

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance Update
United for a Barrier-Free Ontario for All People with Disabilities
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An Interim Victory for Our Grassroots Campaign - Wynne Government at Last Invites Applications to Serve on the Education Standards Development Committee

May 29, 2017

SUMMARY

Let's celebrate victories, even interim ones! We have just won one.

On Thursday, May 25, 2017, after we waged a 171-day campaign, the Wynne Government has finally started the delayed process of recruiting people to serve on the promised Education Standards Development Committee, to be appointed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. That Committee will come up with recommendations that it will submit to the Ontario Government on what the promised Education Accessibility Standard should include.

What is this all about, you ask? The Education Accessibility Standard is needed to ensure that Ontario's education system becomes fully accessible to over one-third of a million students with disabilities. It should spell out the actions that educational organizations should take to remove and prevent accessibility barriers against students with disabilities at all levels of Ontario's education system.

For years, the AODA Alliance called for the Ontario Government to develop an Education Accessibility Standard under the AODA. Students with disabilities face far too many accessibility barriers at all levels of Ontario's education system.

In our last interim victory in this campaign, back on December 5, 2016, Premier Wynne commendably announced in the Ontario Legislature that her Government had agreed to develop an Education Accessibility Standard. She said this in an answer to a question during Question Period from Conservative MPP Bill Walker. Mr. Walker pressed Premier Wynne to agree to create an Education Accessibility Standard.

After that December 5, 2016 announcement, the next step that the Wynne Government had to take under the AODA to start the process of developing the promised Education Accessibility Standard was to appoint an arms-length Standards Development Committee to consult the public on accessibility barriers in Ontario's education system, and to develop recommendations on what that accessibility standard should include. We promptly pressed the Government to post an advertisement to invite members of the public to apply to serve on the Education Standards Development Committee. The Government should have been able to do this very quickly. It does not take long to write and post such an ad. The Government had been studying the issue of whether to agree to create an Education Accessibility Standard since well before the June 2014

Ontario election.

For months, we saw no action. We mounted a daily count on Twitter of how many days had ticked by since Premier Wynne's December 5, 2016 announcement, and yet, no ad posted. It took the Government a full 171 days just to issue its May 25, 2017 invitation for members of the public to apply to serve on the Education Standards Development Committee. That announcement was set out in a May 25, 2017 email from the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to those people and organizations on the Accessibility Directorate's distribution email list.

Our efforts have at last paid off. Below we set out the May 25, 2017 broadcast email from the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ann Hoy. When reading that email, it is easy to miss the announcement of this opportunity to apply to serve on the Education Standards Development Committee. It oddly comes at the end of that email from the Assistant Deputy Minister that focuses on another topic, an announcement of a public survey on accessibility barriers in Ontario's education system.

Despite taking almost a half a year to make this announcement, the Wynne Government seems not to be fully prepared. Oddly, the Wynne Government has not announced a closing date for this application process. It is a virtually universal practice in the Ontario Government to announce a closing date for applications when it invites the public to serve on such public bodies, or to apply for a Government job. This means that further delays are possible. We urge the Wynne Government to now set and publicize a closing date.

There are scant specifics on the application process provided in the announcement, except the name of a public servant to write for more details. We promptly wrote that public servant, asking for more details. He simply told us that an applicant can send him their CV.

It is our understanding that there has not yet been a Government web posting for applying to serve on the Education Standards Development Committee. An invitation to express an interest in applying is also set out in a new survey on education accessibility barriers that the Wynne Government announced at the same time. It is unlikely that many will look to a Government survey as a place to apply for such positions.

The Government gave the public up to July 14, 2017 to complete its survey. The links to the survey are as follows:

- English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>
- French: <https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/SondageAccessibilite>

We will soon make public our analysis of this Government announcement and of the Government's survey. We will also offer tips on completing that survey. We urge one and all to take part in this survey, either by using the Government's online link set out above, or by filling out the survey form, also set out below, and emailing it to the Government.

