K-12 Education Standards Development Committee

**Small Group Summary Report**

**June 2021**

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# Introduction

The following report provides high-level summaries of the findings of the “small groups”, made up of members of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) Education Standards Development Committee (SDC), that have been exploring the seven main barriers to accessible education identified by the SDC in the K-12 sector. The full [[K-12 SDC Initial Recommendations Report](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations) is posted online.](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations)

Three additional groups explored important themes related to the barrier areas: emergency planning / safety; timelines and accountability; and transitions from K-12 to the postsecondary sector; and from K-12 to employment. These areas are all reflected in this summary.

## Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 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 AODA’s Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). 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 Space; and Customer Service.

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. The vision is to have 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.

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

## Purpose of the Initial Recommendations Report

The full document sets out the Committee’s initial recommendations for a proposed education accessibility standard. 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 a new proposed standard to the Minister. As outlined by the act, the Minister may adopt the recommendations in whole, in part, or with modifications.

## Rationale

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 an Education Accessibility Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA). Under the AODA, an accessibility standard is a regulation that spells 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.

## 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, seven 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; and 7) Physical and Architectural Barriers.

Based on the seven 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 their draft recommendations to the full Committee for discussion and review before final voting. Through their work the Committee decided to form two additional small groups focused on Planning for Emergencies and Safety and Compliance, Accountability and Timelines. The Committee members were collaborative, engaged and dedicated throughout the experience of working together in small groups and as a full Committee.

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 draft 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.

In addition to these seven groups, three other small groups have examined key areas of accessible K-12 education.

With this background in mind, the following report can be read as a complementary document to the larger [K-12 SDC Initial Recommendations Report](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations).

The seven main barrier areas considered by these small working group are as follows:

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

As well, three other small groups have explored the following areas:

1. Planning for Emergencies and Safety and
2. Accountability and Timelines
3. Transitions

The summaries below all vary in length and complexity, as they were drafted independently by the members of the respective small groups. They represent the judgment of each group regarding the ideal format for representing their discussions and findings.

**Small Group Summaries**

# Barrier One Recommendations Summary: Attitudes, Behaviours, Perceptions and Assumptions

Prevalent societal attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and assumptions toward students with disabilities in the K-12 education system underlie the first barrier, underpinning all other barrier areas.

The recommendations identify what the Ontario Ministry of Education\*, district school boards, schools, Ontario College of Teachers\* and educators need to address to combat ableism and ensure accessibility, equity, and inclusion for all students with disabilities. [\*Hereinafter referred to as the Ministry and College of Teachers, respectively]

To address **Attitudes, Behaviours, Perceptions and Assumptions** requires understanding and transforming societal beliefs norms and expectations. The successful implementation of the recommendations addressing other barrier areas is impossible without first identifying and acknowledging ingrained ableist thinking that shape values, practices and priorities.

The [barrier one full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-0) that fall under **Attitudes, Behaviours, Perceptions and Assumptions** are available online for review and feedback.

These recommendations require that the Ministry, College of Teachers and District School Boards collaborate to implement, monitor, and report on progress tackling **Attitudes, Behaviours, Perceptions and Assumptions**.

The five (5) **Attitudes, Behaviours, Perceptions and Assumptions** recommendations in the full draft document address the areas summarized below:

* **Lived experience by students and educators with disabilities must inform the approach to addressing accessibility issues** 
  + District school boards locally should be networked by the Ministry for accessible information sharing
* **Teacher candidates must learn the need for inclusive, equitable and accessible education**
  + Enhanced quality of College of Teachers Special Education requirements
* **In-servicing to model inclusive behaviours and attitudes, and acceptance of differences** 
  + Ministry material development for local staff training on strategies to ensure full participation by students with disabilities
* **A vision of accessibility is communicated to school board stakeholders**
  + Developed by the Ministry, such multi-year curriculum using age-appropriate content is implemented by each school board with accessible in-person and online channels
* **Change attitudes and behaviours using policy frameworks, resources, opportunities and performance expectations.**

# Barrier Two Recommendations Summary: Awareness and Training

As societal attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and assumptions toward students with disabilities in the K-12 education system can be attributed to gaps in knowledge and training, or awareness of barriers faced by students with disabilities. To affect a cultural change, the concept of Universal Design for Learners (UDL) and the inclusion of people who self-identify as being differently abled is essential in the development and delivery of any training program for all education stakeholders.

