

# **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

## ***2006-07 Accessibility Plan***

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## Introduction

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In June 2005, the Ontario government took a strong stand on accessibility when it passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) into law.

The AODA lays out a comprehensive road map to make Ontario accessible to all people through the development, implementation and enforcement of new, mandatory accessibility standards for some of the most important aspects of people's lives.

The first two standards that are currently being developed cover the areas of transportation and customer service. On June 13, the first anniversary of the passage of the AODA, the government announced the development of three new standards that will address information and communications, the built environment, and employment.

While the government is moving forward to implement the AODA, there will be a transition period where government and the broader public sector will continue to meet their obligations under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA). These obligations will remain in effect until they are repealed and replaced by standards under the new Act.

Under the ODA, Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans to make policies, practices, programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. These plans must be made available to the public. Accessibility planning efforts to date have developed a strong foundation for the development of accessibility standards that will mean real and effective change.

This document is the fourth annual accessibility plan developed by the Ministry of Education. It highlights the achievements of the 2005-06 plan and outlines the commitments for 2006-07 so that no new barriers are created and, over time, existing ones are removed.

This ministry intends to build on its achievements by implementing initiatives that support the government's commitment to continue to make Ontario an inclusive and accessible province where people of all abilities have a chance to fully achieve their potential.

## Message from the Minister

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I am pleased to provide you with the Ministry of Education 2006-07 Accessibility Plan.

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* requires all public sector and broader public sector organizations to have an annual Accessibility Plan and to make it available to the public. This is the fourth year in which plans have been written and are being implemented by organizations such as ours across the province.

This year marks the first anniversary of the landmark *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, (AODA) – legislation that will foster the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in key areas of daily living. I understand the importance of improving accessibility for the public, as well as for staff.

Our government is already moving ahead with the development of two accessibility standards, in the areas of customer service and transportation. This past June, our government announced that we will develop three new standards in the areas of communications and information, the built environment, and employment.

Within the Ministry of Education, we are building on the success of our previous three plans and continuing to look for ways to better meet the needs of people with disabilities who come into contact with this ministry, regardless of whether they are staff, members of the general public or ministry stakeholders.

Like all students, students with disabilities deserve a good outcome from public education, and we need to make sure they have every opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential. My ministry is committed to improving accessibility through identifying, removing and preventing barriers. We are dedicated to working together within our ministry, across government and with our stakeholders in key areas of customer service, employment, communications and information, and the built environment to achieve this goal.

During 2006-2007, this ministry will continue to work to better educate staff on accessibility and to raise awareness of disability issues among staff, particularly management staff. In addition, the Ministry will continue to support our delivery partners, school boards and school authorities in their efforts to meet the needs of students with special education needs.

We strongly believe that the achievements highlighted in this year's plan, as well as the commitments to make further improvements in the coming year, demonstrate this ministry's efforts to support the government's commitment to make Ontario's communities strong, vital and accessible to all people of all abilities.

If you have any comments or concerns, I encourage you to share them using the contact information located at the end of this document.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne  
Minister of Education

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## **Report on 2005-06 Achievements**

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The Ministry of Education was successful in achieving, and, in some cases, surpassing, the commitments in the 2005-06 Accessibility Plan. This section provides a status report.

**Commitment:**

Continue to work with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to ensure that child care and service hubs developed under the Best Start Strategy are designed in compliance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA).

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

The Federal Government has provided notice of termination of the 2005 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCC). In the absence of the 2005 ELCC funds for 2007-08 onwards, Ontario will not be able to meet its original space target of 25,000 spaces.

However, Ontario municipalities plan to create more than 14,000 child care spaces by September 2006.

The 2005-06 Integrated Implementation Plans have been submitted (47 in total) and are currently being considered for sustainability.

**Commitment:**

Support the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education to provide the minister with advice on special education matters.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

Ministry staff continued to support the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) and its sub-committees to respond to ministry proposals and offer advice on:

- Accountability and Partnerships,
- Student Learning and
- System Capacity.

Council met June 8-9, 2005; October 18-19, 2005; and February 23-24, 2006 and produced its 2004-05 Annual Report. The 2005-06 Annual Report is expected to be published on the website in Summer, 2006.