Below please find:

* the May 25, 2017 email from assistant deputy minister Ann Hoy, announcing the Government's survey on education accessibility barriers, and announcing that one can now apply to the Government to serve on the Education Standards Development Committee.

* The text of the Wynne Government's survey on education accessibility barriers.

* The text of the May 25, 2017 letter from Education Minister Mitzie Hunter to the education sector, announcing the Government's survey on education accessibility barriers, and

* the text of the Engagement guide which the Government prepared for the education sector on how to take part in the Government's gathering of information on education accessibility barriers. We have not seen any comparable guide sent to the disability sector. We anticipate that the Government sent something similar to the colleges and universities sector. However, the Government sent none of this to us. Rather we learned of the letter from the Education Minister from someone in the education sector who received it.

There is now just a little over one year left before the June 7, 2018 Ontario general election. On March 16, 2017, [we wrote Ontario Accessibility Minister](#) to ask for the Government's achievements and plans for the upcoming year on the accessibility issue. She has not yet replied. There have been 74 days since we wrote.

You can always send your feedback to us on any AODA and accessibility issue at aodafeedback@gmail.com

Have you taken part in our “Picture Our Barriers campaign? If not, please join in! You can **get all the information you need about our “Picture Our Barriers” campaign** by visiting www.aodaalliance.org/2016

To sign up for, or unsubscribe from AODA Alliance e-mail updates, write to: aodafeedback@gmail.com

We encourage you to use the Government’s toll-free number for reporting AODA violations. We fought long and hard to get the Government to promise this, and later to deliver on that promise. If you encounter any accessibility problems at any large retail establishments, it will be especially important to report them to the Government via that toll-free number. Call 1-866-515-2025.

Please pass on our email Updates to your family and friends.

Why not subscribe to the **AODA Alliance’s YouTube channel**, so you can get immediate alerts when we post new videos on our accessibility campaign.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/aodaalliance>

Please **"like"** our Facebook page and share our updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/Accessibility-for-Ontarians-with-Disabilities-Act-Alliance-106232039438820/>

Follow us on Twitter. Get others to follow us. And please re-tweet our tweets!!
@AODAAlliance

Learn all about our campaign for a fully accessible Ontario by visiting
<http://www.aodaalliance.org>

MORE DETAILS

Text of the May 25, 2017 Broadcast Email to the Disability Sector from Assistant Deputy Minister Ann Hoy

In December 2016, Premier Kathleen Wynne made a public commitment to develop an accessibility standard for education.

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development are working together to establish a Standards Development Committee for Education. As an important part of this process, we are gathering the evidence and public input required to support the Committee's work.

We are inviting your organization to be part of this process. We want to hear your views about accessibility in education – both the barriers you have witnessed or experienced, and success stories you would like to share. We have developed a confidential survey to collect your input.

Please click on the following links to complete the survey:

- English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>
- French: <https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/SondageAccessibilite>

If you prefer, you may complete the attached accessible Word version of the survey and return it to aoda.input@ontario.ca.

A response by July 14, 2017 is appreciated. I encourage you to share this survey with appropriate members of your organization or with your broader network.

Your input through this survey will be shared with a Standards Development Committee and will help to provide the foundation for a new accessibility standard for education in Ontario.

The survey focuses on five high-level themes:

1. Accessibility Awareness and Training in the Education Sector
2. Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations (Policies, Processes, Programs)
3. Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making
4. Transition Planning across the Education Sector
5. Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

These themes were drawn from a review of current requirements, programs, and policies that support accessibility in education and from preliminary research about barriers faced by students with disabilities. Please note that these focus areas are not final, and that all feedback received through this consultation will be considered.

We are officially launching the recruitment process for a Standards Development Committee for Education, and are now accepting applications. For information on how to apply, please contact Phil Simeon, Manager of Standards Development at phil.simeon@ontario.ca. More information regarding the recruitment process will continue to be communicated.