As recommendations from small group one was received, it became clear that the adaption of those recommendations would enable the changes that would help eliminate the barriers identified for awareness and training.

The [barrier two full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-1) that fall under **Awareness and Training** can be found online for review and feedback.

After a detailed examination of recommendations from barrier one and of this barrier, we recommend that:

1. A common Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 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.
2. The Government of Ontario develop and provide a model training module and template for AODA, 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.
3. School boards develop and deliver adaptive/assistive technology and services training programs at:
   1. a general awareness level; and
   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 online.

# Barrier Three Recommendations Summary: Curriculum, Assessment & 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:

1. Intersectionality of students, staff, family, and community identities and perspectives
2. Intersectionality of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and Accountability
3. Intersectionality of each disability barrier, socially constructed in systems/ individuals

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.

When addressing Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, there is an explicit relationship between them. 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.

The [barrier three full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-2) that fall under **Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction** can be found online for review and feedback.

These recommendations address the need for the Ministry and School Boards to work together to ensure implementation, monitoring, review, and reporting on progress towards barrier-free access to all curriculum, assessment and instructional resources and methods.

The topics covered in the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction (CAI) recommendations are listed under the **11 key themes** outlined in the full draft document. They are as follows:

## Diversity and Accessibility in Design and Development

* 1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI)
  2. review and renewal of curriculum using principles of accessibility, equity and inclusion
  3. strategy and action plan for continuous review of all curriculum. requiring that all reviewed and new curriculum address accessibility barriers and are barrier free
  4. review and renewal process for all curriculum (e.g. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); American Sign Language (ASL); Indigenous languages, mental health and well-being, financial literacy, digital literacy, physical education, etc.)
  5. inclusion of Alternative and Expanded curriculum resources (e.g. learning skills, executive functioning, vocational, disability-specific—vision and hearing loss, full captioned digital, visual accommodations, and non-verbal formats)
  6. resource guidelines and resources to support professional practice in equitable, barrier free designed learning experiences.
  7. culturally responsive (fair) assessment practices
  8. non-discriminatory and anti-racist curriculum and assessment design and application

## Learning Resources and Self-Assessment

* 1. the design of instructional materials that are fully accessible on a timely basis
  2. procurement procedures be fully accessible, in timely, quality alternative formats and/or conversion ready
  3. lived experiences of persons with disabilities inform curriculum resource development
  4. student instruction in self-assessment methods

## Professional Learning and Development

* 1. Faculty of Education, teacher education, ongoing professional learning and leadership development ensure the principles and practices of UDL and Differentiated Instruction (DI) are applied in curriculum, assessment, and instruction
  2. ongoing professional learning on diagnostic, formative, and summative curriculum-based and more formal assessments

## Student Voice in Barrier Free Policy and Practice

* 1. 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 and destinations.
  2. curriculum and assessment policies review and design provide for fair and equitable, barrier free accessibility for a wide range of abilities and needs
  3. 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
  4. access to multiple adaptive pathways, experiential learning and specialized programs

## Early and On-going Assessment for Students with Disabilities’ Needs

* 1. timely and fair/unbiased assessments for the identification of disability related need.
  2. data collection and action to review and address access and barriers to disability related assessments and identification in service gaps.
  3. on-going evidence-based classroom assessments informing how a student learns best

## Interactive Communication in Accessible Learning Environments

* 1. ongoing input, survey feedback and monitoring procedures; alternative mechanisms by which information exchange, collaboration, and learning
  2. open communication, regular policy design and review, and practices that ensure full access, equity and inclusion for a wide range of abilities and needs
  3. alternative mechanisms for information exchange, collaboration, and learning

## Accessibility Hub and Shared Practice

* 1. accessibility hub of continuously updated centrally located (e.g., online) resources and research-based initiatives be developed and be openly accessible across education sectors.
  2. research-informed culturally responsive pedagogy and assessment-informed practices be widely shared throughout district school boards through professional learning networks and online knowledge repositories

## Teaching and Learning about Human Rights and Disability

* 1. 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, OHRC and AODA requirements
  2. lived experiences of persons with disabilities informs learning and fair, equitable assessment practices

