ministry's Indigenous education strategy is designed to improve opportunities for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, including students with disabilities, and to increase knowledge and awareness of all students about indigenous histories, cultures, teachings, languages and perspectives. The strategy requires that:
  - 26.1. the ministry ensures curriculum design and content including Indigenous curriculum is fully accessible and available for students with disabilities.
  - 26.2. the Boards ensure that Indigenous pedagogy, ways of knowing, and experiences (including students across all disabilities) are guided by cultural knowledge and perspectives that can provide fair and unbiased assessment practices, culturally responsive knowledge building and personalized learning pathways to success.
  - 26.3 the ministry and Boards address how student achievement and wellbeing for Indigenous students living with disabilities be reconceptualized to include students' emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the whole being. The focus of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices must address the ways in which education can be reconceptualized to include Indigenous ways of knowing.

**Timeline:** immediate

## Specialized alternative and expanded curriculum and pathways recommendations

Curriculum development and learning expectations that support the learning needs of students with disabilities need to be accessible and responsive to specific individual needs. This includes extensions to curriculum and alternative curriculum resources and learning expectations.

There are limited provincially regulated resources for some disabilities, for example, low incidence disabilities such as vision loss. For example, references such as Expanded Core Curriculum are supported and resourced by some learning institutes. While individual boards provide a variety of differing supports, in specialized, learning centres and regular class there needs to be enhanced development, shared access, and staff development in these areas of expanded and alternative curriculum across the province. Additionally, students who participate in specialized and expanded programs require fair and impartial assessment practices. Instructional designs need to be inclusive and accommodate the needs of students with disabilities ensuring they have every opportunity to



meet diploma and specialize certification requirements (for example, apprenticeship programs, Specialist High Skills Major).<sup>C-1(b)</sup>

### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

27. The Ministry of Education review, develop and provide alternative and expanded curriculum and learning expectations that support the specific learning needs of students with disabilities in access and use of learning resources.
- 27.1. this includes the requirement of specific curriculum, and/or recommended resources for students with disabilities, that address or are tailored to the needs arising from the student's disability or combination of disabilities.
  - 27.2. for students with vision loss, resources including the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) be adopted for required use across each board.
  - 27.3. the ministry upon consultation, review and development of any new provincial curriculum and supporting supplementary resource documents include specialized, expanded or additional curriculum that address the needs arising from specific disability or combination of disabilities.
  - 27.4. for students with developmental disabilities, an inclusive and expanded curriculum be developed and that supplementary resources developed by boards and collaborative partners be readily accessible and shared.
  - 27.5. the ministry in partnership with Boards review and develop practice and documentation related to specialized and expanded programs and certificates leading to graduation to ensure required and supported transitions to student's postsecondary programming, school to workplace and community opportunities are in place.
  - 27.6. boards ensure alternative, expanded curriculum and learning expectations be supported by educators (classroom and special education teachers) and other professionals who interact with the student, and that adequate time and resources be given for professional learning, planning and delivery of these curriculum.

**Timeline:** six months

### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

28. Boards ensure students with disabilities who participate in specialized and expanded programs receive the required adaptations to instructional design and assessment practices so that they have every opportunity afforded them to earn a diploma albeit 16 credits for an Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or 30 credits for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). It is in the design process where many students for example, with intellectual disabilities can achieve credits and pursue diploma pathways (for example, through apprenticeship programs and others).

**Timeline:** one year

## **Resource development and improvement planning recommendations**

Research, evidence-based strategies, and practices in curriculum, assessment and instructional design, review, and implementation, continue to inform and transform education. Barrier-free accessibility for learners with disabilities requires ongoing evidence informed, shared resources to respond to new technologies, contexts and issues. This work is person centred, involves ongoing learning and change at individual, system and institutional levels. Boards as champions for all their students have a duty to accommodate students with disabilities through continuous review of practice and process, collaboration, and shared solutions involving transdisciplinary practice.

### **Curriculum and instruction recommendation:**

29. The ministry in collaboration with Boards develop, make accessible and continue to renew resource tools to support full curriculum and assessment accessibility for students with disability including: <sup>C-1(b)</sup>

- 29.1. resource tools on the process and content of curriculum design.
- 29.2. resource tools and process resources for the development, appropriate design and use of assessment tools and practices.
- 29.3. resource tools and process resources to support educators in the design and development of Universal Design for Learning instructional strategies.
- 29.4. resources tools and process resources for full participation in curriculum, experiential learning, physical and health education, outdoor learning, co-curricular learning.
- 29.5. accountability tools and processes to survey, monitor and communicate student engagement and performance data informed by accessible curriculum, assessment and instruction practices.

**Timeline:** immediate

#### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

30. The design of ongoing multi-year improvement processes, transdisciplinary practice, resource sharing and flexible shared solutions advance the elimination and prevention of barriers for full student participation that is responsive to their needs.

**Timeline:** immediate

### **Long term objectives and timeline alignment for curriculum, instruction and assessment recommendations**

#### **Multi-year improvement accessibility plan**

The ministry, Boards and public organizations need to have procedures and processes in place to meet the long-term objectives of the accessibility standards. This includes the plan for barrier prevention and reduction, systems of gathering information and developing ongoing reporting on the implementation of accessibility standards, recognizing that implementation of all recommendations is ongoing, continuous and responsive to needs of students with disabilities. Guidelines and tools to support process orientation, ongoing development and impact towards standards and continuous improvement enable implementation and goals of equity, accessibility and inclusion.

#### **Assessment and accountability recommendation:**

31. By 2025 the Curriculum Instruction and Assessment recommendations will be implemented and will include:

- 31.1. the establishment by ministry and Boards of an annual review process, whereby year over year selected recommendations are monitored using tools for assessing, evaluating and reporting on progress and ongoing status of overall accessibility standards implementation. The progress monitoring tools would include ministry, Board, association, and other relevant research resources for example, Multi Year Strategic Plans, School Effectiveness Framework, Equity and Cultural Responsiveness frameworks and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* Alliance October 10, 2019 Proposed Framework for the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards and tools to audit and report progress and future next steps.
- 31.2. the ministry develop and communicate access to guidelines to support the annual process for recommendation implementation including a variety of tools that can be utilized for auditing, surveying, feedback and next steps.
- 31.3. the Boards collaborate with the ministry and their respective communities in their planning, processes, progress and communications toward the intended outcomes.

- 31.4. Boards as advocates for all students need to demonstrate continuous updating, collaboration<sup>6-1(b)</sup> and improvement in their duty to accommodate and eliminate barriers for students with disabilities as demonstrated in their annual review and public reporting.

**Timeline:** two years

## Section four: Digital learning and technology

The rationale and motivation for the recommendations of the Digital Learning Technology Group relates to the need for school boards and government ministries to remove systemic barriers for the inclusion and full participation of student and staff in the school community. In the context of digital learning and technology, this requires that boards and government ensure all digital resources are fully accessible to students and staff with disabilities. The recommendations also address training and funding barriers that boards, in particular, face to ensuring the proper use of digital learning technologies.

Based on the groups lived experiences, consultations and research it became clear that several barriers currently exist that prevent students and staff with disabilities from full participation in the life of the school. From learning materials to outdated assistive devices to gaps in board level policies and procedures, many barriers currently exist. The group's recommendations strive to confront these issues and offer solutions that ensure the inclusion and full participation of students with the school community.

### Section four recommendations:

32. Require school boards to consult with educators, parents/caregivers and students in the design of professional development and training activities in the use of accessible technologies.

**Timeline:** immediate

33. Require boards to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate comprehensive training programs for its staff on procuring and using accessible digital technology.

**Timeline:** six months

34. Require school boards to designate an accessible "digital accessibility lead" (a board-level staff appointment) that will support educators in the procurement and use of digital technologies and will be responsible for all digital information at the school and system level.

**Timeline:** immediate

### Accessible digital and technology action plan:

**Rationale:** many school boards do not have policies, procedures or practices to consistently meet the digital and technology requirements to support the learning needs of students with disabilities. This undermines student achievement and well-being for those students. Given the scope of this recommendation an extended timeline is needed.

35. Require all school boards to develop and make public in an accessible format a "Digital and Technology Action Plan" with specific policies, procedures, timelines and outcome evaluation metrics that identify, remove and prevent digital, technology and bureaucratic barriers that impede learning for students with disabilities. This plan shall be updated every two years in light of new and emerging technology.

**Timeline:** six months

For example, the plan should include:

- 35.1. establishing, publicizing and enforcing information technology procurement accessibility requirements, to ensure that no technology is purchased either by a school board unless it ensures full digital accessibility. Digital and information technology accessibility should be included as a requirement in all Requests for Proposal or other tenders for sale of products and services to a school board or the

- ministry. If a vender provides a product that turns out to have accessibility problems, it should be a term of the procurement that the vender will remediate the product at its expense.
- 35.2. ensuring that digital and other technology that is used by or with students is designed based on universal design principles and is accessible to students with disabilities, except where to procure such is impossible without undue hardship.
  - 35.3. a process for researching, evaluating and acquiring new evidence informed accessible technologies.
  - 35.4. websites, intranet content and e-learning software and hardware use a variety of accessible formats.
  - 35.5. each board's Learning Management Systems (LMS) is to be fully accessible to staff and students with disabilities, including those who use adaptive technology. The plan should ensure that no teacher or other, school board staff is able to turn off any feature of the Learning Management System that is accessible in favour of one that is not.
  - 35.6. all accessibility features on digital equipment are turned on and available to ensure that information posted through them will be accessible to students with disabilities, including those using adaptive technology such as screen readers or voice recognition tools.
  - 35.7. board documents affecting students (report cards, assessments, Individual Education Plans etc.) are fully accessible. Software used to produce a school board's documents such as report cards, Individual Education Plans, or other key documents should be designed to ensure that they produce these documents in accessible formats.
  - 35.8. all technology procurement policies and procedures meet accessibility requirements. Any procurement of technology including information technology should include specific accessibility end-user functionality requirements. A condition of procurement should be a requirement that the supplier or vender must remediate any inaccessible product or service at its own expense.
  - 35.9. any textbook used in any learning environment must be accessible to teachers and students with disabilities at the time of procurement.
  - 35.10. electronic documents created at the school board for use in education and other programming and activities should be created in accessible formats unless there is a compelling and unavoidable reason requiring otherwise.
  - 35.11. a school board shall not use PDF format for documents to be used by or in connection with students or their parents unless an accessible alternative format such as MS Word is also simultaneously available, including, for example, for any textbook or other instructional material, school or ministry policy, or student-related document such as report card or Individual Education Plan. For example, if a textbook is available in EPUB format, the textbooks must meet the international standard for that file format. For EPUB it is the W3C Digital Publishing Guidelines currently under review. If a textbook is available in print, the publisher should be required to provide the digital version of the textbook in an accessible format at the same time the print version is delivered to the school/Board.
  - 35.12. ensure that students who are provided assistive technology for use at school can also take them home for home use as well.
  - 35.13. school boards remove any barriers that prevent students with disabilities from fully accessing adaptive technologies such as restrictions on being able to install apps on laptop computers or mobile devices, or firewalls that restrict access to websites needed to facilitate the use of adaptive technology.

## Recommendations for the Ministry of Education:

36. Ensure the Ministry of Education provides sufficient long-term funding through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) to support boards in acquiring and supporting assistive technologies and related hardware and software via enhancements to the Special Education Grant. This should also include funding for any student with any kind of disability defined in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

**Timeline:** immediate

**Rationale:** a joint effort to develop a set of pre-service, in-service and board level training and professional development programs will promote a consistent and leading edge set of practices for ensuring students with disabilities have the tools and supports needed for their learning and well-being. Assisting boards in developing

training programs and tools to measure student progress will ensure consistent progress is made and documented. <sup>C-1 (b)</sup>

### **37. Training programs to support boards:**

- 37.1. develop resource documents, case studies and training modules in collaboration with experts in adaptive technology, students with disabilities, trustee associations, teacher federations, the College of Teachers and Faculties of Education in the use of accessible technologies.
- 37.2. provide school boards resources to support professional development in assistive technology, its application and Universal Design for Learning for school board staff;
- 37.3. assist boards in developing a process for evaluating the effectiveness of training as it frequently relates to student outcomes, teacher knowledge and skills
- 37.4. require training models for school boards to address student training needs for all students receiving assistive technologies
- 37.5. develop student outcome measures using tools as QUIAT and SETT and document within each student's Individual Education Plan.

**Timeline:** one year

### **38. Removing barriers:**

- 38.1. the ministry shall not use PDF formats for documents to be made available for students or parents/guardians, or for Special Education Advisory Committees, unless an accessible alternative format such as MS Word is also simultaneously made available.
- 38.2. the Ministry of Education should establish, implement, publicize and enforce information technology procurement accessibility requirements for any technology to be made available in schools, to ensure that no technology is purchased by the ministry for use by school boards, unless it ensures full digital accessibility, along the same lines as is required above for procurement by school boards.
- 38.3. the ministry's program for funding adaptive technology for students with disabilities shall not bar the use of any category of technology, such as smart phones, which are needed by and effective for those students.
- 38.4. the Ministry of Education should immediately direct T.Y.O. to make its online learning content accessible to persons with disabilities, and to promptly make public a plan of action to achieve this goal, with specific milestones and timelines.
- 38.5. the Ministry of Education should make public a plan of action to swiftly make its own online learning content accessible for persons with disabilities, setting out milestones and timelines, and should report to the public on its progress.

**Timeline:** immediate

**39. Digital learning and technology barrier:** Both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual classroom events and virtual meetings with students, parents and school staff are now common and will likely remain a fact of life in the future. Some virtual meeting platforms are much more accessible than others. Only the most accessible virtual meeting platforms should be used for real time classes and for any meetings with school board staff and families or students.

The virtual platform offerings on the market are evolving and will continue to evolve, as will the degree of their accessibility. A platform that is not very accessible today could become very accessible in the near future, if sufficiently improved. A platform that is accessible today could have its accessibility broken by a software update. Seventy-two school boards should not each have to duplicate efforts at studying the comparative accessibility of different virtual platforms available on the market.

We therefore recommend:

- 39.1. for any real-time classes (sometimes called synchronous learning), or any meetings with school board staff and students or families held virtually rather than in person (such as an Individual Education

Plan or Identification, Placement, and Review Committee meeting), only accessible virtual platforms shall be used by a school board. <sup>C-1(b)</sup>

- 39.2. each school board shall make public the name of the virtual platform or platforms it uses and publicly certify that it has confirmed that it is an accessible virtual meeting platform.
- 39.3. the Ministry of Education should regularly monitor and have tested the accessibility of major virtual meeting platforms, shall make public the results of its comparisons, and shall provide a list of approved accessible options for virtual platforms to school boards on a quarterly basis.
- 39.4. the Ministry of Education and each school board shall make public a phone number and email address for the public to contact to report accessibility problems experienced with virtual meeting platforms used in the education system. The aggregated feedback received shall be shared with the public and school boards on a quarterly basis.

**Timeline:** immediate

## Section five: Organizational barriers

The initial consultation for the Education Accessibility Standards identified a significant number of organizations barriers, particularly concerning special education processes such as the Identification, Placement and Review Committee and the Individual Education Plan processes. Parents raised concern about their lack of meaningful participation in these processes.

Many concerns were also raised about exclusions/refusal to admit which disproportionately impact students with disabilities. Other issues identified by the consultation raised concerns about differences in terminology and understanding of disability rights. In addition, there are challenges in the delivery and access to student support provided in school by community agencies funded by other ministries.

Transitions was also identified as an organization barrier, included transitions into school, between schools, and out of secondary school to postsecondary education, employment or community living.

The recommendations are based on the extensive knowledge of the education system of committee members, their personal experience and input from the sectors they represent.

### Section five recommendations:

#### **Compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recommendations**

**Barrier:** the initial consultation process and the review of relevant documents highlighted the disconnect between the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Education Act* and related regulations. In part, this reflects the development of regulations under the Education Act for students with disabilities prior to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Significant areas of difference relate to the rights of students who are determined to be “exceptional” under Regulation 181/98, Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils. The categories of exceptionality do not directly relate to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* definition of disabilities and this means that some students with disabilities are excluded from the right to special education programs and services. It creates a two-tier system.

In addition, the word “accommodations” has two different meanings in education and in a human rights context. Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, a person with a disability has a right to “accommodations” to prevent discrimination to the point of “undue hardship” of the service provider. In education, the term is used in reference to assessment, environmental and instructional accommodations for learning. This discrepancy needs to be addressed with a common definition and understanding.

## 40. Our recommendations are:

The Ministry of Education shall:

- 40.1. ensure that no student with a disability is excluded from eligibility for programs and services, including special education programs and services, that they require due to definitions or criteria that are inconsistent with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- 40.2. broaden the definition of accommodations or “accommodate” used in special education to be consistent with the term, accommodations, used in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* so that school boards shall ensure that all students receive needed services, supports accommodations or other educational opportunities including but not limited to special education programs and services.
- 40.3. Ensure that school boards fulfil their duty to accommodate the disability-related needs of students with disabilities, in relation to all school-related activities, and that the policies are in place to ensure that they do so.

**Timeline:** immediate

District School Boards shall:

- 40.4. ensure that students with a disability shall have access to and receive any programs and services, including special education or other disability-related services or supports that they require, in accordance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code* on the duty to accommodate persons with disabilities.

**Timeline:** immediate

**Inter-ministry collaboration: to ensure students with disabilities receive the support they need from other ministry-funded services at school recommendations**

**Barrier:** the following recommendations have been developed to address the challenges faced by students who need services from the community in order to access learning and participate effectively in the school life. Without these services, such as rehabilitation services or mental health services, the student’s education may be negatively impacted. These recommendations address the lack of coordination and accountability between different ministries who are each responsible for supporting the student at school.

41. To ensure that students with disabilities receive all of the supports and services that they require at school from programs and services operated by other ministries, including the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services our recommendations are:

- 41.1. the Government of Ontario designate a lead from the Cabinet Office or by a selected ministry, to be responsible to make sure that children/youth programs are adequately funded and that decision making on changes to programs and services are taken with full consideration for the impact on children and youth in all environments.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 41.2. collaborative planning for the provision of services and supports by other Ministries and community agencies should occur throughout the system, including between provincial ministries, and at the school board and school level, to ensure consistency and continuity of services to individual students.

**Timeline:** six months

- 41.3. the documentation of plans to support students at school be integrated, building on the effective practices related to single plans of care and using the Individual Education Plans as the key document for students with disabilities who need accommodations and other programs and services at school.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 41.4. professional development should be provided to school staff including administrators, teachers, and educational assistants, about community prevention and intervention services delivered to students at school and collaborative planning and delivery of these services and supports. Planning and delivery of

the professional development for school staff should be held jointly with community professionals<sup>C-1(b)</sup> who also need professional development about school services. An example of this type of joint professional training, to support tiered interventions for occupational therapy, was used in the CanChild Partnering for Change pilot project.

**Timeline:** six months

- 41.5. the inter-ministerial guidelines for transition planning for students with developmental disabilities (2011) has resulted in improvements in school-family and community planning for students after they leave school and this model should be used for transition planning for a broader group of students with disabilities who will require access to support services after graduation.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 41.6. the Ministry of Education work with other provincial ministries to develop common transition protocols or guidelines to support effective transition planning for students with disabilities. In addition, a provincial repository should be developed for the sharing of effective transition practices and resources.

**Timeline:** six months

- 41.7. a policy should be developed to ensure integrated and collaborative planning between community agencies and school boards for students with disabilities who require services delivered at school, that are funded by other ministries.

**Timeline:** six months

- 41.8. an education advisory committee on autism should be established and include stakeholders from the education sector, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Health, parents and autistic individuals consistent with the recommendations from the Ontario Advisory Panel Report (2019). The scope of the role of the committee is described in the detailed recommendations for a new needs-based Ontario autism program, alignment with other ministries - Ministry of Education, Page 33-39.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 41.9. the recommendations from the Ontario Advisory Panel Report (2019) regarding mental health services be implemented. In particular, the recommendations on capacity building amongst school staff about awareness of the mental health needs of students with autism, intervention strategies and the referral pathways for community support. (Alignment with Other Ministries - Ministry of Health page 40 to 46).

**Timeline:** six months

- 41.10 dispute resolution mechanisms be developed at the student, school board and provincial level regarding access and delivery of student support services from provincial and community partners. The dispute mechanism for students and families should be user friendly and provide timely decisions, building on the approaches provided by the Supporting Success, A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Disputes Regarding Special Education Programs and Services (2007). The process for resolving systemic disputes should be solution focused and include accountability mechanisms to ensure follow up and evaluation of solutions provided.

**Timeline:** six months

## Accountability recommendations

**Barrier:** a significant barrier that has been identified by families is the lack of accountability for the implementation of policies and regulations and the delivery of programs and services to students. Families of students with disabilities feel like there is nowhere to turn with their concerns about programs and services that are not being delivered or only partially meet the student needs. Historically, many regulations and policies have not included accountability mechanism such as reporting, reviewing annual progress, or publicly reporting on implementation. Section on Accountability and Timelines covers many of these issues. This section is mainly about what a student, or a parent of a student, can do to raise and resolve concerns. The default mechanism has been an appeal to the Ontario Human Rights Commission Tribunal which can be an expensive and time-consuming process.

Our recommendations are:

42. The Ministry of Education shall:



- 42.1. ensure accountability and oversight to ensure that District School Boards are fulfilling their<sup>C-1.(b)</sup> responsibilities to meet the needs of students with disabilities.  
**Timeline:** immediate
- 42.2. create an ombudsman/oversight office where students' and parents' concerns regarding the provision of education for students with disabilities can be investigated and resolved.  
**Timeline:** six months
- 42.3. designate an assistant deputy minister with the needed authority to be responsible for ensuring a barrier-free and accessible school system for students with disabilities.  
**Timeline:** immediate
- 42.4. mandate that the designated assistant deputy minister shall have in place a permanent advisory committee representing individuals with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their parents, that reflects the needs of high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities.  
**Timeline:** immediate
- 42.5. ensure monitoring, auditing, surveying, and feedback of District School Boards' provision of education to students with disabilities, including special education and accessibility plans, to ensure compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.  
**Timeline:** six months
- 42.6. collaborate with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility and make public and provide effective practices in terms of Special Education and Accessibility Planning.  
**Timeline:** immediate

District School Boards shall:

- 42.7. ensure and demonstrate their accountability that the needs of students with disabilities are met.  
**Timeline:** six months
- 42.8. ensure that their mission, vision and values statements, and all of their policies, procedures, and practices, are in compliance with the equality rights of students with disabilities in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.  
**Timeline:** six months

## Individual education plans recommendations

**Barrier:** currently, students with special education needs are entitled to have an Individual Education Plan. This right should be extended to all students with disabilities. Parents/guardians must be consulted in the development of the Individual Education Plan and regular review and updating. Yet Ontario's special education regulations do not spell out important and much-needed details on such things as:

- exactly how the Individual Education Plan is to be developed, and how parents, guardians, and the student is to be involved in that process.
  - what parents /guardians of students with disabilities are to be told in advance or during the Individual Education Plan development process, about the Individual Education Plan development process, and their rights in the Individual Education Plan development process.
  - establishing a prompt, fair, independent and impartial process for parents /guardians of students with disabilities to go if they are not satisfied with the Individual Education Plan that a school board proposes, in order to get a review of the proposed Individual Education Plan.
  - establishing a prompt, fair, independent and impartial process which parents /guardians of students with disabilities can use, if they believe that the school board is not fully implementing a student's Individual Education Plan.
43. The Ministry of Education shall mandate that any students with disabilities their disability have the right to an Individual Education Plan and should be provided one by their school board to ensure that students with disabilities obtain the accommodations or programs and services needed to support their success at

school.

**Timeline:** one year

44. The Ministry of Education shall revise the format and content of the Individual Education Plan to include accommodations, as defined by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, as well as supports or services that a student with disabilities needs to enable them to fully participate in and fully benefit from all opportunities available at school. It should include accommodations, supports or services in relation to all aspects of school life, including those needed for education and learning, for emergencies, for health and safety, behaviour or social engagement. The aim should be to consolidate to the extent possible all such planning for the student in one place. The portions of the Individual Education Plan that are needed to be shared with specific school staff members to implement them shall be shared with those staff members. Otherwise, the student's confidentiality in connection with the Individual Education Plan shall be maintained.

**Timeline:** six months

45. The Ministry of Education make changes to the Individual Education Plan content and format, and the method of reporting to the ministry about students with an Individual Education Plan, to ensure that consistent and comparable data can be collected and aggregated from all school boards. (See also Section 6 Recommendations about Data Collection).

**Timeline:** six months

46. Each school board should notify the parents/guardians of students with disabilities, and where applicable, the students themselves, of their right to have an Individual Education Plan. All students with disabilities who want or need an Individual Education Plan shall have one provided.

**Timeline:** immediate

47. The Ministry of Education shall publicly report on what changes have been made to the standards for Individual Education Plans, and regularly audit school board Individual Education Plans for compliance with the new standards.

**Timeline:** six months

48. School boards shall conduct annual audits of Individual Education Plan compliance and publicly report on the results of the audit.

**Timeline:** 18 months

## Parent and student participation recommendations

**Barrier:** parents /guardians of students with disabilities, and students with disabilities themselves, need direct, easy access to important information about the menu of programs, services, supports and accommodations available for students including students with disabilities, and how to request or advocate for them. They have a right to know all the important information they need including, for example what is available, what persons and what office to approach to get this information and to or to request or change the student's placements, programs, supports, services or accommodations, or to raise concerns about whether the school board is effectively meeting the student's disability-related education needs.

This information should be easy to find, and should be readily available in accessible formats, in plain language and in multiple languages. Parents report that too often, it is very difficult to find out this important and basic information. It is inefficient and unreliable to leave this responsibility to individual principals, spread across Ontario, to each deal with this as they choose. When it is left to each principal, without clear requirements and pre-prepared materials for parents, guardians and students, school boards won't be able to ensure that this important need is met.

As well, parents/guardians of students with disabilities report that too often, they find it very difficult frustrating and demoralizing to advocate for their child's needs in the school system. Depending on the board, the school and the people involved, it can be a welcoming, positive and cooperative process, or an alienating, bureaucratic and rigid process.

When there is a dispute about the Individual Education Plan contents or implementation, parent/guardians/students do not have a dispute mechanism and some parents, guardians or students resort to

filing a human rights complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. Filing a human rights complaint<sup>C-1(b)</sup> involves great legal expenses, delays and hardships to a family. A dispute mechanism that is easy to use and that can resolve issues quickly is needed.

49. **We recommend:** All of the students with disabilities and the parents/guardians of those students have the right to fully participate in the planning and implementation of the student's educational plan/program.  
**Timeline:** immediate

The Ministry of Education shall:

- 49.1. ensure effective processes and resources used for planning for all students with disabilities to ensure that students and parents/guardians are able to participate effectively in the process.  
**Timeline:** six months
- 49.2. develop a timely formal process/dispute resolution mechanism for parents/guardians and students to appeal the contents or implementation of individual education plans, to make necessary changes if required, and to ensure that district school boards follow it.  
**Timeline:** six months
- 49.3. in cases where disputes cannot be resolved at the school board level, appoint an arm's length third-party mediator when parents and/or students can show that the school is not effectively meeting their needs.  
**Timeline:** one year

The District School Boards shall:

- 49.4. provide parents/guardians of students with disabilities, and where applicable, students with disabilities themselves, with timely and effective information, in accessible formats, on the available services, programs and supports for students with disabilities (whether or not they are classified as students with special education needs under the Education Act and Regulations).  
**Timeline:** six months
- 49.5. ensure that parents, guardians, and students are informed, as early as possible, in a readily accessible and understandable way, about important information such as:
  - a. what "special education" is and who is entitled to receive it.
  - b. what the rights are to full participation in and full inclusion in all the school board's education and other programming, and to be accommodated in connection with those programs under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, whether or not the student is classified as a student with special education needs under Ontario's Education Act and regulations.
  - c. the menu of options, placements, programs, services, supports and accommodations available at the school board for students with disabilities.
  - d. who to approach at the school board to get this information, and how to request placements, programs, supports, services or accommodations for students with disabilities, including the development of Individual Education Plans, or to raise concerns about whether the school board is effectively meeting the student's education needs.**Timeline:** six months
- 49.6. ensure parents and guardians of students with disabilities can easily find out and, where necessary visit, different placement, program, service and support options for a student with a disability, to ensure that the parent, guardian or the student, is knowledgeable about the options for placement, program or services that are available to be provided to that student.  
**Timeline:** immediate
- 49.7. develop, implement, and make public an action plan to ensure parent/guardian/students have access to the information they need and meet the requirements of this section. The action plan should incorporate the following:
  - a. the goal of the plan.
  - b. what information will be made available to parent/guardian/students with disabilities.
  - c. how information will be formatted to make it easy to understand and jargon free.
  - d. the types of formats that will be used to make the information available and accessible.

- e. where information will be available to parents/guardians/students (in schools and on-line <sup>C-1(b)</sup> including school and school board websites).
- f. the timelines for distributing information to all parent/guardians/students and the key transition points when information will be provided (such as at start of school, at least once annually, and as part of student planning, including individual education plan development and review).
- g. who will be responsible for ensuring information is provided to parent/guardian/students with disabilities.
- h. how the distribution of information will be tracked or measured.
- i. what measures will be used to evaluate the value and impact of providing the information.
- j. how the action plan will be evaluated.
- k. how the action plan will be shared publicly with regular progress updates.

**Timeline:** six months

- 49.8. ensure that each school shall send home an introductory pamphlet, or equivalent, to all parent/guardians at the start of each school year, or when first registering a student in the board, and not only to families of those students who are already being identified as having a disability.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 49.9. ensure provision of in-person and virtual events to help families learn how to navigate disability-related school board processes. Where possible these should be streamed online and archived online as a resource for families to watch at a convenient time.

**Timeline:** six months

- 49.10. ensure an effective process for parents and guardians of students with disabilities, and, the students themselves, to effectively take part in the development and implementation of a student's plans for meeting and accommodating their disability-related needs, including (but not limited to) their individual education plan.

**Timeline:** six months

- 49.11. consistent with the Ministry of Education policy recommendations, parents and guardians and students with disabilities must be invited to take part in a all school planning meetings, including meetings where accommodation plans will be made and where the individual education plan will be developed or reviewed. Such meetings should include the following:
  - a. the school board should bring to the table all key professionals who can contribute to the discussions.
  - b. the family should be invited to bring to the table any supports and professionals that can assist the family and the planning process.
  - c. parents should have the right to bring with them anyone who can assist them in advocating for their child.
  - d. parents/families should be given a wide range of options for participating for example, in person or by phone. They should be told in advance who will attend from the school board.
  - e. any proposal for accommodations including a draft individualized education plan should include a summary of key points to assist families in understanding them.
  - f. if a school board refuses to provide an accommodation, service, or support for a child's disability that a parent, guardian, the student requests, or if the school board does not provide an accommodation or support that it has agreed to provide, the school board shall be required to promptly provide written reasons for that refusal. It should let the family and student know that they can request written reasons.

**Timeline:** six months

- 49.12. consistent with the recommendations for a Ministry of Education policy on student and parent engagement, a school board level dispute resolution mechanism is available to parents of students with disabilities, and to those students, for concerns related to accommodations, including individual education plans.

The dispute resolution process shall be:

- a. fair, independent and impartial
- b. respectful

- c. non-adversarial
- d. timely
- e. accessible
- f. one where the decision is provided in writing.

**Timeline:** one year

- 49.13. after the dispute resolution process is completed, if the family is not satisfied, they have the right to bring their concerns regarding the proposed accommodations, including the individual education plan, to a designated senior official at the school board with authority to approve the requested accommodations, for a further review.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 49.14. in cases of dispute, the ministry shall appoint a mediator.

**Timeline:** six months

- 49.15. no proposed services, supports or accommodations that the school board is prepared to offer shall be withheld from a student pending a review.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 49.16. notify parents and guardians, who themselves have a disability, that they have a right to have their disability-related needs accommodated in these processes, so that they can fully participate in them. For example, they should be notified that they have a right to receive any information or documents to be used in any such meeting or process in an accessible format.

**Timeline:** immediate

- 49.17. ensure that students with a disability who move from school board to school board, or school to school, have the right to an individual education plan with same or comparable programs, services and accommodations. If the school board, or the school to which the student transfers proposes to deny or to reduce those accommodations or supports, the parent/guardian/student should be able to take their concern to the dispute resolution process. all accommodations shall be maintained until and unless, through the dispute resolution procedures set out in these accessibility standards, the school board has justified a reduction of those accommodations.

**Timeline:** one year

- 49.18. ensure the training and development of a roster of helpers (sometimes known as system navigators) for parents of students with disabilities to help them navigate the often-complex world of supports for students with disabilities both within the system and with partner community agencies.

**Timeline:** six months

- 49.19. ensure that parent/guardians and students with disabilities have the opportunity and training to develop self advocacy skills.

**Timeline:** six months

The ministry and District School Boards shall:

- 49.20. collate effective practices for enhancing student and parent involvement from around the province and develop a repository and/or mechanism to share the resources with school boards and make them publicly available.

**Timeline:** six months

### **Exclusions/refusals to admit to school/reduced school hours recommendations**

**Barrier:** parents have concerns with the use of the principal's power to exclude students from school. (Also called refusal to admit to school) Section 265(1)(m) of the *Education Act* requires principals to:

"Subject to an appeal to the board, to refuse to admit to the school or classroom a person whose presence in the school or classroom would in the principal's judgment be detrimental to the physical or mental well being of the pupils."

Concerns are expressed that a significant proportion of those excluded from school are students with disabilities. The Ministry of Education does not track data on exclusions and does not require school boards to track data on

them, in contrast to suspensions and expulsions.

Parents identified a lack of due process, such as:

- not being told the reason for the refusal to admit or how to challenge it
- no limit on how long the refusal to admit can continue
- the absence of a plan for the student's return to school
- no assured provision of alternative education program while the student is excluded
- no consistent and fair process to appeal the refusal to admit

There are many stories from parents about formal and informal arrangements for a student with disabilities to attend for less than the full school day or school week without the parents' voluntary consent. The school board places the student on a "modified school day." There are no consistent practices for when or how this can occur, the documentation to be kept, or plans for return to full time school.

Concerns have been raised that in some situations, a student with disabilities is excluded from school directly or indirectly because the school has not effectively accommodated that student, as is required by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the Charter of Rights.

A survey of Ontario school boards showed that a majority of boards have no policy on how and when a principal may refuse to admit a student. Of the 33 boards for which a policy was obtained, these policies vary substantially. A student, excluded from school, and their parents are treated very differently from one board to the next. Students and parents across Ontario deserve the same safeguards. Principals are placed in a difficult position, not knowing what they can and should do.

These recommendations seek to reduce or eliminate the number and duration of exclusion of students with disabilities. References to "refusal to admit" includes formal and informal exclusions, and exclusions from school for all or part of the school day. These measures should be set out in the ~~K-12~~ Education Accessibility Standards.

Our recommendations regarding Refusal to Admit are:

50. The ~~K-12~~ Education Accessibility Standards should require the following of any school board and of the Ministry of Education where it operates schools:

- 50.1. exclusions/refusals to admit should only be imposed in rare cases when it is demonstrably necessary to protect the health and safety of students or others at school, and only after all relevant accommodations for the student up to the point of undue hardship have been explored or attempted.
- 50.2. refusal to admit of a student shall not last more than five consecutive school days, unless formally extended following the due process requirements required for an initial refusal to admit.
- 50.3. refusal to admit a student to school cannot be used, in whole or in part, for purposes of discipline of a student, or as a form of discipline of that student. A student shall not be subjected to a refusal to admit to school for purposes of facilitating a police investigation.
- 50.4. when considering whether to refuse to admit a student to school, the principal and school board should take into account the fact that excluding a student from school is contrary to the student's right to an education. The principal and school board should also proceed from the starting point that the rights of students with disabilities under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, including their right to accommodation of their disability-related needs up to the point of undue hardship, take primacy over all other Ontario laws and policies.
- 50.5. the principal must make a family aware of the possibility of exclusion as early as that option realistically presents itself as being under consideration. The school board shall have a mandatory meeting with the family before a refusal to admit is imposed, or if crisis circumstances arise without any warning, as soon after the refusal to admit as possible (a pre-exclusion meeting). The meeting should advise the student and/or family of the school's intention to exclude the child, the reasons for the exclusion and underlying events, the process for the family to contest the exclusion, the demonstrated outcomes for

which the school board shall be looking, and an explanation that a subsequent meeting day will be set within a reasonable timeframe where the principal and parent(s) will review progress and discuss a re-entry plan for the student.

