Recommendations to the Minister of Justice on an Accessibility Standard in Education: Phase 2

Submitted to the Minister of Justice
by the Accessibility Advisory Board

January 2023

The enclosed recommendations were developed by the Education Standard Development Committee and submitted to the Accessibility Advisory Board in October 2022.

The Accessibility Advisory Board reviewed, made amendments, and approved them for submission to the Minister of Justice.

Contents

1. Introduction

The Need for an Accessibility Standard in Education

A strong society is one that can develop, change and adapt. The <u>inclusion</u> of people with <u>disabilities</u>, <u>Deaf</u> people, and other diverse groups helps to strengthen a society's ability to respond to change, be innovative, and build social, economic and environmental resilience.

We are undergoing a period of immense change, with issues such as climate, technology, skills gaps, and food security having profound impacts on our society. Ensuring that people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people are not left behind and are actively included in all aspects of society increases our systemic ability to be nimble and innovate.

<u>Equitable</u> access to education is a human right, enshrined provincially, nationally, and internationally in the:

- <u>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</u>

- <u>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</u>

- <u>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</u>

- <u>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</u>

- <u>Nova Scotia Accessibility Act</u>

Realizing education as a human right for all learners requires intentionally prioritizing the prevention and removal of structural and systemic <u>barriers</u> that prevent <u>equitable</u> access, while also ensuring the prevention and removal of individual barriers. It means deliberately developing education systems and sectors that prioritize the knowledge and leadership of diverse minoritized communities. These systems and sectors must be designed to promote the <u>meaningful participation</u> of all learners, and ensure educational policies, programs, practices, and services are <u>inclusive</u>, flexible, and responsive. In other words, ensuring <u>accessible</u> education for all learners requires systems transformation.

The architects of that transformation must be minoritized communities that have been harmed by policies that have failed to redress the ableist, racist, and colonial roots of those harms. African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer, and other marginalized community members have essential lived and professional expertise to offer transformation efforts. Importantly, people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people are members of each of these communities and must be centered in this work. As a diverse community explicitly named in the Accessibility Act, people with disabilities are named

throughout these recommendations. However, meaningful transformation must recognize and reflect the intersectional nature of exclusionary harm, and ensure those diverse voices are the key drivers of change.

Increased access to education improves quality of life,[1] and leads to higher employment rates and income levels.[2] People with disabilities generally have lower incomes, employment rates, and levels of education.[3] They are more likely to report a lower quality of life, and to experience higher rates of poverty than those without disabilities. In Nova Scotia, the employment rate among people with disabilities is 55%, compared to 79% for those without disabilities. 62% of people with disabilities in Nova Scotia earn less than $30,000 annually, compare to 42% of those without disabilities.[4] Nova Scotian residents with a disability or chronic illness are less satisfied with all aspects of their quality of life, compared to the general population.[5]

Implementing an accessibility standard in education under the Accessibility Act will prevent and remove barriers to education, improving access and participation levels. It is expected this will lead to enhanced quality of life, increased access to employment, and higher income levels among Nova Scotians with disabilities and Deaf Nova Scotians.

While varying definitions of disability exist, the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act defines disability as a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society.[6] Some people may not have a diagnosed disability, but still experience accessibility barriers. Others who experience accessibility barriers may not identify as having a disability. This may include people who are Deaf, those who identify as neurodivergent, those who have a chronic illness or condition, and others. In this document, the terms "people with disabilities" is used and intended to include all people who experience accessibility barriers in education.

[1] Government of Canada – https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/measuring-what-matters-toward-quality-life-strategy-canada.html
[2] Statistics Canada – https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016024/98-200-x2016024-eng.cfm and https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016024/98-200-x2016024-eng.cfm
3 Statistics Canada – https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2021010/article/00003-eng.htm (2021) and https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2015001-eng.htm#a3 (2017)
[4] Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability 2017
[5] Engage Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative https://engagenovascotia.ca/about-qol
[6] Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017

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Background

Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act, enacted in 2017, recognizes accessibility as a human right and sets a goal of becoming an accessible province by 2030. It enables Government to develop accessibility standards in the areas of:

- Education

- Built environment

- Delivery and receipt of goods and services

- Information and communication

- Employment

- Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

In September 2018, Government released Access by Design 2030, and committed to developing an accessibility standard in education. Under the Accessibility Act, the Accessibility Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Minister of Justice on the content and implementation of an accessibility standard in education. In March 2019, the Accessibility Advisory Board established an Education Standard Development Committee to assist them with this work. The Accessibility Advisory Board established that the scope of the recommendations would include public and private early years, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education, including the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning.