## New and Specialized Programs; Physical Health and Wellness, Mental Health and Well-being; Indigenous Education; Specialized Alternative, Expanded Curriculum and Pathways

* 1. action plans to ensure specialized programs are open, accessible and barrier free
  2. 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
  3. coordinated resources, guidelines and materials that effectively include students across all disabilities in physical, health and wellness programming within and beyond the school environment; development of Adapted Physical Education (APE) resources
  4. design strengths-based curriculum resources, assessment methods, and professional development for educators with which to assess resiliency needs of all student
  5. School Mental Health Ontario initiatives including resources, training, and implementation support
  6. Indigenous pedagogy, ways of knowing, and experiences (including students across all disabilities) are guided by cultural knowledge and perspectives that can provide fair and un-biased assessment practices, culturally responsive knowledge building and personalized learning pathways to success
  7. develop and provide alternative and expanded curriculum and learning expectations- including the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for students with vision loss; experiential learning through co-operative education and apprenticeships; French immersion and extended French etc., alternative inclusive and expanded curriculum supporting identified student needs
  8. access to adaptive and assistive and emerging technologies and resources for use
  9. adaptations to assessment methods in specialized and expanded programs including experiential learning, co-operative education, and apprenticeships
  10. adaptations to assessment methods related to earning a diploma certificate and preserving pathways to postsecondary education

## Resource Development and Improvement Planning

* 1. accountability tools and processes to survey, monitor and communicate student engagement and performance data based on accessible curriculum, assessment and instruction practices
  2. ongoing multi-year improvement processes, transdisciplinary practice, resource sharing and flexible shared solutions

## Long Term Objectives and Timeline alignment for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Recommendations

* 1. 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 standard implementation and publicly reported.
  2. continuous updating, collaboration and improvement in a duty to accommodate and eliminate barriers for students with disabilities as demonstrated in their annual review and public reporting.

# Barrier Four Recommendations Summary: 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 students 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 school boards face in particular to ensuring the proper use of digital learning technologies.

The [barrier four full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-3) that fall under **Digital Learning and Technology** can be found online for review and feedback.

Based on the group’s lived experiences, consultations, and research it became clear that a number of 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.

# Barrier Five Recommendations Summary: Organizational Barriers

The initial consultation for the Education Accessibility Standard identified a significant number of organizational barriers, particularly concerning special education processes such as the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and the Individual Education Plan (IEP) 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 schools by community agencies funded by other Ministries.

Transitions was also identified as an organizational barrier, including 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.

Below is a summary of each of the barrier areas we addressed with recommendations.The [barrier five full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-5) that fall under **Organizational Barriers** can be found online for review and feedback.

## Compliance with the AODA, 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, the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 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 OHRC and the AODA. 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 OHRC 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 OHRC, 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.

## 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 students’ education may be negatively impacted. These recommendations address the lack of coordination and accountability between different Ministries that are each responsible for supporting the student at school.

## 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 that 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. The 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 OHRC Tribunal which can be an expensive and a time-consuming process.

## Individual Education Plans Recommendations

**Barrier:** Currently, students with special education needs are entitled to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This right should be extended to all students with disabilities. Parents/guardians must be consulted in the development of the IEP 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 IEP is to be developed, and how parents, guardians, and the student are to be involved in that process;
* What parents /guardians of students with disabilities are to be told in advance or during the IEP development process, about the IEP development process, and their rights in the IEP development process;
* Establishing a prompt, fair, independent, and impartial process for parents//guardians of students with disabilities to undertake if they are not satisfied with the IEP that a school board proposes, in order to get a review of the proposed IEP;
* Establishing a prompt, fair, independent, and impartial process that parents/guardians of students with disabilities can use if they believe that the school board is not fully implementing a student’s IEP.

## 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. This includes, for example, what is available, how 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 IEP 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 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.

## 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 school full time.

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 Ontario’s Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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 Standard.

## Data Collection Recommendations

**Barrier:** The review of accessibility barriers in education and the discussions by the SDC 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.

## School Board Accessibility Committees and Plans Recommendations

**Barrier:** Earlier standards of AODA 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 SDC 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.

