2017 Accessibility Survey:
Results in Context
K-12 Sector

Presented by:
Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
Orientation Meeting
February 5, 2018

Purpose

- This presentation outlines the results of a survey focused on barriers to accessibility in education, both K-12 and post-secondary.

- The survey was developed and shared by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

- The survey was available for public response in the spring/summer of 2017, and closed in October.

- This presentation provides an initial overview of feedback, and is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of responses. More in-depth information from the survey is available to the Committee on request.

Context

- The survey format was designed to give respondents the opportunity to provide written responses.

- Survey respondents shared personal narratives, experiences, and recommendations related to accessibility in education, from a range of perspectives.

- The survey results, along with additional reports and resources are intended to inform Committee discussions around identification of barriers.

- Committee members are encouraged to combine this material with their own expertise and experience as they begin to determine potential focus areas.

Survey Themes

- The survey asked respondents to comment on barriers and best practices in five areas:

  1. Accessibility Awareness and Training
  2. Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations (Policies, Processes, Programs)
  3. Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making
  4. Transition Planning
  5. Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

Survey Themes (cont'd)

- Themes were drawn from a review of current requirements, programs, and policies that support accessibility in education and from preliminary research about barriers faced by students with disabilities, including a third-party interjurisdictional review completed by KPMG.

- In addition, open-ended questions encouraged respondents to share their perspectives about any other barriers or best practices not addressed in the survey.

Survey Respondents

- As of October 16, 2017, the survey received a total of 2,988 responses (2,820 English and 168 French).

- Survey respondents from the K-12 and post-secondary sectors included:
  - Students (20%)
  - K-12 Educators and Professionals (28%)
  - Post-Secondary Educators and Professionals (21%)
  - People with disabilities (18%)
  - Parents and guardians (32%)
  - Other stakeholders, e.g. allied health professionals (8%)

- Survey respondents were able to select multiple responses (e.g., student and person with a disability), so there is a significant amount of overlap across demographic categories.

Response Summaries

- The following are high-level summaries of responses provided to each question within the survey for the K-12 sector.

- These summaries provide a snapshot of key concerns and themes across stakeholder responses.

Accessibility Awareness and Training

- **Improving accessibility awareness in schools:**
  - Ongoing accessibility training opportunities for staff and educators
  - Establish parent councils focused on accessibility and student supports
  - Increase classroom supports, (e.g., Educational Assistants)
  - Decrease classroom sizes

- **Effective resources, tools or policies in schools:**
  - Clear, frequent communications with staff, students and families
  - Use of Identification, Placement, and Review Committees (IPRCs)
  - Clear Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with follow through
  - Collaborations with disability service providers and related organizations to create programs and tools

Awareness of Accessibility Accommodations

- **Challenges to accessing supports, programs, or services in schools:**
  - Timely accommodations
  - Waitlists for assessments
  - Awareness of the system and supports available
  - Access to supports (e.g., ASL interpreters, Educational Assistants)

- **Effective resources, tools, or policies in schools:**
  - Clear and practical training resources in multiple formats
  - A designated person to help navigate services and opportunities
  - Training for staff and educators

Information, Communication, and Inclusive Decision-Making

Transition Planning

- **Challenges in transitioning across educational institutions:**
  - Lack of clear process
  - Lack of communication between institutions
  - "Starting over" with documentation and negotiation of supports at every move
  - Inconsistencies in support/accommodation offerings across schools/ institutions

- **Challenges to planning for employment, post-secondary education or training, or community living:**
  - Lack of opportunities
  - Lack of awareness of supports/services/opportunities
  - Delays in the transmission of information between institutions
  - Long waitlists for community programs
  - Lack of accessible transportation to get to/from school/programs

Transition Planning (cont'd)

- **Effective resources, tools, or policies to support smooth transitions:**
  - Planning ahead
  - Having a clear and central "navigator"
  - Transition programs for parents and students

Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces

- **Challenges navigating educational built environment:**
  - Elevator availability and service disruptions
  - Door operators (not enough of them and not working)
  - Space for mobility aids and service animals in classrooms
  - Accessible washrooms
  - Wayfinding and accessible signage

Inclusive and Accessible Learning Spaces (Cont'd)

- **Effective resources, tools, or design practices to improve accessibility in older buildings:**
  - Funding
  - Flexible furnishings
  - New technology
  - More door openers
  - Elevator accessibility and service disruptions

- **Other ways of enhancing the physical accessibility of schools:**
  - Flexible lighting
  - Acoustics
  - Space for people with sensory needs
  - Accessibility of gymnasiums and play spaces

Other Barriers

- **Other accessibility barriers experienced by students and parents and ways to address them through a new standard:**
    - Inaccessible field trips and extracurricular activities
    - Staff turnover
    - Support for service animals in the classroom
    - Costs associated with testing
    - Segregated classrooms
    - Lack of appeals mechanisms for accommodations

Other Barriers (cont'd)

- **Other barriers to providing an accessible education faced by professionals, and how to address them through a new standard:**
  - Support for professional development
  - Having more prep time to dedicate to accommodations
  - Understanding roles and rights for service animals
  - Mental health awareness and supports
  - Lack of appeals mechanisms for accommodations
  - Lack of services for non-English speaking and newcomer families
  - Issues with digital learning and accessibility of digital materials

Discussion