The Education Standard Development Committee consists of community members with a broad range of lived and professional expertise in education, and government representatives (see Appendix B). The majority of committee members are representatives who identify as Deaf or having a disability. While people with disabilities are specifically named in the Accessibility Act and are therefore explicitly named in these recommendations, committee members assert the importance of centering the knowledge and experiences of all minoritized learners and communities as a condition of equity and accessibility in education at all levels.

Standard Development Process

The Accessibility Act outlines the following steps for developing accessibility standards:

1. The Accessibility Advisory Board establishes a Standard Development Committee to assist them in developing recommendations on the content and implementation of a standard.

2. The Standard Development Committee develops recommendations in consultation with stakeholders.

3. The Accessibility Advisory Board submits recommendations to the Minister of Justice. These recommendations are made publicly available.

4. The Minister prepares a proposed accessibility standard, adopting the Accessibility Advisory Board recommendations in whole, in part, or with modifications.

5. The Minister makes the proposed standard publicly available for comment for 60 days.

6. The Minister consults with the Accessibility Advisory Board with respect to any comments received, and revises the proposed standard, if necessary

7. The Minister recommends an accessibility standard to Governor-in-Council for approval as a regulation

Scope

The Education Standard Development Committee developed recommendations for the following entities:

Early Years

- Licensed child care facilities
- <u>Family</u> home child care agencies
- Pre-primary programs
- Early Childhood Development Intervention Services
- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

Elementary and Secondary

- Regional Centres for Education
- Conseil scolaire acadien provincial
- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
- Private elementary and secondary schools

Post-Secondary

- Universities
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Private Career Colleges
- Language Schools

Adult Learning

- Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning

Government of Nova Scotia

- Department of Advanced Education

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

Understanding the <u>diversity</u> between and within these education sectors and the strengths of various policy tools, the Education Standard Development Committee is recommending multiple tools be used to implement these recommendations.

Most recommendations are for an accessibility standard to be enacted in the form of a regulation under the Accessibility Act. There are also some non-regulatory recommendations, recommendations for amendments to regulations under other legislation, and recommendations for guidelines for some private sector entities. The type of recommendation is noted throughout, and Appendix A provides a comprehensive outline of all types being recommended.

Gaps

The Education Standard Development Committee recognizes that there are areas of the education system that are not included in these recommendations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Elementary and secondary education delivered by the Departments of Justice, Community Services, and Health and Wellness.

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

Further, these recommendations do not address all existing accessibility barriers in the education sectors within scope. For example, barriers related to before and after school care, extra-curricular activities, and services provided by allied health professionals were not specifically considered by the committee. The committee acknowledges that accessibility barriers exist in these and other areas and recommend they be addressed by Government. Excluding these areas from these recommendations was solely due to needing to establish parameters around the scope of work.

In addition, barriers related to other accessibility standard areas were outside of the scope of this work, so were not addressed. These include:

- Built Environment

- Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

- Employment

- Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services

- Information and Communication

Approach

Given the breadth of the scope and the complexity of accessibility issues to be addressed, the Education Standard Development Committee used an incremental approach to develop recommendations in two phases:

Phase 1 Recommendations

The first phase recommendations were submitted to the Minister of Justice in August 2020. Rather than being recommendations for an accessibility standard, they were recommendations for critical conditions and commitments that Nova Scotia's education sectors must make to realize equitable access to education as a fundamental human right that must be protected for all learners. They were broad and high-level, and covered areas related to: capacity building; teaching and learning; accessibility services; research; accountability; communication, and navigation. The phase 1 recommendations can be accessed on the Accessibility Directorate website.

Phase 2 Recommendations

The Education Standard Development Committee began developing their second phase of recommendations in September 2020. They used the phase 1 recommendations as a framework to develop more specific and detailed recommendations for an accessibility standard. Some non-regulatory recommendations were also developed, including guidelines for some private career colleges, language schools, private elementary and secondary schools, and community learning organizations that offer Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning programs.