- 50.6. parents and guardians who themselves have a disability shall be notified that they have a right to have their disability-related needs accommodated where needed to take part in any meetings, appeals or other procedures regarding an actual or contemplated refusal to admit. For example, they should be notified that they have a right to receive any information or documents to be used in any such meeting or process in an accessible format.
- 50.7. any student excluded from attending school shall be provided an equivalent and sufficient educational program while away from school. a written plan for the student's education should be required, prepared immediately, and shared with the family.
- 50.8. a mandatory fair procedure should be established that the school board must follow when refusing to admit a student. These procedures should ensure accountability of the school board and its employees, including:
  - a. a student and their families should have all the procedural protections that are required when a school board is going to impose discipline such as a suspension or expulsion.
  - b. the prior review and written approval of the superintendent should be required before a refusal to admit is imposed. If it is an emergency, then the superintendent should be required to review and approve this decision as quickly afterwards as possible, or else the refusal to admit should be terminated.
  - c. superintendent should independently assess whether the school board has sufficient grounds to refuse to admit the student and has met all the requirements of the school board's refusal to admit policy (including ensuring alternative education programming is in place for the student).
  - d. the principal should be required to immediately notify the student and his or her family in writing, co-signed by the superintendent, of the refusal to admit, the reasons for it, and the duration. The letter should be in plain language, translated if necessary, and include:
    - i. what a refusal to admit is and the duration
    - ii. the permissible reasons
    - iii. the school board's process for reviewing that decision, and
    - iv. the student/family's right to appeal (including how to use that right of appeal)
    - v. steps that the school board has taken or will be taking to provide an alternative education and to expedite a student's return to school
    - vi. the expected timeline for the completion of these steps
  - e. a refusal to admit a student to school should not be extended for an accumulated total of more than 15 days (within a surrounding 30-day period) without the independent review and written approval of the director of the, school board or their designate.
  - f. an extension of refusal to admit must first consider excluding the student from a single class, and then the option of excluding the student from that entire school, and only as a last resort, excluding the student from all schools at that school board.
  - g. the refusal to admit shall be documented, and the record shall include information on:
    - i. the reason for the refusal to admit
    - ii. the duration of the refusal to admit and any extensions
    - iii. the plan to provide an educational program to the student for the duration of the refusal to admit
    - iv. the plan for the student to return to full time school attendance
  - h. while the student is excluded, the school board should undertake ongoing efforts to facilitate the student's return to school as quickly as possible. The return to school plan shall include meetings with the family and student to plan for the return and review the additional supports that may be needed.
- 50.9. to ensure that appeals to the school board under section 265(1)(m) of the Education Act from a refusal to admit a student to school are prompt and fair, the following should be required:
  - a. a student excluded from school or their parent/guardian should be permitted to launch an appeal from a refusal to admit at any time that the refusal to admit continues. no time limit for filing an appeal should be imposed.

- b. no school board shall set an arbitrary length of time that an appeal hearing can take. The<sup>C-1(b)</sup> appeal hearing should take as long as needed for a fair hearing. The excluded student or their family should not have an arbitrary prior time limit imposed on their oral presentation of their appeal. They should be allowed the time they need to present their appeal. They shall be permitted to present relevant evidence to support their appeal if they wish.
- c. at an appeal, the school staff should present their reasons first on why the exclusion is justified and should continue. The student or their family shall then be given a chance to present their case on why the student should not have been excluded and why they should be allowed to return to school.
- d. an appeal should be held quickly to minimize the time the student is away from school. The board of trustees shall hear and/or determine the appeal within fifteen business days of receiving the notice of intention to appeal (unless the parties agree to an extension).
- e. once an appeal is launched, the school board shall prepare for the student, their parents, and the trustees, a report on the reasons for the refusal to admit, the factual background, and the efforts to return the student to school since the exclusion began. The board staff shall arrange a meeting (pre-appeal meeting) with the student and their family to try to resolve the case or narrow the issues, explain the process, disclose any information the student and their family need, and canvass and address any other matter that might help ensure a smooth and timely appeal.
- f. the appeal should be heard in closed session by the entire board of trustees, not a subcommittee (unless the board can show it has legal authority to delegate this decision to a subcommittee). Any trustee that votes on a decision in an appeal must have been present for the entire argument of the appeal.
- g. a board of trustees, hearing an appeal from a refusal to admit, should consider whether the school board has justified the student's initial exclusion from school and its continuation. The burden should be on the school board to justify the exclusion from school.
- h. if the student is not successful on the appeal, they should have a further avenue to appeal to court, with mediation available, or to an expert tribunal designated to hear such cases.
- 50.10. the school board shall create an emergency process and fund for accelerating education disability accommodations needed to facilitate a student's remaining at or promptly returning to school, in connection with an actual or contemplated refusal to admit.
- 50.11. information and data on refusals to admit shall be collected and aggregated data reported publicly by school boards and by the Ministry of Education.
- 50.12. the Ministry of Education should develop a central repository/mechanism for sharing effective practices of alternatives to exclusion/refusal to admits and modified days in order to support school board efforts to reduce the number and duration of refusal to admits and modified days.

**Timeline:** one year for boards; six months for the Ministry of Education

### Data collection recommendations

**Barrier:** the review of accessibility barriers in education and the discussions by the committee members have identified a major barrier as the lack of data collection regarding accessibility and students with disabilities, as well as the challenges of comparing data from across the province. A critical change that is needed is to start tracking data about students with disabilities, rather than on students who have been identified as 'exceptional.' The following recommendations focus on ensuring comparable data is collected, analysed and publicly reported regarding students with disabilities and the accessibility barriers they face.

51. The K-12 Education Accessibility Standards should require the following of any school board and of the Ministry of Education where it operates schools:

- 51.1. Collect data on students with all types of disability as defined in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, using individual education plans, or the identification, placement, and review committee, and such other methods that the ministry and, school boards devise, rather than only collecting data on students with an "exceptionality" as defined under current Ontario special education laws.



- a. data should be collected about students with disabilities that is consistent and comparable <sup>C-1(b)</sup> across the province according to the parameters below.
- b. data collection should accurately report the numbers of students with each kind of disability. where a student has more than one disability, each disability would be separately counted.
- 51.2. data should also be collected on the accommodations, or programs and services that are to be provided to the student.
- 51.3. collect student data on all incidences of exclusion/refusal to admit, consistent with the recommendations related to exclusions and modified days in Section 7. The data collected should include whether the student has a disability, the nature of the incident, the length of the exclusion/refusal to admit, reasons for the exclusion/modification in writing, the educational services provided to the student while excluded from school and the plan for return to full time school attendance.
- 51.4. collect student data on the number of students who are on a modified day, including reason for modified day, duration, and appeals, if any, as well as about the alternative education program provided.
- 51.5. collect and analyse annual data on the number of students who are accessing professional services and assessments provided by Regulated Health Professionals and other specialists, both from school board services and community partners who delivery services in schools. Further the data collected should be in compliance with a standardized protocol designed by the Ministry of Education (see also data collection recommendation four). Data collected should include the number of days students wait for the assessments and be publicly reported.
- 51.6. collect information on the numbers of staff with specialized expertise relating to students with disabilities such as:
  - a. teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing
  - b. teachers of the visually impaired
  - c. applied behavioural analysts
  - d. speech-language pathologists
  - e. audiologists
  - f. physiotherapists, occupational therapists
  - g. assistive technology
  - h. and other key personnel
- 51.7. publicly report on an annual basis data related to disability, exclusions, modified day, wait times for professional assessments, and the number and types of staff who instruct students with disabilities

**Timeline:** one year

Ministry of Education shall:

- 51.8. collect all of the above data form each school board and:
  - a. publicly report on the data referred to above, as an aggregate and on a school board by school board basis.
  - b. identify changes over previous year(s) and any gaps or deficits or areas for improvement.
  - c. develop a provincial action plan to resolve gaps or unmet needs.
- 51.9. redesign the mandatory contents of the individual education plans to support collection of data about students with disabilities and the accommodations, or programs and services, which are required to support their needs.
- 51.10. provide a standardized provincial rubric for documenting the number of professional and specialist assessments provided by each school board annually that includes information on the prioritization criteria used in referring students for assessments and the length of time from identification of the need for the assessment and the assessment completion and results shared.

**Timeline:** one year

Ministry of Education/Equity Secretariat shall:

- 51.11. ensure the collection of student census data includes information about disability, including the type of disability, or disabilities, the intersectionality of disability with other key factors such as race,

indigenous identity, sexual identity and socio-economic factors. Data collection should be based on <sup>C-1 (b)</sup> processes and questions that are consistent for all school boards.

- 51.12. analyse data related to disability and report publicly on information related to the number and types of disabilities and the intersectionality of disability with other factors. In addition, the data should be linked to student outcomes and achievements, including graduation rates, credit accumulation, course selection and other measures.
- 51.13. use disability information and analysis to identify gaps and develop plans to improve the outcomes and achievement of students with disabilities.

**Timeline:** one year

### **School board accessibility committees and plans recommendations**

**Barrier:** earlier standards of *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* have required organizations, including school boards and the ministry, to document their multi-year plans for improving accessibilities, including identifying specific barriers. While some school boards have multi-stakeholder accessibility committees, there are significant variations in the membership, roles and responsibilities of accessibility committees. The committee members believe that the development of more comprehensive expectations for accessibility committees and plans will improve education accessibility and accountability and remove accessibility barriers. In addition, these recommendations identify the importance and value of having students and individuals with disabilities with lived experience included in these committees and plans.

52. The ~~K-12~~ Education Accessibility Standards should require the following of any school board and of the schools operated by the Ministry of Education to:

- 52.1. establish an Accessibility Committee and develop multi-year accessibility plans that identify barriers, establish plans to eliminate the barriers and ensure compliance with accessibility standards.
- 52.2. designate an accessibility lead staff reporting to the Director of Education. Ensure that the membership of the school board Accessibility Committee includes senior board officials with responsibility for human resources, teaching and learning, physical facilities, information technology, procurement, transportation, as well as students and individuals with disabilities.
- 52.3. assign the respective responsibilities of the lead staff and committee members to oversee the planning and monitoring of accessibility compliance with the accessibility standards.
- 52.4. systematically review educational programming, services, facilities, and equipment to identify recurring accessibility barriers within that organization that can impede the full and effective participation and inclusion of students with disabilities, as well as strategies to eliminate those barriers.
- 52.5. mandate that the contents of the accessibility plan to include:
  - a. processes to identify accessibility barriers, including complaints/reports from schools, students, and community members.
  - b. plans for removing and preventing accessibility barriers.
  - c. clear assignment of responsibilities for action.
  - d. performance measures for monitoring progress.
  - e. requirements to report to the school board's trustees regularly.
  - f. requirements for seeking input from the school board's special education advisory committee.
  - g. an annual report on progress towards the elimination of accessibility barriers.
  - h. feedback mechanisms to collect and review input from school accessibility committees, staff students and the community.
  - i. require school boards to publicly report on the accessibility plan and progress to implementation, as well as a summary of feedback on accessibility barriers and strategies.

**Timeline:** one year

- 52.6. the Ministry of Education should be required to designate an office or role, such as an assistant deputy minister, responsible for achieving a barrier-free and accessible school system for students with

disabilities. This office or person, should have in place a permanent advisory committee representing individuals with disabilities, including students, that are representative of both high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. As part of the role, the office or lead should publicly report on the progress of the ministry and school boards to improve accessibility annually. <sup>C-1 (b)</sup>

**Timeline:** six months

- 52.7. the Ministry of Education shall provide templates and resources to ensure consistency of processes and documentation for accessibility committees and accessibility plans.
- 52.8. the Ministry of Education shall provide school boards with accessibility expectations for programs and services.
- 52.9. the Ministry of Education shall establish a publicly accessible depository and/or other mechanisms for the sharing of best practices with school boards and other stakeholders about accessible education programs, services and facilities.
- 52.10. the Ministry of Education should be required to annually:
  - a. analyze the barriers and accessibility problems identified by each school board 's accessibility committee, and the actions identified or proposed for corrective action.
  - b. post a report to the public that identifies the recurring barriers experienced in Ontario school boards and share actions that are being taken or proposed to correct these. This includes the requirement to identify areas where corrective action has not being taken or where more is needed.

**Timeline:** six months

District School Boards shall:

- 52.11. establish at each school an Accessibility Committee that would include the Principal or designate, staff, students, families, and community groups, to identify accessibility barriers and possible solutions to address them. The committee will provide input to the School Board Accessibility Committee and/or lead staff responsible for accessibility. This will ensure that accessibility barriers unique to each school are identified and addressed as quickly as possible.
- 52.12. establish a dedicated resource within the school board, or shared among school boards, to convert instructional materials to an accessible format, where needed, on a timely basis.
- 52.13. ensure that all schools create an accessible and welcoming environment for students with disabilities and their families, including those family members with disabilities. This includes ensuring schools encourage and make it easy to seek accommodations for their disabilities.

**Professional learning recommendations**

**Barrier:** the earlier sections on attitudes, technology and curriculum have identified the importance and value of professional development about ableism, accessibility, *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, *Ontario Human Rights Code* and disability as critical to the effective education of students with disabilities. These recommendations focus on professional development related to organizational barriers the related recommendations.

53. Ministry of Education shall:

- 53.1. ensure that training is provided to teachers, and other staff, on new data collection methods for students with disabilities once standards are developed.
- 53.2. develop training models on the use of clear definitions, common language and consistent practices and definitions to ensure clarity for staff, students, and parents.
- 53.3. work with district school boards and community organizations to collaborate on the development of joint professional learning resources to support students with disabilities at school. This should include working with non-educators such as occupational therapists, medical practitioners, and paraprofessionals and parent/guardians to ensure diverse perspectives and expertise.

- 53.4. ensure that training is provided to teachers, and other staff, on how to effectively support students with disabilities in experiential learning opportunities, and in the development and practice of employment skills. <sup>C-1(b)</sup>

**Timeline:** six months

Ontario College of Teachers shall:

- 53.5. ensure that the mandatory qualifications to teach students who are blind/low vision be enhanced to provide the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of these students.
- 53.6. work with the Ministry of Education and select faculties of education to initiate a master's level program in both French and English for teaching students who are blind/low vision such that exists in other jurisdictions.
- 53.7. revise the guideline for accreditation of faculties of education:
  - a. to add more credits on teaching students with disabilities in the pre-service program
  - b. to add training on the duty to accommodate all students with disabilities
- 53.8. create and distribute a professional advisory to all certified teachers on the duty to accommodate students with disabilities and understand how to assist in their support.

**Timeline:** six months

District School Boards shall:

- 53.9. provide opportunities for the development of advocacy skills to parents and students with disabilities.
- 53.10. develop resources and professional learning opportunities for teachers, and other staff, to better communicate with parents and encourage collaborative planning of Individual Education Plans.
- 53.11. share best practices around fostering parent engagement with teachers and other staff.

**Timeline:** six months

### **Process for a school board identifying and making the placement of student with disabilities recommendations**

**Barrier:** the system for a school board's formal identification and placement of students with disabilities, **Regulation 181/98** creates barriers for students with disabilities, beyond the fact that the definition of "exceptional pupil" does not include all students with disabilities as defined in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the Charter of Rights.

For a formal decision on a student's identification and placement, one must apply to a school board committee called an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee. The review committee can only decide on whether the student falls within the definition of "exceptional pupil" and on the students' "placement." It can only make recommendations but not binding decisions on the student's "program" or services."

A student or their parents/guardians can appeal to the Special Education Appeal Tribunal about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee's decision on identification and placement (but not on recommendations regarding program or services). Courts can review that tribunal's decision. Such appeals are rare.

Regulations for Identification, Placement, and Review Committees were created before the protections for equality for students with disabilities were enacted in the Charter of Rights and *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the following problems have been identified:

1. more than half of the students receiving special education services and who have an Individual Education Plan, were not identified through an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee. This strongly

suggests this process is irrelevant to many.

2. many school staff and families complain about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee's administrative burden and delays that can create barriers to student success.
  3. identification, placement, and review committees are hampered by the arbitrary, undefined and confusing distinction between define "placement" on which the identification, placement, and review committee can decide, and inseparable issues concerning "program" or "services on which the identification, placement, and review committee cannot decide."
  4. families report that they don't understand the identification, placement, and review committee process or feel included in it. Frequently the meetings are short, and families feel rushed. In addition, families who don't understand the process may waive their right to a review.
  5. some families feel forced into adversarial appeal processes, that may not address the family's core concerns about the supports that the student needs.
54. The identification, placement and review committee process and regulation should be reviewed to determine if it needs to be re-designed, retained or replaced.
- Timeline:** six months
55. The review panel should include students or persons with disabilities, families, school board and Ministry of Education representatives.
- Timeline:** immediate
56. If the identification, placement, and review committee process is to be redesigned, the following principles should be included:
- a. a provincially consistent mandatory process, that is expeditious, fair, and user-friendly, for a student and/or parent/guardian to work collaboratively with the school board to develop an agreement as to how the needs of the student with a disability will be met.
  - b. decisions about a student's placement should not be separated from decisions over a student's program and services. The overlapping terms "placement," "program" and "services," if retained, should be defined and clarified.
  - c. the student and/or parent/guardian should be assured of reasonable timelines to enable the consideration of options and provide input into the decision-making process.
  - d. dispute resolution or appeal processes should be available on all issues regarding decisions about how the school board will meet the student's needs, and not limited to identification and placement only. These mechanisms should be prompt and user friendly.

**Timeline:** one year

## Section six: Social realms

The area of social realms is often overlooked as being an important part of education and should be seen as an integral part of the student's education and development.

"I see the impact of the gap where students are excluded due to lack of transportation to support them. It is not just the students that are feeling the impact as I see the "hurt" of their parents. Students with disabilities have a right to be with their peers and classmates where they can learn and develop as they should".

"Service animals is a big one for me as I trained mine to be one and experienced what he could do to ease fear, decrease depression and get our clients to a level of openness and confidence to learn and grow. I also have seen the impact that many clients have experienced and what they were like before their service dogs came into their lives."

Social realms should not be viewed just as social activities outside the classroom but also in the classroom where the social interaction among students is an integral part of learning process.

Our group had diverse knowledge and experiences which played an important part in creating these recommendations and ensuring that we took an intersectional perspective on removing barriers within social

“As someone who has experienced the barriers in the education system, it was important to ensure that lived experience and student voice guided the process in creating the recommendations and are evident in the completed recommendations.”

## Section six recommendations:

### Educational and online events recommendation

57. Each school board should only hold educational events at venues on school board property or outside school board property whose built environment is accessible to students and staff with disabilities. The buses used to transport students to the off-site events should also be accessible, so that students with disabilities do not have to travel to the event separate from their classmates.

Educational events include, but are not limited to clubs, teams, field trips, dances, graduation, fundraisers, extracurricular groups or any school or school board event that includes students and school personnel.

**Note:** To assign specific staff at school board to facilitate transportation for students with disabilities. Please refer to built environment definition in the glossary.

**Timeline:** Immediate

### Transitions facilitator/navigator recommendations

58. Each school board should develop and create the role of the Transition Facilitator/Navigator to work with students and their families in collaboration with school staff, and community agencies to explore pathways and develop transition plans. The Transition Facilitator/Navigator would assist students accessing special education supports, consult and liaison with community disability service providers and provide transition planning resource development for all school board and school staff. See [description of role and responsibilities](#).

**Timeline:** one year

59. Ministry of Education should set up a centralized Transitions Hub. The hub would support the role of the Transitions Facilitator/Navigator as well as provide a conduit of best practice transitions information and regular communication from across all publicly funded school boards and school authorities in Ontario. If needed it would provide smaller boards the ability to partner and develop successful programs.

**Timeline:** immediate

### Transportation recommendations

60. The obligations under this part of the standards should be binding, both on school boards and transportation consortia. Both parties have the duty to adhere to the standards and to work together to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are honoured.

**Timeline:** six months

**Rationale:** up to three organizations may be involved in the transportation of students: A School Board, a consortium of school boards that jointly arrange for student transportation, and private bus companies that are contracted to provide bussing in that area. Students with disabilities and their parents should not have to try to figure out who is responsible for their child’s transportation needs. The following should be required of all three organizations.

61. To ensure that students with disabilities get the transportation services they need to attend school this recommendation will set criteria for creating monitoring and accountability. The Education Accessibility Standards should require that where a school board provides bussing or other transportation services to

students with disabilities in order to enable them to attend school, the school board/bus company's/transportation consortia shall review and develop policies and procedures that include:

- 61.1. individual consultation with each family to identify accessibility and accommodation needs of the student with disabilities in relation to transportation.
- 61.2. ensure the Transportation Consortia/bus companies and drivers have been properly trained to accommodate students with disabilities and their individual needs.
- 61.3. with any bus driver that is changed, they are given the same information and training prior to driving the student, or, in the case of an emergency replacement, as soon as possible.
- 61.4. clearly reflect the responsibilities and duties of the school board/bus companies/transportation consortia and acknowledge that they have the shared responsibility to make sure the duties are fulfilled.
- 61.5. retention of training records, including when it was provided and report to their respective boards on training twice per year.
- 61.6. designate and provide a reachable official at the school board and the transportation, especially during the working hours when students are being transported, to receive and address phone calls, emails and text messages from a family about problems regarding the student's transportation.
- 61.7. documentation of all complaints reported on student transportation services, and the company to which it applies. A summary report including number of complaints, types of complaints and status, be provided to the school board, transportation consortia, Special Education Advisory Committees and accessibility committee on a quarterly basis. These reports shall be made public on the school board's and transportation consortium's website.
- 61.8. the Education Accessibility Standards should make it clear that the fact that the policies and procedures created does not remove or reduce the school board/bus companies/transportation consortia's duties under these accessibility standards or otherwise under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to ensure that the student has been provided with barrier-free participation in the school board's educational programs and opportunities. In any contract for bussing, the school boards/bus company's/transportation consortia should be required to monitor compliance with all obligations regarding bussing, such as the duty to properly train each bus driver on the specific disability-related needs of each passenger, and to document this training. School Boards/bus company's/transportation consortia should periodically audit consumer satisfaction and compliance with all applicable education accessibility standards and publicly report on the audit's results. A bus company's failure to consistently and reliably meet its obligations should trigger penalties and termination of the contract.
- 61.9. a valuation process for past performance and provision of transportation services for students with disabilities should be included in the Request for Proposal for bussing. A valuation of any company's past performance on accessibility for students with disabilities should be given a major consideration in deciding the continued use of service.

**Timeline:** six months

62. The Education Accessibility Standards should require that where a school board provides bussing or other transportation to students with disabilities in order to enable them to attend school, the school board shall ensure, and shall monitor to ensure that:

- 62.1. the school board has individually consulted with each family to identify the accessibility and accommodation needs of the student with disabilities in relation to transportation, and the bus company and driver have been properly trained to accommodate that need.

**Timeline:** six months

63. The Education Accessibility Standards should require that the school board and, where applicable, a bus company with which it contracts, will ensure that pick-up and drop-off locations for a student's bussing are accessible when needed to accommodate the parents or guardians of students with disabilities.

**Timeline:** immediate

64. As a part of efforts to educate the entire school community about inclusion of students and school community members with disabilities, all school boards will develop and implement workshops to educate on and address bullying and cyberbullying in schools and the impacts that they can have on students' physical and mental health. These workshops need to be informed and facilitated by young persons with disabilities. The workshops are to be presented to all members of the school community.

**Timeline:** six months

**Experiential / co-op learning opportunities recommendations**

65. Persons with disabilities face extraordinarily high unemployment rates. Getting the chance for an experiential learning or coop placement while in school can be the gateway, if not the only gateway, to that first letter of reference. Every student's first letter of reference is essential to getting their first job and more importantly, if you have a disability. Therefore, these recommendations are essential to combating the high unemployment that youth with disabilities too often happen to face. For the success of these recommendations, it is extremely important that school boards provide informal advice and support to all employers, including small businesses.

To ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate in a school board's experiential learning programs, each school board should:

- 65.1. review its experiential learning programs to identify and remove any accessibility barriers.
- 65.2. put in place a process to affirmatively reach out to potential placement organizations in order to ensure that there will be a range of accessible placement opportunities in which students with disabilities can participate.
- 65.3. ensure that its partner organizations that accept its students for experiential learning placements are effectively informed of their duty to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities.
- 65.4. create and share supports and advice for placement organizations who need assistance to ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate in their experiential learning placements.
- 65.5. monitor placement organizations to ensure they have someone in place to ensure that students with disabilities are effectively accommodated, and to ensure that effective accommodation was provided during each placement of a student with a disability who needed accommodation.
- 65.6. survey students with disabilities and experiential learning placement organizations at the end of any experiential learning placements to see if their disability-related needs were effectively accommodated.

**Timeline:** one year

66. The Ministry of Education should provide templates or models for these policies and measures. It should be required to prepare and make available training videos for school boards and employers offering experiential learning programs to guide them on accommodating students with disabilities and the impacts in experiential learning placements.

**Timeline:** six months

**Social isolation recommendation**

67. Each school board shall provide where needed or requested by a student with disabilities or their family, staff assistance for social interaction and play, particularly during unstructured or minimally supervised times, such as recess or lunch. This is to address social isolation that students throughout their educational journey from K-12. The Individual Education Plan shall include a detailed, specific plan for how to implement and achieve social inclusion both in the formal school activities and informal parts of the school day. Creative and flexible plans should include multiple organizations or programs both inside and



outside school board designed to foster inclusiveness in the long term across all levels from students to the administration. C-1(b)

This recommendation is inclusive of all students with disabilities even those who require a communication device or use augmentative communication to communicate.

**Timeline:** one year

### **Service animals (as per *Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005* customer service standards) recommendation**

**Barrier:** some school boards or schools do not let students with disabilities bring a sufficiently trained service animal to school as an accommodation to their disability, either because the school board or school does not allow for this or lacks a proper policy to allow for this.

Some students on the autism spectrum and their families in Ontario have reported having difficulties at some school boards with being allowed to bring a service animal to school and have even had to take action before the Human Rights Tribunal against a school board. Others have been able to succeed without barriers in bringing their service animal to school.

68. We therefore recommend:

- 68.1 when a student with disabilities or their parent/guardian request permission for the student to bring a trained service animal to school with them as an accommodation to their disability, the school board shall consider, decide upon that request, and give reasons for its decision, in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, with the duty to accommodate students with disabilities under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, with the policy of the Ontario Human Rights Commission on the [duty to accommodate persons with disabilities](#), and the Commission's Policy on [accessible education for students with disabilities](#) and with the following requirements set out in these accessibility standards. This includes requests regarding a trained service animal from an accredited training organization that provided training to the animal and to the student. Where the service animal was not trained by an accredited training organization, it is open to the student or their family to present to the school board satisfactory evidence that both the service animal and the student have received sufficient training.
- 68.2 the school board shall put in place a fair and speedy procedure for considering requests for a student to bring a service animal to school. This procedure should include the following:
  - a. if the school board has any objection to or concerns about the request, the school board will immediately notify the student and family about the specific concerns, and shall work to resolve them, in a manner consistent with the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
  - b. if the school board does not believe that the service animal could assist the student at school, the school board should investigate the request, including how the student benefits from the service animal outside the school and in the home.
  - c. if the school board has any concerns about the feasibility of allowing the student to bring the service animal to school, it shall investigate the experience of other school boards and schools which have successfully enabled a student to bring their service animal to school.
  - d. if a concern is expressed that the service animal at school would interfere with the human rights of other students or staff, the school board shall take action to effectively accommodate their rights without sacrificing the human rights of the student using the service animal, in accordance with the policy of the Ontario Human Rights Commission on conflicting rights. For example, if an EA, assigned to work with the student, cannot work with the service animal for health or other human rights reasons, the school board shall facilitate the assignment of this responsibility to another staff member.
  - e. a student shall not be refused the opportunity to bring a qualified service animal to school without the school board first allowing a trial or test period with the service animal at school.
  - f. where it is proposed to allow a student with disabilities to bring a service animal to school, the school board shall work out with the student, their family, and the organization providing the service

animal, a plan to promote the success of the accommodation, including such things as: C-1 (b)

- i. allowing the service animal's training organization to provide training in the school to school staff.
  - ii. allowing the training organization to provide an orientation to the student population at the school to the presence of the service animal.
  - iii. providing information to other families to reinforce the inclusion of the service animal at school.
- g. if the school board does not agree to the service animal being allowed at school, or if there is a problem with implementing the school board's plans to facilitate its inclusion, the school board shall make available a swift dispute resolution process, including independent mediation if needed, to resolve these issues.
- 68.3 the Ministry of Education shall obtain information from school boards on where service animals have been allowed in school, to make it easier for a school board to reach out to those schools to gather information, if needed.
  - 68.4 nothing in these accessibility standards shall reduce or restrict the rights of a person with vision loss who is coming to a school bringing with them their guide dog, trained by an accredited school for training guide dogs.

**Timeline:** six months

## Section seven: Physical and architectural barriers

When it was passed in 2005, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* required Ontario, including its schools, to become fully accessible to persons with disabilities by 2025. The government did not effectively address the need to achieve this in schools'-built environments up until now. These recommendations are designed to achieve the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act's* goals. It will be for the government to implement measures to ensure that school boards can fulfil them.

The intent/rationale of these recommendations is to ensure that as soon as possible, and no later than January 1, 2025, the built environment in the education system, such as schools themselves, their yards, playgrounds, etc., and the equipment on those premises (such as gym and playground equipment) would all be fully accessible to persons with disabilities and would be designed based on the principle of universal design. Where school programs or trips take place outside the school, these will be held at locations that are disability accessible. The intent/rationale is also to ensure that no public money is used to create new barriers or perpetuate existing barriers in the school system.

### ***Ontario Building Code:***

- *Ontario Building Code* and existing accessibility standards do not set out all the modern and sufficient accessibility requirements for the built environment in Ontario.
- The building code is largely if not entirely designed to address the needs of adults, not children or the specific types of spaces found in K through 12 schools.

### **Accessibility standards**

- the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education have no accessibility standards for the built environment in schools, whether old or new schools. The government should develop a Built Environment Accessibility Standards to substantially strengthen the accessibility provisions in the *Ontario Building Code*.
- neither the Ministry of Education nor the individual school boards have any expertise on staff on how to design a school to be accessible to persons with disabilities. Architects and design and construction teams have no standardized education for accessibility beyond building code minima. Many are not aware of or understand the current minimal requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act's* Design of Public spaces enacted in 2013.

- when the ministry reviews proposals from a school board for construction of a new school or renovation of an existing school, the ministry does not require those plans to be accessible to persons with disabilities, but instead, leaves it to each school board to address accessibility as much or as little as it wishes.
- it is left to each school board to come up with its own designs to address accessibility in the built environment in schools and at other school board locations even though the needs of persons with disabilities to an accessible built environment do not vary from community to community around Ontario. An inaccessible doorway is an inaccessible doorway, whether in Kingston or Chatham.

## **Summary of recommendations for mandatory beyond building code accessibility requirements**

This section includes three different areas of requirements for beyond code additional mandatory requirements for schools and associated facilities including the exterior site elements, the buildings interior elements, and universal design better practices.

### **The exterior site elements include five topics:**

1. access to the site for pedestrians
2. access to the site for vehicles
3. parking
4. exterior doors
5. public playgrounds on or adjacent to school property

### **The interior building elements include 10 topics:**

1. entrances
2. door
3. layout
4. gates, turnstiles and openings
5. windows, glazed screens and sidelights
6. circulation including elevators, ramps and stairs
7. drinking fountains
8. general facilities
9. washroom facilities
10. specialty room and spaces

Finally, enhanced universal design best practice section includes 17 different elements and considerations have been provided based on feedback from a recognized accessibility and universal design expert for ways to improve building and facilities use for all users of the school and community.

## **Section seven recommendations:**

**Timeline:** six months for all recommendations

### **Ensuring a fully accessible built environment at schools recommendations**

**Barriers:** Too often, the built environment where K-12 education programming is offered, have physical barriers that can partially or totally impede some students with disabilities from being able to enter or independently move around. These barriers also impede parents, teachers and other school staff and volunteers with disabilities.

The Ontario Ministry of Education does not effectively survey all school buildings to ensure that they are accessible, or to catalogue what accessibility improvements are needed. C-1(b)

The Ministry of Education's specifications for new school construction do not require all accessibility features or can even preclude needed accessibility features in a new school or other education facility.

## Recommendations:

69. The ~~K-12~~ Education Accessibility Standards should set out specific requirements for accessibility of the built environment in schools and other locations where education programs are to be offered. Accessibility requirements should not only include the needs of people with mobility disabilities. They should include the needs of people with other disabilities such as (but not limited to) people with vision and/or hearing loss, autism, intellectual or developmental disabilities, learning disabilities or mental health disorders. There should be no priorities among disabilities. These requirements should meet the accessibility requirements of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These should include:
  - a. specific requirements to be included in a new school to be built.
  - b. requirements to be included in a renovation of or an addition to an existing school, and
  - c. retrofit requirements for an existing school not slated for a major renovation or addition.
70. Each school board should develop a plan to ensure that the built environment of its schools and other educational facilities becomes fully accessible to persons with disabilities as soon as reasonably possible, and in any event, no later than January 1, 2025. As part of this:
  - a. as a first step, each school board should develop a plan for making as many of its schools' disability-accessible within its current financial context.
  - b. each school board should identify which of its existing schools can be more easily made accessible, and which schools would require substantially more extensive action to be made physically accessible. An interim plan should be developed to show what progress towards full physical accessibility can be made by first addressing schools that would require less money to be made physically more accessible, taking into account the need to also consider geographic equity of access across the school board and a school building's expected lifespan.
  - c. when designing a new school or managing an existing school, wherever possible, a quiet room should be assigned in a school facility to assist with learning by those students with disabilities who require such an environment. For example, when a school board is deciding what to do with excess building capacity, it should allocate unused or under-used rooms as quiet rooms whenever possible.
71. When a school board seeks to retain or hire design professionals, such as architects, interior designers or landscape architects, for the design of a new school or an existing school's retrofit or renovation, or for any other school board construction or other infrastructure project, the school board should include in any Request for Proposal a mandatory requirement that the design professional must have sufficient demonstrated expertise in accessibility design, and not simply knowledge about compliance with the *Ontario Building Code* or the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This includes the accessibility needs of people with all kinds of disabilities, and not just those with mobility impairments. It includes the accessibility needs of students and not just of adults.
72. When a school board is planning to construct a new school, or expanding or renovating an existing school or other infrastructure, a properly qualified and experienced accessibility consultant should be retained by the school board (and not necessarily by a private architecture firm) to advise on the project from the outset, with their advice being transmitted directly to the school board and not only to the private design professionals who are retained to design the project. Completing the eight-day training course on accessibility offered by the Rick Hansen Foundation should not be treated as either necessary or sufficient for this purpose, as that brief course is substantially inadequate and has significant problems.
73. A committee of the school board's trustees, and the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee or Accessibility Committee should be required to review design decisions on new construction or renovations to ensure that accessibility of the built environment is effectively addressed. A school's Accessibility Committee should also be involved in this review. Consultations should include getting input

- from students, parents, school employees and school volunteers with disabilities. These committees should not be seen as technical experts, or as a substitute for the earliest engagement of accessible design experts.
74. Where possible, a school board should not renovate an existing school that lacks disability accessibility, unless the school board has a plan to also make that school accessible. For example, a school board should not spend public money to renovate the second storey of a school which lacks accessibility to the second storey, if the school board does not have a plan to make that second storey disability accessible. Very pressing health and safety concerns should be the only reason for any exception to this.
  75. When a school board decides which schools to close due to reduced enrollment, a priority should be placed on keeping open schools with more physical accessibility, while a priority should be given to closing schools that are the most lacking in accessibility, or for which retrofitting is the most costly.
  76. Each school board should hold off-site educational events at venues whose built environment is accessible.
  77. The Ministry of Education should be required to revise its funding formula or criteria for school construction to ensure that it requires and covers and does not obstruct the inclusion of all needed accessibility features in a school construction project. The following design features should be required by the Education Accessibility Standards and in any new school construction or renovation, and effectively addressed in the ministry's funding/approval requirements for school construction projects. Where an existing school is undergoing no renovation, any of the following measures which are readily achievable should be required. The ministry should enact technical requirements for the following, as binding enforceable rules, not as voluntary guidelines:

### **Ensuring accessibility of gym, playground and like equipment and activities recommendations**

**Barrier:** Schools or school boards that have gym, playground or other equipment not designed based on the principles of universal design, which some students with disabilities cannot use, as well as certain gym, sports and other activities in which students with disabilities cannot fully participate.