This is an important opportunity to hear from you about an accessibility standard for education. I look forward to working with you on meeting our goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Sincerely,
Ann Hoy
Assistant Deputy Minister
Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
416 325-5247
www.ontario.ca/accessibility

Ontario Government Survey of the Public On Accessibility Barriers in Ontario's Education System

Survey on Accessibility in Education

Overview

The Government of Ontario has committed to identifying and addressing accessibility barriers in the education sector and to the development of a new accessibility standard for education.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and accessibility standards provide a roadmap to an accessible Ontario, where people of all abilities can work, play and participate in all aspects of daily living. The purpose of a new accessibility standard for education would be to address barriers to accessibility in the delivery of education.

Under the Act and accessibility standards, organizations across Ontario have flexibility to provide accessible services in a way that meets the needs of people with disabilities and is appropriate to the organization's unique circumstances.

Accessibility standards play an important role in setting a consistent baseline of accessibility throughout the province, raising awareness, and providing guidance to obligated organizations on identifying and removing barriers to accessibility.

Tell us your ideas about how we can identify proposed areas of focus for a new accessibility standard for education under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Your feedback will help us determine the scope of the standard and the mandate of a Standards Development Committee working on new accessibility standards for education in Ontario.

Background

Ontario's government is committed to ensuring that every student has access to the supports they need to succeed in school. The Education Act, administered by the Ministry of Education, provides the legislative framework for accommodations for students that are required by school boards. At the post-secondary level, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development works with publicly funded colleges and universities to provide students with disabilities the necessary support services and accommodations they require.

In 2005, the government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (the Act), which sets a provincial goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025. Under the Act, we have created enforceable standards for accessible customer service, information and communications, transportation, the design of public spaces, and employment.

Many of these standards have already begun to remove barriers in schools, colleges and universities. Ontario's accessibility standards require that accessibility policies be in place, instructors are trained on accessible programs and curriculum, and that libraries are providing accessible formats. Working together with the programs, supports, and services provided through the education system, these requirements are intended to promote an accessible education for all students.

About this Survey

You have been invited to share your thoughts on proposed areas of focus for a new accessibility standard for education under the Act. The information you share will be provided to a Standards Development Committee responsible for making recommendations to government. Your experiences with barriers you have faced to achieving an accessible education for yourself, your child, your students, or colleagues, as well as success stories you have witnessed in your school, college or university, will help to inform the work of the Committee.

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete, depending on the detail of the answers you provide. You are not required to respond to all questions in the survey.

Identifying information will remain confidential as per the Government of Ontario's [Privacy Policy](#). Responses will remain anonymous. We are committed to protecting your privacy whether you are browsing for information or conducting business with the government through electronic channels. The handling of all personal information by Government of Ontario organizations is governed by the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#).

If you have any difficulty completing the survey, please contact either:

- Ministry of Education
 - by email at aoda.input@ontario.ca
 - toll-free at 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514

- TTY at 416-325-3408 or 1-800-268-7095
- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
 - by email at aoda.input@ontario.ca
 - toll-free at 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514
 - TTY at 416-325-3408 or 1-800-268-7095
- Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
 - by email at aoda.input@ontario.ca
 - by telephone at 416-212-5342
 - toll-free at 1-866-515-2025 or 416-849-8276
 - TTY at 1-800-268-7095 or 416-325-3408

Demographic Information

The following questions are for demographic purposes only. **Completing this section is optional.** You will not receive an individual response to your submission.

1. Which sector below best represents you or your organization? Please select as many answers as apply.

- Student
- Parent or Guardian
- Person with a Disability or Disabilities (you are welcome to identify your particular disability if you wish to do so)
- Professional in the Education Sector (please specify below)
- Other. Please specify below

2. Please provide your organization and preferred contact information below. Identifying information will remain confidential. You may be contacted by a representative from the Ontario government if you express interest in participating in a future Standards Development Committee for education (Question 3).