All Annual Reports and other information about MACSE are publicly available on the ministry's website at:

English [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/abcs/acse/acse\\_eng.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/abcs/acse/acse_eng.html)

French [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/general/abcs/acse/acse\\_fre.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/general/abcs/acse/acse_fre.html)

***Commitment:***

Support the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) to make the early screening and intervention tool, known as the Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT), available to more school boards. It is anticipated that the use of this tool will result in earlier identification of students' learning difficulties and application of instructional strategies and targeted interventions. In 2005-06, an evaluation of the tool's effectiveness will be undertaken, Grade 2 tools will be made available and a Mathematics screen will be developed.

***Status:*** On-going.

***Action:***

The ministry provided funding to the LDAO to continue teacher training and support with the Web Based Teaching Tool until June 2007.

Grade 2 screening and intervention tools were added to the tool and a Mathematics screen was developed.

The ministry undertook Stage II of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the tool to improve achievement for struggling students, to be completed by June 30, 2006.

During 2005-06, a total of 50 school boards opted to use the early screening and intervention tool in 1,187 elementary schools. The ministry funded the LDAO to train and provide on-going support to 8,581 teachers, administrators and other education personnel.

The evaluation, expected to be completed by 2006-07, is currently underway.

The Mathematics screen is being piloted.

More information about the WBTT is available on the LDAO's website at:

English <http://www.ldao.ca/wbtt/index.php>

French [http://www.ldao.ca/wbtt/index\\_fr.php](http://www.ldao.ca/wbtt/index_fr.php)



**Commitment:**

Continue to monitor EQAO assessment results to determine the progress of students with special education needs.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

The ministry reviewed Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) results to determine the progress of students with special education needs, as well as the rates of exempting students with special education needs from EQAO tests. With proper accommodation, the ministry expects that the number of students with special education needs participating in EQAO tests will continue to increase over time. The ministry's goal is to improve achievement for all students, including those with special education needs, and to lessen the gap between the weakest and strongest learners.

From 2001-02 to 2004-05 (the most recent Education Quality and Accountability Office report) we noted that students with special needs are participating in provincial tests at a higher rate, and are more likely to be receiving accommodation. While the year-over-year comparisons between 2004-05 and the previous year show modest gains and some areas of decline in performance, depending on the test, from 2001-02 to 2004-05 students with special needs are showing improvements in performance, as follows:

*Grade 3*

- Reading: 15 percent to 18 percent, three percentage points;
- Writing: 12 percent to 16 percent, four percentage points; and
- Mathematics: 25 percent to 29 percent, four percentage points.

*Grade 6*

- Reading: 15 percent to 19 percent, four percentage points;
- Writing: 12 percent to 14 percent, two percentage points; and
- Mathematics: 16 percent to 21 percent, five percentage points.

*Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test*

The success rates for students with special needs remained high in comparison to the success rates in February 2002 and October 2003.

Complete results are available on EQAO's website <http://www.eqao.com/> EQAO for the Grade 3 and Grade 6 tests of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Grade 9 Mathematics, and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.

Ministry staff provided training to school boards to improve understanding and implementation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, and provided training on a resource guide on Entry to School (see below). These activities

complemented broader ministry initiatives to improve student achievement, build capacity and share good practice.

***Commitment:***

Include in the research design of the evaluation of the 2004-05 Learning to18 funded projects implemented by school boards a component that focuses on students with special education needs.

***Status:*** On-going.

***Action:***

The research design includes a component focusing on students with special needs. It is expected that the Request for Proposal for the research will be issued presently.

***Commitment:***

Review the training package, "*May I Help You?*" – *Welcoming Customers with Disabilities*, developed by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, and determine how it can best be used within the ministry. The package is to be used to deliver a workshop on providing services to customers with disabilities. The purpose of the workshop is to raise the level of disability awareness and increase the knowledge of staff about how they can meet the needs of their customers with disabilities.

***Status:*** On-going.

***Action:***

The document has been reviewed; an action plan to utilize the document has been prepared for review by senior staff of both ministries.

***Commitment:***

Continue to incorporate the Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services into the ministry's procurement of goods and services.

***Status:*** On-going.

***Action:***

Procurement staff have addressed the ODA in training sessions during 2005-06 and have continually reinforced ODA compliance in all procurement processes carried out during the year.

**Commitment:**

Provide an on-going expertise, quality assurance measures and consultation to ministry staff on ODA issues associated with Information and Information Technology (I&IT).

