

Ministry of Education

Deputy Minister

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Ministère de l'Éducation

Sous-ministre

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MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education

FROM: Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister

DATE: May 25, 2017

SUBJECT : **Education Accessibility Standard Engagement**

It is important that we address barriers in education that prevent children and students from reaching their full potential. Ontario is committed to supporting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 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 students have access to the resources they need to learn, and to prepare them for a future in Ontario's workforce.

An inclusive education system is key to helping all children and students in Ontario reach their potential, and participate in our society and in the job market. In December 2016, the government committed to developing an accessibility standard for education, under the AODA. To support this important goal, the government is working to establish an Education Standard Development Committee (ESDC) in the fall of 2017.

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Prior to the establishment of the ESDC, we want to hear from the education sector on the potential scope of the ESDC's mandate. There are two ways you can participate in this engagement. The first is by providing a response to the electronic survey. To complete the survey, you can access it by visiting this URL:

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

The second way is to conduct a focus group. The attached engagement guide is designed to help you facilitate this conversation within your organization.

I encourage you to share this survey and engagement guide with all employees of your board, your SEAC, and your school councils. A response by July 14, 2017 is appreciated. 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.

Based on our initial conversations with experts and research, five themes have been proposed for discussion:

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

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

We are also seeking input from other interested parties. The minister has written to all board chairs and to all key groups in the education sector asking for their feedback on this important topic too.

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. More information regarding the recruitment process will continue to be communicated.

Our government is committed to building an inclusive 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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Rodrigues". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "B" and a long, trailing "s" at the end.

Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister

cc Council of Directors of Education (CODE)