- Name:
- Role or Title:
- Company/Organization/Institution:
- Address:
- City/Town:
- Province:
- Postal Code
- Email Address:
- Phone Number:

Participating in Standards Development

If you express interest in participating in a future Standards Development Committee for education, you may be contacted by government.

3. Would you be interested in applying to participate in a future Standards Development Committee related to accessibility in education?

- Yes
- No

Potential Focus Areas

The following section provides you an opportunity to comment on focus areas that could be considered for a new accessibility standard. These themes were drawn from a review of current requirements, programs, and policies that support accessibility in education, based on research about barriers faced by students with disabilities.

- Accessibility Awareness and Training
- Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations – Policies, Processes, and Programs/Supports
- Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making
- Transition Planning
- Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

We welcome any additional comments on areas that are not addressed in these themes. Your input is valuable to shaping this important work.

Accessibility Awareness and Training

Issue:

Ontario's accessibility standards require that all employees and volunteers of an organization be provided with accessibility awareness training. In addition, accessibility standards require specific additional training on accessible course delivery for instructors. Instructors and staff may feel that they would benefit from additional training or professional development to be able to confidently support students with disabilities and to create an accessible classroom.

Example:

- An instructor may feel they have insufficient knowledge or professional development resources to adequately support students with disabilities and diverse learning needs.
- Students without disabilities or their parents may also feel that they lack an understanding of accessibility and disability, limiting their ability to create an inclusive school, college or university environment.
- Students with disabilities or their parents may feel that they are required to repeatedly advocate for accommodation and cannot rely on their school, college or university to have the necessary knowledge base.

Questions:

4. What could your school, college or university do to improve their awareness and consideration of the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities?
5. What resources or policies have you seen as most effective to support awareness of

accessibility needs in your school, college or university?

Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations – Policies, Processes, and Programs/Supports Issue:

In both the K-12 and post-secondary sectors, a variety of supports, programs, and services are provided to support students with diverse learning needs. Regulated accessibility standards also require educational institutions to provide students with disabilities with accessible or conversion-ready course information, student records, and educational resources. Barriers to accessibility can exist when students with disabilities or their parents are not aware of available supports and programs, or when instructors and staff are not aware of their requirements or their obligations.

Example:

- Parents of a child with a disability may not be aware of the range of supports that their child's school, college or university offers that are tailored to their child's specific needs.
- Staff at a secondary school may not be aware that the school is required to provide a student with accessible or conversion-ready formats of educational materials and resources.
- A professor may not be aware of their university's established policies and processes governing disability accommodation needs, or of the supports available, creating uncertainty and inconsistency for a student making a request.

Questions:

6. What challenges do students with disabilities face when accessing supports, programs, or services in their school, college or university?
7. In your experience, what resources, tools, or policies are most effective to promote better awareness of available supports and facilitate appropriate accommodations?

Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making

Issue:

Ensuring people with lived experience of disability are included in decision-making from an early stage is an important aspect of creating an accessible, inclusive school, college or university. Accessibility standards require educational institutions to consult with people with disabilities when creating or updating a multi-year accessibility plan, when developing transportation plans for students with disabilities, and when creating or redeveloping an outdoor play or recreation space, among others.

The first step in engaging students or, where appropriate, their parents in decision-making related to their education or their school, college or university is ensuring they have access to clear information and materials in a format that meets their needs.

Example:

- Students and parents may not be aware that there are opportunities for them to participate within their educational community, in planning related to their individual education or to

broader decisions for the school, college or university as a whole.

- Organizations may make decisions that affect accessibility without consulting with people with disabilities to determine their needs and gather their advice.

Questions:

8. What barriers do students with disabilities or their parents face in participating in decisions that affect accessibility in their schools, colleges or universities?
9. In your experience, what resources, tools, or policies help to promote early engagement by persons with disabilities (or their representatives) in educational decisions and planning?