The Education Standard Development Committee divided the phase 2 recommendations into 7 education sectors:

- Early Years

- Public Elementary and Secondary

- Private Elementary and Secondary

- Public Post-Secondary

- Private Career Colleges

- Language Schools

- Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning

The Education Standard Development Committee acknowledges existing legislation governing education sectors, and recognizes the important progress articulated in current Government of Nova Scotia policy and framework documents, such as the Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy; Multi-Tiered System of Supports – Nova Scotia Public School Programs; Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework; and Quality Matters: Information for Regulated Child Care Settings. These recommendations are intended to expand upon existing policies and frameworks. Developing an accessibility standard in education under the Accessibility Act is an opportunity to build upon and strengthen ongoing work across all education sectors to make education more inclusive, equitable, and accessible.

Consultation

In developing both phases of recommendations, the Education Standard Development Committee was informed by jurisdictional research, and presentations and resources provided by external experts. In addition, the Education Standard Development Committee consulted with over 900 Nova Scotians during various phases of their work. This included staff from education sectors, parents, students, representatives of disability organizations, and other stakeholders.

An online questionnaire was conducted in Spring 2019 to identify barriers to accessing education, and to identify and prioritize areas to address in the recommendations. In March 2020, in-person consultations were conducted in five communities to gather feedback on the draft phase 1 recommendations. In spring and summer 2021, Education Standard Development Committee members met with representatives from private schools, private career colleges, and language schools, and key stakeholders from African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw, and newcomer communities to seek input on the work.

In March 2022, the Education Standard Development Committee held nine online sessions to seek input from stakeholders on the draft recommendations for an accessibility standard in education. Feedback was also received by phone and email.

Implementation

The Education Standard Development Committee acknowledges and agrees with the commitment made in Access by Design 2030 that the accessibility standard in education first apply to the Government of Nova Scotia (Department of Advanced Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration), then public sector bodies prescribed under the Accessibility Act (universities, Nova Scotia Community College, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority), and then other entities.

Recognizing that Government will require time to review these recommendations, draft and consult on a proposed standard, and enact the standard as a regulation, it is recommended that the Government of Nova Scotia must comply with the standard beginning in 2025, prescribed public sector bodies in 2026, and other named entities in 2027.

It is also recommended that Government consider a phased approach to compliance with components of the standard. For example, first expecting compliance with components of the standard related to accountability and professional learning will help build capacity and awareness across education sectors and better prepare them to comply with other components of the standard.

The Education Standard Development Committee understands the importance of a compliance and enforcement framework based on developing awareness, understanding, and capacity to comply with accessibility standards. However, the Department of Justice must ensure compliance and enforcement mechanisms developed and implemented under the Accessibility Act also prioritize immediate solutions for learners and staff encountering accessibility barriers due to non-compliance.

2. Imperatives for Accessible Education

The following are essential commitments and conditions that must exist in Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors for an accessibility standard in education to be successfully implemented. These imperatives are integrated within and integral to all recommendations in this document.

1. **Fundamental Commitment to Human Rights** – Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors must prioritize equitable access to education as a fundamental human right. All participants (staff, learners, families, and other stakeholders) must demonstrate a shared responsibility for equity and accessibility within a human rights framework, by preventing and removing systemic, structural, and individual barriers to participation, including barriers rooted in legacies of ableism/audism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, and cisgenderism.

2. **First Voice** – Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors must value and demonstrate an understanding that all people with disabilities and Deaf people are experts in accessibility. Their experience, diverse domains of expertise and leadership, including evidence generated by a diversity of first voice researchers that is inclusive of Black, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, and gender diverse perspectives must be prioritized in this work.

3. **Equity** – Equitable access to education must be ensured through inclusive teaching and learning practices and environments that maintain high expectations for achievement and well-being of all learners by intentionally bringing Black, Deaf, disabled, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+and other diverse experiences to the centre of curricula, pedagogy, and physical and digital spaces.

4. **Inclusive Decision-Making** – Learners who experience barriers to education, and their families or supporters, must be meaningfully supported to be full, active participants in decision-making regarding their education. This involves prioritizing first voice, and family voice, especially when learners are young or require advocacy support. It also involves ensuring access to information and tools to understand and participate fully in the decision-making process.

5. **Intersectionality** – Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors must demonstrate an understanding that individual and systemic responses to a diversity of disabilities and unique marginalized identities, circumstances, and experiences intersect with and impact accessibility. Experiences of inaccessibility are interconnected with experiences of ableism, audism, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, sexism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and xenophobia.

6. **Collaboration and Consistency** – Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors must facilitate and prioritize a relational approach that centres collaboration, coordination, and consistency within and across stakeholders, initiatives, communities, and sectors.