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

I & IT staff continued to explore, research and share knowledge gained regarding digital tools developed for people with special needs across the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

I & IT is assisting with the Assistive Technology Symposium, *Tools for Learning: Effective Practice for the Use of Assistive Technology for Students with Special Education Needs (Kindergarten to Grade 12)/Des outils pour apprendre : Pratique efficace pour l'utilisation de la technologie au service des élèves ayant des besoins particuliers, de la maternelle à la 12e année*, to be held on September 26-27, 2006 and will use that symposium to gather information and seek information-sharing partnerships regarding technology-assisted solutions for people with special needs.

**Commitment:**

Investigate partnering with other ministries to leverage existing accessibility initiatives related to Information and Information Technology.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

I & IT continues to develop a deeper understanding of Special Needs Opportunity Windows (SNOW), an information technology used in Provincial Schools, and its resources so that materials available through this government-supported resource can be added to the resources available to OPS employees.

**Commitment:**

Continue to ensure that the ministry intranet and website meet or exceed accessibility requirements by carrying out the following measures:

- continue to obtain feedback from stakeholders regarding the accessibility of the ministry website;
- provide ongoing expertise, quality assurance measures and advice on achieving compliance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA);
- carry out tests, as required, of community service cluster websites to ensure compliance with the Act;
- ensure that new web pages are accessible as defined by the Act;

- provide updates and information on accessibility issues to staff who develop intranet sites;
- implement the accessible intranet template ministry-wide;
- review new web pages to ensure they are accessible;
- update the software used for creating accessible web pages;
- purchase new/upgrades to software to create accessible web pages and
- ensure that the Guide to Web Publishing contains current accessibility guidelines

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

All tasks are carried out on an ongoing basis.

**Commitment:**

Continue to build on ministry managers' and employees' awareness of employment practices to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

A Lunch & Learn took place, featuring Catherine Frazee, Co-director, Ryerson RBC Institute for Disability Studies Research and Education, and former Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Accessibility is highlighted in the "Spotlight" section, which links to a page that includes the ministries' ODA plans, as well as information on Equal Opportunity and Human Rights. There is also an enhanced "shadow site" ready for launch as soon as directed.

A one-page summary of the ministry's Accessibility Plan was created and shared with the collective bargaining agents. This summary has been incorporated into the ministry's orientation package and can be posted on the web page that houses the full plans.

**Commitment:**

Maintain the current checklist of software and applications, developed in 2004-05, designed to facilitate use by ministry staff with disabilities in their day-to-day work activities. In addition, explore the feasibility of developing an OPS-wide available checklist.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

The checklist developed to support OPS staff with disabilities in their day-to-day work environment continues to be upgraded and fine-tuned.

I&IT will continue to seek strategies that will allow for the development of ODA-compliant materials to support employees OPS-wide.

I & IT continue to ensure that hardware and software supporting OPS clients in their work environment is fully ODA-compliant.

**Commitment:**

Continue to ensure that ministry publications are available in alternate formats.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

The ministries are continuing to ensure that publications posted on the ministries' websites are accessible to all.

**Commitment:**

Continue to provide textbooks and learning materials in alternate formats to students who are blind or who have low vision and are in district school boards.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

The Provincial Schools Branch continued to make school resources available in alternate formats at no additional cost to school boards. During 2005-06, the Provincial Schools Branch provided alternate format text in Braille, digital text, digital audio, analog audio and large print. The branch distributed 6,093 titles to support the learning of 904 students with print impairment, primarily blind or low vision. A recently created facility enabling special needs advisors in district school boards to order publications online has improved the service provided.

**Commitment:**

Build on existing acts and regulations, guidelines and standards, including the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities released in October 2004 to improve barrier accessibility in ministry buildings.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

All designers, architects and engineers were advised that, as part of the contract agreement, the final design must meet ODA accessibility requirements, including the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities, over and above the existing acts and regulations, guidelines and standards.

All major capital projects planned for the Provincial Schools Branch during fiscal 2005-06 were completed with improved accessibility that meets the ODA requirements.