Section 80.18 of the Ontario *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11* as amended in 2012, requires accessibility features to be considered when new outdoor play spaces are being established or existing ones are redeveloped. However, those provisions do not set the spectrum of detailed requirements that should be included. They do not require any action if an existing play space is not being redeveloped. They ultimately leave it to each school board or each school to re-invent the accessibility wheel each time they build or redevelop an outdoor play space. They do not require anything of indoor play spaces or gyms.

### **Recommendations:**

78. To ensure that gym equipment, playground equipment and other like equipment and facilities are accessible for students with disabilities, the Education Accessibility Standards should set out specific technical accessibility requirements for new or existing outdoor or indoor play spaces, gym and other like equipment, drawing on accessibility standards and best practices in other jurisdictions, if sufficient, so that each school board does not have to re-invent the accessibility wheel.
79. Each school board should:
  - a. take an inventory of the accessibility of its existing indoor and outdoor play spaces and gym and playground equipment, and make this public, including posting this information online.
  - b. adopt a plan to remediate the accessibility of new gym or playground equipment, in consultation with the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee and Accessibility Committee, and widely with the families of students with disabilities.
  - c. ensure that a qualified accessibility expert is engaged to ensure that the purchase of new equipment or remediation of existing playground is properly conducted, with their advice being given directly to the school board.
80. Where playground or other school equipment or facilities to be deployed on school property for use by students is funded and/or purchased by anyone other than the school board, the school board should remain nonetheless responsible for approving the purchases and ensuring that only accessible equipment and facilities are placed on school property for use by students or the public. Decisions over whether

accessibility features will be included, or which will be included, should not be totally left to community groups which may fund-raise for such equipment or facilities. C-1(b)

## Specific accessibility requirements recommendations

### Recommendation part three: usable accessible design for exterior site elements

The following should be required:

#### 81. Access to the site for pedestrians:

- a. clear, intuitive connection to the accessible entrance.
- b. a tactile raised line map shall be provided at the main entry points adjacent to the accessible path of travel but with enough space to ensure users do not block the path for others.
- c. path of travel from each sidewalk connects to an accessible entrance with few to no joints to avoid bumps. The primary paths shall be wide enough to allow two-way traffic with a clear width that allows two people using wheelchairs or guide dogs to pass each other. For secondary paths where a single path is used, passing spaces shall be provided at regular intervals and at all decision points. The height difference from the sidewalk to the entrance will not require a ramp or stairs. The path will provide drainage slopes only and ensure no puddles form on the path. Paths will be heated during winter months using heat from the school or other renewable energy sources.
- d. bike parking shall be adjacent to the entry path. Riders shall be required to dismount and not ride on the pedestrian routes. Bike parking shall provide horizontal storage with enough space to ensure users and parked bikes do not block the path for others. The ground surface below the bikes shall be colour contrasted and textured to be distinct from the pedestrian path.
- e. rest areas and benches with clear floor space for at least two assistive mobility devices or strollers or a mix of both shall be provided. Benches shall be colour contrasted, have back and arm rests and provide transfer seating options at both ends of the bench. These shall be provided every 30 metres along the path placed adjoining. The bench and space for assistive devices are not to block the path. If the path to the main entrance is less than 30 metres at least one rest area shall be provided along the route. If the drop-off area is in a different location than the pedestrian route from the sidewalk, an interior rest area shall be provided with clear sightlines to the drop-off area. If the drop-off area is more than 20 meters from the closest accessible entrance an exterior accessible heated shelter shall be provided for those awaiting pick-up. The ground surface below the rest areas shall be colour contrasted and textured to be distinct from the pedestrian path it abuts.
- f. tactile directional indicators shall be provided where large open paved areas happen along the route.
- g. accessible pedestrian directional signage at decision points.
- h. lighting levels shall be bright and even enough to avoid shadows and ensure it's easy to see the features and to keep people safe.
- i. accessible duress stations (emergency safety zones in public spaces).
- j. heated walkways shall be used where possible to ensure the path is always clear of snow and ice.

#### 82. Access to the site for vehicles:

- a. clear, intuitive connection to the drop-off and accessible parking.
- b. passenger drop-off shall include space for driveway, layby, access aisle (painted with non slip paint), and a drop curb (to provide a smooth transition) for the full length of the drop off. This edge shall be identified and protected with high colour contrasted tactile attention indicators and bollards to stop cars, so people with vision loss or those not paying attention get a warning before walking into the car area. Sidewalk slopes shall provide drainage in all directions for the full length of the dropped curb.
- c. overhead protection shall be provided by a canopy that allows for a clearance for raised vans or buses and shall provide as much overhead protection as possible for people who may need more time to load or off-load.
- d. heated walkways from the drop-off and parking shall be used to ensure the path is always clear of snow and ice.

- e. a tactile walking directional indicator path shall lead from the drop-off area to the closest accessible entrance to the building (typically the main entrance). <sup>C-1(b)</sup>
- f. a parking surface will only be steep enough to provide drainage in all directions. The drainage will be designed to prevent puddles from forming at the parking or along the pedestrian route from the parking.
- g. parking design should include potential expansion plans for future growth and/or to address increased need for accessible parking.
- h. parking access aisles shall connect to the sidewalk with a curb cut that leads to the closest accessible entrance to the building. (so that no one needs to travel along the driveway behind parked cars or in the path of car traffic).
- i. lighting levels shall be bright and even enough to avoid shadows and to ensure it's easy to see obstacles and to keep people safe.
- j. if there is more than one parking lot, each site shall have a distinctive colour and shape symbol associated with it that will be used on all directional signage especially along pedestrian routes.

### 83. Parking:

- a. the provision of parking spaces near the entrance to a facility is important to accommodate persons with a varying range of abilities as well as persons with limited mobility. Medical conditions, such as anemia, arthritis or heart conditions, using crutches or the physical act of pushing a wheelchair, all can make it difficult to travel long distances. Minimizing travel distances is particularly important outdoors, where weather conditions and ground surfaces can make travel difficult and hazardous.
- b. the sizes of accessible parking stalls are important. A person using a mobility aid such as a wheelchair requires a wider parking space to accommodate the manoeuvring of the wheelchair beside the car or van. A van may also require additional space to deploy a lift or ramp out the side or back door. An individual would require space for the deployment of the lift itself as well as additional space to manoeuvre on/off the lift.
- c. heights of passage along the driving routes to accessible parking is a factor. Accessible vans may have a raised roof resulting in the need for additional overhead clearance. Alternatively, the floor of the van may be lowered, resulting in lower capacity to travel over for speed bumps and pavement slope transitions.
- d. wherever possible, parking signs shall be located away from pedestrian routes, because they can constitute an overhead and/or protruding hazard. All parking signage shall be placed at the end of the parking space in a bollard barricade to stop cars, trucks or vans from parking over and blocking the sidewalk.

### 84. A building's exterior doors:

- a. level areas on both sides of a building's exterior door shall allow the clear floor space for a large scooter or mobility device or several strollers to be at the door. Exterior surface slope shall only provide drainage away from the building.
- b. 100 per cent of a building's exterior doors will be accessible with level thresholds, colour contrast, accessible door hardware and in-door windows or side windows (where security allows) so those approaching the door can see if someone is on the other side of the door.
- c. main entry doors at the front of the building and the door closest to the parking lot (if not the same) to be obvious, prominent and will have automatic sliders with overhead sensors. Placing power door operator buttons correctly is difficult and often creates barriers especially within the vestibule.
- d. accessible security access for after hours or if used all day with two-way video for those who are deaf and/or scrolling voice to text messaging.
- e. all exit doors shall be accessible with a level threshold and clear floor space on either side of the door. The exterior shall include a paved accessible path leading away from the building.

## Accessible design for interior building elements – general requirements recommendations

The following should be required:

### 85. Entrances:

SEAC 20-10

- a. all entrances used by staff and/or the public shall be accessible and comply with this section. In a retrofit situation where it is technically infeasible to make all staff and public entrances accessible, at least 50 per cent of all staff and public entrances shall be accessible and comply with this section. In a retrofit situation where it is technically infeasible to make all public entrances accessible, the primary entrances used by staff and the public shall be accessible.

86. Door:

- a. doors shall be sufficiently wide enough to accommodate stretchers, wheelchairs or assistive scooters, pushing strollers, or making a delivery
- b. threshold at the door's base shall be level to allow a trip free and wheel friendly passage.
- c. heavy doors and those with auto closers shall provide automatic door openers.
- d. room entrances shall have doors.
- e. direction of door swing shall be chosen to enhance the usability and limit the hazard to others of the door opening.
- f. sliding doors can be easier for some individuals to operate and can also require less wheelchair manoeuvring space.
- g. doors that require two hands to operate will not be used.
- h. revolving doors are not accessible.
- i. full glass doors are not to be used as they represent a hazard.
- j. colour-contrasting will be provided on door frames, door handles as well as the door edges.
- k. door handles and locks will be operable by using a closed fist, and not require fine finger control, tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist to operate

87. Gates, turnstiles and openings:

- a. gates and turnstiles should be designed to accommodate the full range of users that may pass through them. Single-bar gates designed to be at a convenient waist height for ambulatory persons are at neck and face height for children and chest height for persons who use wheelchairs or scooters.
- b. revolving turnstiles should not be used as they are a physical impossibility for a person in a wheelchair to negotiate. They are also difficult for persons using canes or crutches, or persons with poor balance.
- c. all controlled entry points will provide an accessible width to allow passage of wheelchairs, other mobility devices, strollers, walkers or delivery carts.

88. Windows, glazed screens and sidelights:

- a. broad expanses of glass should not be used for walls, beside doors and as doors can be difficult to detect. This may be a particular concern to persons with vision loss/no vision. It is also possible for anyone to walk into a clear sheet of glazing especially if they are distracted or in a hurry.
- b. windowsill heights and operating controls for opening windows or closing blinds should be accessible...located on a path of travel, with clear floor space, within reach of a shorter or seated user, colour contrasted and not require punching or twisting to operate.

89. Drinking fountains:

- a. Drinking fountain height should accommodate children and that of a person using a wheelchair or scooter. Potentially conflicting with this, the height should strive to attempt to accommodate individuals who have difficulty bending and who would require a higher fountain. Where feasible, this may require more than one fountain, at different heights. The operating system shall account for limited hand strength or dexterity. Fountains will be recessed, to avoid protruding into the path of travel. Angled recessed alcove designs allow more flexibility and require less precision by a person using a wheelchair or scooter. Providing accessible signage with a tactile attention indicator tile will help those who with vision loss to find the fountain.

90. Layout:

- a. the main office where visitors and others need to report to upon entering the building shall always be located on the same level as the entrance, as close to the entrance as possible. If the path of travel to the office crosses a large open area, a tactile directional indicator path shall lead from the main entrance(s) to the office ID signage next to the office door.
- b. all classrooms and or public destinations shall be on the ground floor. Where this is not possible, at least two elevators should be provided to access all other levels. Where the building is long and



spread out, travel distance to elevators should be considered to reduce extra time needed for<sup>C-1(b)</sup> students and staff or others who use the elevators instead of the stairs. If feature stairs (staircases included in whole or in part for design aesthetics) are included, elevators shall be co-located and just as prominent as the stairs.

- c. corridors should meet at 90-degree angles. Floor layouts from floor to floor should be consistent and predictable so the room number line up and are the same with the floors above and below along with the washrooms.
- d. multi-stall washrooms shall always place the women's washroom on the right and the men's washroom on the left. No labyrinth entrances shall be used. Universal washrooms shall be co-located immediately adjacent to the stall washrooms, in a location that is consistent and predictable throughout the building.

91. Facilities:

- a. the entry doors to each type of facility within a building should be accessible, colour contrasted, obvious and prominent and designed as part of the wayfinding system including accessible signage that is co-located with power door openers controls.
- b. tactile attention indicator tile will be placed on the floor in front of the accessible ID signage at each room or facility type. Where a room or facility entrance is placed off of a large interior open area.

### **Accessible design for interior building elements – circulation recommendations**

The following should be required:

92. Elevators:

- a. elevator doors will provide a clear width to allow a stretcher and larger mobility devices to get in and out.
- b. doors will have sensors so doors will auto open if the doorway is blocked
- c. elevators will be installed in pairs so that when one is out of service for repair or maintenance, there is an alternative available.
- d. elevators will be sized to allow at least two mobility device users and two non-mobility devices users to be in the elevator at the same time. This should also allow for a wide stretcher in case of emergency.
- e. assistive listening will be available in each elevator to help make the audible announcements heard by those using hearing aids.
- f. emergency button on the elevator's control panel will also provide two-way communication with video and scrolling text and a keyboard for people who are deaf or who have other communication disabilities.
- g. inside the elevators will be additional horizontal buttons on the side wall in case there is not enough room for a person using a mobility aid to push the typical vertical buttons along the wall beside the door. If there are only two floors the elevator will only provide the door open, close and emergency call buttons and the elevator will automatically move to the floor it is not on.
- h. the words spoken in the elevator's voice announcement of the floor will be the same as the braille and print floor markings, so the button shows one as a number, one in braille and the voice says first floor not G for Ground with M in braille and voice says first floor.).
- i. ensure the star symbol for each elevator matches ground level appropriate to the elevator. The star symbol indicates the floor the elevator will return to in an emergency. This means users in the elevator will open closest to the available accessible exit. If the entrance on the north side is on the second floor, the star symbol in that elevator will be next to the button that says two. If the entrance on the south side of the building is on the first floor, the star symbol will be next to the button that says one.
- j. the voice on the elevator shall be set at a volume that is audible above typical noise levels while the elevator is in use, so that people on the elevator can easily hear the audible floor announcements.
- k. lighting levels inside the elevator will match the lighting at the elevator lobbies. Lighting will be measured at the ground level.

- l. elevators will provide colour contrast between the floor and the walls inside the cab and between the frame of the door or the doors with the wall surrounding in the elevator lobbies. Vinyl peel and stick sheets or paint will be used to cover the shiny metal which creates glare. Vinyl sheets will be plain to ensure the door looks like a door, and not like advertising.
- m. in a retrofit situation where adding two elevators is not technically possible without undue hardship, platform lifts may be considered. Elevators that are used by all facility users are preferred to platform lifts which tend to segregate persons with disabilities and which limit space at entrance and stair locations. Furthermore, independent access is often compromised by such platform lifts, because platform lifts are often requiring a key to operate. Whenever possible, integrated elevator access should be incorporated to avoid the use of lifts.

### 93. Ramps:

- a. a properly designed ramp can provide wait-free access for those using wheelchairs or scooters, pushing strollers or moving packages on a trolley or those who are using sign language to communicate and don't want to stop talking as they climb stairs.
- b. a ramp's textured surfaces, edge protection and handrails all provide important safety features.
- c. on outdoor ramps, heated surfaces shall be provided to address the safety concerns associated with snow and ice.
- d. ramps shall only be used where the height difference between levels is no more than 1 meter (4 feet). Longer ramps take up too much space and are too tiring for many users. Where a height difference is more than 1 meter in height, elevators will be provided instead.
- e. landings will be sized to allow a large mobility device or scooter to make a 360-degree turn and/or for two people with mobility assistive devices or guide dogs to pass.
- f. slopes inside the building will be no higher than is permitted for exterior ramps in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 Design of Public Spaces Standards*, to ensure usability without making the ramp too long.
- g. curved ramps will not be used, because the cross slope at the turn is hard to navigate and a tipping hazard for many people.
- h. colour and texture contrast will be provided to differentiate the full slope from any level landings. Tactile attention domes shall not be used at ramps, because they are meant only for stairs and for drop-off edges like at stages.

### 94. Stairs:

- a. stairs that are comfortable for many adults may be challenging for children, seniors or persons of short stature.
- b. the leading edge of each step (aka nosing) shall not present tripping hazards, particularly to persons with prosthetic devices or those using canes and will have a bright colour contrast to the rest of the horizontal step surface.
- c. each stair in a staircase will use the same height and depth, to avoid creating tripping hazards.
- d. the rise between stairs will always be smooth, so that shoes will not catch on an abrupt edge causing a tripping hazard. These spaces will always be closed as open stairs create a tripping hazard. The top of all stair entry points will have a tactile attention indicator surface, to ensure the drop-off is identified for those who are blind or distracted.
- e. handrails will aid all users navigating stairways safely. Handrails will be provided on both sides of all stairs and will be provided at both the traditional height as well as a second lower rail for children or people who are shorter. These will be in a high colour contrasting colour and round in shape, without sharp edges or interruptions.

## Accessible design for interior building elements – washroom facilities recommendations

The following should be required:

### 95. General washroom requirements

- a. washroom facilities will accommodate the range of people that will use the space. Although many persons with disabilities use toilet facilities independently, some may require assistance. Where the

individual providing assistance is of the opposite gender then typical gender-specific washrooms are awkward, and so an individual washroom is required. <sup>C-1(b)</sup>

- b. parents and caregivers with small children and strollers also benefit from a large, individual washroom with toilet and change facilities contained within the same space.
- c. circumstances such as wet surfaces and the act of transferring between toilet and wheelchair or scooter can make toilet facilities accident-prone areas. An individual falling in a washroom with a door that swings inward could prevent his or her own rescuers from opening the door. Due to the risk of accidents, emergency call buttons are vital in all washrooms.
- d. the appropriate design of all features will ensure the usability and safety of all toilet facilities.
- e. the identification of washrooms will include pictograms for children or people who cannot read. All signage will include braille that translates the text on the print sign, and not only the room number.
- f. there are three types of washrooms. Single use accessible washrooms, single use universal washrooms, and multi-use stalled washrooms. The number and types of washrooms used in a facility will be determined by the number of users. There will always at least be one universal washroom on each floor.
- g. all washrooms will have doors with power door opening buttons. No door washrooms will be hard to identify for people who have vision loss.
- h. stall washrooms accessible-sized stalls – At least two accessible stalls shall be provided in each washroom to avoid long wait times. Schools with accessible education programs that include a large percentage of people with mobility disabilities should to have all stalls sized to accommodate a turn circle and the transfer space beside the toilet.
- i. all washrooms near rooms that will be used for public events shall include a baby change table that is accessible to all users, not placed inside a stall. It shall be colour contrasted with the surroundings and usable for those in a seated mobility device and or of shorter stature.
- j. at least one universal washroom will include an adult-sized change table, with the washroom located near appropriate facilities in the school and any public event spaces. These are important for some adults with disabilities and for children with disabilities who are too large for the baby change tables. This helps prevent anyone from needing to be changed lying on a bathroom floor.
- k. where shower stalls are provided, these shall include accessible-sized stalls.
- l. portable toilets at special events shall all be accessible. At least one will include an adult-sized change table.

#### 96. Washroom stalls:

- a. size: manoeuvrability of a wheelchair or scooter is the principal consideration in the design of an accessible stall. The increased size of the stall is required to ensure there is sufficient space to facilitate proper placement of a wheelchair or scooter to accommodate a person transferring transfer onto the toilet from their mobility device. There may also be instances where an individual requires assistance. Thus, the stall will have to accommodate a second person.
- b. stall door swings are normally outward for safety reasons and space considerations. However, this makes it difficult to close the door once inside. A handle mounted part way along the door makes it easier for someone inside the stall to close the door behind them.
- c. minimum requirements for non-accessible toilet stalls are included to ensure that persons who do not use wheelchairs or scooters can be adequately accommodated within any toilet stall.
- d. universal features include accessible hardware and a minimum stall width to accommodate persons of large stature or parents with small children.

#### 97. Toilets:

- a. automatic flush controls are preferred. If flushing mechanisms are not automated, flushing controls shall be on the transfer side of the toilet, with colour contrasted and lever style handles.
- b. children-sized toilets and accessible child-sized toilets will be required in kindergarten areas either within the classroom or immediately adjacent to the facilities.

#### 98. Sinks:

- a. each accessible sink shall be on an accessible path of travel that other people, using other sinks or features (like hand-dryers), are not positioned to block.
- b. the sink, sink controls, soap dispenser and towel dispenser should all be at an accessible height and location and should all be automatic controls that do not require physical contact.

- c. while faucets with remote-eye technology may initially confuse some individuals, their ease<sup>C-1(b)</sup> of use is notable. Individuals with hand strength or dexterity difficulties can use lever-style handles.
- d. for an individual in a wheelchair and younger children, a lower counter height and clearance for knees under the counter are required.
- e. the insulating of hot water pipes shall be assured to protect the legs of an individual using a wheelchair. This is particularly important when a disability impairs sensation such that the individual would not sense that their legs were being burned.
- f. the combination of shallow sinks and higher water pressures can cause unacceptable splashing at lavatories.

99. Urinals:

- a. each urinal needs to be on an accessible path of travel with clear floor space in front of each accessible urinal to provide the manoeuvring space for a mobility device.
- b. urinal grab bars shall be provided to assist individuals rising from a seated position and others to steady themselves.
- c. floor-mounted urinals accommodate children and persons of short stature as well as enabling easier access to drain personal care devices.
- d. flush controls, where used, will be automatic preferred. Strong colour contrasts shall be provided between the urinal, the wall and the floor to assist persons with vision loss/no vision.
- e. in stall washrooms with Urinals, all urinals will be accessible with lower rim heights. For primary schools the urinal should be full height from floor to upper rim to accommodate children. Stalled washrooms with urinals will have an upper rim at the same height as typical non-accessible urinals to avoid the mess taller users can make. All urinals will provide vertical grab bars which are colour contrasted to the walls. Where dividers between urinals are used, the dividers will be colour contrasted to the walls as well.

100. Showers:

- a. roll-in or curb less shower stalls shall be provided to eliminate the hazard of stepping over a threshold and are essential for persons with disabilities who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices in the shower.
- b. grab bars and non-slip materials shall be included as safety measures that will support any individual.
- c. colour contrasted hand-held shower head and a water-resistant folding bench shall be included to assist persons with disabilities. These are also convenient for others.
- d. other equipment that has contrasting colour from the shower stall shall be included to assist individuals with vision loss/no vision.
- e. shower floor drain locations will be located to avoid room flooding when they may get blocked.
- f. colour contrast will be provided between the floor and the walls in the shower to assist with wayfinding.
- g. shower curtains will be used for individual showers instead of doors as much as possible as it.
- h. where showers are provided in locker rooms each locker room will include at least one accessible shower, but an additional individual shower room will be provided immediately adjacent to allow for those with opposite sex attendants to assist them with the appropriate privacy.

## Accessible design for interior building elements – specific room requirements recommendations

101. Performance stages

The following should be required:

- a. elevated platforms, such as stage areas, speaker podiums, etc., shall be accessible to all.
- b. a clear accessible route will be provided along the same path of access for those who are not using mobility assistive devices as those who do. Lifts will not be used to access stage or raised platforms, unless the facility is retrofitting an existing stage and it is not technically possible to provide access by other means.
- c. the stage shall include safety features to assist persons with vision loss or those momentarily blinded by stage lights from falling off the edge of a raised stage, such as a colour contrasted raised lip along the edge of the stage.

- d. lecterns shall be accessible with an adjustable height surface, knee space and accessible <sup>C-1(b)</sup> audio visual (AV) and information technology (IT) equipment. Lecterns shall have a microphone that is connected to an assistive listening system, such as a hearing loop. The office and/or presentation area will have assistive listening units available for those who may request them, for example people who are hard of hearing but not yet wearing hearing aids.
- e. lighting shall be adjustable to allow for a minimum of lighting in the public seating area and backstage to allow those who need to move or leave with sufficient lighting at floor level to be safe.

#### 102. Sensory rooms

The following should be required:

- a. sensory rooms will be provided in a central location on each floor where there are classrooms or public meeting spaces.
- b. they will be soundproof and identified with accessible signage.
- c. the interior walls and floor will be darker in colour, but colour contrast will be used to distinctly differentiate the floor from the wall and the furniture.
- d. lighting will be provided on a dimmer to allow for the room to be darkened.
- e. weighted blankets will be available along with a variety of different seating options including beanbag chairs or bouncy seat balls.
- f. they will provide a phone or other two-way communication to call for assistance if needed.

#### 103. Offices, work areas and meeting rooms

The following should be required:

- a. offices providing services or programs to the public will be accessible to all, regardless of mobility or functional needs. Offices and related support areas shall be accessible to staff and visitors with disabilities.
- b. all people, but particularly those with hearing loss/persons who are hard-of-hearing, will benefit from having a quiet acoustic environment – background noise from mechanical equipment such as fans, shall be designed to be minimal. Telephone equipment that supports the needs of individuals with hearing and vision loss shall be available.
- c. the provision of assistive speaking devices is important for the range of individuals who may have difficulty with low vocal volume thus affecting production of normal audible levels of sound. Where offices and work areas and small meeting rooms do not have assistive listening, such as hearing loops permanently installed, portable assistive hearing loops shall be available at the office.
- d. tables and workstations shall provide the knee space requirements of an individual in a mobility assistive device. Adjustable height tables allow for a full range of user needs. Circulation areas shall accommodate the spatial needs of mobility equipment as large as scooters to ensure all areas and facilities in the space can be reached with appropriate manoeuvring and turning spaces.
- e. natural coloured task lighting, such as that provided through halogen bulbs, shall be used wherever possible to facilitate use by all, especially persons with low vision.
- f. in locations where reflective glare may be problematic, such as large expanses of glass with reflective flooring, blinds that can be louvered upwards shall be provided. Controls for blinds shall be accessible to all and usable with a closed fist without pinching or twisting.

#### 104. Outdoor athletic and recreational facilities

The following should be required:

- a. areas for outdoor recreation, leisure and active sport participation shall be designed to be available to all members of the school community.
- b. outdoor spaces will allow persons with a disability to be active participants, as well as spectators, volunteers and members of staff. Spaces will be accessible including boardwalks, trails and footbridges, pathways, parks, parkettes and playgrounds, parks, parkettes and playgrounds, grandstand and other viewing areas, and playing fields.
- c. assistive listening will be provided where game or other announcements will be made for all areas including the change room, player, coach and public areas.
- d. noise cancelling headphones shall be available to those with sensory disabilities.
- e. outdoor exercise equipment will include options for those with a variety of disabilities including those with temporary disabilities undergoing rehabilitation.

- f. seating and like facilities shall be inclusive and allow for all members of a disabled sports team<sup>C-1(b)</sup> to sit together in an integrated way that does not segregate anyone.
- g. seating and facilities will be inclusive and allow for all members of a sports team of persons with disabilities to sit together in an integrated way that does not segregate anyone.

105. Arenas, halls and other indoor recreational facilities

The following should be required:

- a. areas for recreation, leisure and active sport participation will be accessible to all members of the community.
- b. assistive listening will be provided where game or other announcements will be made for all areas including the change room, player, coach and public areas.
- c. noise cancelling headphones will be available to those with sensory disabilities.
- d. access will be provided throughout outdoor facilities including to; playing fields and other sports facilities, all activity areas, outdoor trails, swimming areas, play spaces, lockers, dressing/change rooms and showers.
- e. interior access will be provided to halls, arenas, and other sports facilities, including access to the site, all activity spaces, gymnasias, fitness facilities, lockers, dressing/change rooms and showers.
- f. spaces will allow persons with disabilities to be active participants, as well as spectators, volunteers and members of staff.
- g. indoor exercise equipment will include options for those with a variety of disabilities including those with temporary disabilities who are undergoing rehabilitation.
- h. seating and facilities will be inclusive and allow for all members of a sports team of persons with disabilities to sit together in an integrated way that does not segregate or stigmatize anyone.

106. Swimming pools

The following should be required:

- a. primary considerations for accommodating persons who have mobility impairments include accessible change facilities and a means of access into the water. Ramped access into the water is preferred over lift access, as it promotes integration (everyone will use the ramp) and independence.
- b. persons with low vision benefit from colour and textural surfaces that are detectable and safe for both bare feet or those wearing water shoes. These surfaces will be provided along primary routes of travel leading to access points such as pool access ladders and ramps.
- c. tactile surface markings and other barriers will be provided at potentially dangerous locations, such as the edge of the pool, at steps into the pool and at railings.
- d. floors will be slip resistant to help those who are unsteady on their feet and everyone even in wet conditions.

107. Cafeterias

The following should be required:

- a. cafeteria serving lines and seating area designs shall reflect the lower sight lines, reduced reach, knee-space and manoeuvring requirements of a person using a wheelchair or scooter. Patrons using mobility devices may not be able to hold a tray or food items while supporting themselves on canes or while manoeuvring a wheelchair.
- b. if tray slides are provided, they will be designed to move trays with minimal effort.
- c. food signage will be accessible.
- d. all areas where food is ordered and picked up will be designed to meet accessible service counter requirements.
- e. self-serve food will be within the reach of people who are shorter or using seated mobility assistive devices.
- f. where trays are provided, a tray cart that can be attached to seated assistive mobility devices or a staff assistant solution that is readily available shall be available on demand, because carrying trays and pushing a chair or operating a motorized assistive device can be difficult or impossible.

108. Libraries

The following should be required:

- a. all service counters shall provide accessibility features
- b. study carrels will accommodate the knee-space and armrest requirements of a person using a mobility device.

- c. computer catalogues, carrels and workstations will be provided at a range of heights, to <sup>C-1 (b)</sup> accommodate persons who are standing or sitting, as well as children of different ages and sizes.
- d. workstations shall be equipped with assistive technology such as large displays, screen readers, to increase the accessibility of a library.
- e. book drop-off slots shall be at different heights for standing and seated use with accessible signage, to enhance usability.

#### 109. Teaching spaces and classrooms

The following should be required:

- a. students, teachers and staff with disabilities will have accessibility to teaching and classroom facilities, including teaching computer labs.
- b. all teaching spaces and classrooms will provide power door operators and assistive listening systems such as hearing loops.
- c. additional considerations may be necessary for spaces and/or features specifically designated for use by students with disabilities, such as accessibility standards accommodations for complex personal care needs.
- d. students teachers and staff with disabilities will be accommodated in all teaching spaces throughout the school.
- e. this accessibility will include the ability to enter and move freely throughout the space, as well as to use the various built-in elements within (such as, blackboards and/or whiteboards, switches, computer stations, sinks, etc.). Classroom and meeting rooms must be designed with enough room for people with mobility devices to comfortably move around.
- f. individuals with disabilities frequently use learning aids and other assistive devices that require a power supply. Additional electrical outlets shall be provided throughout teaching spaces to accommodate the use of such equipment.
- g. except where it is impossible, fixtures, fittings, furniture and equipment will be specified for teaching spaces, which is usable by students, faculty, teaching assistants and staff with disabilities.
- h. providing only one size of seating does not reflect the diversity of body types of our society. Offering seats with an increased width and weight capacity is helpful for persons of large stature. Seating with increased legroom will better suit individuals that are taller. Removable armrests can be helpful for persons of larger stature as well as individuals using wheelchairs that prefer to transfer to the seat.

#### 110. Laboratories will provide, in addition to the requirements for classrooms, additional accessibility considerations may be necessary for spaces and/or features in laboratories.

#### 111. Waiting and queuing areas

The following should be required:

- a. queuing areas for information, tickets or services will permit persons who use wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices as well as for persons with a varying range of user ability to easily move through the line safely.
- b. all lines shall be accessible.
- c. waiting and queuing areas will provide space for mobility devices, such as wheelchairs and scooters.
- d. queuing lines that turn corners or double back on themselves will provide adequate space to manoeuvre mobility devices.
- e. handrails, not flexible guidelines, with high colour contrast will be provided along queuing lines, because they are a useful support for individuals and guidance for those with vision loss.
- f. benches in waiting areas shall be provided for individuals who may have difficulty with standing for extended periods.
- g. assistive listening systems will be provided, such as hearing loops, will be provided along with accessible signage indicating this service is available.

#### 112. Information, reception and service counters

The following should be required:

- a. all information, reception and service counters will be accessible to the full range of visitors. Where adjustable height furniture is not used, a choice of fixed counter heights will provide a range of options for a variety of persons. Lowered sections will serve children, persons of short stature and

- persons using mobility devices such as a wheelchair or scooter. The choice of heights will also extend to any speaking ports and writing surfaces.
- b. counters will provide knee space under the counter to accommodate a person using a wheelchair or a scooter.
  - c. the provision of assistive speaking and listening devices is important for the range of individuals who may have difficulty with low vocal volume thus affecting production of normal audible levels of sound. The space where people are speaking will have appropriate acoustic treatment to ensure the best possible conditions for communication. Both the public and staff sides of the counter will have good lighting for the faces to help facilitate lip reading.
  - d. colour contrast will be provided to delineate the public service counters and speaking ports for people with low vision.

## **Accessible design for interior building elements – other features recommendations**

### **113. Lockers**

The following should be required:

- a. lockers will be accessible with colour contrast and accessible signage.
- b. in change rooms an accessible bench will be provided in close proximity to lockers.
- c. lockers at lower heights serve the reach of children or a person using a wheelchair or scooter.
- d. the locker operating mechanisms will be at an appropriate height and operable by individuals with restrictions in hand dexterity (such as, operable with a closed fist).

### **114. Storage, shelving and display units**

The following should be required:

- a. the heights of storage, shelving and display units will address a full range of vantage points including the lower sightlines of children or a person using a wheelchair or scooter. The lower heights also serve the lower reach of these individuals.
- b. displays and storage along a path of travel that are too low can be problematic for individuals that have difficulty bending down or who are blind. If these protrude too much into the path of travel, each will protect people with the use of a trip free cane detectable guard.
- c. appropriate lighting and colour contrast are particularly important for persons with vision loss.
- d. signage provided will be accessible with braille, text, colour contrast and tactile features.

### **115. Public address systems**

The following should be required:

- a. public address systems will be designed to best accommodate all users, especially those that may be hard of hearing. They will be easy to hear above the ambient background noise of the environment with no distortion or feedback. Background noise or music will be minimized.
- b. technology for visual equivalents of information being broadcast will be available for individuals with hearing loss/persons who are hard-of-hearing who may not hear an audible public address system.
- c. classrooms, library, hallways, and other areas will have assistive listening equipment that is tied into the general public address system.

### **116. Emergency exits, fire evacuation and areas of rescue assistance**

The following should be required:

- o 116.1 in order to be accessible to all individuals, emergency exits will include the same accessibility features as other doors. The doors and routes will be marked in a way that is accessible to all individuals, including those who may have difficulty with literacy, such as children or persons speaking a different language.
- o 116.2 persons with vision loss/no vision will be provided a means to quickly locate exits – audio or talking signs could assist.
- o 116.3 Areas of rescue assistance
  - a. in the event of fire when elevators cannot be used, areas of rescue assistance shall be provided especially for anyone who has difficulty traversing sets of stairs.
  - b. areas of rescue assistance will be provided on all floors above or below the ground floor.



- c. exit stairs will provide an area of rescue assistance on the landing with at least two spaces for people with mobility assistive devices sized to ensure those spaces do not block the exit route for those using the stairs.
- d. the number of spaces necessary on each floor that does not have an at-grade exit should be sized by the number of people on each floor.
- e. each area of refuge will provide a two-way communication system with both two-way video and audio to allow those using these spaces to communicate that they are waiting there and to communicate with fire safety services and or security.
- f. all signage associated with the area of rescue assistance will be accessible and include braille for all controls and information.

#### 117. Other features

The following should be required:

- o 117.1 Space and reach requirements
  - a. the dimensions and manoeuvring characteristics of wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices will allow for a full array of equipment that is used by individuals to access and use facilities, as well as the diverse range of user ability.
- o 117.2 Ground and floor surfaces
  - a. irregular surfaces, such as cobblestones or pea-gravel finished concrete, shall be avoided because they are difficult for both walking and pushing a wheelchair. Slippery surfaces are to be avoided because they are hazardous to all individuals and especially hazardous for seniors and others who may not be sure-footed.
  - b. glare from polished floor surfaces is to be avoided because it can be uncomfortable for all users and can be a particular obstacle to persons with vision loss by obscuring important orientation and safety features. Pronounced colour contrast between walls and floor finishes are helpful for persons with vision loss, as are changes in colour/texture where a change in level or function occurs.
  - c. patterned floors should be avoided, as they can create visual confusion.
  - d. thick pile carpeting is to be avoided as it makes pushing a wheelchair very difficult. Small and uneven changes in floor level represent a further barrier to using a wheelchair and present a tripping hazard to ambulatory persons.
  - e. openings in any ground or floor surface such as grates or grilles are to be avoided because they can catch canes or wheelchair wheels.