Transition Planning

Issue:

When students transition from child care to school, and from school to work, further education and/or community living, careful planning and coordination are required to ensure a smooth transition. An individualized transition plan that reflects a student's strengths and needs can provide the foundation for a successful transitional experience to the next appropriate pathway for the student.

Guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education encourage K-12 schools in Ontario to provide opportunities and support for students to plan their individual pathways through school, determine their personal goals, and leave school with a clear plan. At the post-secondary level, universities and colleges have established disability support offices, with support from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. Research indicates, however, that students with disabilities and their families may still experience challenges with transition planning, and that poorly implemented transition planning can affect student success.

Example:

- Children with disabilities transitioning from early learning and childcare into the kindergarten classroom may require additional supports for a smooth transition into a more formal learning setting.
- Secondary school students may not have fully benefited from supports and tools available to help them successfully transition to employment or to post-secondary education or training.
- Supports provided in K-12 may be different than those provided in post-secondary education and students may find it difficult to effectively bridge the transition.
- Supports provided in post-secondary institutions may not transition smoothly with students transferring between institutions, or be available consistently to students who are completing programs that bridge across partner institutions.

Questions:

10. What challenges do students with disabilities face in transitioning across educational institutions or when completing programs that bridge partner institutions?
11. What challenges do students with disabilities face when planning for employment, for post-

secondary education or training, or for community living?

12. In your experience, as a student, parent, or professional, what resources, tools, or policies have been effective to support smooth transitions?

Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

Issue:

Students may face challenges navigating older buildings designed and constructed before current accessibility requirements were established. When K-12 schools, colleges, and universities include accessibility features throughout the built environment, from the classroom or student workspace to the building and exterior grounds, students with disabilities can participate in a shared educational experience with other students.

Example:

- Educational spaces, from classrooms to laboratories, where students using assistive devices can easily navigate around the space and access any required supplies, support engaged learning for all students.
- Instructors may benefit from additional guidance on how to create an inclusive educational environment for all their students, such as how to adapt the principles of universal design (also known as “design for all people”) to the physical layout of the classroom.
- In addition to lifts, ramps, or elevators, building design features such as lighting, paint, carpeting or tiles can have a significant impact on accessibility.
- Accessible exterior spaces – playgrounds, picnic tables, or paths between buildings on a campus – foster an inclusive educational community and support better learning.

Questions:

13. What challenges do students, instructors, staff and the public with disabilities face in navigating their educational built environment?
14. In your experience, what resources, tools, or design practices can best support improved accessibility in existing, often older, buildings?
15. What other elements should be considered to enhance the physical accessibility of K-12 schools, colleges and universities?

Additional Barriers to Accessibility in Education

While our research has identified the challenges above, we are seeking your advice on other challenges and barriers that an accessibility standard for K-12 and post-secondary education could address.

16. As a student or parent, what other accessibility barriers have you experienced in pursuing your or your child’s education, and how could they be addressed through a new accessibility standard for education?
17. As a professional in the education sector, what other barriers have you experienced in providing an accessible, inclusive education, and how could they be addressed through a new accessibility standard for education?

Survey Complete

Thank you for completing the survey.

Glossary:

- “Accessibility”: in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the purpose of the Act being to... “achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.”
- “Accommodation”: refers to the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s [Guidelines on Accessible Education](#), and [Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate](#) at www.ohrc.on.ca
- “Disability”: as defined in the AODA means:
 - a) 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,
 - b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - d) a mental disorder, or
 - e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”)
- “Instructor”: anyone directly interacting with students, including but not limited to teacher, professor, Principal, Vice-Principal, Early Childhood Educator (ECE), Teacher’s Assistant (TA), Education Assistant (EA), behaviour expert, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), social worker, administrative staff, etc.
- “Parent”: also includes any person acting as a legal guardian for a student
- “School”: any publicly-funded Ontario school (French, English, Public, Catholic)
- “University/College”: any postsecondary institution operating in Ontario receiving operating grants from the Government of Ontario
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Text of the Minister of Education's May 25, 2017 Letter to School Boards and others in Ontario's Education Sector

Ministry of Education
Minister
Mowat Block
Queen’s Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

May 25, 2017

Dear colleagues,

On December 5, 2016, Premier Wynne made a public commitment to develop an accessibility standard for education.