**Commitment:**

Work with the Ontario College of Teachers on their on-going review of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996*, to ensure that the terminology used in the Act and Regulations reflects current and acceptable language related to people with disabilities.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

During 2005-06 the Ontario College of Teachers concluded a comprehensive review of Ontario Regulation 184/97, the regulation governing teacher qualifications. This review involved extensive consultations with a variety of provincial organizations, including those representing persons with disabilities. Issues raised at these consultations included:

- the inappropriate language in the regulation related to persons with disabilities,
- the need for a special education component in teacher preparation programs and
- the qualifications for teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students.

The College expects to complete its review and recommend amendments to this regulation later in 2006-07.

**Commitment:**

As part of the review of the *Safe Schools Act*, an examination will be undertaken of whether students with special education needs are being accommodated appropriately.

**Status:** On-going.

**Action:**

The Safe Schools Action Team has completed hearings and received submissions from the public on the *Safe Schools Act*. The Action Team has been expanded to include a member with specific expertise in the area of special needs accommodation.

The report was presented to the Minister in summer 2006.

## **In addition to the 2005-06 commitments**

### **Action:**

A total of 85 projects were funded for the 2005-06 school year through the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) with the \$25M grant provided by the Ministry to implement the recommendations in *Education for All—The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs (K to Grade 6)/L'éducation pour tous : Rapport de la Table ronde des experts pour l'enseignement en matière de littératie et de numératie pour les élèves ayant des besoins particuliers de la maternelle à la 6e année*.

The CODE projects are being undertaken by all school boards and school authorities.

The CODE projects address areas such as early identification and intervention, instructional strategies, curriculum-based assessment, progress reporting based on measurable achievement, Universal Design, differentiated instruction, effective professional learning communities, web-based instruction and assistive technology.

CODE's approval criteria required that funded projects complement other initiatives such as the implementation of the ministry's policy on Individual Education Plans, literacy/numeracy training for teachers, school and school board improvement plans, the Web-based Teaching Tool and Student Success projects.

A monitoring process has been developed by CODE to assess the success of the projects and to gather information to report back to the Minister of Education. CODE is hosting sessions for sharing project learning and building leadership capacity for supervisory officers.

### **Action:**

The ministry released a *Resource Guide to Planning Entry to School/Guide de planification de l'entrée à l'école*, which shared effective practices for preparing children, including those with special needs, for schooling and learning.

The release of the Guide was accompanied by seven regional information sessions (6 English and 1 French) in January 2006. Sessions were held in cooperation with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services staff from *Best Start*. Sessions were held in Ottawa, Sudbury, Mississauga, Barrie, Thunder Bay and London, with a province-wide Francophone session in Toronto.



A train-the-trainer slide package was developed and provided to school boards to promote ongoing in-service and communication about good practices to follow when students are entering an Ontario school for the first time.

About 430 people attended from every school board in Ontario and MCYS-funded, pre-school program providers. School boards were asked to delegate staff as well as a member of their Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to attend.

Approximately 30,300 Guides were distributed to school boards, other ministries and, on request, to other stakeholder groups such as provincial parent organizations.

Electronic copies of the guide were made available to the public through the ministry website at:

English <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/planningentry.html>

French <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/fre/parents/planningentryf.html>

## **2006-07 Commitments—Measures to Prevent New Barriers**

During 2006-07, the ministry commits to assess any new Acts or Regulations to ensure that they are compliant with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

The ministry will also review its customer service practices, in preparation for the implementation of the Customer Service Standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

## **2006-07 Commitments—Barriers to be Addressed**

The Ministry of Education commits to identifying, removing and preventing barriers to persons with disabilities during 2006-07. This section summarizes the commitments.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**Barrier:** There is a potential barrier that persons with disabilities may not have access to internet and/or print information developed by the ministry.

**Commitment:** The ministry will continue to ensure that the ministry intranet and website meet or exceed accessibility requirements.

**Responsibility:** Communications Branch.

**Timeline:** On-going.

**Barrier:** There is a potential barrier that persons with disabilities may not have access to information.

**Commitment:** The ministry will continue to ensure that ministry publications are available in alternate formats on the website.

**Responsibility:** Communications Branch.

**Timeline:** On-going.

**Barrier:** There is a potential barrier that managers and employees may not have all the skills, knowledge and attitudes to address barriers faced by customers/clients with disabilities.