#### 118. Universal design practices beyond typical accessibility requirements

The following should be required:

- o 118.1 areas of refuge should be provided even when a building has a sprinkler system.
- o 118.2 no hangout steps\* should ever be included in the building or facility.
  - \* Hangout steps are a socializing area that is sometimes used for presentations. It looks similar to bleachers. Each seating level is further away from the front and higher up but here people sit on the floor rather than on seats. Each seating level is about as deep as four stairs and about three stairs high. There is typically a regular staircase provided on one side that leads from the front or stage area to the back at the top. The stairs allow ambulatory people access to all levels of the seating areas, but the only seating spaces for those who use mobility assistive devices are at the front or at the top at the back, but these are not integrated in any way with the other seating options.
- o 118.3 there should never be “stramps.” A stramp is a staircase that someone has built a ramp running back and forth across. These create accessibility problems rather than solving them.
- o 118.4 rest areas should be differentiated from walking surfaces or paths by texture- and colour-contrast.
- o 118.5 keypads angled to be usable from both a standing and a seated position.
- o 118.6 finishes
  - a. no floor-to-ceiling mirrors
  - b. colour luminance contrast will be provided at least between:
    - i. floor to wall
    - ii. door or door frame to wall
    - iii. door hardware to door

## iv. controls to wall surfaces

- o 118.7 furniture – Arrange seating in square or round arrangement so all participants can see each other for those who are lip reading or using sign language.
- o 118.8 no sharp corners especially near turn circles or under surfaces where people will be sitting.

## 119. Requirements for public playgrounds on or adjacent to school property

The following should be required:

- o 119.1 accessible path of travel from sidewalk and entry points to and throughout the play space. Tactile directional indicators would help as integrated path through large open spaces.
- o 119.2 accessible controlled access routes into and out of the play space.
- o 119.3 multiple ways to use and access play equipment.
- o 119.4 a mix of ground-level equipment integrated with elevated equipment accessible by a ramp or transfer platform.
- o 119.5 where stairs are provided, ramps to same area.
- o 119.6 no overhead hazards.
- o 119.7 ramp landings, elevated decks and other areas should provide sufficient turning space for mobility devices and include fun plan activities not just a view.
- o 119.8 space to park wheelchairs and mobility devices beside transfer platforms.
- o 119.9 space for a caregiver to sit beside a child on a slide or other play element.
- o 119.10 provide elements that can be manipulated with limited exertion.
- o 119.11 avoid recurring scraping or sharp clanging sounds such as the sound of dropping stones and gravel.
- o 119.12 avoid shiny surfaces as they produce a glare.
- o 119.13 colour luminance contrast will be provided at least at:
  - a. different spaces throughout the play area.
  - b. differentiate the rise and run on steps. include colour contrasting on the edge of each step.
  - c. play space boundaries and areas where children should be cautious, such as around high traffic areas for example, slide exits.
  - d. entry to play areas with shorter doors to help avoid hitting heads.
  - e. tactile edges where there is a level change like at the top of the stairs or at a drop-off.
  - f. transfer platforms.
  - g. railings and handrails contrasted to the supports to make them easier to find.
  - h. tripping hazards should be avoided but if they exist, providing colour contrast, to improve safety for all. this is more likely in an older playground.
  - i. safe zones around swings, slide exits and other play areas where people are moving, that might not be noticed when people are moving around the playground.
- o 119.14 play surfacing materials under foot will be pour-in-place rubber surfacing that should be made of either:
  - a. rubber Tile
  - b. engineered wood fiber
  - c. engineered carpet, artificial turf, and crushed rubber products
  - d. sand
- o 119.15 accessible parking and curbs, where provided, at least one clearly marked accessible space positioned as close as possible to the playground on a safe, accessible route to the play space.
- o 119.16 accessible signage:
  - a. accessible signage and raised line map at each entrance to the park.
  - b. provide large colour contrasted text, pictograms, braille.
  - c. provide signage at each play element with id text and braille, marked with a tactile attention paver to make it easier to find.
  - d. identify the types of disability included at each play equipment/area.
- o 119.17 for caregivers:
  - a. junior and senior play equipment within easy viewing of each other.
  - b. sitting areas that offer a clear line of sight to play areas and equipment.
  - c. clear lines of sight throughout the play space.
  - d. access to all play areas in order to provide assistance.

- e. sitting areas with back support, arm rests and shade.
- f. benches and other sitting areas should be placed on a firm stable area for people using assistive devices such as wheelchairs.
- o 119.18 for service animals:
  - a. nearby safe, shady places at rest area benches where service animals can wait with a caregiver with a clear view of their handlers when they are not assisting them.
  - b. spaces where dogs can relieve themselves – dog relief area with nearby garbage can.
- o 119.19 tips for swings:
  - a. providing a safe boundary area around swings which is identified by surface material colour and texture.
  - b. swings in a variety of sizes.
  - c. accessible seat swings or basket swings that require transfer. If size and space allow provide two accessible swings for friends with disabilities to swing together. Platform swings eliminate the need to transfer should be integrated.
- o 119.20 tips for slides:
  - a. double slides (side by side) allow caregivers to accompany and, if needed, to offer support.
  - b. slide exits should not be directed into busy play areas.
  - c. transfer platforms at the base of slide exits.
  - d. seating spaces with back support adjacent to the slide exit where children/caregivers can wait for their mobility device to be retrieved.
  - e. metal versus plastic slides (metal slides avoid static electricity which damaged cochlear implants, while sun exposure can leave metal slide hot, so shade devices are vital).
  - f. roller slides are usually gentler in slope and provide both a tactile and sliding experience or an avalanche inclusive slide.

**Timeline:** six months for all recommendations

## Section eight: Planning for emergencies and safety framework

The current COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to test and evaluate the education system preparedness for a large-scale emergency. From feedback and experience, the first seven months of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the education system was not ready to ensure the needs for students with disabilities were effectively met and accommodated during an emergency. Barriers and gaps identified by the Education Accessibility K-12 Standards Committee related to students with disabilities were heightened or increased. Additional barriers were also identified by committee members. As a result of these observations, the K-12 committee created the Planning for Emergencies and Safety Working group to identify additional barriers faced by students with disabilities during the pandemic and make recommendations to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are met during any emergency, when the emergency affects the ability to delivery education and health services.

The Planning for Emergencies and Safety Working Group gathered resources from experts including [A Strategic Framework for Emergency Preparedness – World Health Organization](#), [Emergency Response Plans](#), [Ministry of Solicitor General](#), [Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic](#), and barriers and gaps identified through experiential learning from COVID-19 to develop recommendations to support a the development of strategic framework for preparing for emergencies and safety for students with disabilities.

Recommendations from previous sections in the committee report along with key principles from the WHO's Strategic Framework for Emergency Preparedness was applied when making recommendations for emergency planning. Recommendations are organized in this section based on the four phases of the emergency management process.

It is important to note that implementation of recommendations within this section of the report would benefit all students; not just students with disabilities during an event of an emergency and assumes that the recommendations would be integrated in an education system wide emergency plan.

By learning from innovations and emergency processes, systems can adapt and scale up the more effective solutions. In doing so, they could become more effective, more agile, and more resilient

*(COVID-19 Pandemic: shocks to education and policy responses, World Bank)*

The current COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to test and evaluate the education system preparedness for a large-scale emergency. From feedback and experience, the first 7 months of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the education system was not ready to ensure the needs for students with disabilities were effectively met and accommodated during an emergency. Barriers and gaps identified by the Education Accessibility K-12 Standards Committee related to students with disabilities were heightened or increased as noted in the report from the Accessibility Education K-12 Committee, Planning for Emergencies & Safety Working Group COVID-19 Barriers for Students with Disabilities & Recommendations, July 2020.

Under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, each ministry is required to develop an Emergency Response Plan. As students return to school and return-to-school plans are enacted, it is important for that an evaluation of Ontario's education system emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system be undertaken and that the results of the evaluation be used to inform the revision or development of emergency plans for future events.

The following discussion and recommendations build upon lessons learned during COVID-19 pandemic and provides long term recommendations that should be in place in the event of any future emergencies.

120. We recommend: The Ministry of Education review its Emergency Response Plan for the delivery of education and health services during an emergency that meets learning needs of all students with disabilities during an emergency. To ensure continued learning, health and wellbeing during an emergency event, this plan should include and incorporate:
- a. an outline of the functional structure, roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders in the delivery of education and health services during an emergency and ensure the safety of students with disabilities.
  - b. an all-hazard approach to address different emergency events and the continued delivery of education and health services for students with disabilities.
  - c. a collaborative, coordinated, multilevel government and education inter-sectoral approach to the development of an emergency plan for all types of emergencies that is responsive and inclusive and reduces or limits consequences or impact of an emergency event for students with disabilities.
  - d. various options to delivering education and health services (for example, normal school day with enhanced health protocols, modified school day routine based on smaller class sizes, cohorting and alternative day or week delivery, at-home learning with ongoing enhanced remote delivery) depending on the type of hazard.
  - e. measures to address the possible surge in demand and increase capacity to provide specialized disability supports, including enhanced staffing, for the return to in-class and distance learning (increase in in-class supports, social workers, psychologists, guidance counsellors).
  - f. collection and maintenance on status of affected students and schools, capacity of and condition of infrastructure to support continued learning for students with disabilities.
  - g. provision of digital resources and any communications during an emergency event is in a format that is accessible to students with disabilities and their parents.
  - h. an outline for all points of transition (virtual to online, elementary to secondary, secondary to work, secondary to postsecondary, etc.) are continued and supported during and post emergency for students with disabilities.
  - i. student voice in the development of the emergency plan.

**Timeline:** 18 months

**Preamble:** as the pandemic progressed, Ministries had to develop individual guidelines and/or policies<sup>6-1 (b)</sup> to help school board create back to school plans and protocols for COVID-19 management. The education sector, parents and students' anxieties increased as there appeared to be an inconsistent approach to school plans, remote learning, etc., from school board to school board.

121. We recommend: In collaboration with other ministries, The Ministry of Education should develop an Emergency Plan Guideline for school boards and school authorities that outlines principles and elements for developing a responsive and effective emergency plan and process to anticipate, respond to and recovery from impacts of an emergency so that:
- it identifies all potential hazards that may cause an emergency event that may disrupt usual operations of the education system and addresses them to mitigate risks and consequences for students with disabilities.
  - during an emergency where there is a disruption to the usual operations of Ontario's education system, the Strategic Emergency Framework ensures students with disabilities will be able to access, fully participate in and fully benefit from all educational programming that is provided to Ontario students.
  - the needs of students with disabilities will be fully included and addressed in any emergency plan developed to ensure continued and consistent access to education and health support services.
  - there will be collaboration and include an education inter-sectorial approach to stakeholder engagement to allow for an integrated and unified approach to the development of emergency plans by school boards across the province.
  - includes a process to assess emergency preparedness and response or operational review in the delivery of education and health services after an emergency to support continuous improvement to emergency responses, sharing of resources, emergency plans, emergency preparedness training exercises, and experiences.
  - the Guideline for Emergency Plans for School Boards be developed with a specific focus on students with disabilities and utilizes lessons learned from COVID-19 and previous reports to lay out a planning and implementation process that the government and school boards can use to strengthen their policies, strategic and operational plans in supporting students with disabilities.
  - as there are significant differences in the education delivery model between secondary and elementary, the Guideline for Emergency Plans for School Boards should be developed to incorporate those differences.
  - the Guideline for Emergency Plans for School Boards allows and enhances an interlinked, coordinated and inter-sectorial education approach in providing a seamless service delivery model to provide services and supports to students with disabilities (Psychology, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Mental Health, etc.) during an emergency event.
  - once the guideline for emergency plans for School Boards is developed, School Boards will review and revise their emergency plans to reflect the Ministry of Education's Guidelines.

**Timeline:** 18 months

121. Disability and accessibility should be front and centre in the upcoming review of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. The Solicitor General, who is responsible for Emergency Management, should involve persons with disabilities. It should involve the Accessibility Standards Advisory Committee. The same process should occur when the Fire Code is reviewed next.

**Note:** no timeline suggested as lead would not be the Ministry of Education and falls out of the mandate of the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee.

123. The Ministry of Education establish an independent review committee as soon as possible to assess the COVID-19 response by the Ministry of Education and School Boards by:
- documenting the response by the ministry and school boards to supporting students with disabilities.
  - documenting the coordination and collaboration with other ministries in responding to the needs of students with disabilities at school and at home during remote learning.
  - identifying key decision points and changes in response activities.

- d. surveying key stakeholders, including student voice about the effectiveness of key response<sup>C-1(b)</sup> activities.
- e. assessing the information collected to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in the response and preparedness to ensure access and delivery of education and health services for students with disabilities.
- f. making recommendations for future emergency planning and preparedness.

**Timeline:** immediate

124. The independent review committee membership should include, but not limited to school boards, students and other individuals with disabilities, and 2 to 3 members of the Education Accessibility K-12 Standards Development Committee and supported by Ministry of Education staff.

**Timeline:** immediate

125. The report of the committee, or interim reports if the COVID-19 pandemic last more than one year, shall be submitted to the Premiere and Cabinet, and made public.

**Timeline:** immediate

126. The Government of Ontario shall be responsible to ensure that lessons learned, and recommendations are used to inform future emergency planning and preparations.

**Timeline:** immediate

127. This process to assess response to emergencies shall be used after each future provincial level emergency that impacts students with disabilities.

**Timeline:** immediate

## Emergency management system recommendations

By learning from innovations and emergency processes, systems can adapt and scale up the more effective solutions. In doing so, they could become more effective, more agile, and more resilient”  
(quoted from the *COVID-19 Pandemic: shocks to education and policy responses*, World Bank)

Emergency management does not only include the response to an emergency event but is a continuous and ongoing cycle of four major stages. Each stage informs the other, are fluid and interactive.

The four stages are: 1) Mitigation and Prevention, 2) Planning and Preparedness, 3) Response and 4) Recovery.

This section of the report addresses the need to include the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee provisions and recommendations from the Planning for Emergencies Working Group to ensure that the need for students with disabilities are met during an emergency, when the emergency affects the ability to delivery education and health services.

**Recommendations below are made in the context of the four phases of the emergency management process.**

### Stage one - mitigation and prevention

The mitigation and prevention stage include actions to eliminate or reduce hazards and their impacts should an emergency occur. It should be considered as an ongoing process, requiring monitoring and updating. This involves a hazard risk assessment is the process to identify hazardous events or situations with potential harm, the likelihood and severity of hazards to occur, and analysis of what could happen if a hazard occurs to identify weakness or vulnerabilities.

128. The outcomes of risk assessment should include:

- a. identification of relevant hazards and risks to the delivery and education and health services for students with disabilities.
- b. assessment of the level of impact and consequences of the hazards and risks for the delivery of education for students with disabilities, all students, staff, parents/caregivers, teachers, delivery of

- health services, confidence of the community.
- c. analysis of the capabilities and capacity available (preparedness) for mitigating hazards and risks to the delivery of education and health services for students with disabilities.
- d. priority setting for mitigation, planning response and recover of the delivery of education and health services.
- e. development of plans to address the identified hazards and risks through mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery strategies/activities
- f. an understanding of community/organization's risk to deliver education services for students with disabilities.
- g. assessment of existing safety status of existing mitigation structures (buildings, information technology, utility systems, supply systems, material, etc.).

Data collection and analysis of data collected pre, during and post emergency event is required to make informed evidence-based decisions in developing of emergency plans and to take action in responding to and mitigate risks during an emergency event.

### **Recommendations for risk assessment**

It is important when conducting a risk assessment prior to developing an emergency plan, that the process in inclusive and collaborative and involves all stakeholders in the provision of education and health services, students, staff, teachers, community education providers, etc.

To prepare for any potential emergency, it is recommended that:

129. The Ministry of Education perform a risk assessment to identify relevant potential hazards and risks, capabilities, and capacity for the delivery of education and health support services for students with disabilities.  
**Timeline:** 18 months
130. The risk assessment process be inclusive and collaborative and involve stakeholders in the delivery of education and health services and persons with or represent persons with disabilities.  
**Timeline:** 18 months
131. That the report from the Independent Review Committee (recommendation 4) be utilized as a resource for the Ministry of Education in performing a risk assessment.  
**Timeline:** 18 months
132. School Boards perform a risk assessment to identify relevant potential hazards, risks, capabilities, and capacity for the delivery of education and health service supports for students with disabilities in an emergency event.  
**Timeline:** 18 months
133. School Board's risk assessment process be inclusive and collaborative and involve local stakeholders in the delivery of education and health services for students with special needs including local health, education service providers, Special Education Advisory Committee and/or Accessibility Committee and students with learned experience with disabilities.  
**Timeline:** 18 months
134. The report from the Independent Review Committee be utilized as a resource for School Boards when performing a risk assessment.  
**Timeline:** 18 months

### **Stage 2 - planning and preparedness**

Preparedness and planning involve ensuring that processes, school boards, schools and education and health services providers, students, parents and the community are ready to respond to an emergency. Using the information and data collected in the mitigation and prevention phase, it is critical that detailed plans developed involve collaboratively working with representatives of all parties who will be impacted, including ministries

involved in the delivery of education and health services, education sector community partners, school boards, school communities, students, and parents. Training and organizing staff and volunteers are critical. C-1(b)

## Recommendations planning:

In addition to the recommendations outlined in Key Recommendations to Emergency Planning, it is recommended that:

135. For efficiency and to maintain infrastructure to support online learning during an emergency, The Ministry of Education should immediately engage an arms-length digital accessibility consultant to evaluate the comparative accessibility of different digital learning and virtual learning environments or platforms available for use in Ontario schools.  
**Timeline:** immediate
136. The Ministry of Education should provide a list of acceptable accessible, cross platform virtual learning environments and synchronous teaching systems to be used by school boards to ensure remote access to education services during an emergency. This list should be regularly reviewed within the emergency management cycle and updated as technology and applications continually evolve, and capabilities increase.  
**Timeline:** immediate
137. The Ministry of Education should make its own online learning content accessible for persons with disabilities, including T.V.O. and T.E.O. as a provider of centralized support for online learning in the English-language and French-language publicly funded education systems, respectively.  
**Timeline:** one year
138. The Ministry of Education should direct its entire staff and all School Boards that whenever making information public in a Portable Document Format (PDF), it must at the same time, make available a textual format such as an accessible Microsoft Word (MSWord) or accessible HTML document. Videos must be audio described (DV) and closed captioned (CC). Templates and technical guides should be developed and provided to school boards.  
**Timeline:** immediate
139. The government enhance and update the central hub of mental health and wellbeing information resources at provincial and regional levels with key messages and links to other resources to ensure they are readily available during an emergency. Ensure all resources are in an accessible digital format (as per [\*Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, O. Reg. 191/11\*](#)), well publicised and shared with school boards.  
**Timeline:** six months
140. Ministries should ensure there is enough capacity and infrastructure backup plans for Ontario Telehealth Network (OTN) and other privacy protected health platforms to allow for school boards to use and deliver services by regulated health care professionals that protect the privacy of the health services and Identification, Placement, and Review Committees.  
**Timeline:** one year
141. The Ministry of Education collect and make readily available resources/information on practices, effective strategies in learning environment, and alternate approaches for students struggling with online learning, etc., from School Boards, agencies and disability specific associations to ensure resources are readily available during an emergency.  
**Timeline:** one year
142. That Ministry of Education should model leadership to School Boards and provide accessible virtual learning webinars, templates for learning, etc., to be utilized in training administrators and teachers to ensure all educational and training resources are accessible remotely in case of an emergency.  
**Timeline:** immediate
143. The Ministry of Education should provide guidelines for a coordinated training delivery model to support parents of students with rehabilitation needs, mental health concerns or who have complex or significant medically needs to access and continue education and health services remotely during an emergency.  
**Timeline:** immediate
144. School Boards should ensure that its hub of learning resources specific to students with disabilities is accessible and available remotely to support teachers and students in their learning during an emergency.



**Timeline:** immediate

145. School Boards should assess and document accommodations, modifications, resources and supports for all students with disabilities to plan for continuation of learning in virtual environment in the event of an emergency or transition back to school after an emergency.

**Timeline:** immediate

146. School Boards should independently collect board wide data on gaps, barriers, emerging issues, transition challenges, technology challenges, additional students' needs and supports as a result of an emergency event through assessment, student and parent feedback to address and plan for system wide supports and services required by students with disabilities to allow for continuous improvement of emergency response plans.

**Timeline:** one year

147. School Boards should plan to provide solely dedicated or designated staff, who are available to support technology including accessibility needs to parents who are supporting the learning needs of students with disabilities.

**Timeline:** one year

148. School Boards should provide focused, practical training for administrators and teachers to support students with disabilities' health, wellbeing and learning in a mixed or virtual environment during an emergency.

**Timeline:** immediate

149. School Boards should provide administrators training and guidelines on supporting students with disabilities through transitioning and change during an emergency.

**Timeline:** immediate

## **Preparedness:**

Preparedness involves establishing roles and responsibilities for actions or functions carried out during an emergency and gathering the resources to support them. Investment in these resources requires investment for upkeep. Staff must receive training and infrastructure must be maintained in working order. Infrastructure needs to be maintained to it can be function when needed during an emergency. Emergency management teams and personnel must be trained to function effectively and efficiently when need during an emergency through a program of tests, drills, and exercises.

It is important for everyone that is affected in an emergency event, including staff, students, parents, education community partners, health and safety organizations, know the emergency plan and how they are to act during an emergency. Training for all involved in important will ensure responses are implemented calmly and effectively during an actual emergency. Testing/practices or drills are critical to a successful response to an emergency.

## **Recommendations Preparedness**

150. The Ministry of Education's emergency plan shall include the creation of a central education leadership command table with the responsibility of ensuring that students with disabilities have access to all accommodations and supports during an emergency. structure and membership shall be outlined in the plan, ensuring all students with disabilities and educational partnership groups are represented on the central education leadership command table.

**Timeline:** six months

151. The Ministry of Education shall pre-assign a communication lead to provide clear and consistent communication and guidance on expectations in education, health service delivery, etc., during an emergency.

**Timeline:** six months

152. The government/Ministry of Education Emergency plans shall include a cross sectorial Partnership Table at provincial and regional levels with the responsibility for ensuring that the need of students with disabilities are viewed from a holistic perspective and that they have access to all accommodations and supports they require during any emergency. The Partnership Table will be responsible to integrate,

coordinate and foster cross sector planning and response to emergencies. Responsibilities of this table are to: <sup>G-1 (b)</sup>

- a. enhance an interlinked, coordinated and inter-ministerial approach in providing a seamless service delivery model to provide services and supports to students with disabilities (psychology, physical therapy, speech therapy, mental health, etc.)
- b. provide clear communication and guidance developed from evidence-based data on school opening, health service delivery, etc.

**Timeline:** 18 months

153. Leadership tables (Command and Partnership) at the provincial level should include advisors that can provide insight on the needs and challenges of students with disabilities from lived experience and the collective experience of disability support groups, as well as students with disabilities.

**Timeline:** 18 months

154. School Boards' Emergency plans shall include the creation of a similar Board Command/Central table as the Ministry of Education's Central Education Command/Central Table, to develop its own emergency plan following the Ministry of Education's Guidelines for Emergency Plans for School Boards.

**Timeline:** two years

155. School Board's Emergency Plan should include pre-assigning a communication lead to provide clear and consistent communication and guidance on expectations in education, education and health service delivery model, updates on emergencies and action plans.

**Timeline:** six months

156. The School Board Emergency Plan should include establishment of a Command/Central Table during an emergency that will be responsible for:

- a. receiving and acting on feedback from teachers, principals and families about problems they are encountering serving students with disabilities during an emergency event. The table will quickly network with similar offices/tables at other school boards and can report recurring issues to the ministry's command table.

157. School Boards should utilize the expertise of the Special Education Advisory Committee members by directly involving members in developing the School Board's Emergency Plan and planning for the delivery of remote learning, other emergency plans, through regular meetings and frequent communications.

158. School Boards should involve their Accessibility Committee which will review all plans at the school board and school level for mitigating risk of an emergency and to meet the accessibility requirements of all students or persons with disabilities in the case of an emergency.

159. In the School Board's Emergency Plan, assign its senior staff member responsible for accessibility to ensure that all changes at schools in response to an emergency maintain accessibility for all students with disabilities.

**Timeline Note:** No timelines have been set for recommendations 156-159 as actions to the recommendations should take place during an emergency event.

### Stage 3 - responding to an emergency

Information access and the ongoing collection of data during an emergency is crucial to decision making and action plans during an emergency.

During an emergency, it is recommended that:

160. As soon as an emergency event occurs, the Ministry of Education's Central Leadership Command Table and the Ministerial cross sectorial Partnership Table will assume their roles.

161. As identified in the Emergency Plan, the ministry's assigned communication lead for emergencies will assume their role to provide consistent messaging and protocols on updates and responses to the emergency, return to school plans, etc. All communications should be accessible by all persons with disabilities.

162. The Ministry of Education develop a rapid response team to receive feedback from school boards<sup>C-1(b)</sup> on recurring issues facing students with disabilities and to help find solutions to share with school boards.and quickly and resolve issues for students with disabilities as they arise during an emergency.
163. The Ministry Central Leadership Command table will collect data on the emergency using evidence-based data collection methods for persons with disabilities. Data collected should include existing and emerging issues, impact on learning and student wellbeing, and effective responses of other jurisdictions in supporting students with disabilities during an emergency. Data will be analyzed to provide clear direction or action to be taken by School Board or share solutions in resolving issues for students with disabilities during an emergency.
164. The Ministerial cross sectorial Partnership Table collect data, from respective sectors, health services, education, service agencies, etc, to identify existing and emerging barriers, know exactly which students with disabilities and how they are impacted, their needs, and how to better direct resources to support them
165. The Ministry of Education should collect and aggregate International data, resources and information from other countries experiences for use in planning transitions between in-school and distance education, including continuation of virtual learning at home.
166. That the School Board's communication lead assumes their role and provide clear communication around education delivery model, protocols and return to school plans. All communication should be made readily available in writing and accessible by everyone in the community, parents and students.
167. School Boards should independently collect board wide data on gaps, barriers, emerging issues, transition challenges, technology challenges, additional students' needs and supports arising during an emergency through assessment, student and parent feedback to plan and take action for system wide supports and services required by students with disabilities during an emergency.

**Timeline note:** no timelines have been set for recommendations 160 to 167 as actions to the recommendations should take place during an emergency event.

#### Stage 4 - debriefing and revising

Emergency management is a continuous process of preparation, testing/practices and revision of emergency plans. Each step informs the others and are interconnected. To close an emergency cycle, it is important to debrief the emergency event to inform practice, improve response and revise an emergency plan.

In addition to the above recommendations, it is recommended that:

168. Ensure that after each emergency event, the Ministry of Education and School Boards ensure emergency plans are reviewed and updated with a focus on continued access to education and health services to support and accommodate the learning, health and wellbeing needs of students with disabilities.
169. Ministry of Education and School Boards ensure that all supplies, infrastructure and equipment for the continued provision of education and health services to students with disabilities are funded, replenished and maintained.
170. Ministry of Education and School Boards will ensure that debriefing includes receiving feedback from education sector providers supporting students with disabilities, as well as students with disabilities and their families.
171. [Policy/Program Memorandum 164](#), provided direction to school boards on remote learning requirements, including implementation and reporting. It identifies effective practices that school boards should develop to support students with students with disabilities. The ministry and School boards should continue to collect feedback on remote learning from parents and students with disabilities to identify continued barriers and the implementation of the requirements.
172. Ministries should review policies and regulations to allow therapy supports and services that have transitioned successfully to a virtual learning environment be shared to geographic areas that have no access to these services. As Emergency Planning is a continuous cycle and learned experiences should be utilized to inform and improve practices to better prepare the education sector for future emergencies, it is recommended that:

173. The Ministry of Education should provide clear guidelines and expectations to school boards on the implementation of Public Health Guidelines to mitigate risks during an emergency event to ensure that school buildings and grounds be fully accessible for students with disabilities. <sup>C-1(b)</sup>
174. Ministries of Education, Health and Children, Community and Social Services should remove any cross-jurisdictional barriers related to the provision of health and education services to ensure students with disabilities can be provided with the mental health and wellbeing services they require to be delivered remotely during an emergency.
175. The Ministry of Education should develop curriculum for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 to enable students to develop the skills and knowledge they need for learning in a virtual learning environment. In the interim, the ministry should share existing, accessible resources on this topic to teachers and School Boards.
176. The Ministry of Education should develop guidelines that provide for alternate or enhanced childcare opportunities to be made available to families of students with a disability, for students required to stay home due to adapted model classroom scheduling during an emergency.
177. In the case of emergency School Boards, in consultation with Public Health Regional Health, must develop clear protocols and procedures with accommodations for students with disabilities for the detection, isolation, tracing and follow up those students who develop symptoms for the virus, flu, respiratory infection, etc.
178. School Boards should develop a clear system-wide plan to address increased classroom and school supports and services (Educational Assistants, Education Works, social workers, psychologists, guidance counsellors) identified through assessments to help mitigate issues and support learning for students with disabilities during an emergency.
179. School Boards should develop protocols and procedures to mitigate security risks for online and virtual learning platforms to help protect privacy of students with disabilities and staff. Online and virtual learning platforms should also be accessible for all students with disabilities.
180. Many students and adults with disabilities volunteer at school events, school events, school daycares and kindergarten classes. School Boards should develop/review guidelines and health and safety protocols that mitigate risks for person with disabilities while allowing them to continue to volunteer during an emergency. Volunteer hours have a valued learning experience and provide opportunities for students and adults with disabilities to be contributing members of the community.
181. School Board should develop virtual learning opportunities for volunteering and co-op courses for students with disabilities during emergencies.
182. The Individual Education Plan is revised to detail, a specific plan for how to implement and achieve social inclusion both in the formal school activities and informal parts of the school day. Creative and flexible plans should include multiple organizations or programs both inside and outside school board designed to foster inclusiveness during an emergency.
183. School Boards should develop and/or review guidelines for transitions plans for students with disabilities to outline supports and accommodations that may be offered in a virtual learning environment or enhanced by online tools and resources to support the physical and emotions wellbeing of student with disabilities when transitioning back to school. Accommodations or strategies should be reviewed and adapted to the virtual learning environment to support transitions. (An example would be for students with disabilities have access to audio described (DV) and closed-captioned (CC) virtual tours of the school facilities, so students could familiarize themselves with the school prior to the start of school. (See also transition section).
184. In consultation with community agencies, School Boards should develop/revise procedures and protocols for volunteers and community agencies that support the health and wellbeing of students with disabilities continue to operate in the school (example, food nutrition programs, clothing exchanges, etc.)
- Timeline note:** as recommendations are related to debriefing after an emergency event, the required action on the recommendations should take place three – six months after the emergency event.

## Section nine: Timelines and accountability small group

The rationale for the Timelines and Accountability Group relates to the complex and demanding work<sup>G-1(b)</sup> to be completed by obligated organizations – school boards, transportation consortia, government ministries – with respect to implementation of the Education Accessibility Standards regulatory requirements by 2025. The group’s mandate was to develop an implementation framework, a set of accountability/compliance mechanisms for obligated organizations and specific timelines for the completion of the requirements of the Education Accessibility Standards.

## **Mandate of the small group:**

To propose implementation timelines and accountability measures regarding the recommendations of the Education Accessibility Standards Committees for school boards, the College of Teachers and the Ontario government.

## **Overview:**

The overall goal in this context is to assess the end result of the implementation of the Education Accessibility Standards, that is, whether obligated organizations have in fact removed and prevented disability barriers that impede students with disabilities to effectively be included in and fully participating in the opportunities that Ontario's public education system provides to students.

We use the formal language of “time from enactment of the regulation” instead of when the government accepts the recommendation. This means the group’s recommendation as incorporated into the Education Accessibility Standards regulation must be implemented within the timeframe suggested once the regulation is enacted.

Timeline categories:

- immediately from enactment of the Education Accessibility Standards regulation (“immediate”)
- six months from enactment (“six months”)
- one year from enactment (“one year”)
- 18 months from enactment (18 months)
- two years from enactment (“two years”)

Where a proposed timeline would make a specific obligation go into effect immediately, that means that the activity required must be in effect immediately upon the enactment of the Education Accessibility Standards. This is proposed where the recommendation relates to a duty that pre-dates this regulation being enacted, for example, under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and/or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is also based on the fact that obligated organizations such as the Ministry of Education would be well aware of what will be expected of it long before this regulation is enacted. The Ministry of Education is expected to be fully involved in decisions within the government on what the final Education Accessibility Standards will include. The ministry has been fully aware of what the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee has been considering over the past three years, since it has a non-voting member on this committee. As well, it is expected that the ministry will give school boards ample advance notice of the expectations of school boards, long before this regulation is finally enacted.

## **Rationale for timelines:**

Many of the recommendations, if included in the Education Accessibility Standards regulation, relate to practices the obligated organizations are currently implementing, for example, school boards have policies for using Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction for students with disabilities. That explains why we suggest the “immediate” timeframe. Or in the context of new capital projects, boards should within six months require prospective firms in the design and construction of schools to ensure full accessibility as outlined in the Group 7 report.

Curriculum change processes do require multi-year timelines; however, recent experience with changes to the math curriculum show that those processes can be accelerated in a reasonable fashion. Given the importance of removing barriers for students with disabilities, we have suggested ambitious timelines for consideration.

### **Ontario government ministries impacted:**

- Ministry of education
- Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
- minister of children, community and social services
- minister of health

## **Overview of regulatory and enforcement responsibilities under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005***

### **Timeline issues**

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* accessibility standards can set different timelines for different requirements. When it comes to a specific requirement, the accessibility standards can set different timelines for different categories of obligated organizations <sup>[1]</sup>. Typically, this focuses on whether an obligated organization is in the public sector or private sector or if they are larger or smaller. In the case of school boards, all are treated as public sector.

To measure which obligated organizations are larger or smaller, earlier *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* accessibility standards governing other areas have divided classes of obligated organizations by their number of employees. The K-12 Education Accessibility Standards Development Committee will aim to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities. The numbers of employees at a school board, however, is not an appropriate way to divide up or classify the size of school boards. A more appropriate approach for purposes of the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards is to divide school boards into classes based on their numbers of students.

When deciding how long the timeline should be for a specific provision in the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards, the following is taken into account:

- the standards' requirements implement pre-existing duties under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- timelines should give a school board the requisite time to fulfill the requirement
- before specific timelines are set for each requirement in the standards, it is important to look at and take into account the totality of new actions that the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards will require of an obligated organization

Some earlier accessibility standards have required some measures to be taken immediately upon the standards being enacted. For example, the Transportation Accessibility Standards required public transit providers to begin announcing route stops immediately upon the enactment of those standards in 2011. The standards should require a measure to go into effect immediately on enactment of the standards, if no time is needed to begin compliance. This should take into account the fact obligated organizations will not have heard about these requirements for the first time when the accessibility standards are enacted. Its development has been a very public process. Its enactment will have been preceded by several public consultation processes.

In the case of some requirements, smaller school boards will need longer timelines than large school boards. This happens where a large school board has greater capacity to implement the measure more quickly than has a small school board.

In the case of some requirements, a small school board would be able to implement a measure more quickly than does a large school board such as, if it is a more complicated process for larger boards. For example, a small

organization can fix accessibility problems in a small website more quickly than can a large obligated organization with a much larger website.<sup>G-1 (b)</sup>

## **Role of the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility**

We here start from and build upon the enforcement provisions that are included in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* assigns responsibility for regulatory compliance and enforcement to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) at the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. As under any *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* accessibility standards, the ministry is responsible for assisting obligated organizations by providing guides, training materials and templates to enable them to effectively understand what the accessibility standards require them to do.

Compliance and enforcement processes undertaken by the directorate regularly involve a graduated step-by-step series of increasing measures to ensure that obligated organizations comply with a specific legal requirement. It is hoped that escalated measures won't be needed. However, the knowledge that there are real and serious consequences for those who do not comply promotes compliance, especially for any who are otherwise more reluctant.