This accessibility standard will help us address barriers in education that prevent children and students from reaching their full potential.

To get started, I am working in partnership with my colleagues at the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and at the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to establish a Standards Development Committee for Education.

We are also conducting a survey to hear from you in the possible scope of this committee's mandate. Feel free to share this survey broadly throughout your organization. You can also provide feedback by conducting a focus group using the attached engagement guide.

To complete the survey, you can access it by visiting this URL:

English:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>

French:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>

I would appreciate your feedback by July 14, 2017. If you have any questions about the survey, please call 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514, or for TTY 416-325-3408 or 1-800-268-7095.

We are officially launching the recruitment process for the education Standards Development Committee and are now accepting applications. For information on how to apply, please contact phil.simeon@ontario.ca at the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. More information regarding the recruitment process will continue to be communicated

Ontario is committed to supporting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and its goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Under this Act, the government has created enforceable standards for accessible customer service, information and communications, transportation, the design of public spaces, and employment. Many of these standards have already begun to remove barriers in child care facilities and schools.

Ontario's accessibility standards require that accessibility policies be in place, educators are trained on accessible programs and curricula, and that libraries are providing accessible formats. These requirements help ensure that all children and students have access to the resources they need to learn and to prepare them for a future in Ontario's workforce.

Our government is committed to building an accessible education system. The development of an education accessibility standard will further support the ability of students with disabilities to reach their potential, and participate in our society and in the job market.

This is an important opportunity to hear from you about an accessibility standard for education. I look forward to working with you on meeting our goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Sincerely,
Mitzie Hunter, MBA
Minister

Attachment

cc Bruce Rodrigues, Deputy Minister of Education

Text of the Ministry of Education's Engagement guide to Lead Discussions on What the Promised Education Accessibility Standard Should Include

**Engagement Guide
for the
Development
of an
Accessibility Standard
for Education
May 2017
Ministry of Education**

Engagement guide for the development of an accessibility standard for education

How to use this guide

Engagement is an important step in creating an accessibility standard for education. We want to hear your views.

How you can get involved

Engagement will run from May to July 2017. The feedback we receive will be used to help design an accessibility standard for education. You can provide your feedback in several ways:

- Complete the online survey: English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>; French: <https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/SondageAccessibilite>
- Email your comments to aoda.input@ontario.ca
- Host your own discussion group using this Engagement Guide

The engagement guide

The guide provides you with a framework to start your own conversation on how to develop an accessibility standard for education.

We have identified five potential themes for discussion:

1. Accessibility Awareness and Training
 - Ensuring all members of the school community have differentiated training to provide an accessible and inclusive educational experience
2. Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations – Policies, Processes, and Programs/Supports
 - Ensuring parents, students, and instructors have access to information about programs
3. Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making
 - Ensuring people with lived experience have a voice during planning processes
4. Transition Planning
 - Supporting children entering school from child care and planning for entry into post-secondary education or employment
5. Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces
 - Ensuring that K-12 schools, colleges and universities include accessibility features throughout the built environment.

Thank you for sharing your ideas and opinions on the design of an accessibility standard for education. Your participation is a key part of the engagement process. We are always looking for creative, innovative and evidence-based solutions to help us do a better job in providing services to the people who need them.

Your input is most welcome and appreciated. For more information about the engagement process, please contact us by email at aoda.input@ontario.ca.