**Commitment:** See Employment Accommodation.

**Responsibility:** See Employment Accommodation.

**Timeline:** On-going.

## **EMPLOYMENT ACCOMMODATION**

**Barrier:** There is the potential barrier that managers may be not fully aware of the requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* or of how to accommodate employees with disabilities.

**Commitment:** The ministry will continue to build on ministry managers' and employees' awareness of employment practices to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. Specifically, the ministry will:

- strongly encourage all managers and supervisory staff to complete the on-line training module, *The Ontarians with Disabilities Act—Maximizing the Contributions of Employees with Disabilities*;
- develop and implement a communications effort, stressing that knowledge of the ODA and the AODA can both improve internal and external service and can avoid complaints by staff and customers;
- design and implement a web-enabled survey of all ministry staff, based on *May I Help You* to promote awareness, with survey results also serving as a “baseline” against which to evaluate progress;
- design and encourage managers and employees to participate in learning opportunities, based on *May I Help You* and
- make available more intensive training sessions, if requested by senior staff.

**Responsibility:** Corporate Coordination Office, with the support of the Human Resources Branch and Communications Branch.

**Timeline:** Beginning in November, 2006 and on-going.

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION**

**Barrier:** There is a potential that ministry staff will not have current information and information technology resources.

**Commitment:** The ministry will provide on-going expertise, quality assurance measures and consultation to ministry staff on ODA issues associated with Information and Information Technology (I&IT). The ministry will maintain the current checklist of software and applications, developed in 2004-05, designed to facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities in day-to-day work activities. In addition, the ministry will explore the feasibility of developing an OPS-wide available checklist and will investigate partnering with other ministries to leverage existing accessibility initiatives related to Information and Information Technology

Specifically, the ministry will support the Assistive Technology Symposium, *Tools for Learning* September, 2006.

**Responsibility:** I&IT.

**Timeline:** On-going.

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

**Barrier:** There is the potential barrier that ministry facilities will not be accessible.

**Commitment:** The ministry will ensure that the new Standards for Barrier Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities released in October 2004 to improve barrier-free accessibility in ministry buildings, are implemented. The ministry will continue to improve accessibility when planning major capital projects, especially converting washrooms to barrier-free washrooms. The ministry will undertake the same diligence with respect to the renewal of rental agreements to ensure that existing ministry properties are accessible.-

**Responsibility:** Corporate Financial and Services Branch, Service and Facilities Unit.

**Timeline:** On-going.

## **ACTS AND REGULATIONS**

**Barrier:** There is the potential barrier that Acts, Regulations and the implementation of OPS Directives, Policies and Procedures may not be in compliance with the ODA.

**Commitment:** The ministry will ensure that Acts, Regulations, Guidelines and Standards reflect the principles of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

**Responsibility:** Legal Services Branch.

**Timeline:** On-going.

**Commitment:** The ministry, as part of the implementation of the review of the *Safe Schools Act*, will ensure that recommendations related to students with special needs are implemented.

**Responsibility:** Policy and Programs Branch.

**Timeline:** On-going.

**Commitment:** The ministry will work with the Ontario College of Teachers on their on-going review of the *Ontario Colleges of Teachers Act, 1996*, to ensure that the terminology used in the Act and regulation reflects current and acceptable language related to people with disabilities.

**Responsibility:** Instruction Teaching Policy and Standards Branch.

**Timeline:** On-going.

**Commitment:** The ministry will continue to adhere to the Guidelines for Procurement of Accessible Goods and Services.

**Responsibility:** Corporate Finance and Services Branch, Service Management Unit.

**Timeline:** On-going.

## **2006-07 Commitments/Support for Ministry Partners**

In addition to fulfilling its commitments as:

- an employer and
- a service provider,

the ministry will support its delivery partners. Following summarizes the commitments:

### *SUPPORT FOR MINISTRY AGENCIES*

The ministry will support the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education to provide the minister with advice on special education matters.

### *SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOL AUTHORITIES*

The ministry will support, through a \$25 million grant to the Council of Directors of Education, innovative projects among school boards that will improve instruction and assessment practices for a diverse range of learners for the 2006-07 school year.

All Student Success/Learning to 18 implementation and training initiatives will be designed and planned to support the diversity of all students in Ontario schools. All professional development will acknowledge and support all students, including those with special education needs. Implementation and training initiatives include but are not limited to Elementary and Secondary Principals, Student Success Leaders in all English and French Language school boards and Student Success Teachers in secondary schools.

