

Annual Accessibility Planning for School Boards under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*: Guidelines and Toolkit

Ontario School Boards
Spring 2003

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References:

This Toolkit was developed by the School Board Consortium, in consultation with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The document is based on the following publications:

[*A Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*](#)
Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. August 2002

[*Toolkit for Annual Accessibility Planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act*](#)
Ontario Hospital Association. March 2003.

Introduction

This document was prepared by a consortium of five school boards in consultation with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. As such, it is intended as a guide only and does not constitute legal advice.

The toolkit was designed as a supplement to [*A Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*](#), published by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. Consequently, school boards are encouraged to use this toolkit in conjunction with the Directorate's guide when preparing their annual accessibility plan. The guide is available at: www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm

The official legal text of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* is available at: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/01o32_e.htm.

If you have questions about how the legal requirements of the ODA apply to specific circumstances in your board, please consult legal counsel. If you have general questions about the Act, please contact the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario at:

777 Bay Street, Suite 601
Toronto ON M7A 2J4
Tel: 416-326-0207; Toll-free: 1-888-520-5828
TTY: 416-326-0148; Toll-free: 1-888-335-6611
E-mail: accessibility@css.gov.on.ca

Electronic copies of these materials may be found on the Council of Directors of Education website at www.ontariodirectors.ca and on the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario website at www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm.

Please note that the sample accessibility plan provided in the toolkit is not a "one size fits all" document, but is a template to assist boards in getting started with the accessibility planning exercise.

If you have questions regarding the development of this toolkit, please contact:

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Section 1

Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning for School Boards

Removing Barriers to Full Participation

People with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of our population. According to Statistics Canada, about 1.9 million Ontarians have disabilities - about 16% of the population. Disability tends to increase with age and as such, it is estimated that 20% of the population will have disabilities within the next two decades. Enhancing the ability of people with disabilities to live independently and contribute to the community will not only have positive effects on the future prosperity of Ontario but will contribute toward the overall quality of life of persons with disabilities and their communities.

By 2020, Statistics Canada estimates that 20% of the population will have disabilities.

Discrimination against people with disabilities is widespread; in fact, the largest category of complaints to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in 2001-2002 was disability discrimination.^[1] People with disabilities face unnecessary barriers almost everywhere: at home, in parks, in recreational facilities, in the streets, in theatres, in stores and in restaurants.

The ODA adopts the broad definition for "disability" that is set out in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*. This can include limitations that are physical, hearing, speech, vision,

smell, taste, touch, intellectual, learning or mental health, as well as from other conditions, accidents, illnesses or diseases. This broad definition is complementary to the broad categories of exceptionality identified in the *Education Act*.

Inclusive Design: A way of designing and environments so they are usable by and appealing to everyone regardless of age, ability or circumstance by working with users to remove barriers in the social, technical, political and economic processes underpinning building and design

Under the ODA, a "**barrier**" is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Barriers prevent people with disabilities from going to school and to work. According to the 1991 Health and Activity Limitations Survey only 6% of adults with disabilities in Ontario have a university degree, compared to 15% of adults without a disability; and only 49% of working age people with disabilities were employed.

Barrier-removal is the process by which disabling conditions are eliminated. When barriers pass unnoticed and are not removed, people with disabilities are prevented from participating fully, and stereotypes about what people with disabilities can and cannot do are perpetuated.

Many people with disabilities identify attitude as the major barrier they encounter. People with disabilities experience attitudinal barriers as stigma and prejudice. Attitudinal barriers, when unchallenged, serve to legitimize discrimination. See Sections 5 and 6 of this document for references and resource materials that provide additional information on types of disability and related barriers.

Barrier-removal is the process by which disabling conditions are eliminated.

At the heart of many communities, and as providers of education, school boards play a crucial role in ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to education and the opportunities that it provides. Universal accessibility is important to the community life of schools. It is also important to ensure the equality of opportunity and access for all employees. All Ontario school boards are currently demonstrating leadership in working with people with disabilities through their many activities and services, including providing specialized education programs and services to students with special needs, and ensuring that buildings and facilities are accessible to all. However, barriers still exist.

The Benefits of Barrier Removal and Prevention

Consider these positive outcomes for barrier removal:

- Creates school communities that are fully accessible for all students.
- Your school board could draw from a larger pool of skilled employees.

- Services, policies, procedures and practices will meet the needs of a wide range of people, including people with disabilities.
- Buildings, facilities, programs and services will be more accessible.
- Your school board will better meet the needs of students, employees, family members, volunteers, and visitors.
- Allows for greater access for community partners to school board facilities.
- Your school board could better meet the needs of all people.

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*

"The purpose of this Act is to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province."

(*Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001: Section 1*)

The Government of Ontario launched its Vision and Framework for Change for Persons with Disabilities in November 2001, when the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was tabled in the Legislature.

In its vision for independence and opportunity for persons with disabilities, the government reaffirmed its commitment to building an inclusive Ontario for persons with disabilities. In implementing this vision, the government pledged to work in partnership with Ontarians to build on what has already been achieved, moving steadily towards a province in which no new barriers to persons with disabilities are created and existing ones are removed over time. Partners are expected to improve accessibility over time, and the government committed to working with them and sharing the responsibility for developing shared solutions.

Improving accessibility is a shared responsibility - with every social and economic sector, every region, every government, every organization, institution and association, and every person in Ontario. The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* includes requirements that would result in all sectors becoming increasingly accountable to the public for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It provides a flexible approach to promote locally driven solutions in tandem with provincial leadership and support.

The ODA sets out requirements for the provincial and municipal governments and key broader public sector organizations, including school boards, public transportation providers, hospitals, colleges, and universities as employers and as service providers. Broader public sector organizations are required to review their policies, programs, facilities and services through the development of annual accessibility plans, in consultation with people with disabilities. Plans must identify the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and the actions that would be taken to address them. Plans would set out improvement goals, as well as describing progress made in the previous year.

School boards must prepare annual accessibility plans, in consultation with

people with disabilities, and make them available to the public.

The Act received Royal Assent on December 14, 2001. [Section 15](#), which sets out requirements for school boards^[2], was proclaimed on September 30, 2002.