Serious concerns have been expressed for several years about deficiencies in the accessibility ministry's compliance/enforcement of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The second *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* independent review conducted by Mayo Moran in 2014 and the third such review conducted by David Onley in 2018 both called for *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* enforcement to be substantially strengthened. Their reports demonstrate that the slow progress on accessibility in Ontario has been due in part to shortcomings in the ministry's compliance/enforcement actions in the past. Despite the findings of those independent reviews, these deficiencies remain.

The compliance/enforcement actions of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* are more likely to succeed where there is clear delegation of responsibility and accountability within obligated organizations for compliance with the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards and where there is a clear, visible and renewed demonstration by the Government of Ontario of its commitment to achieve *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* compliance through greater education and rigorous regulatory action for willful lawbreakers.

The focus of compliance/enforcement activities should not simply be whether an obligated organization such as the Ontario Ministry of Education or a publicly funded school board has posted a policy on an action required by the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards. It is important to assess the end result such as, whether obligated organizations have in fact removed and prevented disability barriers that impede students with disabilities and to assess whether students with disabilities are being effectively included in and fully participating in the opportunities that Ontario's public education system provides to students.

## **Overview of definitions**

### **Definition of accountability measures:**

Implementation plans must include clearly stated qualitative and quantitative performance metrics to measure of the success or failure to implement a specific course of action or recommendation for school boards, government ministry and related third parties (student transportation consortia for example).

### **Definition of implementation:**

Recommendations of the Education Accessibility Standards Development Committee approved by government are acted on (within set timelines) by those responsible parties — school boards, ministries. The government

establishes working committees to develop PPMs to ensure consistent understanding of the requirements<sup>C-1(b)</sup> of the recommendations across school boards, while introducing compliance measures.

### **School boards:**

For purposes of the Education Accessibility Standards Development Committee's recommendations, school boards will be classified as large, medium and small, depending on the number of students served. Large boards will have a student population over 50,000, medium boards 20,000 to 50,000 and small boards under 20,000 students.

### **Timelines recommendations overview:**

We think it is advisable to characterize the timelines for the implementation of Education Accessibility Standards Development Committee recommendations as follows:

1. immediately upon enactment of the regulation.
2. one year after enactment of the regulation.
3. two years after enactment of the regulation and/or with a gradual roll out to sector, based on size and capacity of the school board but no later than January 1, 2025.

All affected parties should begin implementation planning to reach the targeted deadline for implementing the recommendations prior to the formal enactment of the Education Accessibility Standards Regulation. This should ensure compliance with the suggested timeline requirements.

### **Accountability and compliance principles:**

In general, accountability mechanisms can be broken down in the following manner:

- to whom the organization is accountable (public, government, regulators, committees of the governing board)
- what action, process or outcome the organization is accountable for securing
- when the organization will be assessed or measured (every quarter or annually)
- how the organization will be assessed or measured (key performance indicators, achieving specific milestones along a defined pathway).

Compliance mechanisms are ways in which an organization can be incentivized to be accountable. These can be in the form of penalties, audits, spot checks, reporting obligations, annual reviews and the expectation that one or more of these mechanisms will be enforced by the relevant regulatory authority.

All the actions we propose as part of the Standards are ones which should have been in place for years by the obligated organizations. Implementation of them good practices should be starting now, if not already underway.

The focus of compliance/enforcement activities should not simply be whether an obligated organization such as the Ontario Ministry of Education or a publicly funded school board has posted a policy on an action required by the ~~K-12~~ Education Accessibility Standards. It is important to assess the end result such as, whether obligated organizations have in fact removed and prevented disability barriers that impede students with disabilities and to assess whether students with disabilities are being effectively included in and fully participating in the opportunities that Ontario's public education system provides to students.

### **Accountability and compliance recommendations:**

#### **Implementation planning and outcomes measurement**



185. We are proposing that each obligated organization develop a detailed implementation plan, with<sup>6-1 (b)</sup> measurable performance metrics and timelines for achieving milestones towards the implementation of the Standards. The identified performance metrics should have process requirements such as establishing committees with impacted stakeholders (such as students with disabilities) to oversee the implementation planning as well as specific timelines for completion.

It is important to assess the end result such as, whether obligated organizations have in fact removed and prevented disability barriers that impede students with disabilities and to assess whether students with disabilities are being effectively included in and fully participating in the opportunities that Ontario's education system provides to students (see model [implementation planning](#) template).

### **Public reporting: school boards, college of teachers and government**

186. In terms of reporting, each obligated organization should be directed by the Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) to have a section on their web site that publicly reports on the implementation of the Standards. This could be in the form of an annual report, or a completion matrix of the organizations progress to date.
187. In addition, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) should be required to promptly make public a detailed, comprehensive annual and multi-year compliance/enforcement plan for the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards. It should publicly report quarterly on actions taken and actual accessibility improvements achieved.
188. To help promote accountability and compliance, the Ministry of Education should be required to establish and maintain a public searchable data base where all reports, annual plans and updates posted or prepared by school boards or by the ministry in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* will be made available in an accessible format to the public.
189. As part of the government's compliance/enforcement plan, it should establish and widely publicize a provincial toll-free number, and dedicated email address to receive complaints and concerns from students with disabilities their families or others regarding accessible education for students with disabilities. Those contacting this number should be advised to take up their concern first with the relevant obligated organization through its process for addressing such concerns, before bringing it to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility). The ministry should assign a rapid response team to take action where appropriate on input received from this phone number or email address. A summary of input/complaints received (with no identifying information) should be made public quarterly.
190. Those appointed with *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* compliance/enforcement powers who will be addressing the implementation of the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards should have knowledge and any building permit process for a new school or major renovation should be required to comply with the built environment provisions of the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards in order to get a building permit. The project should be checked for compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and not just the *Ontario Building Code* in that process. In addition, the Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) should have staff with experience in the area of education of students with disabilities or should have a resource team whom they can regularly and readily consult who have that expertise. To avoid conflicts of interest, the members of that resource team should be independent of any organizations that have obligations under the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards.

### **Internal: school boards**

191. In terms of school boards, the implementation plan and its milestones should be tabled with and receive input from their Special Education Advisory Committees and Accessibility Advisory Committees every six months. In addition, the implementation plan should also be tabled with the school board or board of trustees every six months until 2025 (during public board meetings). Student transportation consortia should also report to their respective school boards on their implementation plan.

192. In terms of implementation planning, boards should build into their multi-year strategic plans accessibility outcomes as part of the process and required goals. <sup>C-1(b)</sup>

## **Reporting to the government: school boards, college of teachers, transportation consortia**

### **Role of the Ministry of Education**

193. As noted above, the Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) has regulatory authority to ensure compliance with Standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* of all obligated organizations, including government ministries. However, we believe that the ministry of education should play a support role in enabling the timely implementation of the Standards for school boards and the College of Teachers. For example, the Standards may require changes in the obligated organizations service animal policy and procedure. The ministry of education would be then directed by the Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) to facilitate that policy review with boards and be required to revise its current PPM.
194. In addition, although the Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) has regulatory authority over its obligated organizations, we believe Boards should be also be required to report to the Ministry of Education (and the Accessibility Directorate) each quarter on the results of their implementation actions and performance. Reports should detail successes and challenges in meeting the requirements of the Education Accessibility Standards recommendation with proposed solutions or remediation efforts. The College of Teachers should have the same reporting requirements.

### **Ensuring compliance obligations: audits and reviews**

As noted above, recent reports have documented how little oversight and enforcement currently exists with respect to various accessibility standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Given the relatively short timelines for the full implementation of these recommendations (by 2025 at the latest), we are recommending:

195. The Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) conduct on-site inspections of a range of obligated organizations each year on the actual accessibility of their facilities and educational programs and services as addressed in the Standards, and not just an audit of their paper records on accessibility documentation.
- The Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) conduct “implementation reviews” of a select number of school boards and the College of Teachers within six months of the government’s enactment of the Education Standards regulation. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure boards and the College have developed an implementation plan with performance metrics and designated responsibility centres and have started to move forward with the implementation of the Standards.
196. The Accessibility Directorate (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility) conduct a compliance review or audit of Government of Ontario on a quarterly basis.
197. Under s. 26 of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the Government should designate a tribunal to hear appeals from monetary penalties and compliance orders under the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards to a tribunal that has expertise in disability, human rights and education, such as the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. Those appeals should not go to the License Appeal Tribunal, as is now the case under other *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* accessibility standards, because that commercial tribunal lacks the needed knowledge or expertise in the field of education for students with disabilities.

## **Committee members**

### **Voting members**

- Lynn Ziraldo (chair)
- Stephen Andrews
- Mike Cyr
- Donna Edwards
- Jon Greenaway
- Rita-Marie Hadley
- Wendy Lau
- David Lepofsky
- Michelle Longlade
- Sheila McWatters
- Douglas Mein
- Ashleigh Molloy
- Alison Morse
- Rana Nasrazadani
- Victoria Nolan
- Ben Smith
- Jane Ste. Marie
- Jack Stadnyk
- Angelo Tocco
- Lindy Zaretsky

## Non-voting member

- Claudine Munroe

## Glossary of terms and definitions

The glossary provides some of the terms and phrases that are used in the K-12 Committee report and recommendations to assist with the language and context for use and application. It provides definitions of terms used throughout the different barriers to accessible education. For example, there are many specialized terms for technology barriers or curriculum barriers that need to be accessible to all readers of the document.

### Ableism

Attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are assumed to be less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and take part, and of less value than other people. Ableism can be conscious or unconscious and is embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society. <sup>[2]</sup>

Ableism refers to discrimination towards persons with disabilities. It can be through actions as well as underlying beliefs and attitudes. Ableism involves systemic barriers as well as person-to-person interactions, stereotypes and negative attitudes that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities.

### Accessibility Standards

Accessibility standards are rules that persons and organizations have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers <sup>[3]</sup>.

### *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) (Ontario)*

A statute of Ontario. The purpose of the act is, in part, to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to remove barriers for Ontarians with disabilities on or before January 1, 2025. The act consists of standards in five areas: Customer Service, Employment, Transportation, Communication, and the Built Environment. The act came into force on June 4, 2005.

## Accessibility Plan

An accessibility plan describes the actions an organization will take to prevent and remove barriers, and when it will do so. An accessibility plan creates a road map for an organization to increase accessibility. It puts into action an organization's commitment to accessibility (refer to the statement of commitment), and its accessibility policies <sup>[4]</sup>.

## Accessible Digital Format

Information that is provided in digital form that is accessible such as HTML and MS Word.

## Accessible Technology

Technology designed with a wide range of users in mind having built-in customizable features allowing a user to individualize their experience and meet their needs. It can be used by all users. Incorporates the principles of universal design.

## Accountability

A qualitative and quantitative measure of the success or failure to implement of a specific course of action or recommendation for school boards, government ministry and related third parties.

## Accountability Measures

Implementation plans must include clearly stated qualitative and quantitative performance metrics to measure of the success or failure to implement a specific course of action or recommendation for school boards, government ministry and related third parties (student transportation consortia for example).

## Alternative (alternate) Format

A method of communication that takes into account a person's disabilities. Examples include providing a text version of a website, or a large print version of a document for someone with a visual disability. <sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>[5]</sup> These are formats that present printed or electronic documents in different formats in order to ensure everyone has equal access to the information which is required under the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Persons with disabilities often use adaptive/assistive technology that require an alternate/accessible format so the technology can access the information in a specific manner for the user. This can include people who:

- are blind or have low vision
- have an intellectual or other cognitive disability
- cannot hold publications or turn pages because of a physical disability
- have difficulties accessing information on the Internet
- have difficulties watching or hearing video presentation

## Antidiscrimination Education

An approach that seeks to eliminate from an educational system and its practices all forms of discrimination based on the prohibited grounds identified in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and other factors. Anti-discrimination education seeks to identify and change educational policies, procedures, and practices that may unintentionally condone or foster discrimination, as well as the attitudes and behaviours that underlie and reinforce such policies and practices. It provides teachers and students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to critically examine issues related to discrimination, power, and privilege. Antidiscrimination education promotes the removal of discriminatory biases and systemic barriers.

## Anti-racism/Anti-oppression

An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes. <sup>C-1(b)</sup> [2]

#### Assessment

The process of gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a subject or course. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. Assessment for the purpose of improving student learning is seen as both “assessment for learning” and “assessment as learning”. Evaluation of student learning is based on assessment of learning that provides evidence of student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/course, often at the end of a period of learning [6].

Assessment includes educator assessments and professional assessments completed by a variety of clinical, medical, and rehabilitation professionals.

#### Assessment as learning

The process of developing and supporting student metacognition. Students are actively engaged in this assessment process: that is, they monitor their own learning; use assessment feedback from teacher, self, and peers to determine next steps; and set individual learning goals. Assessment as learning requires students to have a clear understanding of the learning goals and success criteria. Assessment as learning focuses on the role of the student as the critical connector between assessment and learning. [7]

#### Assessment for learning

The ongoing process of gathering and interpreting evidence about student learning for the purpose of determining where students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. The information gathered is used by teachers to provide feedback and adjust instruction and by students to focus their learning. Assessment for learning is a high-yield instructional strategy that takes place while the student is still learning and serves to promote learning. [7]

#### Assessment of learning

The process of collecting and interpreting evidence for the purpose of summarizing learning at a given point in time, to make judgements about the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria, and to assign a value to represent that quality. [7]

#### Assistive device

Devices to help people – primarily persons with disabilities – to perform a task. Examples are a wheelchair, personal oxygen tank, assistive listening device, electronic device with adaptive technology, or visible emergency alarm. [2]

#### Assistive Technology or Adaptive Technology (AT)

Is any piece of technology that helps a student with or without a disability to increase or maintain his/her level of functioning. These often include laptops with specialized programs, like speech to text, text to speech, graphic organizers and word prediction software. [8]

#### Asynchronous Learning

Learning that is not delivered in real time. Asynchronous learning may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards [9].

Asynchronous Learning happens on your schedule. While your course of study, instructor or degree program will provide materials for reading, lectures for viewing, assignments for completing, and exams for evaluation, you have the ability to access and satisfy these requirements within a flexible time frame. Methods of asynchronous online learning include self-guided lesson modules, streaming video content, virtual libraries, posted lecture notes, and exchanges across discussion boards or social media platforms.

## Attitudinal Barriers

Occur when people exhibit perceptions, behaviours or make assumptions about individuals with disabilities that are discriminatory.

## Audism

The notion that a person is superior based on their ability to hear or to act like a person who hears <sup>[2]</sup>.

## Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to the various ways individuals who cannot speak may communicate their ideas. Individuals may use various combinations of alternate methods of communication such as displays with pictures, alphabet or words, gestures, sign language, computers, and electronic talking devices. AAC also refers to strategies used to assist people with writing when handwriting is not possible because of physical limitations <sup>[10]</sup>.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurological disorder that affects the way a person communicates and relates to the people and world around them. ASD can affect behaviour, social interactions, and one's ability to communicate. ASD crosses all cultural, ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic boundaries.

ASD is a spectrum disorder, which means that while all people on the spectrum will experience certain difficulties, the degree to which each person on the spectrum experiences these challenges will be different.

Whether someone with ASD is affected mildly, severely, or somewhere in between, they might have difficulty verbalizing their thoughts, managing their anxiety, dealing with change, or participating in group activities. This can sometimes result in unintended conflicts with the community at large, lead to engagement with the mental health sector, as well as criminal and family justice systems. Without the proper supports, people on the spectrum can experience joblessness, homelessness, strain and stress. This can have a major impact on their quality of life <sup>[11]</sup>.

## Barriers

“Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; (“obstacle”) <sup>[12]</sup>.

## Bias

A predisposition, prejudice or generalization about a group of persons based on personal characteristics or stereotypes <sup>[2]</sup>.

## Bilingual Education

Development of literacy in two languages entails linguistic and cognitive advantages for bilingual students.

Ensures a Bilingual Education for Deaf Students that promotes both American Sign Language (ASL) and English:

- Language and Literacy Acquisition
- Critical Thinking Skills and Meta-linguistic awareness and
- Academic Success
- Positive Self Image and Successful Social Interaction
- Appreciation of ASL and Multi-Cultural Identities
- A Learning Environment Appreciative of Diversity



- American Sign Language is the first-language base for students. It is used as the language of dialogue, instruction and study. <sup>C-1(b)</sup> ~~ASL~~ is used to provide students with world knowledge that is a prerequisite for understanding English literacy.
- First language proficiency creates teaching and learning experiences that increase the academic achievement of every student.
- First language proficiency in ~~ASL~~ promotes second language (English) mastery.
- English is a language of instruction and study.
- ~~ASL~~ and multi-cultural heritage information are used in teaching.

The same goes for Deaf students who use Langue des signes Quebecoise and French <sup>[13]</sup> .

### Built environment

The term built environment refers to the human-made surroundings that provide the setting for human activity, ranging in scale from buildings and parks or green space to neighbourhoods and cities that can often include their supporting infrastructure, such as water supply, or energy networks. The built environment is a material, spatial and cultural product of human labor that combines physical elements and energy in forms for living, working and playing. It has been defined as “the human-made space in which people live, work, and recreate on a day-to-day basis”. The “built environment encompasses places and spaces created or modified by people including buildings, parks, and transportation systems”. In recent years, public health research has expanded the definition of "built environment" to include healthy food access, community gardens, “walkability”, and “bikability” <sup>[14]</sup> .

### Community of Practice

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals.

### Competing rights

Situations where parties to a dispute claim that the enjoyment of an individual or group’s human rights and freedoms, as protected by law, would interfere with another’s rights and freedoms <sup>[2]</sup> .

### Conversation Ready

As children begin establishing the building blocks for how to communicate with others, it’s important to equip them with conversational tools for what to communicate with others. Many kids will identify with the frozen feeling of being unsure what to say next, how to answer a question or how to continue a conversation. As a result, many educators are seeing the need to teach conversation skills to all students in a general education setting.

Over time, conversational cues and topics of conversation may become more natural for some students, but extra guidance and education can help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Disabilities and other social and emotional needs to find their footing faster <sup>[15]</sup> .

### Conversion Ready: (AODA Significance)

Conversion Ready refers to digital information that can be easily converted into an accessible format which would provide individuals with an alternative means to access information and educational resources.

People interact, learn, and communicate in diverse ways. Learning opportunities are increased when flexible ways of engaging with learning materials are provided. Considering how people communicate is important for knowledge to be exchanged. Alternative formats take into account diverse ways of exchanging information.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* legislates that educational institutions and their employees know how to produce accessible or conversion ready versions of textbooks and printed

material. Educators, teachers, staff are to learn about accessible course delivery and instruction and be knowledgeable at interacting and communicating with persons with disabilities who may use alternate formats <sup>C-1(b)</sup> [16] .

#### Co-op Opportunity

The cooperative education program provides opportunities for all students in secondary school, including adult learners, to apply, refine, and extend, in the classroom and in the context of a community outside the school, the skills and knowledge outlined in the cooperative education curriculum [17] .

#### Culture

The customs, beliefs, behaviours and/or achievements of a particular time and/or people; behaviour within a particular group [2] .

#### Cultural Competence

An ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, particularly in human resources, non-profit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with persons from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Cultural competence has four components:

1. awareness of one's own cultural worldview
2. attitude towards cultural differences
3. knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews

Cross-cultural skills (developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures [2] .

#### Cultural Responsiveness

Culture goes much deeper than typical understandings of ethnicity, race and/or faith. It encompasses broad notions of similarity and difference and it is reflected in our students' multiple social identities and their ways of knowing and of being in the world. In order to ensure that all students feel safe, welcomed and accepted, and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning, schools and classrooms must be responsive to culture.

Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002), use the terms “Culturally Responsive Teaching” or “Culturally Responsive Pedagogy” to describe teaching that recognizes all students learn differently and that these differences may be connected to background, language, family structure and social or cultural identity. Theorists and practitioners of culturally responsive pedagogy more than acknowledge the “cultural uniqueness” of each student; they intentionally nurture it in order to create and facilitate effective conditions for learning (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). They see student diversity in terms of student strengths; they orient to it as presenting opportunities for enhancing learning rather than as challenges and/or deficits of the student or particular community [18] .

#### Diagnostic Assessment

Assessment that is used to identify a student's needs and abilities and the student's readiness to acquire the knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum expectations. Diagnostic assessment usually takes place at the start of a school year, term, semester, or teaching unit. It is a key tool used by teachers in planning instruction and setting appropriate learning goals.

#### Differentiated Instruction (DI)

Differentiated Instruction is a process where educators vary the learning activities, content demands, and modes of assessment to meet the needs and support the growth of each child. DI provides different learning experiences in response to each student's needs (Tomlinson, 1999). It is a method of teaching that attempts to adapt instruction to suit the differing interests, learning styles, and readiness to learn of individual students [6] .



## Digital Literacy Technology

Although there are varying definitions digital literacy involves the capacity to navigate and adapt to a changing digital environment through access to and use of digital tools, understand how they work, and create digital tools and innovations. It includes 1) finding, consuming and evaluating digital content; 2) creating digital content; and 3) communicating or sharing it.

## Dispute resolution

Is a term that refers to a number of processes that can be used to resolve a conflict, dispute or claim.

Methods of dispute resolution include:

- lawsuits (litigation)(judicial)
- arbitration
- collaborative law
- mediation
- conciliation
- negotiation
- facilitation
- avoidance

### Examples of alternative dispute resolution

Include negotiation, mediation and arbitration, all of which avoid the courtroom while attempting to resolve disputes between two parties.

- The goal of mediation is for a neutral third party to help disputants come to a consensus on their own. Rather than imposing a solution, a professional mediator works with the conflicting sides to explore the interests underlying their positions.
- Mediation can be effective at allowing parties to vent their feelings and fully explore their grievances.
- Working with parties together and sometimes separately, mediators can try to help them hammer out a resolution that is sustainable, voluntary, and nonbinding.
- In arbitration, a neutral third party serves as a judge who is responsible for resolving the dispute.
- The arbitrator listens as each side argues its case and presents relevant evidence, then renders a binding decision.
- The disputants can negotiate virtually any aspect of the arbitration process, including whether lawyers will be present at the time and which standards of evidence will be used.
- Arbitrators hand down decisions that are usually confidential and that cannot be appealed.
- Like mediation, arbitration tends to be much less expensive than litigation.

## Dimensions of Diversity

The unique personal characteristics that distinguish us as individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, class, creed, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise <sup>[2]</sup>.

## Disability

“Defining disability is a complex, evolving matter. The term “disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. Section 10 of the Code defines “disability” as:

1. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech

impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.<sup>6.1(b)</sup>

2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
4. a mental disorder
5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*

“Disability” should be interpreted in broad terms. It includes both present and past conditions, as well as a subjective component, namely, one based on perception of disability. It is the OHRC’s position that anticipated disabilities are also covered by the Code. This would apply where a person does not currently have a disability, but they are treated adversely because of a perception that they will eventually develop a disability, become a burden, pose a risk, and/or require accommodation. The focus should always be on the current abilities of a person and the situation’s current risks rather than on limitations or risks that may or may not arise in the future.

Although sections 10(a) to (e) of the Code set out various types of conditions, it is clear that they are merely illustrative and not exhaustive. It is also a principle of human rights law that the Code be given a broad, purposive and contextual interpretation to advance the goal of eliminating discrimination.

A disability may be the result of combinations of impairments and environmental barriers, such as attitudinal barriers, inaccessible information, an inaccessible built environment or other barriers that affect people’s full participation in society” [19] .

- The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* uses the *Ontario Human Rights Code* definition of “disability” as identified below [12] .

## Discrimination

“Discrimination is not defined in the Code but usually includes the following elements:

- not individually assessing the unique merits, capacities and circumstances of a person
- instead, making stereotypical assumptions based on a person’s presumed traits
- having the impact of excluding persons, denying benefits or imposing burdens.

Many people wrongly think that discrimination does not exist if the impact was not intended, or if there were other factors that could explain a particular situation. In fact, discrimination often takes place without any intent to do harm. And in most cases, there are overlaps between discrimination and other legitimate factors.” [20]

Revised version approved by the OHRC: [Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities \(March 2018\)](#)

**Note:** In the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, “discrimination” is a legal term that is defined by extensive case law. This is not an attempt to capture what that case law says.

## Discriminatory Bias

A perception or act based on a personal perspective as opposed to a neutral or objective perspective, which sees or judges an individual or situation through that positive or negative lens. This serves as a barrier to fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of people and limits our students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society.

## Distance Education Programs

Means programs to provide courses of study online, through correspondence, or by other means that do not require the physical attendance by the student at a school [21] .

## Distance Learning

A method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc., to have classes. Distance learning, also called distance education, e-learning, and online learning, form of education in which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication. Distance learning traditionally has focused on non-traditional students, such as full-time workers, military personnel, and non-residents or individuals in remote regions who are unable to attend classroom lectures. However, distance learning has become an established part of the educational world, with trends pointing to ongoing growth.

## Diversity

The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

## Duty to accommodate

Under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, people identified by Code grounds are entitled to the same opportunities and benefits as everybody else.

In some cases, they may need special arrangements or “accommodations” to take part equally in the social areas the Code covers, such as employment, housing and education. Employers, housing providers, education providers and other parties responsible under the Code have a legal obligation to accommodate Code-identified needs, unless they can prove it would cause them undue hardship. Undue hardship is based on cost, outside sources of funding and health and safety factors <sup>[2]</sup>.

**Note:** In the *Ontario Human Rights Code* terms “duty to accommodate” and “undue hardship” are legal terms that are defined by case law. This is not an attempt to capture what that case law says.

## Elementary and Secondary School Educators

Under the *Education Act*, school principals are responsible for referring exceptional students to a committee for identification and placement, for preparing an individual education plan for each exceptional student, and for communicating board policies and procedures to staff, students and parents. Teachers are responsible for participating in the accommodation process, assessing students’ progress, and communicating with parents. All education providers are required to investigate accommodation solutions and grant accommodation requests in a timely manner.

## Emergency preparedness

The knowledge, capacities and organizational systems developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals effectively to anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent, emerging, or current emergencies <sup>[22]</sup>.

## Emergency

An event or threat that produces or has the potential to produce a range of consequences that require urgent, coordinated action <sup>[22]</sup>.

## Emergency response plan (ERP)

A document describing how an agency or organization will manage its response to emergencies. An ERP describes the objectives, policies and concept of operations (CONOPS) for the response, as well as the structure, authorities and responsibilities to make that response systematic, coordinated and effective. For example: a national whole-of- government ERP can be a synthesis of ministry-specific ERPs, and can

detail the resources, capacities, and capabilities that each ministry will employ in its response. A whole-of-society ERP also includes contributions from the private sector <sup>C1 (b)</sup> [22] .

### Emerging Technologies

“There is no commonly agreed definition of emerging technologies but what this term potentially covers is vast and of course will change over time. For the purpose of this report\* emerging technologies are technologies that are relatively new fast developing with the potential to deliver a considerable impact on individuals in society in the next five to 10 years. We focused on emerging technologies that are readily available to consumers many emerging technologies highlighted in this report rely on artificial and intelligence.” [23]

### Equitable

Just or characterized by fairness or equity. Equitable treatment can at times differ from same treatment [2] .

### Equitable Funding Barriers

Currently there is considerable funding in education for content that is not accessible to all students. Textbooks and learning management platforms often are not usable by students with disabilities. Additional funding is required to procure and train on assistive technologies to access curriculum. The cost of assistive technology devices and training can be particularly high with respect to low incidence disabilities. Ongoing technical and training support from qualified personnel for staff and students is essential, but places additional stressors on budgets.

### Equitable Training Barriers

Occur when technology is deployed without adequate and appropriate student and staff instruction by qualified experts in the use and application of the technology. Obstacles exist when there is little or no measurement of the effectiveness of the training on student outcomes and overcoming the learning barriers the technology was designed to address. For example, a student is provided with text to speech technology to provide access to digital text but is not instructed on the strategies required to increase comprehension of the text and no data is periodically collected on student outcomes following the implementation of the technology. This can lead to underutilization of the assistive technology without an understanding of why and identifying solutions.

### Equity

A condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean that people are treated the same without regard for individual differences.

### Ethnicity

Sharing a distinctive cultural and historical tradition often associated with race, place of origin, ancestry or creed. [2]

### Evaluation

The process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria and assigning a value to represent that quality. Evaluation is based on assessments of learning that provide data on student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/subject/course, often at the end of a period of learning.

### Exclusion

Exclusion is used in this document to mean Refusal to Admit [*Education Act*, s. 265 (m)] and also includes formal or informal requests for the student to attend school for less than the full school day, or one or more full school days, except where the absence from school has been requested by the parent/guardian.

## Executive functioning

Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.

## Experiential Learning

Today's students need learning that goes beyond the classroom. School-work programs expand students' learning by helping them:

- understand more about the industries they may want to pursue in the future
- get exposed to career options in industries they may not have known about or even considered
- develop essential workplace skills
- see how their in-class learning can be applied in the workplace
- make more informed decisions about their education and career path so they make a successful transition into the job market (Ontario Ministry of Education).

In experiential learning opportunities, students work in partnership with communities or community organizations to support community-identified priorities. These opportunities allow students to learn from community expertise, enhance their knowledge, and develop their social and civic responsibility. These opportunities typically involve engagement with community, non-profit, and / or public organizations. Co-curricular community-engaged learning consists of a structured learning experience that takes place outside of a course, in partnership with community for the purpose of supporting priorities identified by the community, enhancing students' knowledge, and sense of social and civic responsibility. It occurs in non-profit, community and/or public organizations.

## Financial literacy

Financial literacy means having the knowledge and skills to make responsible economic and financial decisions with confidence. This can apply to everyday decisions, like buying groceries to bigger investments, like paying for tuition or buying a car. Financial literacy builds students' understanding of personal finances, the local and global economy and the results of their choices as consumers so that they can make informed financial decisions throughout their lives.

## First Nations

A term that is used to describe Aboriginal peoples in Canada that are not Métis or Inuit. Also, a general term to describe a community or communities that have similar identifiers (such as, land – reserve; culture, language, traditions, history). There are 634 First Nations in Canada that speak 60 distinct languages <sup>[24]</sup>.

## Formative assessment

Assessment that takes place during instruction in order to provide direction for improvement for individual students and for adjustment to instructional programs for individual students and for a whole class. The information gathered is used for the specific purpose of helping students improve while they are still gaining knowledge and practising skills.

## Full Captioned Videos

Captions are text versions of the audio content, synchronized with the video. They are essential for ensuring your video is accessible to students, employees, and members of the public who are deaf or hard of hearing. They also help non-native English speakers to understand the video, make it possible to search for content within the video, help all students learn the spelling of technical terms spoken in the video, and make it possible to generate an interactive transcript where users can click anywhere in the transcript to watch the video where that text is spoken. (University of Washington) Quality and visibility of captions are vital for success of Deaf and hard of hearing students in the classroom. All videos regardless of the platform they are on, should have a captioned option.

- [Canada Radio Television Commission](#)
- [Accessible Hub: Queens University](#)
- [University of Washington](#)

## Gender identity

A person's conscious sense of maleness and/or femaleness. This sense of self is separate and distinct from one's biological sex [2].

## Government

Under the *Education Act*, the Ministry of Education is responsible for setting out a process for identifying and accommodating disability-related needs in the publicly funded elementary and secondary school systems. The ministry must ensure that all exceptional pupils can access special education programs and services without payment of fees. The ministry is responsible for funding levels and structures, legislating procedures, and creating appeal and monitoring mechanisms. The ministry of Colleges and Universities is responsible for providing similar educational services at the postsecondary level. Both ministries are also required, to complete an annual accessibility plan that addresses the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities.

## Hate Activity

Comments or actions against a person or group motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation or any other similar factor. Examples are hate crime, hate propaganda, advocating genocide, telephone electronic communication promoting hate, and publicly displaying hate in notices, signs, symbols and emblems [2].

## Harassment

Engaging in a course of comments or actions that are known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. It can involve words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning or unwelcome. Harassment under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* is based on the prohibited/protected grounds (see definition) [2].

## Historical Disadvantage

Disadvantage resulting from historic patterns of institutionalized and other forms of systemic discrimination, sometimes legalized social, political, cultural, ethnic, religious and economic discrimination, as well as discrimination in employment. This also includes under-representation experienced by disadvantaged groups such as women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, LGBT persons and racialized people [2].

## Human Rights Code (the "Code") (Ontario)

A provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and opportunities without discrimination in the specific areas of good, services and facilities, accommodation/housing, contracts, membership in vocational associations and trade unions and employment. The Code's goal is to prevent discrimination and harassment and outlines the inalienable rights of all members of the human family. The Code was one of the first laws of its kind in Canada and is in accord with the United Nations' International Declaration of Human Rights. Before 1962, various laws dealt with different kinds of discrimination. The Code brought them together into one law and added new protections. See [Prohibited/Protected Grounds](#).

## Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up an Identification, Placement and Review Committee. An Identification, Placement, and Review Committee is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the board.



## Role of the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee

- decide whether or not the student should be identified as exceptional
- identify the areas of the student's exceptionality, according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education
- decide an appropriate placement for the student
- review the identification and placement at least once in each school year

### Identification

#### Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?

The *Education Act* defines an exceptional pupil as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program....” Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education.

### Exceptionalities

Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities:

The following terms when used are from the Ministry of Education [resource cited below](#). School Boards may have further criteria for determination of exceptionality.

### Behavioural

- Behavioural Exceptionality: A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:
  - a. an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships
  - b. excessive fears or anxieties
  - c. a tendency to compulsive reaction
  - d. an inability to learn that cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof

### Communicational

- Autism: A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:
  - a. disturbances in rate of educational development; ability to relate to the environment; mobility; perception, speech, and language;
  - b. lack of the representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language.
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing: An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.
- Language Impairment: A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or the use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:
  - a. involve one or more of the forms, content, and function of language in communication; and
  - b. include one or more of: language delay; dysfluency; voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.
- Speech Impairment: A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors; that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.
- Learning Disability: One of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills and that:
  1. Affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are at least in the average range.

2. Results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range), and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support.
3. Results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills.
4. May typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; perceptual-motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions (for example, self-regulation of behaviour and emotions, planning, organizing of thoughts and activities, prioritizing, decision making).
5. May be associated with difficulties in social interaction (for example, difficulty in understanding social norms or the point of view of others); with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities.
6. Is not the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.

## **Intellectual**

- Giftedness: An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.
- Mild Intellectual Disability: A learning disorder characterized by:
  - a. an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and support services
  - b. an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development
  - c. a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support
- Developmental Disability: A severe learning disorder characterized by:
  - a. an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development
  - b. an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development
  - c. a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support

## **Physical**

- Physical Disability: A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of students without exceptionalities who are of the same age or development level.
- Blind and Low Vision: A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

## **Multiple**

- Multiple Exceptionalities: A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities that is of such a nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.



**What will they consider in making its placement decision?**

Before the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee can consider placing the student in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will:

- meet the student's needs
- be consistent with parental preferences
- If, after considering all of the information presented to it, the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet the student's needs and that such a decision is consistent with parental preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services.
- If the committee decides that the student should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.

The following is [additional Ministry of Education information](#) regarding placements:

- **A regular class with indirect support:** the student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.
- **A regular class with resource assistance:** the student is placed in the regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a qualified special education teacher.
- **A regular class with withdrawal assistance:** the student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50 per cent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher.
- **A special education class with partial integration:** the student is placed by the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee in a special education class where the student-teacher ratio conforms to the standards in [O.Reg. 298, section 31](#), for at least 50 per cent of the school day, but is integrated with a regular class for at least one instructional period daily.
- **A special education class full time:** the student is placed by the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee in a special education class, where the student-teacher ratio conforms to the standards in [O.Reg. 298, section 31](#) for the entire school day.

Other options exist to meet the student's needs, and parents and school board staff are encouraged to explore them. For example, they may need to consider applying for admission to:

- provincial school for students who are deaf, blind, or deafblind, or a demonstration school for students who have severe learning disabilities or a facility that provides the necessary care or treatment appropriate to the student's condition.
- applications to provincial schools and demonstration schools are coordinated and submitted by the school board. Applications to care and treatment facilities are made by the parents directly to the facility, although school board staff may be able to assist the parents in gathering useful information.

**Impairment**

A physical, sensory, intellectual, learning or medical condition, including mental illness, that limits functioning and/or requires accommodation. Impairment may be apparent to others or hidden, inherited, self-inflicted or acquired, and may exist alone or in combination with other impairments. Impairment can affect anyone (whatever their gender, sex, race, culture, age, religion, creed, etc.) <sup>[2]</sup>

**Implementation**

Recommendations of the Education Accessibility Standards Development Committee approved by government are acted on (within set timelines) by those responsible parties — school boards, ministries.