Glossary

- “Accessibility”: in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the purpose of the Act being to... “achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.”
- “Accommodation”: refers to the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s [Guidelines on Accessible Education](#), and [Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate](#) at www.ohrc.on.ca
- “Disability”: as defined in the AODA means:
 - a) 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,

- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - d) a mental disorder, or
 - e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”)
- “Instructor”: anyone directly interacting with students, including but not limited to teacher, professor, Principal, Vice-Principal, Early Childhood Educator (ECE), Teacher’s Assistant (TA), Education Assistant (EA), behaviour expert, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), social worker, administrative staff, etc.
 - “Parent”: also includes any person acting as a legal guardian for a student
 - “School”: any publicly-funded Ontario school (French, English, Public, Catholic)
 - “University/College”: any postsecondary institution operating in Ontario receiving operating grants from the Government of Ontario

Engagement Toolkit

The Ontario government is currently engaging Ontarians on its development of an accessibility standard for education. Engagement will be held from May to July 2017.

You can make a difference by participating and getting involved.

To help you host your own discussion and gather feedback from members of your community, the Ministry of Education developed a guide and toolkit with templates and materials for organizing and promoting your event, as well as collecting and submitting the results.

The toolkit includes:

- Sample agenda
- Sample invitation
- Discussion Notes Template
- Sample Social Media Promotion

After your discussion, we encourage you to send the results to aoda.input@ontario.ca. Feel free to send us photos and important quotes from participants. Your input will be shared with the Honourable Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, and will be used to help shape an accessibility standard for education.

Other ways you can participate include:

- filling out the survey:
 - English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>
 - French: <https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/SondageAccessibilite>
- talking about how you’re contributing to the discussion on Twitter and Instagram, and encouraging others to get involved and participate.

Privacy Statement:

Ontario is committed to respecting your privacy and protecting your personal information. The handling of all personal information by Government of Ontario organizations is governed by the [*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*](#). Please review our [Privacy Statement](#) for more information. By participating in this engagement, you are consenting to, and acknowledging that you have read, understood, and agree to the Privacy Statement.

Sample Agenda

Community Discussion on an Accessibility Standard for Education

Day, Month, Year

Start time – End time

Meeting location

City

1. Welcome and introductory remarks
2. Participant introductions
3. Discussion begins

Theme #1 – Accessibility Awareness and Training

Questions:

- What could your school, college or university do to improve their awareness and consideration of the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities?
- What resources or policies have you seen as most effective to support awareness of accessibility needs in your school, college or university?

Theme #2 – Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations – Policies, Processes, and Programs/Supports

Questions:

- What challenges do students with disabilities face when accessing supports, programs, or services in their school, college or university?
- In your experience, what resources, tools, or policies are most effective to promote better awareness of available supports and facilitate appropriate accommodations?

Theme #3 – Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making

Questions:

- What barriers do students with disabilities or their parents face in participating in decisions that affect accessibility in their schools, colleges or universities?
- In your experience, what resources, tools, or policies help to promote early engagement by persons with disabilities (or their representatives) in educational decisions and planning?

Theme #4 – Transition Planning

Questions:

- What challenges do students with disabilities face in transitioning across educational institutions or when completing programs that bridge partner institutions?
- What challenges do students with disabilities face when planning for employment, for post-secondary education or training, or for community living?
- In your experience, as a student, parent, or professional, what resources, tools, or policies have been effective to support smooth transitions?

Theme #5 – Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

Questions:

- What challenges do students, instructors, staff and the public with disabilities face in navigating their educational built environment?
- In your experience, what resources, tools, or design practices can best support improved accessibility in existing, often older, buildings?
- What other elements should be considered to enhance the physical accessibility of K-12 schools, colleges and universities?

Other Questions

- As a student or parent, what other accessibility barriers have you experienced in pursuing your or your child's education, and how could they be addressed through a new accessibility standard for education?
 - As a professional in the education sector, what other barriers have you experienced in providing an accessible, inclusive education, and how could they be addressed through a new accessibility standard for education?
4. Closing remarks/Discussion concludes
 5. End

Sample Invitation

Subject line: You're invited to a community discussion on developing an accessibility standard for education.