ODA Requirements

"The accessibility plan shall address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in the [school board's] by-laws, if any, and in its policies, programs, practices and services." (ODA; s. 15 (2))

The ODA requires that school boards prepare annual accessibility plans (section 15(2)), in consultation with persons with disabilities and others, that address barriers in the following ways:

1. Report on the measures that the school board has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
2. Describe the measures in place to ensure that the school board assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for people with disabilities.
3. List the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the school board will review in the coming year to identify barriers to people with disabilities.
4. Describe the measures the school board intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
5. Any other information that the regulations prescribe for the purpose of the plan (no such regulations have yet been developed).
6. Make the accessibility plan available to the public.

Joint Accessibility Plans

School boards may submit joint accessibility plans with other organizations affected by the Act, as long as each organization's individual obligations are met ([section 17](#))

Key Dates:	
December 14, 2001	<i>Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001</i> given Royal Assent
February 7, 2002	Partial proclamation: creation of the Accessibility Advisory Council and Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
September 30, 2002	Proclamation of section 15 of the ODA, bringing into effect obligations of school boards

September 30, 2003

First year accessibility plans required to be completed

School Board Accessibility Planning

The ODA builds on relationships and practices that currently exist.

The ODA builds on relationships and practices that currently exist by requiring school boards to prepare annual accessibility plans and consult with people with disabilities in their preparation. The purpose is to help school boards think strategically about barrier removal and prevention and to plan for the long term.

Accessibility plans are intended to address existing barriers to people with disabilities and to prevent new barriers from being established. The specific length and format of the plans is not prescribed; flexibility remains with the school boards themselves. However, in this toolkit, there is a sample of a school board accessibility plan format that may assist in ensuring that all obligations are met.

Some may choose to tie their plans into the annual curriculum, budget and capital planning process. In fact, accessibility planning will be most effectively implemented over the long term when it is integrated with business and capital planning cycles. The integration of accessibility planning within annual planning cycles will assist school boards in ensuring that accessibility planning is conducted in a strategic manner across the organization, and within existing financial resources. It will also assist in increasing staff understanding and awareness of ODA obligations and accessibility issues.

At this time, school boards are not required to submit their accessibility plans to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, but the Directorate may request them.

School boards have the flexibility to set fiscal and business priorities within the accessibility planning process. Since all are directed to implement this within existing resources, school boards would take this into consideration during long-term priority setting and planning.

School Boards may want to approach this first year as a "transition year," and this first plan as the beginning of a longer-term process.

School Boards may want to approach this first year as a "transition year," and this first plan as the beginning of a longer-term process. First year plans should start to bring together the diverse pieces and initiatives on accessibility that are already occurring, to gather information on existing barriers that have already been identified. Then they should start to plan for the following year and set longer-term priorities for ongoing barrier removal and prevention.

Accessibility planning is an annual obligation, which enables school boards to plan and move ahead in a strategic way by setting goals, budgeting resources and setting performance measures and monitoring. Accessibility planning is an ongoing process:

next year's plan will report on the commitments made in this year's plan, and set new priorities and commitments for the following year, and so on. The accessibility planning cycle will also be facilitated by integrating it with the business and capital planning cycles.

Keeping in mind that all organizations have *Human Rights Code* obligations to accommodate people with disabilities, short of undue hardship, the purpose of annual accessibility planning is to set priorities and plan for prevention and removal of barriers over the long term.

Steps in Creating an Accessibility Plan

The following outline provides a series of steps a school board may undertake in developing an accessibility plan. It is recognized that school boards differ in their mandates, resources and organizational structures. For that reason, the following steps are suggestions and guidelines only.

1. **Create an accessibility planning working group.**
2. **Commit (or re-commit) to annual accessibility planning.**
3. **Collect information on previous accessibility improvement activities.**
4. **Establish measures for preventing new barriers.**
5. **Identify areas to review in the coming year and barriers to address in the coming year.**
6. **Determine a process for addressing identified barriers in the coming year.**
7. **Establish a review and monitoring process.**
8. **Prepare the plan, obtain approval, and make it available to the public.**

1. Create an Accessibility Planning Working Group.^[3]

The role of the Working Group is to:

- **Prepare the school board's accessibility plan, in consultation with people with disabilities and others;**
- **Champion the planning process across the school board; and**
- **Ensure the plan is made available to the public.**

To empower the Working Group's activities, and harness broad support for their work within the school board, support from senior staff is critical. Members should be chosen for their professional skills and responsibilities. School boards are strongly encouraged to include members who are also people with disabilities. These members can provide insightful information to the Working Group and bring about a deeper understanding of accessibility.

As the ODA employs comprehensive definitions of both "disability" and "barrier," the school board may choose to include wide representation on the working group (see also section 5 of the sample accessibility plan). Examples of groups that may have representation include:

- Administration
- Community Members
- Employee groups
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Parish
- Physical Plant/Facilities
- School Council
- Special Education Advisory Council
- Students
- Teaching and non-teaching staff
- Trustees

2. Commit (or re-commit) to annual accessibility planning.^[4]

The school board's commitment to accessibility can be guided by the overall mission of the particular school board and by the purpose of the ODA. For example, accessibility can be built into strategic objectives about the relationship of the school board to the community served, its commitment to principles and practices of inclusion, and/or its policies and services that foster community participation and integration.

The Working Group may choose to integrate the following into its statement of commitment:

- Statements of your school board's commitment to providing access for students, employees, family members, volunteers, and visitors with disabilities.
- The values that underpin the relationship between people with disabilities and the school board.
- How barrier identification, removal and prevention will be integrated within services and activities.

During the initial planning process, the Working Group will set strategies and goals to realize this commitment to accessibility planning. Future plans may further refine the realization of the accessibility objectives as set out at this early stage.

3. Collect information on previous accessibility improvement activities

"The accessibility plan shall include a report on the measures that the [school board] has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities." (ODA; s. 15 (3)(a))

School boards already have made notable improvements in accessibility for people with disabilities. The Working Group should conduct a review of these previous achievements. This is an opportunity to highlight the efforts made to date in removing and preventing barriers to people with disabilities.

In the first year of plans, school boards would be reporting here on the key achievements in accessibility in previous years. Subsequent plans would begin to report more specifically on those commitments to barrier prevention and removal that were made in previous plans.