The government establishes working committees to develop PPMs to ensure consistent understanding of the requirements of the recommendations across school boards, while introducing compliance measures. C-1(b)

#### Inclusion

Appreciating and using our unique differences – strengths, talents, weaknesses and frailties – in a way that shows respect for the individual and ultimately creates a dynamic multi-dimensional organization [2] .

#### Inclusive Design

Taking into account differences among individuals and groups when designing something, to avoid creating barriers. Inclusive design can apply to systems, facilities, programs, policies, services, education, etc. [2] .

#### Inclusive Education

Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected [25] .

#### Indigenous

Generally used in the international context, refers to peoples who are original to a particular land or territory. This term is very similar to “Aboriginal” and has a positive connotation [2] .

#### Individualized Education Plan

A plan called an individual education plan containing specific objective and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil. The Individual Education Plan must be developed for a student, in consultation with the parent. It must include:

- specific educational expectations
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be received
- a statement about the methods by which the student’s progress will be reviewed
- for students 14 years and older (except those identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for transition to appropriate postsecondary school activities, such as work, further education, and community living

The Individual Education Plan must be completed within 30 days after the student has been placed in the program, and the principal must ensure that the parent receives a copy of it [26] .

#### Information and Communication Barriers

Occur when information is not provided in an accessible digital format and/or when information and communication are inaccessible to students with a wide range of disabilities such as; physical, intellectual, vision, hearing, communication, learning, mental health issues or students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. These barriers relate to both the sending and receiving of information.

#### Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the study of how various forms of oppression, discrimination, domination and other social processes intersect and influence each other. For example, students in schools can belong to more than one marginalized group. A student may identify as being culturally different from his or her classmates, belong to a different socio-economic group, and may also identify as gay. This student’s experience would be different than someone who is of a similar cultural and socio-economic group as the majority of the class, but who also identifies as gay. Though these two students have an identity in common, their experiences in and around the classroom would likely be quite different because of their unique outlooks, as well as their unique social and cultural circumstances. They may not benefit from the same types of supports and would likely need educators and administration in schools to support and nurture their needs differently. An intersectional education lens takes various social, historical and

political processes into consideration in order to best understand how to support the wide range of experiences of diverse students <sup>C-1 (b)</sup> [27] .

### Job-embedded professional development (JEPD)

Job-embedded professional development refers to teacher learning that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers' content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning. [37] Effective professional learning for today's teachers should include the following features:

- It must be grounded in inquiry and reflection, be participant-driven, and focus on improving planning and instruction.
- It must be collaborative, involving the sharing of knowledge and focusing on communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
- It must be ongoing, intensive and supported by modeling, coaching and the collective solving of specific problems so that teachers can implement their new learning and sustain changes in practice.
- It must be connected to and derived from teachers' work with students – teaching, assessing, observing and reflecting on the processes of learning and development (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, Job-embedded professional learning).

### Multi-disciplinary Team Model

A multidisciplinary team is composed of members from more than one discipline so that the team can offer a greater breadth of services to the student. Team members work independently and interact formally. Multidisciplinary teams may be thought of as requiring everyone to “do his or her own thing” with little or no awareness of other disciplines' work. There is often power dynamics involved in terms of a hierarchy of discipline importance.

### Multi-literacy

Multi-literacy is the ability to identify, interpret, create and communicate meaning across a variety of visual, oral, corporal, musical and alphabetical forms of communication. Beyond a linguistic notion of literacy, multi-literacy involves an awareness of the social, economic and wider cultural factors that frame communication.

### Online learning

Is education that takes place over the Internet. It is often referred to as “e- learning” among other terms. However, online learning is just one type of “distance learning” – the umbrella term for any learning that takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom.

### Pathways

To promote success in school and life, it is essential for Ontario schools to provide opportunities and support for all students to plan their individual pathways through school and for each to make a successful transition to his or her initial postsecondary destination. Schools that adopt “pathways thinking” enhance every student's outlook for success by:

- supporting students in identifying their personal interests, strengths, needs, and aspirations and in using this knowledge of themselves to inform their choices of programs and learning opportunities
- providing a range of diverse and engaging learning opportunities, courses, and programs, both in and outside the classroom, that meet the interests, strengths, needs, and aspirations of the students and honour all postsecondary destinations – apprenticeship training, college, community living, university and the workplace

### Pedagogy

A term to describe the science of teaching, learning and evaluation. Refers to curriculum, methods,<sup>C-1(b)</sup> assessment, instruction, teacher/learner relationships and classroom structures. A broad field that is expanding in its definitions and scope (such as, critical pedagogy; pedagogy of the oppressed) [28] .

#### Person-Directed Planning

Person-directed planning provides the opportunity for a person to explore resources in their community, try new activities, gain new experiences, and make informed decisions based on those experiences. From this, custom, or person-directed supports are built around each person's desired goals and outcomes. Person-directed planning engages individuals who have a disability in identifying their work, volunteer, leisure and recreational interests and goals.

#### Plan

A document designed to identify, at various levels, responsibility for a range of activities aimed at meeting specific objectives and at implementing accompanying strategies and tactics [22] .

#### Policy/Program Memoranda (PPM)

Numbered policy directives are issued to district school boards and school authorities to outline the Ministry of Education's expectations regarding the implementation of ministry policies and programs [29] .

#### Postsecondary Institutions

These institutions must ensure that their facilities and services are accessible, that appropriate, effective and dignified accommodation processes are in place, and that students who require accommodations because of their disabilities are accommodated to the point of undue hardship. Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, they are also required to complete an accessibility plan. Educators at the postsecondary level are responsible for participating in the accommodation process (including the provision of specific accommodations), being knowledgeable about and sensitive to disability issues, and maintaining student confidentiality.

#### Power

Access to privileges such as information/knowledge, connections, experience and expertise, resources and decision-making that enhance a person's chances of getting what they need to live a comfortable, safe, productive and profitable life [2] .

#### Privilege

Unearned power, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities that exist for members of the dominant group(s) in society. Can also refer to the relative privilege of one group compared to another [2] .

#### Professional Learning

Focused, ongoing learning for every educator "in context", to link new conceptions of instructional practice with assessment of student learning [30] .

#### Prohibited/Protected Grounds

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* prohibits discrimination or harassment based on these personal characteristics. The specific protected grounds include: age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity and gender expression (recently added to the Code), marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, receipt of public assistance (in housing) and record of offences (in employment) [2] .

#### Program Options

**Accommodations, Modified Expectations, and Alternative Expectations** When planning the student's program, the team should identify which of the following options best suits the student's needs in each subject, course or skill area in which the student will receive instruction:

- no accommodations or modifications
- accommodations only
- modified expectations (with or without accommodations)
- alternative expectations/programs (with or without accommodations)

The following are the Ministry of Education's [current definitions](#) of the following terms.

**A subject or course in which the student requires neither accommodations nor modified or alternative expectations is not included in the Individual Education Plan.**

It is essential that the teacher(s) responsible for providing direct instruction to the student be the primary decision maker(s) in the process of determining the student's programming needs and identifying the appropriate option with respect to each of the relevant subjects, courses and programs.

All subjects or courses in which the student requires accommodations and/or modified expectations and all alternative programs must be listed in the Individual Education Plan. Each should be identified as "Accommodated only" (AC), "Modified" (MOD) or "Alternative" (ALT).

**Accommodated only**

The term accommodations refer to the special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required by students with special education needs to enable them to learn and demonstrate learning. The provision of accommodations in no way alters the curriculum expectations for the grade level or course. The accommodations, which are likely to apply to all of the student's subjects or courses, must be described in the designated section of the Individual Education Plan form. (See [section 5.1](#) for types of accommodations.)

Accommodated only (AC) is the term used on the Individual Education Plan form to identify a subject or course from the Ontario curriculum in which the student requires accommodations alone in order to work towards achieving the regular grade-level expectations. Because the student is working on regular grade-level or regular course curriculum expectations, without modifications, there is no need to include information on current level of achievement, annual program goals, or learning expectations. In other words, the Special Education Program section of the Individual Education Plan template does not need to be completed when the student requires accommodations alone.

**Modified**

Modifications are changes made in the grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and/or complexity of the regular grade-level curriculum expectations.

Modified (MOD) is the term used on the Individual Education Plan form to identify a subject or course from the Ontario curriculum in which the student requires modified expectations – expectations that differ in some way from the regular grade-level expectations. (See [section 4.3](#) for more information on how to document modified curriculum expectations in the Individual Education Plan). Students may also require certain accommodations to help them achieve the learning expectations in subjects or courses with modified expectations.

For each secondary school course with modified expectations, it is important to indicate clearly in the Individual Education Plan the extent to which the expectations have been modified. Depending on the extent of the modification, the principal will determine whether achievement of the modified expectations constitutes successful completion of the course and will decide whether the student is eligible to receive a credit for the course <sup>[30]</sup>. The principal's decision must be communicated to the parents and the student.

Alternative expectations are developed to help students acquire knowledge and skills that are not<sup>C-1(b)</sup> represented in the Ontario curriculum. They either are not derived from a provincial curriculum policy document or are modified so extensively that the Ontario curriculum expectations no longer form the basis of the student's educational program. Because they are not part of a subject or course outlined in the provincial curriculum documents, alternative expectations are considered to constitute alternative programs or alternative courses.

The skill areas in which alternative expectations and programs are often appropriate include gross motor skills, perceptual motor skills, and life skills. Examples of alternative programs include speech remediation, social skill programs, orientation/mobility training, and personal care programs. For the vast majority of students, these programs would be given in addition to modified or regular grade-level expectations from the Ontario curriculum. Alternative programs are provided in both the elementary and the secondary school panels.

Alternative courses, which are available at the secondary school level, are non-credit courses. The course expectations in an alternative course are individualized for the student and generally focus on preparing the student for daily living. School boards must use the “K” course codes and titles found in the ministry's Course Code listings to identify alternative courses. Examples of alternative courses include Transit Training and Community Exploration (KCC), Culinary Skills (KHI), and Money Management and Personal Banking (KBB). (See [section 4.3](#) for more information on how to document alternative expectations in the Individual Education Plan). Alternative (ALT) is the term used to identify an alternative program or an alternative course on the Individual Education Plan form.

#### Racialization

The process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter and affect economic, political and social life [\[2\]](#).

#### Racism

A belief that one group is superior or inferior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people don't even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions [\[2\]](#).

#### Remote Learning

Learning that occurs when classes are taught at a distance and when students and educators are not in a conventional classroom setting. Remote learning takes place in times of extended interruption to in-person learning – for example, as a result of a pandemic or natural disaster. Classes can be synchronous or asynchronous and can be taught online through a Learning Management System (LMS) or by using videoconferencing tools. In some cases, they may be delivered through emails, print materials, broadcast media, or telephone calls [\[9\]](#).

#### Requirements for Accessibility Committees

In order to get a broad perspective of existing barriers to accessibility within their organization, organizations could seek feedback from employees, clients, customers and persons with disabilities [\[31\]](#).

#### Risk Assessment

The process of determining those risks to be prioritized for risk management by a combination of risk identification, risk analysis, and evaluation of risk level. A risk assessment includes a review of the technical characteristics of hazards, analysis of exposures and vulnerability, and evaluation of the effectiveness of existing coping capacities [\[22\]](#).

#### Risk Management



Coordinated activities to direct and control risk in order to minimize potential harm. These activities include risk assessments, implementing risk treatment or response measures, and evaluation, monitoring, and review <sup>6-1(b)</sup> [22] .

## Resilience

From the Latin *resilire*: “to bounce back” refers to the capacity to return to good mental health after challenging and difficult situations.

Teachers provide an environment that enriches young lives. In this environment, students gain the ability to deal with unforeseen challenges with a positive attitude. They are able to work through the challenges and are strengthened because of those difficult situations. Resilience research suggests teachers have an indispensable role to play in generating an environment where every student who enters their classroom can develop the ability to triumph over challenge [32] .

## School Boards

School boards are required to develop and maintain a special education plan outlining programs and services, to establish a Special Education Advisory Committee, and to participate in a board’s annual review of its special education plan, annual budget and financial statements. Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, they are also required to complete an accessibility plan.

For purposes of the Education Accessibility Standards Development Committee’s recommendations, school boards will be classified as large, medium and small, depending on the number of students served. Large boards will have a student population over 50,000, medium boards 20,000 to 50,000 and small boards under 20,000 students.

## School bus provider (operators)

The school bus providers are usually third-party companies or organizations, which are contracted by school boards and consortia to provide transportation services for students with disabilities [33] .

## Self-Identification

A term used to describe how an individual name or appoints themselves. Typically refers to the group that we believe we belong to (such as, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Louis Riel Métis, Inuk, Cree, Oji-Cree, Haida, Stolo, Dene, MicMac, Native) [34] .

## Self-regulation

Children's ability to self-regulate – to set limits for themselves and manage their own emotions, attention, and behaviour – allows them to develop the emotional well-being and the habits of mind, such as persistence and curiosity, that are essential for early learning and that set the stage for lifelong learning.

## Service Animal (as per *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, Customer Service Standard)

(4) For the purposes of this Part, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,

- a. The animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person’s disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal
- b. Or the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:
  - i. A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
  - ii. A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario
  - iii. A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario
  - iv. A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
  - v. A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario
  - vi. A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
  - vii. A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario

### Special Education Program

As defined in the *Education Act*, “an educational program for an exceptional pupil that is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation, and that includes a plan containing specific objective and an outline of educational services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil”.

A special education program is defined in the *Education Act* as an educational program that:

- is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation; and includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil

### Special Education Services

As defined in the *Education Act*, “facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program”.

### STEM

**STEM** is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — in an interdisciplinary and applied approach. Rather than teach the four disciplines as separate and discrete subjects, **STEM** integrates them into a cohesive learning paradigm based on real-world applications.

### Stereotype

Incorrect assumption based on things like race, colour, ethnic origin, place of origin, religion, etc. Stereotyping typically involves attributing the same characteristics to all members of a group regardless of their individual differences. It is often based on misconceptions, incomplete information and/or false generalizations <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Student Self-Assessment

The process by which a student, with the ongoing support of the teacher, learns to recognize, describe, and apply success criteria related to particular learning goals and then use the information to monitor his or her own progress towards achieving the learning goals, make adjustments in learning approaches, and set individual goals for learning.

### Students with Disabilities

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* guarantees the right to equal treatment in education, without discrimination on the ground of disability, as part of the protection for equal treatment in services. Education providers have a duty to accommodate students with disabilities up to the point of undue hardship. Students with disabilities are not always being provided with appropriate accommodation, and, in some cases, are falling victim to disputes between the various parties responsible for accommodation. The accommodation process is a shared responsibility. Each party has a duty to co-operatively engage in the process, share information, and canvass potential accommodation solutions. In this regard each party has a specific role to play.

### Summative Assessment

Evaluation that occurs at the end of important segments of student learning. It is used to summarize and communicate what students know and can do with respect to curriculum expectations.

### Synchronous Learning



Learning that happens in real time. Synchronous learning involves using text, video, or voice <sup>C-1 (b)</sup> communication in a way that enables educators and other members of the school- or board-based team to instruct and connect with students in real time. Synchronous learning supports the well-being and academic achievement of all students, including students with special education needs, by providing educators and students with an interactive and engaging way to learn. It helps teachers provide immediate feedback to students and enables students to interact with one another (From PPM 164: Requirements for Remote Learning).

Synchronous learning is the kind of learning that happens in real time. This means that you, your classmates, and your instructor interact in a specific virtual place, through a specific online medium, at a specific time. In other words, it's not exactly anywhere, anyhow, anytime. Methods of synchronous online learning include video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting, and live-streaming lectures.

#### Systemic Barrier

A barrier embedded in the social or administrative structures of an organization, including the physical accessibility of an organization, organizational policies, practices and decision-making processes, or the culture of an organization. These may appear neutral on the surface but exclude members of groups protected by the Human Rights Code <sup>[2]</sup>.

#### Systemic Discrimination

Patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for groups identified under the *Human Rights Code* <sup>[2]</sup>.

#### Systemic Organizational Barriers

Occur when policies, procedures, or practices may unintentionally and unfairly discriminate against persons with disabilities and prevent full participation. For example, a lack of Universal Design for Learning and accessibility collaboration between curriculum, information and communications technologies (ICT), Special Education and SEA departments may result in procurement and deployment of technology, digital materials, learning platforms and professional learning initiatives that do not support accessibility. Systemic barriers also occur when the Ministry of Education, a school board, school or a teacher have in place policies, rules, procedures or practices that block students with disabilities from using assistive/adaptive technology or support services. For example, an iPhone cannot be procured as an adaptive aid due to a rule that cell phones are not an approved device, or a rule, practice or firewall exists that only allows certain approved apps to be installed on an iPad or another piece of digital technology. Rules that require standardization of what apps may be present on a computer or tablet can impede students with disabilities from being able to use apps that are designed for them, or that best facilitate their learning activities. Further, if Administrator privileges are required to change and save settings on a device or to add or update software on the device, the ability to independently customize the device for individual needs to restrict timely access to learning.

#### Technology and Technical Barriers

Occur when a device or technological platform is not accessible in its intended use and cannot be used with an assistive device. Barriers also occur when equipment, technical infrastructure, and technical assistance is insufficient to meet the needs of the students and staff and therefore impede student learning.

#### Transdisciplinary Team Model

A transdisciplinary approach yields different results than interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches because it requires each team member to become sufficiently familiar with the concepts and approaches of his and her colleagues as to blur the disciplinary bounds and enable the team to focus on the problem as part of a broader phenomenon. As this happens, discipline authorization fades in importance and the problem and its context guide an appropriately broader and deeper analysis.

Means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability, designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including, but not limited to, postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based on the student's strengths, preferences and interests. <sup>C-1(b)</sup>

### Transition Plan

Transition plan, as part of the student's Individual Education Plan, must include the following components:

- specific goals for the student's transition
- the actions required, now and in the future, to achieve the stated goals
- the person or agency responsible for or involved in completing or providing assistance in the completion of each of the identified actions
- timelines for the implementation of each of the identified actions

### Transition Planning

Transition planning involves looking ahead and planning for the future. While students are in school, they can prepare for the opportunities and experiences of being an adult. Transition planning is part of your Individual Education Plan. Transition planning involves the student, family, local service community workers, teachers and other staff supporting students transitioning.

### Transitions Facilitator/Navigator

The role of the Transition Facilitator/Navigator is to work with students and their families in collaboration with school board staff, and community agencies to explore pathways, and develop transition plans. This position will support students accessing special education support services in all schools across the school board, in a central board position.

### Transitions Hub

The Transitions Hub would create a “community of practice (CoP)” that unites and integrates all of the separate transition facilitator/navigators and programs. This Hub would come together to share knowledge of various demographics and best practices to support student’s transitions throughout their educational pathway.

### Transportation Consortium

A transportation consortium is an organization formed by school boards operating in the same geographical area. Consortia are responsible for administering policies, planning and procuring bus services, awarding and managing contracts with transportation providers and auditing their performance for contract compliance <sup>[35]</sup>.

### Universal Design for Learning

A teaching approach that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials designed to meet special needs to enhance learning for all students, regardless of age, skills, or situation. It is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences.

### Virtual Education

Refers to instruction in a learning environment where teacher and student are separated by time or space, or both, and the teacher provides course content through course management applications, multimedia resources, the Internet, videoconferencing, etc., Students receive the content and communicate with the teacher via the same technologies.

## Virtual Instruction

Is a method of teaching that is taught either entirely online or when elements of face-to-face courses are taught online through learning management systems and other educational tools and platforms. Virtual instruction also includes digitally transmitting course materials to student

## Virtual Learning

Defined as learning that can functionally and effectively occur in the absence of traditional classroom environments [\[36\]](#).

## Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Refers to a system that offers educators digitally based solutions aimed at creating interactive, active learning environments. VLEs can help educators create, store and disseminate content, plan courses and lessons and foster communication between student and educator. Virtual learning environments are often part of an education institution's wider LMS.

## VLE in Educational Technology

Is a Web-based platform for the digital aspects of courses of study, usually within educational institutions. They present resources, activities and interactions within a course structure and provide for the different stages of assessment. VLEs also usually report on participation; and have some level of integration with other institutional systems.

## Well-being

Well-being is a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future.

**Cognitive:** The development of abilities and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and the ability to be flexible and innovative.

**Emotional:** This involves learning about experiencing emotions, and understanding how to recognize, manage and cope with them.

**Social:** The development of self-awareness, including the sense of belonging, collaboration, relationships with others, and communication skills.

**Physical:** The development of the body, impacted by physical activity, sleep patterns, healthy eating, and healthy life choices.

**Resources:** [School Mental Health Ontario](#); Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health.

**Notes:** The following is an excerpt from the *Ontario Human Rights Code* regarding [responsibilities related to accessibility for students with disabilities](#).

## Footnotes

- [1] ^ See AODA Section 6 (7).
- [2] ^ [Teaching human rights in Ontario - A guide for Ontario schools, 2013, Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)
- [3] ^ [Guide to the act](#), AODA.ca.
- [4] ^ [Accessibility Policy and Accessibility Plan – Who Needs One?](#), [Section 4: Accessibility Plans](#), AODA.ca.
- [5] ^ [What are Alternate Formats?](#), Queen's University
- [6] ^ [Learning for All K-12: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12](#), Ontario Ministry of Education.

- [7] ^ [Growing Success: Assessment, evaluation and reporting in Ontario schools](#), Ontario Ministry of Education.
- [8] ^ [Assistive Technology](#), Ontario Teachers' Federation.
- [9] ^ [PPM 164: Requirements for Remote Learning](#), Ontario Ministry of Education
- [10] ^ [What is AAC?](#), International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC).
- [11] ^ [About Autism](#), Autism Ontario.
- [12] ^ [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#), e-Laws Ontario.
- [13] ^ [Bilingual Education](#), Ontario Ministry of Education., [Bilingual Education](#), Gallaudet University.
- [14] ^ [Definitions: built environment](#), definitions.net.
- [15] ^ [Everyday Speech](#) and [Grand Conversations in Primary Classrooms](#), Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Ontario.
- [16] ^ [SNOW Inclusive Learning and Education](#).
- [17] ^ [Cooperative Education 2018](#), Ontario Ministry of Education.
- [18] ^ [Capacity Building Series K-12, Secretariat Special Edition #35](#), Ontario Ministry of Education.
- [19] ^ [What is a disability?](#), Ontario Human Rights Commission.
- [20] ^ [What is "discrimination"?](#), Ontario Human Rights Commission.
- [21] ^ [Bill 197, COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020](#), Legislative Assembly of Ontario.
- [22] ^ [World Health Organization Framework](#).
- [23] ^ [European Disability Forum](#).
- [24] ^ [2011 Census of Population Program](#), Statistics Canada.
- [25] ^ [Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009](#), Ontario Ministry of Education
- [26] ^ [Highlights of Regulation 181/98](#), Ontario Ministry of Education
- [27] ^ [OISE Wordpress](#), University of Toronto.
- [37] ^ [Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hirsh, 2009](#)
- [28] ^ [Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007](#).
- [29] ^ [Policy/Program Memoranda](#), Ontario Ministry of Education.
- [30] ^ [adapted from Fullan, Hill, & Cr  vola, 2006](#).
- [31] ^ [Integrated Guide](#), AODA.ca.
- [32] ^ [What Works? Research into Practice: Research monograph #25, Bolstering Resilience in Students: Teachers as Protective Factors](#), Ontario Ministry of Education.
- [33] ^ [Published plans and annual reports 2020-2021](#), Ministry of Education, School Business Support Branch, 2017.
- [34] ^ [Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007](#).
- [35] ^ [Archived - Discussion paper: a new vision for student transportation](#), Ministry of Education, 2018.
- [36] ^ [Simonson & Schlosser, 2006](#).



# Grand Erie District School Board

Education Centre: 349 Erie Avenue, Brantford, Ontario N3T 5V3  
 (519) 756-6301 | granderie.ca | info@granderie.ca | Fax: (519) 756-9181

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February 15, 2019

Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP  
 Minister of Education  
 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
 900 Bay Street  
 Toronto, ON  
 M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Thompson,

Re: Bill 44 (formerly Bill 191), Education Amendment Act, (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)

The Grand Erie DSB SEAC is writing to request the Minister bring Bill 44 back into the legislative process with the goal of amending the Education Act and the supportive structures begun in 2015 during the provincial roundtables led by Parliamentary Assistant Granville Anderson to engage stakeholders in the development of a provincial FASD strategy.

Attached please find our original letter of support March 9, 2018 for the above amendment and the response from the Hon. Naidoo-Harris, former Minister of Education.

Sincerely,

Kyle Smith, Chair  
 Grand Erie DSB SEAC

Cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees  
 Hon. Lisa MacLeod, MPP, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Enclosure(s):

1. April 30, 2018, Copy of letter from former Minister of Education to Grand Erie DSB SEAC Chair
2. March 9, 2018, Copy of letter from Grand Erie DSB SEAC Chair to former Minister of Education
3. September 9, 2015, Copy of Ministry of Children and Youth Services Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Provincial Roundtable Report.

*SUCCESS* for Every Student

RECEIVED

MAY 07 2018

**Ministry of Education**

Minister

Mowat Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Ministre

Édifice Mowat  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ontario

April 30, 2018

Mr. Kyle Smith  
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee  
Grand Erie District School Board  
349 Erie Avenue  
Brantford ON N3T 5V3

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for your correspondence about Bill 191 and individuals living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). I am pleased to respond.

Recently, the Ontario Legislature was prorogued to allow for the Speech from the Throne to outline the government's priorities for the final session of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament.

As a result, government bills, Private Member's Bills and all outstanding business on the Order Paper was lost. The Government House Leader made an offer to the opposition parties to carry over all bills from the previous session, including Private Member's Bills, but the opposition refused this offer. The government has reintroduced all pieces of government legislation and all members have the same opportunity to reintroduce their Private Member's Bills.

On April 11, MPP Kiwala reintroduced the legislation, now Bill 44, in the new session of the Legislature. We will endeavour to keep you apprised of any developments in this process. As we have done at the end of each sitting, we will again explore options to make an agreement with the opposition parties to pass some of the reintroduced Private Member's Bills at the end of this sitting.

That being said, we know that students with FASD may require additional supports in order to succeed in school. Although you may already be aware, I would like to share with you some information about how the Ministry of Education is supporting students with FASD in our schools.

.../2

Students who have behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities, may have educational needs that go beyond regular instructional and assessment practices. Such students may be identified as exceptional pupils. The ministry sets out definitions of exceptionalities that must be used by school boards after determining that a student is an “exceptional pupil.”

The ministry’s broad categories of exceptionalities are designed to address the wide range of conditions that may affect a student’s ability to learn, and include any medical conditions, whether diagnosed or not, that can lead to particular types of learning needs. The inclusion of some medical conditions in the definition of exceptionalities is intended to include medical conditions that may result in learning difficulties, such as, but not limited to, Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, and Tourette Syndrome. All students with demonstrable learning-based needs are entitled to appropriate accommodations in the form of special education programs and supports.

Currently, students with FASD who require special education programs and/or services may have their learning needs addressed through an Individual Education Plan (IEP). At the discretion of the board, a transition plan may also be developed for students who receive special education programs and/or services, but do not have an IEP and have not been identified as exceptional, which may include students with FASD. All transition plans must be developed in consultation with the parent(s), student (as appropriate), postsecondary institution (where appropriate), and relevant community agencies and/or partners, as necessary.

Our government is committed to ensuring that every student has access to the supports they need to succeed in school, including students with special education needs. It is for this reason the ministry is investing more than \$300 million over the next three school years in special education. This investment will provide school boards with funding to address current waitlists for special education assessments, increase programs and services for students with special education needs and support students with extraordinarily high needs to be successful in school. The ministry continues to make changes to be more responsive to the needs of all students with special education needs and to increase our focus on supporting their achievement, equity and well-being.

Overall, the provincial Special Education Grant (SEG) is projected to be approximately \$3.01 billion in 2018-19. This represents a projected increase of over \$139.3 million or nearly 4.9 per cent over 2017-18; and an increase of \$508.9 million or 20.4 per cent since 2012-13. As you know, SEG funding is enveloped for special education programs, services and equipment. Any unspent special education funding must be treated as deferred revenue for special education.

.../3

We also know that good schools become great schools when parents and families are engaged in their children's learning. That is why we have invested over \$68 million since 2005 to support parent engagement initiatives. This funding supports:

- Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) and school councils;
- 20,000 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants at both the school council and regional/provincial levels; and
- Parent engagement initiatives led by the four provincial parent organizations.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. I hope you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Indira Naidoo-Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "H" at the end.

Indira Naidoo-Harris  
Minister of Education  
Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care





# Grand Erie District School Board

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March 9, 2018

Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris,  
Minister of Education,  
22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mowat Block,  
900 Bay Street,  
TORONTO, Ontario,  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris:

The Grand Erie District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) respectfully submits this letter in support of Bill 191. The Grand Erie DSB SEAC supports the necessity of recognizing the importance of the Ministry of Education amending the Education Act to ensure that all board staff are informed of the resulting permanent brain injury resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE). This life-long brain injury is therefore considered a neurodevelopmental disorder and is diagnosed under Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

The Grand Erie DSB SEAC passed the following motion at its March 8, 2018 meeting stating this letter be sent to you with copies sent to the Chair of each Ontario SEAC and all MPP's within our Board's jurisdiction. The Motion read as follows:

*"We the SEAC of Grand Erie DSB hereby request and endorse that the honourable Minister Naidoo-Harris expeditiously bring Bill 191 forward for a second and third reading so as to amend the Education Act to require Ontario School Boards to recognize, accept and promote the understanding of diagnoses under FASD including but not limited to literature, informed practices for students impacted by PAE, changes in the IPRC processes, and for each Board to facilitate collaboration with local families as well as any local FASD Support Groups."*

We look forward to this Government's continued commitment by serving as the first Ontario Government to recognize and promote awareness of FASD and to receiving news of the passing of Bill 191 to amend the Education Act before the end of the current parliamentary session.

Sincerely,

K. Smith, Chair  
Grand Erie DSB SEAC

cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees  
Hon. Michael Coteau, Minister of Children & Youth Services  
Dave Levac, MPP Brant-Brantford  
Toby Barrett, MPP Haldimand-Norfolk

*SUCCESS* for Every Student

**Ministry of Children  
and Youth Services**

Minister's Office

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à l'enfance et à la jeunesse**

Bureau de la ministre

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14<sup>e</sup> étage  
Toronto ON M5S 2S3  
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Téléc. : 416 212-7431



September 9, 2015

Dear Colleague:

As Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I was tasked with hosting province-wide roundtables to engage with service providers, advocates, children's treatment centres, families, caregivers, and especially individuals affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) as part of the development of a provincial FASD strategy.

The enclosed report is a culmination of a months-long commitment on the part of dedicated roundtable attendees to share their valuable insights about how to best improve outcomes for individuals affected by FASD across the lifespan. It includes diverse perspectives on how Ontario can best support awareness and prevention efforts, and improve services for individuals living with FASD.

I would like to extend my heart-felt gratitude to all participants in the provincial roundtables for their commitment to improving the lives of those living with FASD. Moving forward, the stories, insights and perspectives that were shared will contribute significantly to the development of a provincial FASD strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Granville Anderson".

Granville Anderson  
Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Provincial Roundtable Report

A Report from Parliamentary Assistant Granville Anderson  
to the Minister of Children and Youth Services

SEPTEMBER 2015

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Provincial Roundtable Report

A Report from Parliamentary Assistant Granville Anderson  
to the Minister of Children and Youth Services

1	<b>A MESSAGE FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANT</b>
3	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
3	About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
4	About this report
4	Our sustained commitment
5	About the roundtables
9	<b>PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK</b>
9	<b>What We Heard:</b> Awareness and Prevention
13	<b>What We Heard:</b> Screening, Assessment and Diagnosis
15	<b>What We Heard:</b> Programs, Services and Supports
18	<b>What We Heard:</b> Training for Front-Line Staff and Professionals
21	<b>What We Heard:</b> Evidence-Based Service Delivery Models
23	<b>POPULATION-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS</b>
23	<b>What We Heard:</b> First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Aboriginal Perspectives
25	<b>What We Heard:</b> The Francophone Perspective
26	<b>OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS</b>
28	<b>ENDNOTES</b>

## A Message From the Parliamentary Assistant



**Granville Anderson**

Parliamentary Assistant  
to the Minister of Children  
and Youth Services  
MPP Durham

Prenatal exposure to alcohol is a leading known cause of cognitive and developmental disability in Canada. The statistics for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are startling.

Approximately one in one hundred Canadians is affected by FASD. This means over 130,000 Ontarians are living with FASD. **What makes the issue of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder worthy of our commitment is we know that with the right information, programs, services and supports, FASD is preventable.**

Recognizing the importance of the FASD issue in Ontario, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Children and Youth Services, asked

me to host province-wide roundtables. The Minister asked me to listen and learn about what is needed to better meet the needs of people with FASD, and their families and caregivers.

From May to August of this year, I hosted roundtable sessions across Ontario in major cities, small towns, and remote regions. Each roundtable brought together a diverse group of service providers, advocates, families, caregivers and individuals whose lives have been changed by FASD. We met with a common goal. As a roundtable participant stated: "We need to build awareness of what it is like to live with FASD every day."

This is what I learned: Public knowledge of FASD is limited at best. Many women and men are unaware of the risks of alcohol use before, during and after pregnancy. Children and youth affected by FASD are more likely to have mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and social and behavioural problems. Those affected have a high likelihood of dropping out of school or facing conflict with the law. Many adults with FASD cannot live independently, and have troubles obtaining and keeping a job. Adults with FASD are also more likely to experience psycho-social problems that increase their chances of getting arrested and going to jail. There are limited supports for adults and seniors living with FASD.

I have heard heart-wrenching accounts of how these challenges have affected people with FASD and their families and caregivers and that these challenges can last a lifetime.

For me, it was apparent from our first meeting that FASD is a complex issue. Participants brought so much passion and dedication to telling their individual stories and experiences. They bravely shared their daily difficulties and frustrations, trying to get help for their children and grandchildren. They told me about the urgency and need for action, and of their desire for Ontario to create positive change. What connected each person was a sense of hope—a hope that individuals affected by FASD in Ontario can reach their full potential if given the right supports.

I am absolutely humbled by, and grateful for, this experience. We came together as parents, caregivers, colleagues, service providers, affected individuals and collaborators—all committed to preventing FASD and improving the lives of those living with this disability. I give a heart-felt thank you to everyone who participated and for sharing your stories. I thank the people in the field for all the wonderful work that you do.

Inside this report, you will find many of the ideas and stories that were shared during the roundtable discussions. We can all play a significant role in the formation of the province's first FASD strategy by keeping the discussion going. As a community, let us continue to help, uplift and encourage each other to integrate new ideas and approaches that raise awareness and ultimately prevent FASD. As one roundtable participant knowingly declared, "People with FASD can succeed if they have the right people in their lives." It is through bravery and integrity that we can pave the way to a more positive future.

Sincerely,



Granville Anderson  
Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister  
Ministry of Children and Youth Services



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"FASD is the leading cause of developmental disability in Ontario and it is preventable."*

## Introduction

### About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

**FASD is a term used to describe a range of disabilities that may affect individuals exposed to alcohol in utero.** FASD encompasses the following diagnosed conditions: fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), partial FAS (pFAS), alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND), and alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD)<sup>1</sup>.

**FASD is brain damage caused by exposure to alcohol in utero.** FASD is among the leading causes of cognitive and developmental disability among children in Canada. FASD can affect memory, sensory integration, social communication, language processing, emotional regulation, adaptive functioning and other executive functions such as: planning, prioritizing, organizing, paying attention, and remembering details.

**FASD is an invisible disability for the majority of individuals affected.** Most individuals who have FASD do not display the physical features associated with the disability. It may appear that the affected individual "won't" comply with expectations, whereas due to the nature of the brain damage, they actually "can't".

**FASD is preventable.** Although FASD can be prevented by not consuming alcohol during pregnancy, there are many reasons why a woman may drink during pregnancy including: the woman did not know she was pregnant, mental health issues, substance abuse and addictions, coping with violence, physical and/or sexual abuse, a lack of awareness of the risks of drinking during pregnancy, and a lack of a support network (or not feeling supported).