## Professional Learning Recommendations

**Barrier:** The earlier sections on attitudes, technology and curriculum have identified the importance and value of professional development for teachers and other professionals who work with students with disabilities. Professional learning about ableism, accessibility, AODA, OHRC and disability are critical to the effective education of students with disabilities. These recommendations focus on professional development related to organizational barriers. The related recommendations include significantly enhancing the professional qualifications required to teach students who are blind or low vision, as well as adding more rigour to the Special Education Additional Qualifications. The recommendations for the school board include self advocacy training for parents and students as well as fostering parent engagement especially around the collaborative development of IEP’s.

## 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 and Placement Committee (IPRC). The IPRC 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 IPRC’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 IPRCs were created before the protections for equality for students with disabilities were enacted in the Charter of Rights and Ontario’s 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 (IEP), were not identified through an IPRC. This strongly suggests this process is irrelevant to many.
2. Many school staff and families complain about the IPRC’s administrative burden and delays that can create barriers to student success.
3. IPRCs are hampered by the arbitrary, undefined and confusing distinction between define “placement” on which the IPRC can decide, and inseparable issues concerning “program” or “services on which the IPRC cannot decide.”
4. Families report that they don’t understand the IPRC 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 an IPRC.
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.

# Barrier Six Recommendations Summary: Social Realms

Social Realms are integral parts of students' education and development inside and outside of the classroom. The topics covered in Social Realms are listed under the 7 key themes outlined in the full draft document and have been created to ensure that the intersectional perspectives of the school community are included and upheld to remove barriers within social realms.

The [barrier six full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-5) that fall under **Social Realms** can be found online for review and feedback. The topics are as follows:

## Educational and Online Events

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. They should be held where it is transportation and built environment accessible.

## Transitions Facilitator/Navigator

1. 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, develop transition plans, access special education supports and provide transition planning resource development for all school boards and staff.
2. A centralized Transitions Hub will be set up by Ministry of Education to support the role of the Transitions Facilitator/Navigator. The Hub would be a conduit to share best practices, develop partnerships and maintain regular communication across all school boards and authorities in Ontario.

## Transportation

Both school boards and transportation consortia should work together and acknowledge they have shared responsibility of ensuring the rights of the students are honoured by:

1. Individual consultation with each family to identify accessibility and accommodation needs.
2. Ensure the Transpiration Consortia/bus companies and drivers, including replacement drivers have been properly trained to accommodate the students and their individual needs. In the case of emergency replacement, as soon as possible. Training records are to be provided to the respective boards twice per year.
3. A summary report of numbers, types and status of complaints be provided to the school board, transportation consortia, Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) and accessibility committee on a quarterly basis. These reports shall be made public on the school board’ and transportation consortia’ website.
4. School boards/bus companies/transportation consortia should monitor bussing compliance as well as periodically audit consumer satisfaction with all applicable education accessibility standards and publicly report on the audit’s results. A bus company’s constituent failure to meet its obligation should trigger penalties and termination of the contract.
5. Major consideration in an Request for Proposal (RFP) for bussing should be given to those companies who have a proven record of providing accessibility for students with disabilities.
6. The contracted bus company will ensure that pick-up and drop off locations are accessible when needed to accommodate the parents or guardians of students.

## Bullying/Cyberbullying Workshops

School boards will develop and implement workshops to educate on and address bullying and cyberbullying and its impact on students’ physical and mental health. These workshops are to be informed and facilitated by young people with disabilities and presented to all members of the school community.

## Experiential / Co-Op Learning Opportunities

1. School boards should:
2. Review its experiential learning programs to identify and remove any accessibility barriers.
3. Reach out to potential placement organizations that are informed and committed to the duty to accommodate to the learning and participation of the student.
4. Create and share supports and advice for placement organizations, including small businesses, who need assistance in the student’ learning and participation process.
5. Monitor placement organizations to ensure accommodations are provided and effective.
6. Survey students and placement organizations to examine the provision and effectiveness of the accommodation.
7. The Ministry of Education to provide template or models for these policies and measures. It also should prepare and make available training videos for school boards and placement organizations to guide them through this process.

## Social Isolation

1. 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
2. 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.