Ontario is committed to supporting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and its goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025.

On December 5, 2016, Premier Wynne made a public commitment to develop an accessibility standard for education.

It is important that we address barriers in education that prevent students from reaching their full potential.

Do you want to help design an accessibility standard for education?

You are invited to attend a community discussion. The input from this event will be shared with the Honourable Mitzi Hunter, Minister of Education, and will be used to help shape an accessibility standard for education.

We need your ideas and feedback to help make a difference. Get involved and share your voice.

Date:

Time:

Place:

Please confirm your attendance by (day), (month) (year), by email (email address) or phone at (phone number).

If you need accommodation support in order to participate in this engagement, please contact the organizer.

An agenda and discussion questions will follow upon confirmation.

Discussion Notes Template

Accessibility Standard for Education

Day, Month, Year
Start time – End time
Location
City

Participants

1. (Name), Title, Organization (if applicable)
2. (Name)
3. (Name)
4. Etc.

Key Themes

- What are the main themes that were discussed during the meeting?

Direction

- Provide summaries of the discussion points rather than a word-for-word account.
- Do not identify comments by contributors (i.e. names or organizations) – instead, summarize the feedback from the group as a whole
- When drafting the summary, use simple and neutral language.
- Make sure participants are aware that by participating they are consenting to, and acknowledging that they have read, understood and agree to the [Privacy Notice Statement](#).

Theme #1 – Accessibility Awareness and Training

Questions:

- What could your school, college or university do to improve their awareness and consideration of the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities?
- What resources or policies have you seen as most effective to support awareness of accessibility needs in your school, college or university?

Theme #2 – Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations – Policies, Processes, and Programs/Supports

Questions:

- What challenges do students with disabilities face when accessing supports, programs, or services in their school, college or university?
- In your experience, what resources, tools, or policies are most effective to promote better awareness of available supports and facilitate appropriate accommodations?

Theme #3 – Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making

Questions:

- What barriers do students with disabilities or their parents face to participating in decisions that affect accessibility in their schools, colleges or universities?
- In your experience, what resources, tools, or policies help to promote early engagement by persons with disabilities (or their representatives) in educational decisions and planning?

Theme #4 – Transition Planning

Questions:

- What challenges do students with disabilities face in transitioning across educational institutions or when completing programs that bridge partner institutions?
- What challenges do students with disabilities face when planning for employment, for post-secondary education or training, or for community living?
- In your experience, as a student, parent, or professional, what resources, tools, or policies have been effective to support smooth transitions?

Theme #5 – Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

Questions:

- What challenges do students, instructors, staff and the public with disabilities face in navigating their educational built environment?
- In your experience, what resources, tools, or design practices can best support improved accessibility in existing, often older, buildings?
- What other elements should be considered to enhance the physical accessibility of K-12 schools, colleges and universities?

Other Questions

- As a student or parent, what other accessibility barriers have you experienced in pursuing your or your child's education, and how could they be addressed through a new accessibility standard for education?
- As a professional in the education sector, what other barriers have you experienced in

providing an accessible, inclusive education, and how could they be addressed through a new accessibility standard for education?

Notes taken by:

(Name), (Phone number), (Email)

NOTE: After your discussion, we encourage you to send the results to aoda.input@ontario.ca. Feel free to also send us photos and important quotes you heard. Your input will be shared with the Honourable Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, and the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister Responsible for Accessibility. Your input will also be shared with a Standards Development Committee to help shape an accessibility standard for education.

Sample Social Media Promotion

Accessibility Standard for Education

Sample 1:

- Tweet: Participate in the development of an accessibility standard for education by hosting your own roundtable. Engagement Toolkit available.
- Link to this engagement toolkit: xxx

Sample 2:

- Tweet: Want to help improve #Accessibility in Ontario? Take this survey!
- Link to the survey:
 - English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EducationSurveyEN>
 - French: <https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/SondageAccessibilite>