**Over 130,000 Ontarians have FASD.** The estimated incidence of FASD in Canada is 1:100 live births, or one per cent of the population<sup>2</sup>. FASD can affect every racial, cultural and socio-economic group across Ontario.

**FASD cost Canada \$1.8 billion in 2013.** A study by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found that the overall burden and costs associated with FASD in Canada in 2013 was approximately \$1.8 billion<sup>3</sup>. The study used the most conservative assumptions, which means that the true costs are likely much higher. Another study indicated that it has been estimated to cost the Canadian economy \$6.2 billion annually<sup>4</sup>.

**FASD has a devastating and life-long impact on individuals across Ontario.** Many adults affected by FASD cannot live independently, secure and maintain employment, and are more likely to experience psycho-social and behavioural problems that increase their risk of being in conflict with the law and/or correctional facilities<sup>5</sup>.

## About this report

In September 2014, Premier Wynne issued a mandate letter to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The letter included a commitment to develop and implement strategies that will improve the experiences and outcomes for children and youth with complex and special needs (including those who are affected by FASD).

As Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, my responsibilities include:

*“Engaging with families, and as appropriate with affected youth, to listen to the challenges they face, and what they believe is required to better meet their needs in the development of a provincial Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder strategy.”*

This report provides a summary of what we heard through our engagement. The discussions at our roundtables will help shape a future provincial FASD strategy to increase awareness and prevention—as well as support the needs of those living with FASD and their families and caregivers.

Finally, it is the experiences and insights shared by individuals affected by FASD, their families and caregivers, service providers, and researchers that have made this report possible. I deeply appreciate all of your contributions.

Look for these text features inside this report:



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

What we heard from Ontario



### DIGGING DEEPER

Information to deepen your knowledge

## Our sustained commitment

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is committed to supporting children and youth with complex and special needs to ensure that every child in Ontario has the best possible start in life. As part of this commitment, the province is developing an FASD strategy to address the complex needs of individuals affected by FASD across the lifespan so they can participate as fully as possible in community life.

To facilitate the development of an Ontario FASD strategy, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services:



### DIGGING DEEPER: READ THE 2014 MANDATE LETTERS

[The Minister of Children and Youth Services' 2014 Mandate Letter.](#)

[The Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services' 2014 Mandate Letter.](#)

## MCYS VISION

An Ontario where all children and youth have the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.



- Organized 25 cross-ministry roundtable sessions to facilitate dialogue among service providers, advocates, children's treatment centres, families, caregivers, and especially individuals affected by FASD. The sessions included insights from Francophone, Aboriginal communities, lived-experience and general attendance audiences. Individuals were also able to send informal and formal written submissions, as well as information and research on FASD.
- Implemented a web-based survey on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' website.
- Established an expert group of FASD researchers and clinicians.
- Conducted interviews with a number of other key informants from across Canada to seek evidence-based input and expertise.
- Consulted with partners from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and International Trade, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of the Attorney General. They confirmed the project direction and provided input and participation where feasible.
- Hired a researcher to conduct research to inform awareness, prevention and targeted intervention strategies to support women and their partners to have alcohol-free pregnancies.

There is still more work to be done.

Decreasing the incidence of new FASD cases in Ontario continues to be important. Our stakeholders have called for the development of a FASD strategy for Ontario, including: the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise (FASD ONE), the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Select Committee on Developmental Services, and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to developing a strategy to give hope to those affected by FASD and their families and caregivers.

## ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS:

A complete invitation list of 500+ participants was compiled with input from ten ministries.

FASD participants reflected the diversity of Ontario's population as a whole.

## About the roundtables

### In their own voices

From May 2015 to August 2015, the following FASD stakeholder engagement occurred: eight roundtables with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal communities; 16 roundtables with service providers, advocates, families, caregivers and individuals affected by FASD—in five Ontario regions; and one dedicated roundtable for individuals with lived experience and their families and caregivers.

The Ministry worked with a professional facilitator with subject matter expertise in FASD to organize, lead, moderate, transcribe, summarize and report on the roundtable sessions across Ontario. Over 400 Ontarians participated. A number of these participants represented organizations from across different sectors (such as: health, education, social services, justice and corrections) and shared their feedback. In doing so, they enriched our work with their perspectives.

## Format of roundtable sessions

In each session, a dialogue was facilitated with key stakeholders following a participant guide and set of questions arranged into five FASD roundtable themes. In collaboration with First Nations, Métis, Inuit, urban Aboriginal organizations, and Francophone partners, a customized agenda, participation guide and feedback survey were developed to tailor roundtable sessions to better meet the needs of participants.

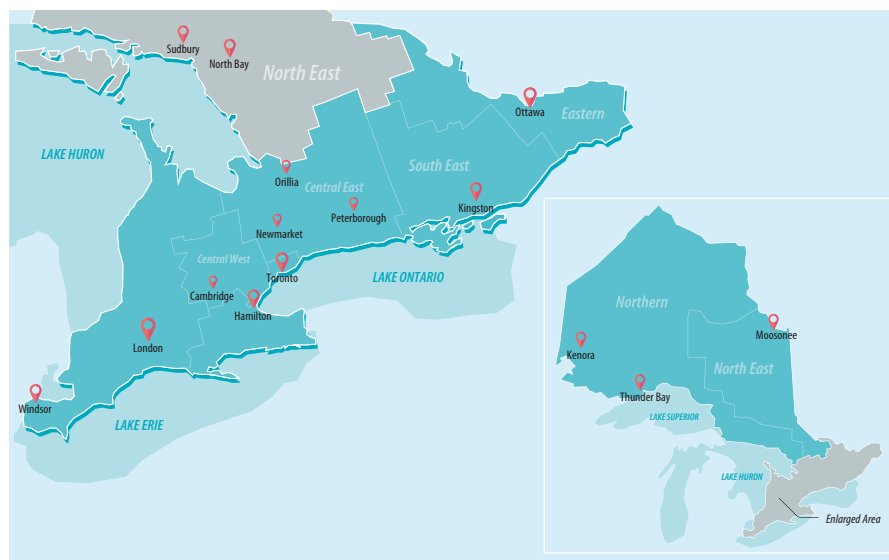
Group discussion, small breakout sessions, and an individual exercise were used to stimulate input from session participants. The responses noted down electronically and on a poster board were used to generate this report.

## Roundtable themes

Individuals affected by FASD, families, caregivers, service providers, researchers and provincial associations provided feedback in the following five areas:

1. **Awareness and Prevention:** Includes broad awareness building and health promotion efforts, community development, discussion of alcohol use and related risk with all women of childbearing years and their support networks, specialized, holistic support of pregnant women with alcohol and other health/social problems, and postpartum support for new mothers and their children.
2. **Screening, Assessment and Diagnosis:** Includes medical, cognitive, behavioural, communication, adaptive, motor and executive functioning information provided by a multi-disciplinary team trained in the current best practice model and using accepted diagnostic criteria. Diagnosis requires confirmed history of prenatal alcohol exposure and areas of suspected delay.
3. **Programs, Services and Supports for Individuals and Caregivers:** Addresses the needs of individuals with FASD and their families and caregivers. Programs and services in the community, aimed at enabling individuals affected by FASD to reach their potential, as well as supports and assistance to families and caregivers.
4. **Training for Front-Line Staff and Professionals:** Consists of formal education, pre-service and in-service training programs, typically targeted at program/service providers (including health, medical and social and human services professionals) and/or community groups.
5. **Evidence-Based Service Delivery Models:** Evidence refers to basic scientific and applied research leading to increased understanding of FASD, its epidemiology (i.e., incidence and prevalence), leading practices in the prevention of FASD, and development of standards to guide the delivery of FASD clinical services and/or FASD programming.

## Roundtable locations



Region	Roundtable Locations	Dates	Target Partner/ Stakeholder Group(s)
West Region	Hamilton	May 4, 2015	All stakeholder groups
East Region	Peterborough	May 5, 2015	All stakeholder groups
North Region	Thunder Bay	May 20, 2015	All stakeholder groups
Central Region	North Cambridge	June 15, 2015	All stakeholder groups
East Region	Kingston	June 16, 2015	All stakeholder groups
East Region	Ottawa (Aboriginal)	June 17, 2015	Aboriginal focus and includes Inuit partners
East Region	Ottawa	June 18, 2015	All stakeholder groups
North Region	North Bay	June 22, 2015	All stakeholder groups
North Region	Sudbury	June 23, 2015	All stakeholder groups
Toronto Region	Downtown Toronto	June 26, 2015	All stakeholder groups
East Region	Ottawa (French)	June 29, 2015	Francophone focus
Central Region	Newmarket	July 3, 2015	All stakeholder groups

Region	Roundtable Locations	Dates	Target Partner/ Stakeholder Group(s)
West Region	London	July 6, 2015	Aboriginal focus and includes Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians and Independent First Nations
West Region	London	July 7, 2015	All stakeholder groups
West Region	Windsor	July 8, 2015	All stakeholder groups
Central Region	Orillia	July 9, 2015	Individuals with lived experience
North Region	Kenora	July 14, 2015	Aboriginal focus and includes Ontario Native Women's Association
Toronto Region	Toronto	July 15, 2015	Dedicated roundtable with Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
Toronto Region	Toronto	July 16, 2015	Dedicated roundtable with Métis Nation of Ontario
North Region	Sudbury	July 21, 2015	Aboriginal focus and includes Union of Ontario Indians
North Region	Thunder Bay	July 23, 2015	Dedicated roundtable with Nishnawbe Aski Nation
Central Region	Toronto	July 27, 2015	All stakeholder groups
North Region	Moosonee	Aug. 5, 2015	All stakeholder groups
North Region	Kenora	Aug. 20, 2015	Dedicated roundtable with Grand Council of Treaty #3
East Region	Durham	Aug. 21, 2015	All stakeholder groups



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Ontario needs a cross-government and coordinated FASD strategy that builds on existing programs, services and strategies."*



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Many have heard of FASD but they only have a superficial level of understanding of what it is."*



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"There is so much shame and stigma associated with FASD. People do not want to admit there was maternal drinking."*

## Participant Feedback

### What We Heard: Awareness and Prevention

#### The general public does not understand FASD

In Ontario, there is growing awareness about the risks of alcohol use in pregnancy and the specific consequences for the baby. However, participants were quick to point out that there is little awareness about the harm that can be done by consuming alcohol in pregnancy, even small amounts.

TV, radio, social media and public announcements were the most commonly suggested communications methods for FASD awareness campaigns. Participants also mentioned that messaging must be positive and should not blame women or mothers. Messaging should also emphasize the strengths of those living with the disorder.

#### Working to eliminate the stigma of FASD

Birth mothers of children with FASD face overwhelming stigma. Participants told us that these women often feel guilt, shame, and embarrassment from knowing that prenatal alcohol exposure caused lifelong problems to their own children. The stigma surrounding FASD is a major reason why some people living with the disorder and their families and caregivers may avoid diagnosis and seeking help within their community and health or social care systems. We learned that many adoptive and foster parents of children with FASD also deal with stigma.

We heard that "it is time to change the message". Participants suggested that FASD be communicated as a brain injury with lifelong challenges and a range of possible "secondary" behavioural symptoms.

## FASD awareness strategies are not targeting high risk groups

Participants told us the general public thinks that FASD only affects those of a certain socio-economic status. Participants also believe that FASD awareness strategies in Ontario are not doing a good job of reaching groups at risk for FASD. High risk groups for FASD extend to social drinkers, people with addictions or mental health issues, and sexually active youth.

- Participants identified college and university students as a high risk group due to their propensity for engaging in high risk behaviours, including binge drinking and having unsafe sex while drinking. Some participants believed that FASD awareness and prevention education could be most effective if it became a mandatory part of post-secondary orientation week programs.
- Participants identified professional women in their 30's as another high risk group not being targeted by FASD awareness campaigns. Similarly, FASD awareness strategies do not often target men and partners—even though they can have significant influence helping mothers avoid consuming alcohol while pregnant.
- Participants told us that women struggling with alcohol and substance abuse require a more complex, cross-sectoral response to help them change their alcohol and substance use patterns.
- Participants also said that FASD awareness strategies should be extended to individuals affected by FASD.

## FASD awareness should be taught as early as possible in schools

“Start early—before they reach high school” was a resounding theme we heard at the roundtables. Many participants feel the Ontario school curriculum does not include a robust FASD awareness component. Participants believe that teaching students about FASD will help prevent the spread of misinformation, raise awareness, and lower the stigma and bullying associated with individuals affected by the disorder.

- At the elementary level, participants feel that FASD education could take on a greater role in the health and sexual education, and continue on through high school. We also heard that FASD education should be available in college and university.
- Participants also told us that educators require more information, resources and teaching strategies to better support students with FASD. One way participants said this could be addressed is by improving communication between health providers and the education system. Another way is by building customized programs, services and supports for students with FASD.
- We heard that as some children do not go through the Ontario's publicly funded education system, FASD awareness should be taught in federal schools, in communities, and in independent schools (like First Nations schools).



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*“We need to educate both women and men on the dangers of drinking during pregnancy—and the need for using effective birth control if alcohol is being consumed.”*



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*“I’m so afraid to send my son to high school because he does not have the necessary support in place. And without these supports, he is at risk of getting involved with the wrong crowd.”*



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Awareness campaigns should not be targeted just to pregnant women. They need to be targeted to all women of childbearing age and their partners."*



### DIGGING DEEPER: SANDY'S LAW

Click [Sandy's Law](#) to read more about the Liquor License Act requiring certain premises to post signs warning women that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause FASD.

### We need to build on existing FASD awareness campaigns

Participants identified FASD awareness campaigns in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Alaska, France, the United States, Australia and Sweden. Participants stated that there is "no sense reinventing the wheel". They encouraged the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to look at these campaigns to learn best practices that may be leveraged in Ontario. For example:

- **"Baby Bump" Campaign:** In 2014, LCBO partnered with FASworld Canada to promote the "Baby Bump Campaign" in stores from August 25 to September 12. The goal of the campaign was to help raise awareness about FASD and to promote alcohol-free pregnancy. Virtually all the roundtable participants had seen the Baby Bump FASD awareness posters at a liquor store. Participant opinions with respect to the effectiveness of the campaign varied. Some felt the campaign was effective. Others felt it sent the wrong message and that negative awareness campaigns should be discouraged as they have been shown not to be effective.
- **"Think Before You Drink" Campaign:** Many participants also suggested that we leverage existing campaigns, like: Halton Region's "Think Before You Drink" campaign, Best Start "Healthy Baby, Healthy Brain" campaign, the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS) campaign, and the Families Affected by FASD "Red Shoes Rock" campaign. Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was another successful campaign mentioned by participants.
- **"Bell Let's Talk" Campaign:** One participant spoke of a TV commercial where a celebrity talked about depression and mental health—and suggested we do the same for FASD.
- **FASD Warnings:** Participants told us that signage in restaurants, bars and clubs, warning about alcohol use in pregnancy, do work. We heard that many places do not have the warning posters up, or that the posters were not visible or that the signage needs to be updated. We also heard about how pregnancy tests have been made available in some women's washrooms in bars in Alaska. Participants suggested that more efforts could be made to place FASD warnings and labels on: alcohol bottles, contraceptive packages, within liquor stores, and at restaurants (in addition to, or to expand on, Sandy's Law). Negative campaigns should also be discouraged.

## There are many effective FASD awareness programs in Ontario

Government programs—like **(Aboriginal) Healthy Babies Healthy Children**, **Best Start** and the **Aboriginal Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Child Nutrition Program**—are effective programs for sharing information about FASD and educating individuals on the dangers of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

- **(Aboriginal) Healthy Babies Healthy Children** provides screening and assessment for infants and young children and gives direction to new parents, supports and help finding community programs.
- **Best Start** is a trusted resource for maternal and newborn developmental health providing multi-media resources, consultations and workshops to people across Ontario.
- The **Aboriginal Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Child Nutrition Program** provides information, family support and activities related to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, offers educational opportunities to the broader community about the dangers of alcohol use during pregnancy, and organizes activities that focus on healthy nutrition.

Participants also spoke very highly of many community-based programs in Ontario, including:

- The **Parent Child Assistance Program** is a home visitation case-management model for mothers who abuse alcohol or drugs during pregnancy.
- Mothercraft's **Breaking the Cycle** program is an early identification and prevention program that enhances the outcomes of alcohol/substance-exposed children by addressing maternal addiction problems and the mother-child relationship through a community based cross-systemic model.



### DIGGING DEEPER: BEST START

Click [Best Start](#) to learn more about the Ontario government's Best Start plan for child care, early learning and healthy development.





## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"A diagnosis can provide greater understanding and acceptance. It can also result in more realistic expectations and contribute to positive outcomes."*



## DIGGING DEEPER: WHERE DO YOU GO TO GET DIAGNOSED?

[FASD ONE: List of Diagnostic Services in Ontario](#)



## DIGGING DEEPER: FASD GUIDELINES

Review them here:  
[FASD: Canadian Guidelines for Diagnosis](#)



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Ontario needs provincial standards for screening assessment and diagnosis."*

## What We Heard: Screening, Assessment and Diagnosis

### We should screen for FASD as early as we can

Participants suggested that early post-natal screening take place before the child is six years of age. They also suggested that a teacher, day care worker or social worker could easily screen for FASD in children. We heard that in most instances, once the child is formally diagnosed with FASD, he or she can be linked to a number of beneficial FASD school programs, counseling services and community-based programs. These early interventions will help support the individual and reduce secondary symptoms that are often displayed in individuals with FASD, including: mental health problems, inappropriate behaviours, alcohol and drug abuse, and problems with the law.

### A diagnosis can help provide greater understanding and acceptance

Stigma and fear of judgment are the main reasons why women will not disclose to healthcare providers that they drank during their pregnancy. The stigma also prevents individuals from obtaining an FASD diagnosis to access the supports they so desperately need. We heard participants say that a diagnosis is the first step in changing minds and attitudes. A diagnosis can help a person understand that the underlying cause of their issues is a permanent disability. In addition, when others are trained and educated to understand FASD, they will know how to alter their own behaviour towards an individual with FASD in a positive way.

### FASD diagnostic clinics and Canadian guidelines

There are 14 diagnostic clinics in Ontario; most of these clinics diagnose children for FASD, not adults. Each diagnostic clinic provides FASD screening, assessment and diagnostic services by a multi-disciplinary team. We learned that a number of community and grassroots organizations are collaborating with the clinics to improve accessibility to Ontarians requiring FASD screening, assessment and diagnostic services.

Revised evidence-based guidelines for FASD screening, assessment and diagnosis will be released in the fall of 2015. Participants hope that the guidelines will be mandated and used by all health and social services organizations to ensure consistency in the screening, assessment and diagnosis process, and to reduce the risk of misdiagnosis.

### There are many barriers to screening, assessment and diagnosis

Participants identified the following barriers that need to be overcome to meet the needs of people with FASD, their families and caregivers, and communities:

- **Confirmation of Maternal Alcohol Consumption During Pregnancy is Required to Obtain an FASD Diagnosis:** To get an FASD diagnosis in Ontario, the mother herself does not necessarily need to disclose that she consumed alcohol during her pregnancy; however, there does need to be confirmation by a reliable source (father, grandmother, family members, etc.) that there was alcohol use during pregnancy. The stigma and fear of judgment are reasons that women may not disclose to healthcare providers or others that they drank during their pregnancy. In addition, adults who potentially have FASD may not be able to obtain the corroboration necessary to confirm their mother consumed alcohol while pregnant. Participants suggested a possible solution is to introduce neuro-behavioural testing during pre- and post-natal screening, or to perform meconium testing at birth.
- **Travel and Associated Costs:** Many people with FASD living in remote communities must travel great distances to access screening, assessment and diagnostic services. We heard that the travel expenses and the cost to perform the neuro-developmental assessment may not be covered by insurance. First Nations and Inuit people who live on-reserve are not covered under the federally funded Non-Insured Health Benefits Program. Participants suggested that alternative service models be used to improve access, including: the Ontario Telemedicine Network, Tele-Mental Health, Tele-Psychiatry, and mobile or portable clinics.
- **Lack of Culturally Appropriate Services:** We heard that screening tools are often not culturally appropriate, or do not reflect the diversity of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal peoples or other cultures in Ontario.
- **Wait Lists and the Duration of the Process:** Participants told us that they often have to wait a long period of time to get an FASD assessment at one of Ontario's 14 diagnostic clinics. To improve accessibility, participants suggested we expand assessment criteria and open more diagnostic centres, particularly in the North and in remote communities.
- **Lack of Trained Professionals to Provide an Accurate Diagnosis:** Participants highlighted the need for more trained speech language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists and other health care providers in Ontario who specialize in FASD screening, assessment and diagnostic services. In addition, we heard that professionals need to be trained to support families and caregivers during, and after, the diagnosis.

### Physicians, health care providers and social workers play a critical role in screening for alcohol use

Participants said that many health care providers and social services providers avoid asking their clients and patients questions about drinking patterns and habits. "Ask all mothers if they consumed alcohol during their pregnancy"—participants felt this is a message that all health care providers and social services workers should be trained to ask without judgment or offence. When the questions are asked, we heard that it is not always done in a manner that is culturally appropriate for some groups.



#### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Individuals with FASD need to be supported with programs and services even if they do not have a diagnosis."*



#### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Once a diagnosis is given, then what? There is a lack of programs, services and transitions after diagnosis."*



#### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Too many individuals with FASD have been misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all."*



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"You can get wrap-around for one year, or respite for six weeks—but FASD is a lifelong disability."*



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Parents need to be advocates; they need to share their stories in order to raise awareness."*



## DIGGING DEEPER: FASD AND ONTARIO'S JUSTICE SYSTEM

FASD among the inmate population may be 28 times higher than in the general population.

Youth with FASD are 19 times more likely to be confined in a young offender's facility than their non-affected peers.

[FASD ONE – FASD and Justice: Summary of Activity in Ontario](#)



## DIGGING DEEPER: FASD RESOURCES

[FASlink](#)

[Strongest Families](#)

[FASD ONE](#)

[Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health](#)



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"There are no supports for seniors with FASD."*

## What We Heard: Programs, Services and Supports

People with FASD and their families and caregivers need lifelong support

Across Ontario, there is a network of FASD research organizations and community outreach programs that provide invaluable support to people with FASD and their families and caregivers. The following programs are making a difference to people living with FASD:

- **Reach For It**, the **Compass Program**, **Big Brothers-Big Sisters**, **Aboriginal FASD/Child Nutrition Program**, **Healthy Babies, (Aboriginal) Healthy Children**, **Camp Unity** and Mother Craft's **Breaking the Cycle** are just a few well-established programs offering supports and services for those with FASD.
- **Respite** is another support program mentioned in the roundtable sessions. Respite provides temporary support to parents and caregivers who need a break. It can help decrease the stress of raising a child with FASD.
- Outside of Ontario, some participants pointed to the British Columbia **FASD Key Worker Program**, which provides a specialized family support worker to enhance support of children and youth, families and caregivers, parents and families affected by FASD.
- The **Choice Program** from the United States was also cited as an example of a well-established program that helps at-risk youth build resiliency by promoting protective factors to mitigate risk in their daily lives.
- **Youth Justice Diversion Programs** divert youth affected by FASD who have committed a "less serious" criminal offense from the court system into the community for rehabilitation. While participants applaud these supports, many commented that it is too bad that many of the FASD programs and supports are not readily available to adults in the justice system.
- As is so often the case, the best experts are those who live with, or care for, someone with FASD—and **support groups and networks** in Ontario make good use of this first-hand resource.
- A number of evidence-based **information resources** have also been developed. Some are community, population or sector specific, while others are for the general public. Examples mentioned at the roundtables include: the **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Information Network**—an online resource that gives insight into the family and caregiver perspective of living with the disorder; the **Strongest Families FASD Parent Training Program**—a pilot study to develop an internet-based program for families and caregivers; **FASD ONE's diagnostic resources**—resources that provides information about FASD assessment and screening best practices in Ontario; and the **Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health**—which provides educational programming for Aboriginal families on child nutrition and FASD.
- Many parents and caregivers want to ensure their children with FASD are taken care of in later years. For adults affected by FASD, access and availability to employment services, affordable housing, and financial supports that have the flexibility to accommodate the unique needs of individuals with FASD will go a long way to providing the necessary lifelong supports for people with the disability.

## Services need to be tailored to the person with FASD

FASD has a spectrum of symptoms. As a result, participants told us that FASD programs and services are most effective when they are tailored to the person with FASD.

- We heard that FASD services are often provided based on an individual's chronological age. Participants feel it would be more effective if services were provided based on the individual's developmental age.
- For many people with FASD and their families and caregivers, there is a need to have programs, services and supports available outside of the normal business hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We heard from many families and caregivers that there is very little to no immediate crisis supports. Many participants stressed that this issue could be addressed by introducing 24/7 supports for specific services to assist individuals living with FASD and their families and caregivers during times of need for immediate assistance.
- We heard from participants that families and caregivers either do not have access to sufficient respite supports. The availability of respite varies across the province and some families have access while others do not. Some families and caregivers choose not to access respite because there is a lack of trained workers who do not have the experience to work with an individual with FASD. The need for respite increases when the individual with FASD completes school and, in particular, if there are no alternative programs or activities in place (e.g., postsecondary education, work, day activities). We also heard from families that one of the biggest supports they have is when their child is supported in the school system. Many families and caregivers indicated that school is a form of respite that provides them with a temporary break and allows them to focus on other areas of their lives.
- Many parents at the roundtables voiced their frustrations with Ontario's service system. They indicated that the system is fragmented and not responsive to the needs of individuals with FASD. We learned that many people with FASD who are particularly vulnerable (e.g., homeless, suffering from addictions, or are in the justice system) cannot access current programs, services and supports. Integration and communication are key factors in helping people navigate the FASD care continuum. Participants suggested a multi-disciplinary approach would improve communications between the health, social services and the education systems.
- Families and caregivers often worry that services may be taken away when their child is "doing well". Some service providers do not understand that the services are needed 24/7.



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"The one-size-fits-all approach does not work with individuals living with FASD."*



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Parents and caregivers cannot take all the burden with no supports. We need respite services."*



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"I want my child to have the appropriate supports and services in school so that he can succeed."*



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*“Every agency should have at least one person who is knowledgeable about FASD.”*

### Communities need access to more FASD supports

The programs, services and supports that are available to people with FASD vary across the province. Supply of these services is not keeping up with demand in many Ontario communities.

- We heard that when a service provider with knowledge in FASD leaves a rural or remote community, the knowledge leaves with them. To fill the service gap, health care providers must fly in a few times a year to provide FASD specialized services because these services are not available locally.
- Participants mentioned that building community capacity to meet the needs of the individuals affected by FASD is key to ensuring the programs, services and supports we develop are equitable and culturally appropriate.
- It is also important to understand that each community has its own unique circumstances and realities that must be taken into consideration when developing programs, services and supports. For example, while providing services through alternative models (like the Ontario Telemedicine Network and mobile supports) may improve access, participants told us that we should keep in mind that some communities prefer a person-to-person service delivery method.
- Participants suggested that a regional hub model—providing access to training, multidisciplinary teams and system navigators who can leverage the Ontario Telemedicine Network and mobile supports—would help build community expertise.

### There is a need for additional funding for FASD supports

The consensus among participants is that cases of FASD in Ontario are most likely under-reported. This under-reporting suggests that there is a greater need for additional funding for FASD programs, services and supports.

Participants pointed out that this lack of funding also contributes to gaps in service, especially in cases whereby the funding is only short-term. It was suggested that long-term funding be committed for FASD services, even if it means fewer programs are funded. Participants also called for more funding for respite services so that families and caregivers have the supports they need to cope with the stress that can be experienced when raising a child with FASD. Additional funding should also be provided for the development of programs, services and supports geared to adults and seniors who do not have family support.

# What We Heard: Training for Front-Line Staff and Professionals

All front-line staff and professionals would benefit from FASD training

FASD is a sensitive topic for families and caregivers living with the disorder. This often makes it difficult for many front-line staff and professionals to talk about FASD with their clients. Many say they do not want to stigmatize the birth mother, her family and caregivers, or the child.

Participants emphasized the need for front-line staff to be trained to communicate with individuals with FASD and their families while: limiting judgment, acting with empathy and managing the family's grief, anger and denial.

Below is a list of the groups, as identified by participants during the roundtable sessions, which should be the primary audiences for mandatory training on FASD. It includes the most commonly suggested groups, all of whom have an impact on the life of an individual with FASD and their family and caregivers.

## Family/Caregivers/ Foster Parents

### Health Care Providers

- Doctors/Obstetricians/  
Gynecologists
- Nurses/Nurse Practitioners
- Psychologists/  
Neuropsychologists
- Midwives
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Therapists
- First Responders

### Social Service Providers

- Therapists
- Child Welfare Workers
- Case Workers
- Social Workers

## Educators

- Childcare Workers
- Teachers
- Principals/Directors
- Education Assistants
- Early Childhood Educators

## Justice System

- Police
- Lawyers
- Judges
- Probation Officers
- Corrections Officers
- Court Workers

## Other

- Employers
- Landlords
- Financial Managers/  
Bank Employees



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"It is difficult for service providers to ask a woman whether she drinks alcohol."*





## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Service providers are often unaware of the daily struggles of individuals living with FASD and their families and caregivers."*

### FASD training needs to be broad in scope

Participants agreed most people do not understand that people with FASD have brain damage. Participants told us that:

- There should be a **consistent level of training** across all front-line staff so there is a common understanding that FASD is a spectrum disorder that affects individuals differently.
- Front-line staff should be trained to **recognize the possible symptoms of FASD** including: behavioural issues, sensitivity to sensory stimulation and learning disabilities.
- Front-line staff should be trained in **effective strategies** on how to support individuals with FASD.
- There is a lack of **consistent information being delivered by front-line workers and professionals** to clients about the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. We heard that training should emphasize this FASD message: There is no safe amount, no safe time, and no safe type of alcohol can be consumed during pregnancy.

Training should also include information about strategies, programs, services and supports available in Ontario to support people with FASD and their families and caregivers and participants stressed that ongoing training is paramount to translating the most current FASD research thinking and best practices to front-line support workers.

## There are many ways to deliver FASD training

When asked what methods of training are effective, participants suggested:

- **FASD Champions:** In mentorship programs, front-line staff are connected to FASD Champions—who are people with FASD and/or their families and caregivers. This allows for the sharing of lived experience and gives the front-line staff new insight into effectively working with people with FASD. Some individuals with lived experience indicated their interest in becoming a champion, coordinator or advocate for FASD in Ontario.
- **Train-the-Trainer Programs:** Another effective method of training suggested by participants is to have one expert in the community, who has previously received formal training, train other individuals in the community.
- **Professional Training:** FASD is currently included in some professional training curricula, but it is limited. We heard that FASD education and training must also be included in the curricula of professions that work with individuals with FASD and their families and caregivers. Some of these professions are:
  - Doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, first responders and midwives
  - Teachers, principals and teaching assistants
  - Social workers and social services workers
  - Child welfare workers
  - Police, probation officers, lawyers and judges

These professionals have a major role in the awareness and prevention of FASD. FASD education and training will give these professionals a greater understanding of the disability and the programs, services and supports available in Ontario.



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"There needs to be a way to train educators that goes beyond the textbook."*



## What We Heard: Evidence-Based Service Delivery Models

### People with FASD need consistency of care throughout their lives

Participants were asked what supports do people with FASD need to better access FASD programs, services and supports.

- **Case Coordinator:** Participants agreed that it is important to have a case coordinator or support worker to help people with FASD navigate the system on a consistent basis. Individuals affected by FASD have indicated that having a champion, coordinator, or advocate with lived experience would be helpful for others living with FASD. We also heard that we should build on the existing Special Needs Strategy—in particular the coordinated service planning processes and the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services.
- **One-Stop Source:** Participants described the difficulties people with FASD encounter in their daily lives—and how these difficulties are compounded as they try to navigate the FASD continuum of care. Participants said it would be extremely helpful if there was a one-stop, 24/7 source where they could go to get up-to-date and accurate information about FASD services and supports. Participants suggested that the province could build on an existing website or 1-800 number. A similar information source exists in Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta.
- **No Wrong Door:** The idea of a “No Wrong Door” is a notion mentioned by participants. People with FASD and their families and caregivers will always be given or directed to the appropriate services they need. This may involve referrals to other organizations, collaboration, or connection to a navigator to access appropriate programs, services and supports.



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*“I struggle every day and worry about what will happen to my child when I am no longer around.”*

### People with FASD need help transitioning from child to adult public support services

Adults with FASD face tremendous challenges and are an underserved population. Participants explained that adults with FASD have fewer services available to them. We heard from participants about the need for better transition processes from the children services system to the adult services system. Families voiced their concerns about their child moving into the adult sector in particular because there is no transition planning or supports available. We learned that in Ontario, many support services that help children with FASD are no longer available once the child reaches the age of 18. Families and caregivers must apply for adult support services. This can be a very frustrating and stressful experience because families have to tell their story again, it is a new and unfamiliar process—and there is no guarantee that helpful services will be available.

## Measuring Success – What Would it Look Like?

Participants were asked to provide the measures of success for a provincial FASD strategy. Despite the varying participant backgrounds, the majority of the responses followed these themes:

- **Reduction of the Prevalence of FASD:** We will know that an FASD strategy is successful when we see a reduction in the prevalence of FASD. This would mean that there is a greater awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol while pregnant and prevention efforts are successfully reaching Ontarians.
- **Services are More Accessible:** A successful FASD strategy will address the lack of accessible services for remote communities and for people living in urban centres. Efforts to increase capacity, to better integrate services, to leverage the Ontario Telemedicine Network, and to improve navigation will lead to improved programs, services and supports that are more accessible to people with FASD and their families and caregivers.
- **Increased Capacity to Diagnose FASD:** We will know an FASD strategy is successful when we see sufficient diagnostic clinics in the province, trained professionals to do the diagnosis, a decrease in the number of misdiagnoses—and there will no longer be a wait list for individuals waiting to be diagnosed.
- **Fewer People with FASD within the Justice System:** Due to lack of screening, lack of transition supports and general lack of advocacy, many people with FASD end up in the justice system. We will know that an FASD strategy is successful when we have fewer people with FASD entering the justice system—as well as more supports for people with FASD already within the justice system.
- **Reducing Stigma:** The negative opinion that many people have towards FASD has been detrimental to the improvement of FASD awareness, prevention, programs, services and supports in Ontario. Reducing stigma towards FASD would be a major success factor of an FASD strategy.
- **Live a Successful Life:** With adequate programs, services and supports in place, individuals with FASD will be able to lead a successful life within their community. They will have the basic requirements like housing and employment, or access to money, along with all the unique social, psychological and health supports required. The result will be a lower level of stress on individuals with FASD, their families and caregivers.
- **Better Data on FASD:** An FASD strategy will create the necessary systems to monitor FASD prevalence in Ontario. Some participants felt that an FASD diagnosis code in the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) could help us obtain statistics on the prevalence of FASD in Ontario. This data could then help inform our targeted prevention efforts. In addition, participants believe that physicians would be more likely to assess FASD if a billing code existed.



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"I am a student at a community college and my disability counsellor really understands me and helps me."*



### **DIGGING DEEPER: ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY**

Ontario is developing an [Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy](#) in collaboration with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal partners to improve outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal children and youth by transforming the way that services are designed and delivered.



### **DIGGING DEEPER: ABORIGINAL FASD/CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM (CNP)**

The Aboriginal FASD/CNP is delivered to 180 Aboriginal communities both on- and off-reserve.

Front-line workers provide healthy lifestyle education, personal support and traditional cultural activities that promote FASD prevention and healthy nutrition.

Program staff produce community resource materials and offer professional development training on prevention/ intervention to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social service providers, educators, justice and medical personnel.



### **IN THEIR OWN VOICES**

*“Services and service delivery need to be developed using the traditions and culture of Aboriginal people.”*

## **Population-Specific Considerations**

We engaged with First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal partners and Francophone community through a number of dedicated roundtables. The feedback we received echoed many of the same themes and issues raised at the other roundtables. Below are additional comments that were uniquely voiced by First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Aboriginal partners and the Francophone community.

### **What We Heard: First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Aboriginal Perspectives**

#### **We must acknowledge the history and trauma of Aboriginal People**

Participants stressed the need for sensitivity and understanding of the impacts of history on the present state and the challenges of Aboriginal children, youth, and their families. Aboriginal communities continue to be affected by, and are recovering from, the intergenerational impacts of historical assimilationist policies and program approaches. These approaches removed children from their families and communities, and resulted in the loss of cultural connections and traditional child-rearing practices (e.g., *Indian Act*; forced relocations of Inuit families in northern Canada).