4. Establish measures for preventing new barriers^[5]

"The accessibility plan shall include the measures in place to ensure that the [school board] assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for people with disabilities." (ODA; s. 15 (3)(b))

The core intent of the accessibility plan is to provide an action plan for the elimination of present barriers and the creation of policies and procedures to prevent future barriers from being created. By reviewing the school board's decision-making practices and putting measures in place to ensure that proposals are assessed with respect to their effect on people with disabilities, school boards can better ensure no new barriers are created.

5. Identify areas to review in the coming year and barriers to address in the coming year^[6]

"The accessibility plan shall include a list of the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the [school board] will review in the coming year to identify barriers to people with disabilities." (ODA; s. 15 (3)(c))

When identifying areas to review and barriers to address, the Working Group should take the following into account:

- The broad definition of 'disability' adopted under the ODA, which goes beyond physical disabilities to include mental illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, etc.;
- *Human Rights Code* obligations to provide accommodation (short of undue hardship) to people with disabilities, both as a service provider and as an employer;
- The facilities, services etc. that are frequently used by the public or have a significant impact on people with disabilities.

Accessibility planning on an annual basis provides school boards with a process for strategic and continuous improvement of accessibility. Rather than review and address all barriers in all by-laws, policies, programs, practices, services and facilities in the first year, the Working Group can establish priorities for reviewing and addressing barriers. Once priorities in barrier-removal are established, effective strategies can be created to use the school board's finite resources optimally.

Establishing priorities can be accomplished by determining your current level of accessibility and by communicating with key stakeholders and partners.

The ODA requires that people with disabilities be consulted in the development of accessibility plans by school boards. However, the method of consultation is not prescribed and may vary.

To help reach people with disabilities, in addition to staff members, students and parents, school boards should consult with local organizations and groups for people with disabilities. Groups consulted will vary from school board to school board. Some will have very active Special Education Advisory Committees, for example; others may have strong relationships with disability organizations. In others, the parent advisory councils may take a strong interest in the development of the accessibility plans. School boards should use their discretion in determining the most appropriate groups and/or individuals to consult. But all are encouraged to consult with people who have a variety of types of disabilities, to ensure that accessibility plans are addressing the diversity of barriers that exist.

Community outreach is essential because persons with disabilities face many barriers to participation.

In addition, ongoing collaboration between senior business officials, other school board staff, the accessibility planning working group and community groups is important to ensure each group has an opportunity to provide their input or ideas during each stage of the planning process.

6. Determine a process for addressing identified barriers in the coming year^[7]

"The accessibility plan shall include the measures the [school board] intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities." (ODA: s. 15(3) (d))

Measures to identify barriers in the coming year could simply involve a continuation of the barrier-identification activities suggested in Step 5. After collecting data, the Working Group decides which barriers to address in the coming year. Once identified, school boards must determine how to address barriers within their resources and set targets and timelines for these actions. The ODA does not require organizations to address every barrier identified, but gives organizations the flexibility to determine the barriers they will address each year.

Consider using the following process to determine how identified barriers will be addressed:^[8]

- a. Decide how barriers will be removed or prevented
- b. Specify performance criteria
- c. Assign responsibility for removal or prevention of the barrier
- d. Decide on a timetable
- e. Allocate resources

The Working Group may require external experts - architects, barrier-free design consultants, accommodation specialists, or computer professionals - to help solve difficult or complex access issues. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario maintains a list of such professionals in their online Directory of Accessibility located at: www.accessibilitydirectory.ca.

The Working Group should also consult the individuals who identified the barriers. Many people with disabilities are authorities on eliminating the barriers that affect them.

7. Establish a review and monitoring process

The plan should specify how often the objectives will be reviewed, and ascertain whether barrier-removal and barrier-prevention strategies are being implemented effectively and on time.

It is vital that the Working Group meets regularly during the planning year. It is recommended that your school board evaluate progress at least quarterly and more often during the first months of the planning year. You can use both informal and formal methods for gathering data on the effectiveness of barrier-removal and prevention strategies.^[9] By establishing a review and monitoring process, your Working Group will be well-informed and organized as preparation of the next annual accessibility plan begins.

8. Prepare the plan, obtain approval, and make it available to the public.

Your school board's accessibility plan should be clearly written. It is important that people with disabilities, and others who were part of the consultative process, have opportunities to comment on the plan before its internal approval and public release.

Your plan should avoid passive sentences. Write short sentences and avoid jargon. Whenever possible, use short, commonly used words. Plain language is one form of accessible format!

Accessible formats may include standard word processor files, ASCII files, CD-ROM, properly marked-up Web pages, in Braille, or on audio cassette.

Accessibility plans must be made available to the general public.^[10] And on request, they should be made available in accessible formats.

More information in providing publications in multiple formats is provided by the Accessibility Directorate at: www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/how/howto_information.htm.

Section 2

Sample Annual Accessibility Plan

Annual Accessibility Plan for the Great Lakes District School Board* September 2003 - August 2004

Submitted to

Title

30 August 2003

Prepared by

Great Lakes District School Board
Accessibility Working Group

*This publication is available on the Great Lakes DSB's Website
(www.yourschoolboard.com Website)
and in accessible formats upon request*

Note: This plan is a template that may be used as a guide in preparing a school board's accessibility plan. Accordingly, when using the sample plan, modifications to each section will need to be made to reflect the needs/activities of individual school boards.

**There is no "Great Lakes District School Board". All other names, places, institutions, and municipalities are fictitious. Any resemblances to persons living or dead are purely coincidental.*

This Sample School Board Accessibility Plan is based on the sample "Owl Lake District School Board" plan that was included in the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario's "Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning."

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the ODA requires each school board to prepare an annual accessibility plan; to consult with people with disabilities in the preparation of this plan; and to make the plan public.

This is the first annual plan (2003 - 2004) prepared by the Accessibility Working Group of the Great Lakes District School Board. The plan describes: (1) the measures that the Great Lakes District School Board has taken in the past, and (2) the measures that the Great Lakes District School Board will take during the year (2003 - 2004) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

This year, the Great Lakes District School Board committed to the continual improvement of access to school board facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community with disabilities. The plan also reports on the participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans.