7. **Sufficient and Sustainable Resources** – Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors must ensure funding and human resources to implement and sustain the accessibility standard in education. This will require significant financial investment and leadership from the Government of Nova Scotia.

8. **Continuous Learning and Improvement** – Nova Scotia's education systems and sectors must ensure their programs, policies, and procedures are continuously reviewed and improved to reflect new learning and research, and to respond to the changing needs and experiences of learners and educators.

3. Early Years Recommendations

During the development of these recommendations, the Government of Nova Scotia entered the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. The Education Standard Development Committee anticipates that these recommendations will help inform the transformation of the early learning and child care system in Nova Scotia.

This section includes recommendations for the early years sector, and apply to:
- Licensed child care facilities
- Family home child care agencies
- Pre-primary Programs
- Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services
- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Three types of recommendations are included in this section:
- Accessibility standard, enacted as regulation under the Accessibility Act
- Amendments to the Pre-primary Act and the Early Learning and Child Care Act regulations
- Other non-regulatory recommendations

Accountability

1. **Early Learning and Child Care Act Amendment:** To ensure inclusive practices are embedded within all licensed early years programs regardless of the receipt of public funding, regulations supporting inclusive practices related to access, participation and supports must be enacted in the Early Learning and Child Care Act.

2. **Pre-Primary Act Amendment:** The Pre-primary Act must be amended to ensure inclusive practices related to accessibility, participation and supports, along with equitable access to specialists and services within the school system.

3. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must add <u>diversity</u>, <u>equity</u>, <u>inclusion</u> and accessibility outcomes to the <u>Nova Scotia Quality Matters assessment program</u> (or subsequent program) to ensure that eligibility to receive provincial funding for licensed childcare centres is directly linked to meeting these specific outcomes. Any program that meets licensing requirements and is seeking funding under the above, must be eligible to receive funding support.

4. **Accessibility Standard:** When developing, reviewing, and implementing policies, resources, and practices impacting children with developmental delays and disabilities, <u>early years programs</u> must ensure:

   - Families are consulted about these decisions.

   - They are child-centered and culturally and linguistically responsive.

   - They examine the positive and negative implications of these policies, resources, and practices on children with developmental delay and disabilities.

   - They support the provision of services for children with developmental delays and disabilities in environments in which all children would naturally participate.

   - These decisions are informed by a broad base of <u>evidence</u> that prioritizes <u>first voice</u> and <u>family voice</u> experience and expertise.

   - Address and promote the cross-sector collaboration of agencies and local programs.

5. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and <u>early years programs</u> must work collaboratively to establish a systematic approach to <u>inclusion</u> that allows for the coordination, braiding and leveraging of funds, resources and supports at a local community level in order to meet clear inclusive practice outcomes to improve <u>accessible</u> programming in the early years.

6. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must provide sufficient access to specialized technical assistance and consultative services to support <u>early years programs</u> in implementing high-quality inclusive practices.

7. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure the human rights afforded to young children with developmental delays and disabilities under the <u>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</u> and <u>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</u> are reflected in all early years program policies, frameworks and procedures.

Professional Learning

8. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure that <u>early years programs</u> develop and implement an <u>evidence-based</u> cross-sector professional development approach that provides a variety of learning opportunities and supports to all staff to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to implement accessibility standards. These learning opportunities must be:

   - In inclusive practice, <u>routine-based intervention planning</u>, accessibility, <u>universal design for learning</u>, <u>disability</u> rights, <u>ableism</u>, barriers, culturally and linguistically responsive learning, social emotional development/learning, <u>Deaf</u> culture, <u>Deaf</u> spaces, language and communication choices, and appropriate assistive technology.

   - Provided both as part of mandatory orientation requirements for new staff, and ongoing professional learning.

   - Informed by <u>evidence</u> that prioritizes <u>first voice</u> and <u>family voice</u>.

   - Provided through partnerships with local post-secondary education and training institutions and/or partner agencies.

   - <u>Accessible</u> for all staff with disabilities and those who are <u>Deaf</u>.

   - Ensuring accessibility must be the responsibility of <u>early years programs</u>, and not be the responsibility of staff.

9. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and <u>early years programs</u> must ensure <u>early years professionals</u> are supported to integrate professional learning into practice. This includes:

   - Providing early years program <u>leaders</u> and administrators with the training, coaching, tools, and time necessary to support guided reflective practice with the <u>early years professionals</u> within their program.