## Service Animals

1. 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:
   1. Immediately notify the students and family if that are specific concerns or objections and shall work to resolve them, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. This may include investigation of how the student will benefit from the service animal in their learning and development.
   2. Allowed a trial or test period with the service animal at school before a decision is made to reject the request.
   3. Take action to effectively accommodate each student and or staff conflicting rights without sacrificing the human rights of the student using the service animal.
   4. Develop a plan with the student, their family, and the organization providing the service animal such as:
      * Allowing the service animal’s training organization to provide training to school staff.
      * Allowing the training organization to provide an orientation to the student population at the school to the presence of the service animal.
      * Providing information to other families to reinforce the inclusion of the service animal at school.
      * Engage a swift dispute resolution process which may include an independent mediation to resolve a rejection of the request or with the implementation plan.
2. 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.
3. Nothing in this accessibility standard 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.

# Barrier Seven Recommendations Summary: Physical and Architectural

These recommendations are to be included in the Education Accessibility Standard to deal with barriers in the built environment of the K-12 publicly funded school system. These do not include specific technical requirements, such as the precise width of doorways or other paths of travel. These recommendations set out the barriers to be addressed and the measures to address them. If the Government of Ontario adopts these, it would have to then proceed to set technical requirements where possible.

The [full barrier seven recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-6) that fall under **Physical and Architectural** barriers can be found online for review and feedback.

The proposed measures have been designed to achieve the AODA’s goal of an accessible school system in Ontario by 2025. Although it is acknowledged that there are costs associated with these measures, the Government of Ontario will need to determine how much it is prepared to spend, and which of these requirements it would thereby adopt.

There is a far greater cost of not imposing these requirements! If any school facilities remain inaccessible, or if new schools are built with new barriers, there will be later costs for retrofitting and/or litigation costs in response to human rights cases.

The Ontario Building Code and existing accessibility standards do not set out all the modern and sufficient accessibility requirements for the built environment in Ontario. Moreover, the building code is largely if not entirely designed to address the needs of adults, not children. The Government of Ontario has no accessibility standard for the built environment in schools, whether old or new schools. The Government has not agreed to develop a Built Environment Accessibility Standard to substantially strengthen the accessibility provisions in the Ontario Building Code.

## Rationale

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 people 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.

The Ministry of Education does not now have its own standard or guideline for school boards to follow that specifies or requires that new school construction or major renovations be accessible to people with disabilities. When the Ministry has had local schools reviewed in the past to assess where physical improvements are needed, it has either not had accessibility reviewed at all or has only considered the limited accessibility requirements of the Ontario Building Code and the AODA standards.

The Ministry of Education has very little expertise in its staff on how to design a school to be fully accessible to people with disabilities. 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 people with disabilities. Instead, the Ministry leaves it to each school board to address accessibility as much or as little as it wishes, in accordance with whatever standard for accessibility the school board wishes to use. School boards have reported that when funding is sought from the Ministry for school construction, the funding formula or calculations that the Ministry uses does not cover accessibility requirements and can require the exclusion of accessibility features from a school board’s proposed plans.

The Ministry does not specifically track how much money, provincially appropriated for local school revitalization or improvements, is in fact used for improving accessibility.

Each School board is left to re-invent the wheel when it comes to accessibility, even though the needs of people 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.

There is no assurance that school boards have on their staff the expertise needed to decide what to do to ensure that a school is accessible. Municipal Building Code officials do not always effectively enforce the Ontario Building Code’s limited accessibility requirements. They do not enforce AODA requirements. School boards have nowhere to go to ensure in advance that a school construction project they wish to undertake is accessible, before construction begins.

Accordingly, 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. This is highly inefficient and wasteful. It allows public money to be used to create new barriers against people with disabilities and to perpetuate existing barriers.

Providing a barrier-free built environment in schools benefits everyone. It ensures that all students can come to school to learn there. It enables parents and other family members with disabilities to take full part at school activities to which family members are invited. It enables people with disabilities to be employed in all jobs throughout the school. It enables the school, a public building, to be used for other important public uses, such as town hall meetings or as a polling station during elections.

Funding for school construction and renovation comes from the Government of Ontario. That funding and the funding approval process must be expedited and must ensure accessibility of schools. It must not delay or preclude the achievement of this goal.

When it was passed in 2005, the AODA required Ontario, including its schools, to become fully accessible to people with disabilities by 2025. The Government did not effectively address the need to achieve this in schools’-built environment up until now. These recommendations are designed to achieve the AODA’s goals. It will be for the Government to implement measures to ensure that school boards can fulfil them.