The Accessibility Working Group identified over x# of barriers for people with disabilities. The most significant findings were that the majority of the school board's materials were only available in print. Over the next several years, the Accessibility Working Group recommends focusing on x# of different barriers. This year, the Working Group recommends removing and preventing x# of barriers

1. Aim

This plan describes the measures that the Great Lakes District School Board has taken in the past and measures that will be taken during the next year (2003 - 2004) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities who work in, use or attend school board facilities and services.

2. Objectives

This plan:

1. Describes the *process* by which the Great Lakes District School Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities
2. Reviews efforts at the Great Lakes District School Board to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities during the *past year(s)*
3. Lists the policies, procedures, programs, practices and services that the Great Lakes District School Board will review in the *coming year* to identify barriers for people with disabilities
4. Describes the *measures* the Great Lakes District School Board will take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities
5. Describes how the Great Lakes District School Board will make this accessibility plan *available to the public*

3. Commitment to Accessibility Planning

Statement here about the approval process in a school board e.g. senior administration, Trustees etc..

The Great Lakes District School Board is committed to:

- Establishing an Accessibility Working Group
- Consulting with people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans
- Ensuring school board policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility
- Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community

The Director of Education has authorized the Accessibility Working Group to prepare an accessibility plan that will enable the Great Lakes District School Board to meet these commitments.

4. Description of the Great Lakes District School Board

The Great Lakes District School Board traces its roots to *(insert date)*, when *(insert historical information)* were asked by the *(insert relevant data)* to establish education programs for children in the city. This was, in part, a response to a large influx of families from xxx in *(insert date)*.

The Great Lakes District School Board was formally established in *(insert date)* . Over the next *(insert date)* years, other school districts and boards were established in *(insert county name)* County and by *(insert date)* there were *(insert appropriate number)* boards. These amalgamated into the single regional structure in *(insert date)*. In 1998, the Great Lakes Board of Education became The Great Lakes District School Board.

Presently, the Great Lakes District School Board serves *(insert number)* students through *(insert number)* secondary and *(insert number)* elementary schools. Our schools are *(insert description)* where the board's motto of *(insert board motto)* is acted on in an *(insert descriptor)* setting. The philosophy of the Great Lakes District School Board is to *(insert board philosophical statement)*. All students, regardless of special talents or challenging needs can grow and they can grow best by attending schools, which offer accessible programs in accessible settings through accessible services.

Note: Each board may insert "Mission/ Vision" statements at this point or prior to the above. The above is a sample descriptor for one particular board. Of course, you may personalize it as needed.

5. The Accessibility Working Group Members

The accessibility working group was formally constituted in April 2003 and consists of the following members:

List of working group members		
<i>Working Group member</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Contact information</i>
Chair	Senior Staff	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Administration & Finance	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Community Members	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Employee Groups	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Human Resources	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Information Technology	<i>Contact Info</i>

<i>Name</i>	Parish	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Physical Plant	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	School Council	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Special Education Advisory Committee	<i>Contact Info</i>
<i>Name</i>	Students	<i>Contact Info</i>

Note: Each board team will determine individual work group members to reflect their needs. Consider choosing teaching and non-teaching members, Trustees etc. The ODA requires that accessibility plans be prepared in consultation with people with disabilities. It is strongly recommended that the Working Group include employees who may have disabilities.

6. Recent Barrier-removal Initiatives

During the last several years, there have been a number of informal initiatives at Great Lakes District School Board to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

Note: Each board will tell its own story in narrative style. For example:

The Great Lakes District School Board, through its Special Education Plan, 2002-2003, has addressed access for students with disabilities through modifications and accommodations of programs and services. The Special Education Plan is available on the board website at www.yourschoolboard.ca or in print, large type, audio tape or Braille from the Special Education Department, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx ext xxx.

Accessibility has been facilitated with the inclusion of automatic door openers on major school interior and exterior doorways, elevators in all secondary schools with multiple stories, ramps for all school front and rear access points, accessible washrooms, audio and visual emergency alarm systems, and tactile and high-contrast signage, etc.

Attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities are being addressed through staff and student in-service about diversity, rewriting diversity policy/procedures and examining other policies and procedures for barriers to accessibility.

The designs of new schools have architectural features that incorporate principles of universal design as much as possible. Current renovations to existing buildings have accessibility for people with disabilities addressed in the plans.

Communicating in a variety of formats has been accomplished on a limited basis and this area will be addressed in the 2003-2004 plans.

7. Preventing new barriers

From this point forward, all school board programs, policies, practices and services will be subject to the guiding principles of inclusionary practice. We will strive to create an environment that is accessible to all people, regardless of age or ability. Through the annual accessibility planning process, Great Lake District School Board's programming, policies and practices will be assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

8. Barrier-identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Working Group used the following barrier-identification methodologies:		
<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
Presentation to Senior Administration	Opportunity for input and feedback	Ongoing
Letter to Stakeholders	Describe the working group composition and initiatives for the coming year	By September 2003
Presentations to Employee Groups	For information	Prior to submission
Focus groups	The board conducted focus groups with staff and former students to determine what barriers need to be addressed.	The focus groups were held in July and August 2003
Community consultations	The board held an open meeting with community groups representing persons with disabilities and other relevant stakeholder groups, e.g. SEAC	The meeting was held in August 2003
Presentation to Trustees	For information	Prior to submission

Note: It is possible that a school board may ultimately use only 2-3 methodologies to identify barriers. The above list includes a greater number for the purposes of providing examples of how barriers might be identified within the school board setting.

Other barrier-identification methodologies include:

- a. Complete the "Tool" under Section 3 of this document
- b. Brainstorm a list of known and suspected barriers (see Section 5)
- c. Solicit staff contributions (e.g. through questionnaires, interviews, discussions or meetings)
- d. Conduct accessibility assessments/audits using guides and checklists^[11]
- e. Communicate and consult with key stakeholders and partners and with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Whatever methodology chosen to identify barriers, it is important to ensure that people with disabilities are consulted as part of this process.

