

Date: Friday, July 24, 2020

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2A5

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

Dear Minister Lecce and Minister Cho,

Re: K-12 Education Standards Development Committee: Planning for Emergencies and Safety Small Group Report

On behalf of the members of the Planning for Emergencies and Safety small group (the small group), I am pleased to submit the small group's advice and recommendations on emergency planning and safety for students with disabilities in K-12 education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The K-12 Education Standards Development Committee (The Committee) formed the small group when the Ministry of Education was seeking feedback from the Committee on the barriers and issues identified through the COVID-19 pandemic. The small group's mandate includes using experiential learning from the COVID-19 pandemic to:

- identify new and reoccurring accessibility barriers to learning for students with disabilities in the context of remote learning; and
- develop an emergency plan framework (that covers the phases of preparing, planning, response and recovery) for a systematic response to an emergency.

The small group members have put incredible effort, time and passion to complete this report that includes valuable advice and recommendations for government consideration. The report addresses the following 9 barriers for students with disabilities as a result of COVID-19:

1. organizational, policy and procedural barriers
2. mental health and well being
3. academic (learning inequities for students with disabilities)
4. support for secondary school students with disabilities
5. transitions between in school and virtual learning
6. accessible communication and technology
7. training on the integration of digital technology into learning
8. transportation

9. recommendations addressing barriers for the Government and School Boards in emergency planning and safety

Thank you for your shared commitment to ensuring accessibility and inclusion for students with disabilities in Ontario. We have appreciated the discussions with Minister Lecce on Grants for Students Needs funding and the school board memos that address the current work being done to support students. The barriers in our report reflect what we have heard from various educational partners, families of student with disabilities and students within Ontario. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss these additional recommendations. The work and passion of the Committee continues, and we look forward to more opportunities to share our advice and feedback with you.

Together we can create an accessible and inclusive education system for students with disabilities during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Lynn Ziraldo,
Chair, K-12 Education Standards Development Committee

Attachments:

1. Small group report