## Building Design Requirements

During the course of its work, members of the committee focused on the following subjects regarding the built environment of schools and accessibility:

## Ensuring a Fully Accessible Built Environment at Schools

General Constraints:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

**2. Ensuring Accessibility of Gym, Playground and Like Equipment and Activities**

General Constraints:

1. 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.
2. Section 80.18 of the Ontario’s IASR, 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.

Other subjects relating to school design and accessibility included the following:

1. Accessible Design for Exterior Site Elements
2. Accessible Design for Interior Building Elements – General Requirements
3. Accessible Design for Interior Building Elements – Circulation
4. Accessible Design for Interior Building Elements – Washroom Facilities
5. Accessible Design for Interior Building Elements – Specific Room Requirements (e.g., Performance Stages,
6. Sensory Rooms
7. Offices, Work Areas, and Meeting Rooms
8. Outdoor Athletic and Recreational Facilities
9. Arenas, Halls and Other Indoor Recreational Facilities
10. Swimming Pools
11. Cafeterias
12. Libraries
13. Teaching Spaces and Classrooms
14. Waiting and Queuing Areas
15. Information, Reception and Service Counters

## Accessible Design for Interior Building Elements - Other Features such as:

1. Lockers
2. Storage, Shelving and Display Units
3. Public Address Systems
4. Emergency Exits, Fire Evacuation and Areas of Rescue Assistance
5. Other Features (e.g., space and reach requirements + ground and floor surfaces)
6. Universal Design Practices beyond Typical Accessibility Requirements
7. Requirements for Public Playgrounds on or Adjacent to School Property

# Barrier Eight Recommendations: Planning for Emergencies and Safety Working Group

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 K-12 Education SDC elated to students with disabilities were heightened or increased as noted in the report from the **Accessibility Education K-12 SDC, Planning for Emergencies and Safety Working Group COVID-19 Barriers for Students with Disabilities and Recommendations, July 2020**.

The Planning for Emergencies and safety section of this report focuses on building upon lessons learned during COVID-19 pandemic and making short- and long-term recommendations that should be in place in the event of future emergencies.

The [barrier eight full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-7) that fall under **Planning for Emergencies and Safety** can be found online for review and feedback.

The recommendations contained in the full report were made based on the 4 stages of emergency planning and that 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.

## Mitigation and Prevention

“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).

To prevent and mitigate some of the barriers that were faced by students with disabilities during COVID-19 during future emergency events, it is important 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 topics included under mitigate and prevention include:

1. an independent review and assessment of the Ministry of Education’s and School Boards’ response to COVID-19 in supporting students with disabilities during COVID-19.
2. Developing 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.
3. Developing and revising Ministry of Education’s and School Board emergency plans using an all-hazard approach to address different emergency events and the continued delivery of education and health services for students with disabilities.
4. Using 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.
5. Ensuring student voice and people with lived experience are involved in the development of emergency plans
6. Ministry of Education and Schools complete a risk assessment through a process that is inclusive and collaborative and involve stakeholders in the delivery of education and health services and persons with or represent persons with disabilities.

## 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.

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 upkeeping. 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.

The topics under planning and preparedness include:

1. maintaining infrastructure, technology, dedicated technology supports to support online learning during an emergency
2. ensuring all resources developed are accessible to all students with disabilities during an emergency
3. to update and make accessible information and resources for mental health & wellbeing accessible through a centralized hub during that is available during an emergency
4. ensuring students with disabilities have access to education, health and wellbeing services required during an emergency
5. develop 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.
6. 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.
7. provision of 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.
8. Ministry of Education and School Board Emergency Plan shall include the creation of Central Leadership Command 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.
9. Ministry of Education and School Boards shall designate a communication lead to provide clear and consistent communication and guidance on expectations in education, health service delivery, etc. during an emergency.
10. Ministry of Education and School Boards’ emergency plan shall include cross-sectorial partnerships with the responsibility for ensuring that the needs 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.