9. Barriers Identified

In its review, the Accessibility Working Group identified many barriers. Over the next several years, the Accessibility Working Group has decided to focus on the following:

Barriers Identified by the Accessibility Working Group		
Type of Barrier	Description of Barrier	Strategy for its removal/prevention
Physical	The front doors of several schools are very heavy and may be difficult to open for a wheelchair user or someone with limited strength.	Install power-operated doors or change the doors to lighter ones.
Physical	Benches in front lobby/hallways of several buildings obstruct paths of travel of people who are blind and visually impaired.	Re-organize lobbies and hallways.
Physical	In several school libraries, the aisles are wide enough for wheelchair users, but there is not space to turn around at the ends of the aisles.	Re-organize the shelving configuration in libraries.
Architectural	Reception Counters at several schools are not at eye level for wheelchair users.	Re-configure reception counters.

Architectural	Public telephones in schools: space cannot accommodate wheelchair users.	Redesign/reconfigure public telephone areas.
Architectural	Inaccessible washrooms in old wing of the high school.	Re-model two washrooms in old wing.
Communication	People who are deaf and hard of hearing cannot detect audio fire alarms currently being used in all schools.	Investigate visual emergency notification system.
Communication	Sign language interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing patients are hard to find.	Meet with Canadian Hearing Society to obtain information on how best to access these services.
Information	Student records are only available in print, which are not accessible to students with learning disabilities and students who are blind and visually impaired.	Working group to consult with learning disability specialist and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.
Information	Many forms and records are only available in print.	Make all forms available on the web, on disk or in other electronic formats.
Information	Student information and brochures are sometimes difficult to procure in alternative formats.	Working Group will discuss concern with Ministry of Community and Social Services (Accessibility Directorate of Ontario).
Attitudinal	Teaching and non-teaching staff members are often unaware/lack knowledge of non-physical disabilities (i.e. students with mental health disabilities).	Education sessions for staff and preparation of material for the staff orientation binder.
Attitudinal	Several students and parents have identified bullying and social isolation as significant problems in several elementary schools.	Explore possibilities for disability sensitivity and awareness programming for classmates.

Technological	Board website is not accessible to people who are blind and visually impaired or who use screen-reading software.	Enrol Information Technology staff in courses on accessible web design. Make necessary changes to website.
Policy/Practice	No central location for raising and addressing accessibility issues.	Establishment of Accessibility Working Group and Internal communications re: their role.
Policy/Practice	The school board's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities conflict with other employment policies.	Establishment of employment accommodation working group to review policies.

10. Barriers to be Addressed in 2003 - 2004

The Accessibility Working Group will address six barriers during the coming year. This plan will address at least one area in each of policies, programs, practices, services and facilities.

Barrier	Objective	Means to remove/prevent	Performance criteria	Resources	Timing	Responsibility
Communication/information Most school board forms, records and student information brochures only available in print format in English.	To the extent possible, provide non-print, alternative formats for school board forms, records and student information brochures as well as key brochures in 3 second languages *Note: to be completed over five year	Produce non-print format for school board forms, records and student information brochures; translation services	By September 2004, all forms, records and student information brochures produced after 2002 to be made available in non-print format and in 3 languages	\$xxx	Commence project in October 2003	I.T. dept Translation services contracted

	period					
Attitude Staff lack knowledge about disabilities	Staff will better understand how to accommodate students and staff with various types of disabilities	Disability awareness workshops and material prepared for staff	All staff will be aware of ways to accommodate students and staff with physical & non-physical disabilities	earmarked \$xxx for training	Sessions to be offered on Professional Development Days, 2003-04	Special Education
Technical School board website is not accessible.	Ensure that website is accessible to people who use screen-reading software.	Enrol I.T. staff in courses on accessible website design and/or hire external consultant to make change	People with disabilities can access school board website	\$xxx	Commence work in January 2004 for completion by March 2005.	I.T.
Physical School reception stations are too high for wheelchair users	Reconfigure school reception areas	Consult with architect and contractor to remodel station	Students in wheelchairs will be able to speak to school receptionist at eye level at counter	\$xxx	Commence work on one school reception stations in October 2003 to be completed by January 2006	Facilities Department
Policies Some school board policies may result in barriers to people with disabilities	Ensure all board policies are inclusive and address accessibility issues	Central office staff to review relevant policies and procedures	No individual is left out	Time for central office staff	Begin in September 2003 and complete by June 2004	All central office departments
Architectural Plans for new schools and renovations to existing schools have not	Ensure new buildings or renovations to existing facilities are accessible for all people	Consult with facilities planning and redesign	All schools in plan are completely accessible	\$xxx	Commence work in Spring 2003 and complete over 5 years	Facilities Department

adequately considered accessibility	with disability					
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Note: The 2003-2004 work plan is a plan about planning areas to be addressed and includes some tasks that can be accomplished in the first year, e.g. review policy documents for accessibility barriers, etc. Year two of the plan builds on year 1.

11. Review and monitoring process

The Accessibility Working Group meets regularly during the planning year to review progress. Throughout the year, evaluation of the effectiveness in implementing the barrier-removal and prevention strategies will be ongoing in preparation for the second year of accessibility planning.

The Working Group reminds staff about roles in implementing the plan. Minutes of meetings will be available.

12. Communication of the plan

The Great Lakes District School Board's accessibility plan will be posted on the board website at www.yourschoolboard.on.ca and hard copies will be available. The plan can be made available in accessible formats. The plan may be included within the school board orientation package to new staff.

Contact information for accessible format requests: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Section 3

Tool for School Board Accessibility Working Groups

The following questions are designed for members of school board accessibility working groups involved in accessibility planning under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA). The various questions may be used to help identify barriers and develop barrier removal strategies and to assist with the annual accessibility planning exercise.

SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN SCHOOL BOARD ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

1. Does your board have a main contact person/department identified to handle inquiries related to accessibility?

- Can this person provide quick and easy information to students, staff and visitors about your board's accessibility planning?
 - If this information is available via a telephone, is it also available through TTY/TDD for people who are deaf and hard of hearing as well?
 - If this information is available on the board's website, is the information available in a text-based format to make it accessible to people who are blind and visually impaired and use reading software?
2. How does your board currently deal with accessibility issues?
 3. Does your board monitor the availability, usage and condition of barrier-free features (i.e. accessible parking spaces, drinking fountains, counters, doorways, ramps, signage etc.)?
 4. Does your board get complaints about cluttered hallways and paths, or about providing accessible services/facilities? Consider keeping an inventory of complaints and following up with them.
 5. Does your board have policies on:
 - Accommodating employees and students with disabilities?
 - Ensuring facilities, publications, websites, and services are accessible to people with disabilities?
 6. Do your board's site planning, facilities and capital planning have policies promoting a barrier-free facility through the use of universal design features?
 7. Does your board ensure barrier-free designs are incorporated into new construction projects and re-development in outdoor spaces (i.e., parking lots, pathways, etc.)?
 8. Is accessibility considered in the approval of expansions or the construction of new buildings and facilities?
 9. Does your board provide information in accessible formats to people with disabilities (i.e. large print, audio tapes, computer diskettes, Braille)?
 10. Do your board's schools and facilities have both audible and visual emergency alarm systems?
 11. Are all board buildings, parking lots and other facilities barrier-free?
 12. Does your board's maintenance and snow removal plans consider people with disabilities (i.e. access for wheelchairs, canes, strollers, etc.)?

13. Does your board use International and Universal Symbols and tactile signage in schools and facilities? Consider font size, colour, lighting and contrast.
14. Are trash receptacles, drinking fountains, benches, public telephones and other accessories easily accessible for people using wheelchairs, crutches and other assistive devices?
15. Has board staff received training in providing accommodation for people with disabilities? (For example, communication using TTY, sign language interpreters, real-time captioning for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.) Does staff know how to respond to requests for communications in accessible formats?
16. Have teaching and non-teaching staff had training with respect to interaction with people with disabilities and understanding issues concerning people with different types of disabilities?
17. Does your board have an emergency evacuation protocol, which includes assisting the safe evacuation of people with disabilities?
18. Does your board deal with or maintain an arrangement with a taxi service or other means to provide accessible vehicles to transport students with disabilities to and from schools and events?

Note: Additional questions may be added to reflect individual board situations

Section 4

Frequently Asked Questions

Contents:

1. What is the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?
2. What is the definition of disability under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?
3. Does the ODA have priority over the *Ontario Human Rights Code*?
4. What is the role of the Accessibility Advisory Council? ([section 19](#))
5. What is the role of the Accessibility Directorate? ([section 20](#))

6. What are the requirements for school boards under the ODA?
 7. By what date must accessibility plans be prepared?
 8. What are the requirements of the ODA with respect to school boards?
 9. What must school boards include in their accessibility plans?
 10. Are school boards required to submit the accessibility plans to the government?
 11. How should school boards make their plans public?
 12. Are school boards required to consult with people with disabilities in preparing their annual accessibility plans?
 13. How can school boards identify people with disabilities within the board and within the community to assist with implementing their obligations?
 14. Who will pay the costs of developing and implementing the plans?
 15. Do school board accessibility plans have to look like the sample annual accessibility plan provided?
 16. Can a school board prepare a plan jointly with another public organization or school board in the area?
 17. Should plans be prepared as part of the operating plan process?
 18. Municipalities are required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee. Are school boards required to set up a committee as well?
 19. Is there a penalty for *not* completing the annual accessibility plan?
 20. What is the cost for retrofitting old buildings? Who pays?
 21. What buildings currently must be wheelchair accessible? How will the ODA change this?
 22. Where can I get more information on the ODA?
1. **What is the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?**
 - The [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#) (ODA) was passed on December 14, 2001.

- The purpose of the ODA is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province ([section 1](#)).
- Several key sections were proclaimed on February 7, 2002, including the establishment of the Accessibility Directorate.
- The majority of ODA obligations were proclaimed on September 30, 2002 and December 31, 2002.

[last bullet re: Independence and Opportunity was removed, no longer available, no longer on website]

2. **What is the definition of disability under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*?**

- The ODA covers the same broad range of disabilities as the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). These include physical, sensory, cognitive, developmental and mental disabilities, and brain injury.
- [Section 2](#) of the ODA defines "disability" as:
 - 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").

3. **Does the ODA have priority over the Ontario *Human Rights Code*?**

No. The Ontario [Human Rights Code](#) retains primacy over the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

4. **What is the role of the Accessibility Advisory Council? ([section 19](#))**

Please note: Section 19 of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, which established the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario, was revoked by an Order in Council, November 4, 2005.

5. **What is the role of the Accessibility Directorate? ([section 20](#))**

The Directorate consults with organizations that must prepare accessibility plans and policies, and may request and review those documents. It provides information, tools and resources to assist organizations in meeting their obligations under the ODA.

The Directorate provides specialized knowledge, research and support to the implementation of the ODA.

It supports public and private organizations through partnerships. For example, the Directorate partnered with the Canadian Standards Association to develop voluntary standards for customer service to increase the knowledge and skills of businesses when serving customers with disabilities.

The Directorate provides public education and information as well as develops educational resources and features best practices.

The Directorate also makes recommendations to the minister on draft regulations, after studying comments it receives from the public.

6. **What are the requirements for school boards under the ODA?**

School boards are required to prepare annual accessibility plans and to make them public. The plans will address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disabilities in the organization's by-laws (if any), and its policies, programs, practices and services ([section 15](#) and [Schedule](#)).

In preparing plans, two or more municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities may prepare joint plans ([section 17](#)).

7. **By what date must accessibility plans be prepared?**

Plans should be prepared on an annual basis, enabling organizations to tie accessibility planning into their regular planning cycles. The initial plan was to be completed by September 30, 2003.

8. **What are the requirements of the ODA with respect to school boards?**

School boards, as defined in section 1 and established under section 68 of the *Education Act*, are required to prepare an accessibility plan each year and to consult with people with disabilities and others, when preparing this plan. Accessibility plans must be made available to the public.

9. **What must school boards include in their accessibility plans?**

Plans must identify barriers to people with disabilities, ways in which to remove and prevent them in a school board's, by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services. [Section 15](#) of the ODA provides additional information about the contents of a plan.

10. Are school boards required to submit the accessibility plans to the government?

No, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario of the Ministry of Community and Social Services may, upon request, review those documents. However, these plans must be made public.