Work is underway to revise/update the provincial policies governing secondary school programs and diploma requirements, in keeping with the government's announced policy commitments for Student Success/Learning to 18 Phase 3. Similar to the current policy provisions (under "Ontario Secondary Schools"), the revised/updated policies will apply to all students in secondary schools, including those with special education needs. The revision process includes an inter-branch steering committee overseeing the work, with representation on the committee by the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch and the Special Education Strategic Planning Branch.

In addition, the government/ministry is also committed to creating a new Provincial Skills Certificate in order to give positive recognition for achievements to the small number of students not working toward, or unlikely to achieve the requirements for the secondary school diploma. This design and development work will be undertaken in consultation with key stakeholders in the special education community, and with full consideration given to respecting and meeting the needs of students with special education needs, consistent with provincial

policies governing special education and the provisions of *the Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

As revised curricula are released, the Introduction will include an enhanced section on Planning Programs for Students with Special Education Needs, and many specific curriculum expectations in the documents will include examples to address the teaching and learning needs of all students. The ministry will continue to ensure that the needs of all students are addressed in the revised curriculum.

The ministry will take steps to improve program planning by clarifying the connection between a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), the Ontario curriculum and the provincial report card with school boards. The ministry will also assist boards to streamline their administrative processes, so that they may focus their resources on program planning and implementation.

The ministry will support English- and French-language school boards in using technology more effectively for students with disabilities by bringing together presenters, vendors and representatives from school boards, school authorities, faculties of education and advisory bodies at a province-wide Assistive Technology Symposium, *Tools for Learning: Effective Practice for the Use of Assistive Technology for Students with Special Education Needs (Kindergarten to Grade 12)/Des outils pour apprendre : Pratique efficace pour l'utilisation de la technologie au service des élèves ayant des besoins particuliers, de la maternelle à la 12e année*, on September 26 and 27, 2006 in Toronto.

To further support school boards, plans are underway to train Teachers' Assistants in effective practices to support students with ASD in the classroom. This project is supported with a \$5 million grant to the Geneva Centre. In addition, an advisory committee will be set up to develop the training content, implementation and evaluation. The training is intended to take place over a two-year period.

The ministry will support the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) to make the early screening and intervention tool, known as the Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT), available to additional teachers in more school boards. It is anticipated that the expanded use of this tool will result in earlier identification of more students' learning difficulties and greater application of instructional strategies and targeted interventions. Specifically, in 2006-07, an evaluation of the tool will be completed and a pilot of the made-in-Ontario Mathematics screen will be undertaken.

The ministry will support school boards to reduce wait times for psychological assessments that are needed in order to provide students with appropriate special education programs and services, through a \$20 million grant to the Ontario Psychological Association to help address the backlog.



#### *LEARNING MATERIALS*

The ministry, through the Provincial Schools Branch, will continue to provide textbooks and learning materials in alternate formats to students who are blind or who have low vision and are in district school boards. A recently created facility enabling special needs advisors in district school boards to order publications online has improved the service provided.

The ministry, through the Provincial Schools Branch, to examine the feasibility of expanding access to learning materials in digital formats to all print-impaired students in district school boards and school authorities in order to ensure equity, improve service and reduce costs. Following a thorough review, a decision will be made regarding further efforts in future years.

#### *EVALUATION*

The ministry will continue to monitor EQAO assessment results to determine the progress of students with special needs.

The ministry will include in the research design of the evaluation of the 2006-07. Learning to 18 funded projects implemented by school boards a component that focuses on students with special needs.

#### *INTERMINISTERIAL COORDINATION*

The ministry will continue to work with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to ensure that child care and service hubs developed under the Best Start Strategy are designed in compliance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA).

## **For more information**

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Questions or comments about the ministry's Accessibility Plan are always welcome.

Please telephone:

General Inquiry Number: 416-325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514  
TTY/TTD Number: 1-800-263-2892  
e-mail: [info@edu.gov.on.ca](mailto:info@edu.gov.on.ca)  
Ministry website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/>

Visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services Accessibility Directorate of Ontario website at <http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/accessibility/index.html>. This site promotes accessibility and provides information on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

Alternate formats of this document are available free, upon request, from:

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