## 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.

The topics under responding to an emergency include:

1. Ministry of Education and School Board Command table collect data on the emergency using evidence-based data collection methods for people with disabilities.
2. 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.
3. Data should be collected collaboratively and independently at a provincial and school board level 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 during an emergency

## Debriefing and Revising

To close an emergency cycle, it is important to debrief the emergency event to inform practice, improve response and revise an emergency plan.

Topics under the stage of debriefing and revising include:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Ministry of Education and School Board ensure all policies and procedures are revised and updated to reflect changes made during last emergency event.

# Barrier Nine Recommendations: Timelines and Accountability Working Group

The mandate of the Timelines and Accountability Group is 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 and affected agencies.

The [barrier nine full recommendations](https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations/barrier-area-narratives-and-recommendations#section-8) that fall under **Timelines and Accountability** can be found one for review and feedback.

The following report makes a number of recommendations that detail various accountability mechanisms for obligated organizations under the AODA. It also proposes specific timelines for incorporation of the recommendations into the Education Accessibility Standard.

The overall goal in this context is to assess the end result of the implementation of the Education Accessibility Standard, 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 Standard regulation must be implemented within the timeframe suggested once the regulation is enacted.

Timeline categories:

* Immediately from enactment of the Education Accessibility Standard regulation (“immediate”)
* 6 months from enactment (“6 months”)
* 1 year from enactment (“1 year”)
* 18 months from enactment (18 months)
* 2 years from enactment (“2 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 Standard. This is proposed where the recommendation relates to a duty that pre-dates this regulation being enacted, e.g. 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 Standard 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.

# Recommendations Summary: Technical Sub-Committee

The Technical Sub-Committee (TSC) is comprised of representatives from both the Kindergarten to Grade 12 and Post-secondary Education Standards Development Committees (SDCs).

The TSC’s mandate, as received from the Minister for Accessibility, was to identify barriers that students with disabilities experience during transition, with a special focus on transition planning between the sectors, and to make recommendations for removing these barriers.

Transitions considered by the subcommittee included those into and within K-12; and from K-12 to work, the community, and post-secondary education.

Specifically, the purpose of the Technical Sub-Committee was to:

* Share information across the Kindergarten to Grade 12 and Post-secondary Education Standard Development Committees
* Consider areas of commonality and alignment
* Provide practical advice and guidance to both Committees on transition planning and alignment issues
* Review and provide input on Committee meetings specific to transitions
* Identify barriers to students with disabilities during transitions throughout their educational career, and make recommendations for their effective removal

**Note:** Barriers relating to transitions from K-12 into colleges and universities are addressed in this report. Barriers relating to transitions within (e.g., undergraduate to graduate) and out of post-secondary education to employment are addressed in the [Post-secondary Education SDC’s Initial Recommendations Report](https://www.ontario.ca/page/development-proposed-postsecondary-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations-report).

## Barrier Areas

The Technical Sub-Committee identified eight broad areas of barriers that impact the experiences of students with disabilities transitioning between Kindergarten to Grade 12, and from K-12 to Post-secondary Education.

These are:

1. Lack of consistency of planning in transitions;
2. Lack of understanding between the Kindergarten to Grade 12 and post-secondary education systems;
3. Transitions for indigenous students (between First Nations Boards and communities and provincially funded school boards);
4. Lack of a consistent and clear process (and required documentation) to obtain accommodation supports;
5. Not all students have Individualized Education Plans – how to support those students (lack of clear support process);
6. Integration of transition planning; and,
7. Financial implications for reassessment in the transition from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and post-secondary education.

**Transition Planning**

Transition planning involves a coordinated set of activities, undertaken by students, families and academic institutions, that are intended to support academic achievement, health and well-being through numerous transition periods in a student’s life. This includes the pathway to work, adult services, independent/supported living, and community participation. These activities need to be informed by needs, experiences, strengths, and interests. For students living with disabilities, equality of opportunity, and full and meaningful participation in their schools and communities require considerable planning, attention and coordinated services.

Audits of student Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have consistently identified transition planning as an area for improvement because the transition from K-12 to post-secondary presents many barriers for students with disabilities. Many of these barriers stem from poor coordination between secondary schools and post-secondary education institutions.

Transitions for students with disabilities to the community or to employment can also be challenging. Adults with disabilities have higher rates of unemployment and under employment than individuals without disabilities. To address these barriers, supportive and effective transitions are essential for the future success of students with disabilities.

**End**