11. How should school boards make their plans public?

School boards may use a variety of methods for letting members of the public know about their plan, for example: posting the information on their website, putting a notice in their newsletter, posting information on bulletin boards, etc.

Also, the accessibility plan needs to be available in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities.

12. Are school boards required to consult with people with disabilities in preparing their annual accessibility plans?

Yes. Section 15 of the ODA requires that school boards consult with people with disabilities and others when preparing their plans.

13. How can school boards identify people with disabilities within the board and within the community to assist with implementing their obligations?

Many people with disabilities are actively involved with disability organizations in their community. Some examples of these organizations include: the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; Easter Seals Association; the Ontario March of Dimes; Canadian Mental Health Association; Le Phénix; Canadian Hearing Society and Community Living Ontario, as well as consumer organizations such as independent living centres and injured workers.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), representing local associations, is a crucial member source of information about people with disabilities and accessibility needs.

We encourage school boards to contact these and other organizations in their community to locate individuals who have expertise and credibility in disability issues.

Employees and other individuals with disabilities who can assist with the development of the accessibility plan could be identified through advertising in newsletters, via e-mail requests or through managers or immediate supervisors.

14. Who will pay the costs of developing and implementing the plans?

School boards, hospitals, provincial ministries, municipalities, colleges, universities, and public transportation providers have been asked to develop accessibility plans using their existing resources. The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario is available for consultation. Working tools, such as the sample annual accessibility plan, are also available.

15. Do school board accessibility plans have to look like the sample annual accessibility plan provided?

No. The sample plan is simply a tool to assist school boards in the planning process. The plans can take any form that a board would like to develop, as long as the requirements of the ODA are addressed.

16. Can a school board prepare a plan jointly with another public organization or school board in the area?

Yes. [Section 17](#) of the ODA states that two or more organizations are allowed to prepare an accessibility plan together and make it available to the public.

If an organization prepares an accessibility plan with another organization, it does not need to prepare its own accessibility plan if the joint plan meets the ODA's individual requirements for each party.

17. Should plans be prepared as part of the operating plan process?

It may be useful to coordinate the development of an accessibility plan with the operating planning process. However, this may not be possible with the first plan, as the initial plan was to be completed and made public by September 30, 2003.

18. Municipalities are required to establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee. Are school boards required to set up a committee as well?

No, [Section 15](#) does not require school boards to establish an accessibility advisory committee. However, in order to carry out the accessibility planning exercise, school boards may wish to set up a working group to assist in the preparation of the annual accessibility plan. The composition of an accessibility working group, how often it meets, etc., is left to the discretion of each board. Further, as accessibility plans are required annually, a working group could provide some consistency even if the position of the Chair is rotated from board to board on an annual or biannual basis.

In addition, it might be useful to draw upon the ideas and experience of the membership of the local municipal accessibility advisory group. (The ODA requires municipalities of 10,000 or more to establish such committees, with a majority of the membership being people with disabilities.)

19. Is there a penalty for *not* completing the annual accessibility plan?

If the accessibility plan is not completed and made available to the public, as required under the ODA, then the school board is in contravention of the Act. The Accessibility Directorate is monitoring implementation of the ODA by all organizations that have obligations.

[Note: second paragraph removed]

20. What is the cost for retrofitting old buildings? Who pays?

The requirements of the ODA are not retroactive. However, organizations that are required by law to prepare accessibility plans may identify access to older buildings as a barrier.

The ODA does not prescribe measures school boards must take each year to remove barriers. It allows school boards to identify their own priorities and establish reasonable timelines and relevant approaches to barrier removal. Accessible or universal design should be embedded in the front-end of new construction, and renovations of existing spaces; accessibility should be taken into account when ordering new equipment or modifying existing equipment. Planning for accessibility at the beginning of a project will reduce costly renovations to remove barriers later.^[12]

The cost of retrofitting would depend on what barriers and actions are identified in organizations' accessibility plans. Advance planning for accessibility at the design stage is usually much cheaper than modifying a building later to make it accessible.

The ODA allows organizations the flexibility to determine their own priorities. It is expected that organizations will develop and implement accessibility plans within existing planning processes and using existing resources.

21. **What buildings currently must be wheelchair accessible? How will the ODA change this?**

The ODA requires a number of organizations to plan for the removal of barriers through the process of accessibility planning. However, the ODA does not change the current requirements that school boards comply with the Ontario Building Code or the Ontario Human Rights Code.

New buildings and those undergoing renovation must meet the requirements of the current Ontario Building Code (OBC). The OBC provides a set of minimum requirements for public safety inside buildings.

The Human Rights Code (HRC) prevails over the Building Code and over the ODA. The HRC creates a right to accessible workplaces, housing, public transit, hospitals, schools, libraries, restaurants, etc. and places a positive obligation on businesses and public sector organizations to make their facilities accessible. If an organization or business complies only with the requirements of the OBC, they may be vulnerable to a human rights complaint to the extent that their premises continue to fall short of the requirements of the HRC.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate and relevant case law make it clear that facilities should be made accessible through inclusive design choices at the outset. Where barriers already exist, steps should be taken to remove them, unless to do so would cause undue hardship.

For more information about barrier-free design, contact the Canadian Standards Association (416-747-4044) and request the CSA Standard B651-95 Barrier Free Design booklet. It is available in both English and French.

22. **Where can I get more information on the ODA?**

Additional information is available from:

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
Ministry of Community and Social Services
777 Bay Street, Suite 601
Toronto, ON M7A 2J4
Tel: 416-326-0207; Toll-free 1-888-520-5828
TTY: 416-326-0148; Toll-free: 1-888-335-6611
Fax: 416-314-7307
E-mail: accessibility@css.gov.on.ca
Website: www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/

A general guide to annual accessibility planning is available at the following link on the Accessibility Ontario website:
www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm

Section 5

Where to Look for Barriers

Where to Look for Barriers [13]

Definition of disability

The ODA adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. "Disability" is:

- 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*.

What is a barrier?