The resulting intergenerational effects emerge as socio-economic challenges for children, youth, and families—including high levels of addictions and substance misuse, mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress and suicides, loss of traditional parenting skills, and loss of attachment and pride in cultural identities, traditional ceremonies and governance systems.

#### **Culturally-based and culturally-specific FASD support services**

Cultural knowledge building and retention of culture are essential for Aboriginal people in developing positive self-esteem and pride in their identities. Participants mentioned that culturally-based and culturally-specific programs, services and supports that are preventative, family-centred, holistic and strength-based are needed to support those affected by FASD. Programs, services and supports also need to be available in the language of the specific community. Participants said service providers should be trained to work with Aboriginal children, youth, adults, families and caregivers, and communities.

### FASD programs, services and supports: designed and delivered by Aboriginal People, for Aboriginal People

We heard from participants that enhanced Aboriginal control over service design, delivery and system governance is key to improving outcomes. Participants said that Aboriginal communities and organizations are best positioned to understand and determine the needs of their own communities. In addition, it was noted that greater control by First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Aboriginal peoples to develop and deliver culturally appropriate programs, services and supports will promote family preservation and cultural connection.

Some First Nations participants told us that the provincial and federal governments need to resolve issues of jurisdiction and funding so that FASD programs, services and supports can be made available both on- and off-reserve.

### Northern and remote communities need better access to FASD services

Participants said that funding additional FASD diagnostic clinics in the northern and remote communities will minimize the cost of travel. Increasing service capacity will also limit the disruption and sense of disconnection many feel when traveling outside their communities to get the help they need. This also applies to building capacity within communities to provide FASD programs, services and supports.

### Aboriginal communities support culturally appropriate, evidence-based FASD programs and supports

This includes supporting research and evaluation developed by Aboriginal people for their communities to measure the effectiveness of these programs, services, supports and resources. In addition, we heard the need to track progress through culturally and contextually appropriate monitoring, and evaluation approaches, including data collection to measure the prevalence of FASD in Aboriginal communities in Ontario.

### We need to continue the conversation as the provincial FASD strategy is developed

Continuing the conversation will assist in improving relationships and partnerships between Ontario and First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Aboriginal partners. Successful implementation of actions under an FASD strategy is contingent on an ongoing commitment and partnership. An FASD strategy responds to the diversity within and among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and communities in terms of histories, and priorities, and approaches to family care.



#### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"To ensure that FASD supports are culturally and linguistically appropriate, there needs to be self-determination and development from the grassroots; not, 'here it is, now adapt to it'."*



#### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Aboriginal peoples understand the needs of our communities better than anyone else."*



#### DIGGING DEEPER: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA: CALLS TO ACTION

[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) has called on all governments to recognize FASD as a high priority and to develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, culturally appropriate FASD preventive programs.



## IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"We want to design and deliver our own programs, services and supports for our communities."*

### What We Heard: The Francophone Perspective

#### There is a negative view towards FASD in Francophone communities

We heard that the stigma associated with FASD prevents some Francophones with FASD and their families and caregivers to reach out for help. In smaller communities, some families are reluctant to access programs, services and supports because of their connections in the community and concerns with privacy and confidentiality.

#### Culturally appropriate FASD supports are required in French

Often times, Francophone workers have to adapt an existing program on their own, or they simply cannot offer programming. In addition, screening, assessment and diagnosis tools are not culturally appropriate for the Francophone community. French speaking Ontarians have also indicated that often media is translated from English to French without being conscious of the differences between Québécois and French speaking Ontarians. Participants told us that FASD campaigns, programs, services and supports should be created by Francophones for Francophones.

#### More evidence-based research and data collection is required to support the Francophone community

Participants told us that Francophones affected by FASD do not participate in research studies. As a result, the long-term impact of FASD within the Francophone community is not fully understood. This lack of data also makes it challenging to provide culturally appropriate FASD programs, services and supports to individuals living with FASD, their families and caregivers in the Francophone community.

## Observations and Reflections

The roundtables have been a journey into FASD and the rich diversity of Ontario, from Moosonee to Windsor. Each time we came together, we each brought our own unique perspectives with us: families, caregivers, health care providers, affected individuals, social service providers, educators; they all came and shared their stories with us.

The roundtables strived to be inclusive of every individual affected by FASD. What we learned from each other will most certainly play a significant role in the formation of an FASD strategy—and yet it also enhanced each of us personally. For me, these roundtables afforded a privilege that few are able to experience. I am grateful for this opportunity to listen and learn from the many voices across this province. As I reflect back on this experience, I would like to share some of my observations:

### Support for an FASD strategy is high

Without exception, there is a great demand for an integrated Ontario FASD strategy. Participants have waited a long time for action, and they are very pleased to see that the provincial government is moving forward with an FASD strategy.

### The people of Ontario are not aware of FASD

Awareness was an overarching theme I heard throughout the sessions. The effects of this range from: increased prevalence of FASD, to misinformation fueling the stigma around FASD that is felt by individuals with the disability and their families and caregivers. Sadly, this stigma continues to be perpetuated, highlighting the importance and need for raising awareness of FASD.

### We need to start talking about FASD

There is a need to broaden FASD awareness campaigns to target the public in the hopes of preventing new cases—while removing the stigma for people currently affected by FASD. We need to start talking about FASD and how we can decrease its prevalence in Ontario.

### FASD prevention efforts are needed

FASD prevention work is complex. It involves more than providing information about the risk of alcohol use during pregnancy. It also includes discussion of alcohol use, specialized holistic support for pregnant women with alcohol and other health and social issues, as well as postpartum support for new mothers and their children. These supports contribute to improving women's health and reduce the risk of having a child affected by FASD.

### There are many effective programs and services we can leverage

I learned of many effective programs and services available in Ontario that are helping people with FASD. These need to be leveraged and better supported to improve outcomes for individuals affected by FASD. For example, we could build on the success of the following initiatives: the Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy, the Special Needs Strategy, the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, and the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.



### IN THEIR OWN VOICES

*"Without a provincial strategy, individuals with FASD are falling through the cracks."*



### It is time to break down the silos and collaborate

From our many conversations, it is clearly high time to break down the silos that are limiting our success in helping those with FASD. I heard silos exist between sectors such as health, justice, education and social service, as well as between organizations and ministries. An FASD system does not yet exist, and what we do have is fragmented. I believe that FASD programs, services and supports need to be supported by an appropriate accountability structure and funding model.

### We need to help people who need it

Who needs our help? I learned that there are certain high risk groups that are falling through the system, including: adults and seniors with FASD, people who live in rural and remote locations, and people who speak different languages or are part of a different culture. Participants were supportive of an FASD strategy that took a holistic approach to expanding programs, services and supports to all high risk groups.

### Needs are not being met

It is a commonly held opinion that there is not enough support overall for individuals affected by FASD and their families and caregivers. Participants highlighted the lack of capacity, supports and/or funding for awareness and prevention, screening and diagnosis, programs, services and supports, training, and effective delivery of services. I heard that the delivery of FASD programs, services and supports must reflect and respect the differences and diversity within and across Ontario communities.

### Care is required across the life span

Although programs, services and supports exist, many are not available to adults and seniors and there is little support for transition between what programs, services and supports there are.

### There is a huge need for earlier diagnosis

In addition to the lack of screening, there is a huge need for early diagnosis to address the extra support needed for children with FASD before they enter the education system.

### We need to move forward in a measured way

Finally, we need to evaluate the impact of programs, services and supports new and old—and the prevalence of FASD—to ensure we steer our planning efforts in the right direction.

Thank you to all who participated on this stage of the journey. As the roundtables have come to a close, our collective efforts now begin to pick up steam as we address the comments, feedback, insights, and every day realities that participants shared with us. While there is much work left to do, I do know that together, we will be there—leading, learning, innovating, creating and achieving. Together, we will help people affected by FASD grow and be the best version of themselves.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Chudley, A. E., Conry, J., Cook, J. L., Looock, C., Rosales, T., & LeBlanc, N. (2005). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: Canadian guidelines for diagnosis. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 172(5), 1-21.
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- <sup>3</sup> Popova, S., Lange, S., Burd, L., & Rehm, J. (2015, February). The Burden and Economic Impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Canada. Retrieved from [http://www.camh.ca/en/research/news\\_and\\_publications/reports\\_and\\_books/Documents/Burden\\_and\\_Eco\\_Costs\\_FASD\\_Feb\\_2015.pdf](http://www.camh.ca/en/research/news_and_publications/reports_and_books/Documents/Burden_and_Eco_Costs_FASD_Feb_2015.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Thanh, N.X., E. Jonsson, J. Kogan, and P. Jacobs. "Cost of FASD." Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Management and Policy Perspectives of FASD. 1st ed. Weinheim: Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co KGaA, 2011. Print.
- <sup>5</sup> Streissguth, A., Barr, H., Kogan, J., & Bookstein, F. (1996). Understanding the occurrence of secondary disabilities in clients with FAS and FAE: Final report to the centers for disease control and prevention. 96-106: University of Washington, Fetal Alcohol and Drug Unit.







D-1 (a)  
Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC  
Schedule of Meetings

All meetings will be held on Thursday nights at 6:00 p.m.

2021-22 Meeting Dates	Location
September 16, 2021	
October 21, 2021	
November 18, 2021	
December 9, 2021 OR December 16, 2021	
January 20, 2022	
February 17, 2022	
March 10, 2022 OR March 24, 2022	
April 21, 2022	
May 19, 2022	
June 16, 2022	



# Anxiety Tip Sheet for Primary & Junior Educators

## *SUCCESS* for Every Student

Anxiety is a normal emotion experience by children, youth and adults. Anxiety is our body's reaction to perceived danger or stressful life events. It alerts us to threats, protects us from danger and can help us reach an important goal.

Anxious feelings can result from certain medical conditions, difficulties at home, work or school and/or stressful life events. If a child or youth exhibits prolonged worries or fears, physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, nausea, stomach pains, diarrhea) that are increasing in frequency and intensity, this may be an indication of an Anxiety Disorder. Some common anxiety disorders include General Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety and Separation anxiety. Depending on severity and impact on life, families may need to talk to a physician or mental health professional.

More information and resources on Anxiety can be found at <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>  
For more information on how to support a mentally healthy classroom visit <https://smho-smso.ca/>

### **Noticing Signs of Anxiety Problems**

Anxious feelings are experienced by everyone from time to time. But if feelings of worry become excessive and persistent over a longer period of time these feelings and accompanying thoughts can interfere with a student's wellbeing and ability to learn.

As an educator you are well positioned to notice and support a student who is struggling with anxiety at school. *Anxious students may be quiet and well behaved or (due to fight or flight response) may be disruptive and noncompliant.*

### **Common Signs of Anxiety in Children**

- ✓ Refusal and avoidance of classroom activities
- ✓ Difficulty participating in groups
- ✓ Extreme shyness around peers
- ✓ Complaining of physical symptoms (i.e., stomach pains)
- ✓ Separation Issues

Normal Anxiety	Problem Anxiety
Reasonable	Excessive
Productive	Detrimental
Manageable	Uncontrollable
Focusing	Paralyzing
Specific	Generalized
Time-Limited	Chronic
Age Appropriate	Age Mismatch

# How to Support Students: Managing Anxiety

## Tier 1: Classroom/Educator Support: 'Good for All'

### Who can help?: School CYW & LRT

Be consistent and predictable with your daily classroom routines. Use visual schedules and reminders

Speak in a calm tone. Be reassuring and give feedback that alleviates worries.

Teach feelings vocabulary and stress response or body cues associated with anxiety. (Refer: books & videos)

Teach social-emotional skills to all students and build awareness and understanding.

Model a growth mindset for students. Everyone makes mistakes. View them as a learning process.

Practice and encourage the use of deep breathing exercise in the classroom to help students learn and keep their calm. Have posters that visually describe one or two breathing techniques.

Create a welcome, accepting, inclusive atmosphere in the classroom.

## Tier 2: Targeted Accommodations 'Required for Some' Who can help?: School CYW, LRT, Student's Family

Practice and coach calming and coping strategies.

Range of anxiety related strategies can include:

- Be curious. The student's thoughts and emotions may be intense and heightened but it may be due to real difficulties in learning or maintaining friendships or constant change. Sometimes the fear or worry is unlikely. Either way, the body reacts.
- Ensure expectations are clearly understood
- Have private check-ins. Reinforce positive thoughts, growth mindset, communication and self-advocacy
- Recognize brave behaviour
- Chunk work into manageable tasks
- Accommodate expectations for challenging work/situation rather than avoiding altogether

## Tier 3- Targeted Intervention for an Individual

Who can help? In School Team, Resource Team (depending on individual case)

Support depends on individual case, can include Targeted accommodations to education program, Individual counselling, psychoeducation and support for family/guardian, referral to community mental health agency, involvement of physician.

### Information on Community Services

**Contact Brant:** 519-758-8228

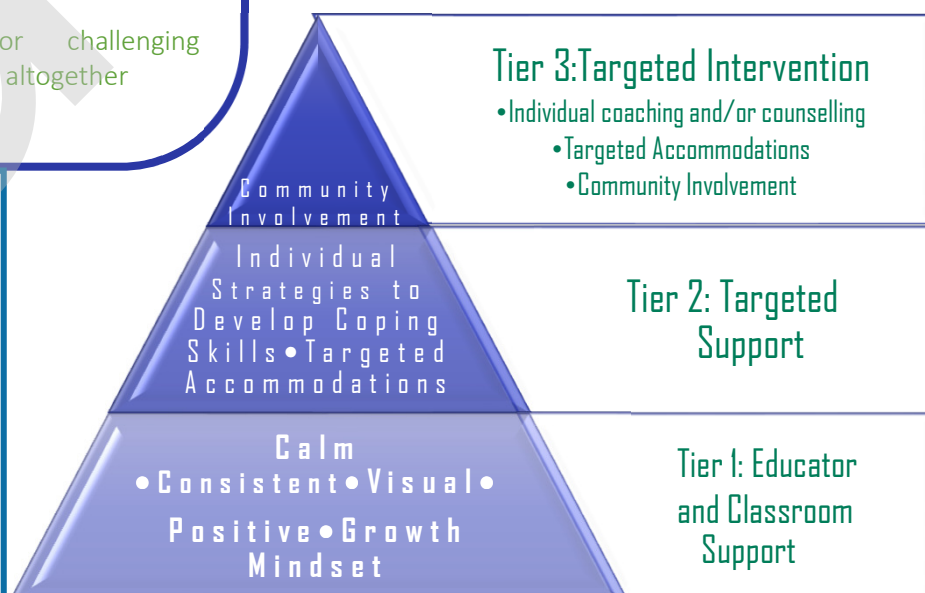
**Haldimand-Norfolk REACH:** 519-587-2441

### Suggested Books and Videos for Educators and Students :

"Ruby Finds a Worry", by Tom Percival  
 "When Worry Takes Hold", by Liz Haske  
 "When My Worries Get Too Big" by Kari Duun Buron  
 "The Worry Box", by Suzanna Chiew

"Fight Flight Freeze- A Guide to Anxiety for Kids"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O5M>





*SUCCESS* for Every Student

**WHAT IS ANXIETY?** Anxiety is a normal emotion experienced by everyone from time to time. It is our body's reaction to perceived danger or stressful life events. Anxiety alerts us to threats, protects us from dangers and helps us reach important goals. Anxiety can impact your body (dizziness, stomachaches, headaches), your thoughts (worry) and your behaviours (fight, flight or freeze).

### **NORMAL FEARS ACROSS AGES AND STAGES**

**Infants:** Stranger Anxiety

**Toddlers:** Separation, Something sudden, intense or new

**Preschool:** Things perceived as large, Harmful, Dark and/or Imaginary

**Elementary:** Dangers related to the world

**Middle Childhood:** Academic, Social, Natural disaster, death

**Adolescence:** non-specific situations/thoughts, relationships, the future

Normal Anxiety	Problem Anxiety
Reasonable	Excessive
Productive	Detrimental
Manageable	Uncontrollable
Focusing	Paralyzing
Specific	Generalized
Time-Limited	Chronic
Age Appropriate	Age Mismatch

SEAC 20-10

# Understanding Anxiety

## Resource for Parents/Caregivers

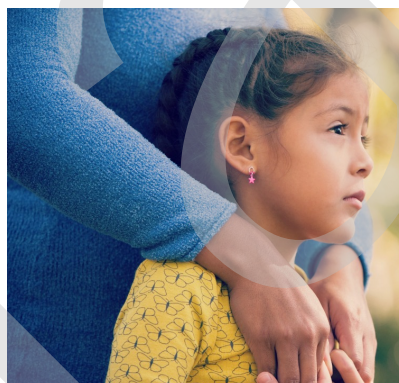
### **WHEN DOES ANXIETY BECOME PROBLEMATIC?**

Anxiety can result from medical conditions, difficulties at home, work, school and stressful life events. When feelings of worry, physical and behavioural symptoms become excessive and persist over a longer period of time and start to interfere with the ability to learn and do everyday activities, this may be an indication of any Anxiety Disorder.

### **Anxiety Disorders include:**

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder or Agoraphobia
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Separation Anxiety
- Social Anxiety

More information on these anxiety disorders can be found at <https://www.anxietycanada.com/learn-about-anxiety/anxiety-in-children/>



The impact of anxiety on learning depends upon severity and other psychosocial & environmental factors.

**On-going communication between school and home is important to ensure that children and youth are developing the academic and social-emotional skills to flourish and achieve their goals.**

### **ANXIETY'S IMPACT ON LEARNING**

- Interferes with concentration, attention, processing and retain and retrieve information.
- Not wanting to demonstrate knowledge in front of the other students (i.e. answering questions and oral presentations).
- May impact on student's ability to participate in classroom discussions, group work, recreational clubs or give presentations.
- May impact social interactions and ability to make and keep friendships
- Can lead to school avoidance and increased absences.
- Can lead to disturbed sleep and feeling tired/fatigued at school
- Children/Youth may struggle to express their thoughts and connecting these thoughts to their behaviours

June 17, 2021

Page 1 of 2

# Understanding Anxiety

## HOW TO SUPPORT A CHILD WITH ANXIETY

- Remember that anxiety is a normal emotion.
- Be aware that children and youth have a range of fears that are normal at different ages and stages of life
- Focus first on building a secure relationship and work on strategies over time.
- Let the child/youth tell you their worries while you listen and acknowledge their feelings.
- Be alert to signs of problematic anxiety
- Maintain calm, predictable routines and plan ahead for changes.
- Engage children and youth in discussions about their worries and fears.
- Promote positive self-talk and practice this in your home.
- Model a growth mindset, everyone makes mistakes. View them as a learning process.
- Help children/youth identify triggers and common situations/emotions that lead to heightened anxiety.
- 'Fact find' with your child, by asking questions that will help them identify perceived or actual threats.
- Develop consistent sleep routines (8-9 hours).
- Promote self-care, relaxation and breathing exercises. Explore coping strategies-music, colouring, bubble bath, being active, reading
- Limit viewing of fearful/traumatic images.

Depending on severity and impact on daily life, child/youth may need to see a doctor and/or mental health professional.

## Resources

- Contact Brant 519-758-8228
- Contact Halidmand Norfolk 519-587-2441

**Anxiety Canada** [www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com)

## REACH OUT

<https://au.reachout.com/articles/how-to-manage-your-anxiety-and-stress>

## Books

What to do when you worry too much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety. By: Dawn Huebner, Ph.D.

Anxious Kids Anxious Parents by Lynn Lyons and Reid Wilson

Drop the Worry Ball by Alex Russell and Tim Falconer

Books by Dr. A. Wagner and Dr. Katharina Manassis

## Videos

[Fight, Flight or Freeze- A guide to Anxiety for kids Anxiety Canada](#)

[Fight, Flight or Freeze- Anxiety Explained for Teens Anxiety Canada](#)

## **GEDSB Tiered Approach to Support Students with Anxiety**

Tier 3: Individual Counselling

Tier 2: Small Group Targeted Intervention

Tier 1: Staff training, Parent Resources.  
Support school based interventions  
Promote positive mental health & wellness  
Accommodations to learning



# Grand Erie School Board

## Board Mental Health Strategy

### 2021-2022 Action Plan

Priority Areas / Strategic Themes	Key Activities	Responsibility	Indicators of Success	Additional Comments
Mental Health Promotion				
Mental Health Prevention				
Mental Health Intervention				

<p>Establish and maintain access and pathways to, from and through services</p>	<p>Liaison with community agencies to support awareness and access to services by staff and students, facilitate pathways to care and complete SO 108 partnership agreements</p> <p>Organize opportunities between school board personnel and community agencies for collaboration and education</p> <p>Facilitate communication between community agencies and school board Administrators, Managers, Leads and Teacher Consultants</p> <p>Chair the Grand Erie Joint Advisory Partnership Committee which reviews Community Partnership Agreements</p> <p>Continued membership on Committees such as Child and Youth Advisory, Suicide Prevention Network, and Mental Health Week</p> <p>Collaborate with Public Health Nurses in the delivery of mental health promotion and prevention.</p> <p>Meet with McMaster Hospital, MHAN Manager and Public Health to review pathway to care. Review pathways to care with Administrators and PSSP staff</p>			
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## Mental Health Leadership Team

Superintendent of Special Education and Wellness

Grand Erie Mental Health and Wellness Lead

Safe Schools & Inclusive Schools Lead

Manager of Communications & Community Relations

Student Success Program Coordinator

Health & Disability Officer

Elementary Administrators

Secondary Administrators

Teacher Consultant, Indigenous Education Office

Teacher Consultant Student Success

Student Support Services Social Worker

Student Support Services Child and Youth Worker

Union President Professional Student Support Services

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

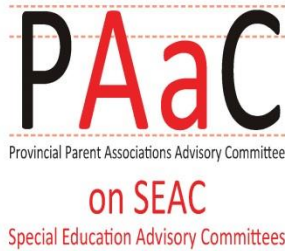
[Name]

Mental Health and Wellness Lead

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

[Name]

Mental Health and Wellness Superintendent



**Members:** • Association for Bright Children • Community Living Ontario • Down Syndrome Association of Ontario • Easter Seals Ontario • Epilepsy Ontario • Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise • Hydrocephalus Canada • Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community • Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario • Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders • VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

**Affiliate members:** • Association Francophone de Parents d'Enfants Dyslexiques ou ayant tout autre trouble d'apprentissage • Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy • Ontario Brain Injury Association • Parents for Children's Mental Health • Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada • VIEWS for the Visually Impaired

May 21, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education

RE: Accommodating students with special education needs in remote learning and collecting data to inform development of effective re-engagement strategies and learning recovery.

As the only group in Ontario that brings together provincial parent associations to communicate and co-operate on issues pertaining to Special Education Advisory Committees, PAAC on SEAC is a valuable resource. We appreciate receiving information from your Ministry, which we can share quickly across the province through our extensive communication networks. We can therefore assist the Ministry of Education in this very challenging school year, when it is especially important to connect.

Throughout the pandemic, families have had to make the difficult choice: either to send their sons and daughters to school despite safety concerns and restrictions, or to support them in virtual classes on-line. Essential workers may have sent their children to school because they had no childcare support. Students with disabilities often face greater safety concerns and require more assistance in-person. Parents may feel overwhelmed by the effort required of them to support their child's remote learning, especially while working from home. Families tell PAAC that accommodations are often lacking in remote education; many students with special education needs are struggling and some have stopped

PAAC on SEAC c/o Easter Seals Ontario, One Concorde Gate, Suite 700, Toronto, M3C 3N6  
Email: [info@paac-seac.ca](mailto:info@paac-seac.ca) Website: [www.paac-seac.ca](http://www.paac-seac.ca)

participating altogether. Boards are reporting reduced enrolment, with fewer students with special education needs attending school virtually or in person.

The April 13, 2021 Ministry memo to school boards stated: *“As part of our Government’s efforts to protect the most vulnerable, boards are expected to make provisions for in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning based on student needs.”* However, it is of major concern if students with complex needs have no option other than to return to schools that are deemed unsafe for all other students and staff. We would like to know if more can be done to provide accommodations in remote learning.

A December 10/20 Ministry memo re *School-Based Health and Rehabilitation Services* states: *“School boards have a duty to accommodate students with special education needs and to provide meaningful access to education up to the point of undue hardship.”* That Duty to Accommodate is defined in the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities at <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-accessible-education-students-disabilities>. OHRC says: “The duty to accommodate is informed by three principles: respect for dignity, individualization, as well as integration and full participation”.

The Ministry of Education’s *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 164: Requirements for Remote Learning* says virtual classroom instruction should “provide differentiated support to all students” and “continue to provide accommodations, modified expectations, and alternative programming to students with special education needs, as detailed in their IEPs.” We think it is important for the Ministry to provide direction and resources to school boards to improve accommodations to students with special education needs in remote learning.

The December 21/20 Ministry of Education memo provided some helpful details about what synchronous learning should involve for students and staff. It says: *“Boards must also ensure that plans are in place to support students with special education needs to learn remotely that leverage the capacity of education workers and board professionals (e.g. behavioural experts, speech language pathologists, and other professionals) to support remote learning.”* Our organizations see the need for professional and paraprofessional staff to provide outreach to students in their homes – both during virtual classes and such as is provided when students are receiving cancer treatment or recovering from surgery.

Throughout the pandemic, the vulnerabilities of Ontario’s citizens – including our students - have become more apparent. Understanding the extent of these challenges can inform the development of effective re-engagement strategies and learning recovery. To improve programs and services, support mental health

PAAC on SEAC c/o Easter Seals Ontario, One Concorde Gate, Suite 700, Toronto, M3C 3N6  
Email: [info@paac-seac.ca](mailto:info@paac-seac.ca) Website: [www.paac-seac.ca](http://www.paac-seac.ca)

and promote student success, real time data-collection is needed more than ever. We ask that the Ministry collect 2020-21 provincial data about the numbers of students with special education needs in each school board:

- in each Exceptionality Identification and Non-Identified
- relative to their IPRC Placements, where applicable
- at both secondary and elementary levels

who have:

- attended school in person while schools were open
- attended school in person while schools were closed
- participated in virtual classes while schools were open
- participated in virtual classes while schools were closed
- neither attended in person nor virtually for significant periods of time

It is also important to know how many students with special education needs have left school boards altogether.

Please let us know how PAAC can help engage SEACs to assist Boards with this data-collection and how we can help the Ministry analyze it.

We are pleased that the Ministry is developing a guide for remote learning for students with special education needs, which we understand is to be completed this Spring. PAAC and its members provided input to researchers at the University of Ottawa. There is an urgent need to ensure effective, respectful, individualized Accommodations so that ANY student can benefit from remote learning. Please advise us as to when the guide will be available.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Diane L Wagner*

Diane Wagner, Chair  
on behalf of the members on PAAC on SEAC

cc.

- Claudine Munroe, Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting), Student Support and Field Services Division; Director, Special Education/Success for All Branch
- Paul Grogan, Education Officer

PAAC on SEAC c/o Easter Seals Ontario, One Concorde Gate, Suite 700, Toronto, M3C 3N6  
Email: [info@paac-seac.ca](mailto:info@paac-seac.ca) Website: [www.paac-seac.ca](http://www.paac-seac.ca)



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JUN 08 2021

30 March 2021

Via email: [minister.edu@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.edu@ontario.ca)

**Renfrew County  
Catholic District  
School Board**

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The Honorable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce:

The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB), in support of a recommendation brought forward to the Board of Trustees by the Special Education Advisory Committee on March 29, 2021, is writing to support Bill 172, the Education Statute Law Amendment Act Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This proposed legislation will require all boards of education throughout Ontario to develop policies and guidelines with respect to FASD and require the Ontario College of Teachers and ECE programs to provide training with respect to FASD.

The RCCDSB is one of many school boards who has benefited from increasing staff knowledge on how to support students who are suspected or have a diagnosis of FASD. The RCCDSB multidisciplinary team, which includes Social Workers, School and Attendance Counsellors, Speech and Language Pathologists, Applied Behaviour Analysis Specialists, Safe Schools Coordinator and a Mental Health and Wellness Lead provide school-based assessment and in-school consultation for students with complex behavioural needs, including FASD. The team applies a transdisciplinary approach to assessment, which fosters holistic and person-centered collaboration to develop a plan for intervention that supports skill development and improved function at school.

Thank you for acknowledging our support for Bill 172.

Yours in Catholic Education,

Bob Schreder  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Pat O'Grady  
Chair of SEAC

cc: Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association (OCSTA)  
Ontario Catholic School Boards  
Education Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MASCE)  
RCCDSB SEAC

*...as an inclusive Catholic  
educational community, we  
are called to express our  
mission as church, to pass  
on the Good News of Jesus  
Christ, to make it relevant in  
the world today, and to be  
the hope for the future.*



# LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

**June 2021**

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) SEAC Circular is published 5 times a year, usually in September, November, February, April and June.

The following are some topics that your SEAC should be looking at. Action items and/or recommendations for effective practices will be underlined.

Feel free to share any of this information or the attachments with other SEAC members. As always, when you are planning to introduce a motion for the consideration of SEAC, it is particularly important that you share all related background items with your fellow SEAC reps.

## **Topics covered by this SEAC Circular:**

1. Ministry of Education updates
2. Learning Recovery, Summer and Transition Programs
3. K-12 Education Standards Development Committee Initial Recommendations
4. MACSE Updates
5. Grade 9 De-streamed Math

## **List of Supplementary Materials:**

1. June 3, 2021 Ministry of Education Update on the 2020/21 School Year
2. Special Education Update June 2021
3. Special Education & Mental Health Update June 2021
4. Effective Implementation of Reading Intervention Programs
5. June 11, 2021 Memo Public Posting of the K-12 Education SDC Initial Recommendations Report

6. K-12 Education Standards Development Committee: Feedback Survey on Initial Recommendations
7. MACSE Meeting Highlights February 2021
8. MACSE Community Collaboration submission from PAAC on SEAC
9. June 9, 2021 Memo New Grade 9 Math Course Curriculum Release

**Note:** You can access the SEAC Circular and supplementary materials at [www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/seac-circulars/](http://www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/seac-circulars/).

You can access Ministry funding (B & SB) memos by date at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/>

## 1. Ministry of Education Updates

Attached is a June 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministry of Education memo on planning for the 2020/21 school year. There is also a June 2021 Special Education Update and the Special Education & Mental Health Update presentation to MACSE. Some of the information is duplicated in the last two documents.

## 2. Learning Recovery, Summer and Transition Programs

On March 25, 2021 (see memo attached to May LDAO SEAC Circular) the ministry released its memo on 2021 spring and summer learning opportunities, including approximately \$7.6 million to provide summer transition programs for students with high special education needs who may find the return to school challenging, with a focus on closing gaps in skills development, learning, and on establishing classroom routines prior to the opening of schools; and \$11.76 million in funding for struggling readers who are at risk for falling behind due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year as well as for the delivery of summer programs.

Ministry documents show that in the summer of 2020 school boards at the elementary level “focused on school visits and introducing students to COVID-19 based protocols including hand washing, social distance learning and becoming familiar with PPE that staff may be wearing. Multi-disciplinary teams were created to support the unique needs of individual students with special education needs related to transitioning back to school.” SEAC members shared that in many school boards the focus of summer transition programming was on students with ASD. SEACs should ask how their board will widen the eligibility for summer programs and include efforts to close the gap in skills development for all students with special education needs.

From pages 18 – 19 of the Special Education Update: “In the Spring 2021, EDU has provided \$11.75M in-year and summer funding for school boards to provide evidence-based reading



intervention programs or programs that have been shown to be efficacious in improving student outcomes for struggling readers who are at risk for falling behind due to the COVID pandemic. School boards have flexibility in the design of their local evidence-based intervention programs. Programs/supports would ideally be provided in-person, consistent with public health advice, but may be provided wholly or in part remotely. The ministry shared a list of Effective Implementation of Reading Intervention Programs informed by advice from researchers.”

Attached is a copy of that list of **Effective Implementation of Reading Intervention Programs**. It outlines 3 tiers of interventions. SEACs should ask what evidence-based intervention programs their school board is using. Most students with learning disabilities would need tier 2 or 3 interventions.

### 3. K-12 Education Standards Development Committee Initial Recommendations

The Kindergarten-Grade-12 Education (K-12) Standards Development Committee (SDC) of the AODA was tasked with developing recommendations for proposed accessibility education standards in the publicly-funded K-12 sector. The Committee is comprised of people with disabilities, representatives from disability organizations, and education sector experts.

In addition, a Technical Sub-Committee, made up of members of the K-12 and Post-secondary Education Committees, has developed initial recommendations on student transitions between different levels of the education sector; and between education and employment and the community.

Both Reports have been posted on Ontario.ca for public review and feedback. Public feedback will be welcomed until **September 2, 2021**. The Reports and associated surveys for public feedback can be viewed here: [Consultation: Initial recommendations for the development of proposed Kindergarten to Grade 12 \(K-12\) education accessibility standards | Ontario.ca](#)

The ministry is also accepting written submissions on the Committee’s behalf by email at: [EducationSDC@ontario.ca](mailto:EducationSDC@ontario.ca). The Committees will review and consider all feedback before they finalize their recommendations and submit their final reports to the Minister for Seniors And Accessibility for consideration.

A June 11, 2021 Memo from Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister of Education (attached) specifically mentions that school boards should be sharing this public consultation opportunity widely, including with their Special Education Advisory Committees.

Since the deadline for feedback to the consultation is September 2<sup>nd</sup>, SEACs might consider setting up a subcommittee to work on a response from their SEAC. The attached consultation questions can be used for this.

LDAO SEAC members are encouraged to respond individually and to send input to me at [dianew@ldao.ca](mailto:dianew@ldao.ca) for the LDAO response



#### 4. MACSE Updates

Attached are Meeting Highlights from the February 2021 MACSE meetings, and the submission from PAAC on SEAC to the June 2021 MACSE meetings.

#### 5. Grade 9 De-streamed Math

The new de-streamed Grade 9 Math course will be implemented in September 2021 and a June 9<sup>th</sup> memo (attached) announces the new curriculum. The Ministry is offering educators training and resources, including webinars and online resources. There is also information available to parents at [www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/grade-9-math-guide](http://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/grade-9-math-guide).

The memo mentions that “the ministry has provided targeted funding to school boards that can be used beginning this spring to help prepare Grade 8 students and their families for their transition to the new Grade 9 Mathematics course. This funding can be used for direct support to students in literacy and math, supports for secondary transition teams to develop targeted transition plans for vulnerable and underserved students.”

SEACs should ask how their school boards plan prepare students with special education needs for the de-streamed Grade 9 Math course. You can refer to the document **De-streaming issues for students with special education needs**, that was attached to the May LDAO SEAC Circular.

**Questions?** Email Diane Wagner at [dianew@LDAO.ca](mailto:dianew@LDAO.ca)



May 26, 2021

The Honorable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce,

**Re: Support for Bill 172 An Act in Relation to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)**

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board (BHNCDSB) endorses Bill 172, the Education Statute Law Amendment Act regarding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The BHNCDSB in full support of a recommendation brought forward to the Board of Trustees by the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) on May 25, 2021 to provide correspondence in support of the Bill.

Bill 172 will require all boards of education throughout Ontario to develop policies and guidelines with respect to FASD. Ontario Teacher College's and Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs shall be required to provide training with respect to suspected or diagnosed FASD.

There is a high prevalence of FASD among children in Ontario. This diagnosis impacts their ability to attend school due to a combination of deficits associated with the diagnosis, along with their capacity to understand the expectations and demands in an academic environment. Education staff need to be taught about the early signs and symptoms of FASD and how to provide appropriate accommodations in the classroom. Furthermore, the students will greatly benefit by promoting the awareness and understanding of FASD in teacher, early childhood educator and other educator programs, along with school boards developing policies and guidelines with respect to FASD.

The BHNCDSB asks that you acknowledge our support for Bill 172 as it will help our students experience success not only in their classrooms, but also within their communities.

Yours in Catholic Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Freeborn".

Lauren Freeborn, Chair  
Special Education Advisory Committee  
Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Rick Petrella".

Rick Petrella  
Chair of the Board  
Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB

c: Toby Barrett, MPP Haldimand-Norfolk  
Will Bouma, MPP Brantford-Brant  
Chairs of all Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees  
Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education  
Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association