A "barrier" is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

An example of each of the different kinds of barriers is shown below:	
Barrier Type	Example
Physical	<p>Heavy doors at entrances and in building interiors.</p> <p>Door knobs that must be twisted</p> <p>Narrow library or cafeteria aisles</p> <p>Benches and tables that are too high in science laboratories</p>
Architectural	<p>A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter</p> <p>A portable/modular classroom that does not have an accessible washroom</p>
Information	<p>Typefaces that are too small to be read by a person with low vision</p> <p>Decor which may be confusing or disorienting for disabled pupils with visual impairments</p> <p>Signage which is confusing or inadequate</p>
Communication	<p>An employee who talks loudly when addressing a person who is deaf</p> <p>School communications to parents are not provided in accessible formats</p>
Attitudinal	<p>Staff who ignore students/visitor who have disabilities or speak only to the people accompanying them.</p> <p>Students with disabilities who are socially isolated and bullied</p>

Technological	<p>Electrical wiring that is inadequate to support the various versions of assistive instructional technology.</p> <p>Science laboratory materials placed too high (e.g., microscopes) or requiring the use of two hands</p>
Policy/Practice	<p>A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly, or at all.</p> <p>School teaching and non-teaching staff and students are not encouraged to share a philosophy of inclusion</p> <p>School board workplace policies do not accommodate the needs of persons with mental illness.</p>

Where to Look for Barriers

1. Physical Barriers:

- Furniture
- Work stations
- Chairs
- Doors
- Door knobs
- Handrails
- Classroom design
- Windows
- Planters
- Bathroom hardware
- Locks
- Security systems
- Drinking fountains
- Seats, tables, counters
- Telephones

2. Architectural Barriers:

- Exterior to a building
- Interior of a building
- Parking areas
- Drop-off zones
- Cubicles
- Washrooms
- Cafeterias
- Elevators
- Escalators

- Hallways
- Floors
- Carpets
- Lobbies
- Reception areas
- Offices
- Classrooms
- Athletic facilities
- Stairs
- Stairwells
- Closets
- Storage areas
- Lighting
- Entrances
- Assembly halls

3. Information/communication Barriers:

- Books
- Printed information
- Web-based resources
- Signage
- Bulletin boards
- Brochures
- Training
- Receptionists
- Forms
- Manuals
- Fax transmissions
- Equipment labels
- Computer screens
- Public announcements

4. Attitudinal Barriers:

- Biases and beliefs
- Lack of information/knowledge
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of sensitivity/intolerance
- Stigmatization
- *See also "Policy/practice" below

5. Technological Barriers:

- Computers
- Operating systems
- Fax machines
- Telephones

- Standard software
- Proprietary software
- Websites
- Keyboards
- Mice
- Printers
- TTYs
- Photocopiers
- Appliances
- Control panels
- Switches

6. Policy/practice Barriers:

- Procurement and purchasing
- Job postings
- Hiring
- Interviewing
- Testing
- Meetings
- Promotion
- By-laws
- Regulations
- Rules
- Protocols
- Safety and evacuation
- Community use of facilities

Section 6

Suggested Reference Materials/Resources

Note:

In addition to the following resources, school boards are encouraged to consult the links provided on the Accessibility Ontario website (www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm)

Accessibility Planning Resources for School Boards:

Accessibility Ontario - Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning
www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/01o32_e.htm

Ontario Human Rights Commission
Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate
www.ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/disability-policy.shtml

Enablelink (Canadian Abilities Foundation) Directory of Canadian Disability Links
www.enablelink.org/resources/links_to.html

Directory for Accessibility
www.accessibilitydirectory.ca

Adaptive Technology Resource Centre
www.utoronto.ca/atrc

Ontario Interpreter Services (OIS)
www.chs.ca/services/ois.html

Canadian Standards Association:
B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design
B480-02 - Customer Service Standard for People with Disabilities
www.csa.ca

Playability Tool Kit: Building Accessible Playspaces
www.opassoc.on.ca/toolkit.php

A Few Key Ontario Disability Organizations:
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
www.cnib.ca

Canadian Hearing Society
www.chs.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association - Ontario
www.ontario.cmha.ca

Community Living Ontario
www.communitylivingontario.ca/

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada - Ontario Division
www.mssociety.ca/ontario

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
www.ldao.ca

Little People of Ontario
www.lpo.on.ca

Ontario Brain Injury Association
www.obia.on.ca

Canadian Paraplegic Association - Ontario
www.canparaplegic.org/on

Le Phénix
www.lephenix.on.ca

Ontario March of Dimes
www.dimes.on.ca

The Easter Seal Society - Ontario
www.easterseals.org

AboutFace International
www.aboutfaceinternational.org

[1] The Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the "Code") prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and requires businesses, employers, and service providers to accommodate people with disabilities, short of undue hardship. The Code is administered and enforced by the Ontario Human Rights Commission ("OHRC").

In March 2001, the OHRC published *Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate*. The guidelines include standards for accommodation, the definition of disability, the general principles of the duty to accommodate and undue hardship, and duties and responsibilities in the accommodation process. The guidelines state: "Under the [Code], everyone has the right to be free from discrimination because of disability or perceived disability in the social areas of employment, services, goods, facilities..." These documents are available on the OHRC's website at: www.ohrc.on.ca.

[2] School Boards are defined in the Schedule to the Act as: "Every district school board as defined in section 1 of the *Education Act* and every board established under section 68 of that Act." The full text of the ODA is available at: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/01o32_e.htm.

[3] See section 5 of the Sample Accessibility Plan.

[4] See section 3 of the Sample Accessibility Plan.

[5] See section 7 of the Sample Accessibility Plan.

[6] See sections 8 and 9 of the Sample Accessibility Plan.

[7] See section 10 of the sample accessibility plan.

[8] See the *Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning* for additional detail on this process.

[9] See the *Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning* for additional detail on this step.

[10] See question 11 in Section 4 (Frequently Asked Questions) for suggestions on how to make plans available to the public.

[11] For more information, see the *Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, prepared by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario at www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm

[12] See also the "Business Case for Accessibility: How Accessibility Awareness Strengthens Your Company's Bottom Line." By the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health. November 2001.

[13] The material set out in this section has been largely drawn from Appendix B found in the *Guide to Annual Accessibility Planning under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* published by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The document may be found on the Ministry's website at www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/planning/planning_information.htm.