   - Developing <u>pedagogical leaders</u> or mentors to support internal coaching of inclusive practices and to develop communities of practice among <u>early years professionals</u>.

   - Allocating time outside of the classroom for <u>early years professionals</u> to support inclusive programming, team collaboration and professional development.

   - Ensuring availability of adequate space, tools and resources to support the development of programming and related materials. This may be provided by <u>early years programs</u> or through provincially funded regional resource centres.

   - Identifying provincial demonstration sites to support and inform best practice and recognize excellence in inclusive early years programming.

10. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure core content in inclusive practices are included within all post graduate in-service certificate programs for advanced practitioners. These programs must build capacity in accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion, and be part of the Nova Scotia Advanced Practitioner Program in Early Childhood Education (APP).

11. **Accessibility Standard:** Early years programs must ensure competencies, criteria and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff of early years programs. (NS-Level-2-ECE-Competency-Profile)

12. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Department of Advanced Education must ensure competencies related to accessibility, disability rights, barriers to participation, the use of appropriate assistive technology, and principles and practices of inclusive education, such as universal design for learning, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy are integrated into the curriculum of all early childhood education programs offered at Nova Scotia's universities, Nova Scotia Community College and Private Career Colleges. (Standards for Early Childhood Education Post-Secondary Programs)

13. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and early years programs must implement ongoing public awareness strategies regarding the legal foundations and benefits of accessibility and inclusion that target a variety of audiences, including families.

14. **Accessibility Standard:** The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure teachers and educational assistants working with braille readers have proficiency in braille. This includes ongoing professional learning and recertification in braille.

Access and Program Entry

15. **Accessibility Standard:** Early years programs must ensure applicants are not discriminated against (as defined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act) during admissions process for declaring a developmental delay or disability, or requiring access to accessibility services or appropriate assistive technology. Once enrolled, early years programs must ensure the right of every infant, young child, and their family, including those with a developmental delay or disability, is realized to meaningfully participate in an equitable, broad range of program options.

16. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must regularly review admission processes to assess for and remove barriers for families of children with developmental delay and disabilities.

    - This must include ensuring application processes and forms are <u>accessible</u> for people with disabilities.

    - This must include clearly communicating to potential applicants about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports.

    - This review must be completed at least every 3 years, and as necessary in response to an identified <u>barrier</u>.

17. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must include children with developmental delays or disabilities in naturally occurring proportion to the general population in their community. Key provincial protocols, including the addition of resources and funding, must be in place to support program success.

Early Learning Environment[7]

18. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must use <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u>, <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u> and recognizing the '<u>environment as teacher</u>' to create <u>accessible</u> play environments.

19. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must create environments that provide <u>accessible</u>, inclusive opportunities for movement and regular physical activity indoors and outdoors to maintain or improve fitness, wellness, and development across all domains.

20. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must provide services and supports in <u>natural and inclusive environments</u> during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

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[7] While out of scope for these recommendations, the Education Standard Development Committee recommends the Accessibility Advisory Board recommend to the Minister of Justice that the Government of Nova Scotia's Interdepartmental Committee on the Built Environment Standard consider accessibility requirements in the built environment for early learning and child care settings be developed and enacted as regulations under the Accessibility Act or the Early Learning and Child Care Act.

Family Involvement and Collaboration

21. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must develop and implement policies, structures, and practices that build trusting and respectful partnerships between families and <u>early years professionals</u>, and ensure full <u>meaningful participation</u> of families, and shared decision making. This includes:

    - Ensuring individual planning and goal setting is guided by <u>family</u> concerns and priorities

    - Ensuring families are involved in all decision-making processes related to their child's education and programming.

    - Communicating consistent and strong messages regarding the importance of families being authentic partners with critical expertise and ideas.

    - Establishing <u>equitable</u> protocols for reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience between families and professionals.

    - Providing financial supports, structures, and resources that allow families to effectively participate in activities (e.g., flexible meeting times, childcare, transportation costs).

    - Ensuring interactions are respectful of and responsive to the intersecting <u>diversity</u> of families, including race, ethnicity, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, <u>family</u> status, and <u>disability</u>.

    - Providing learning experiences that align with children's cultural and familial norms.

    - Creating opportunities for families to build informal networks of support through connections with other experienced families.

    - Including families as a regular part of the program improvement and problem-solving processes.

    - Providing opportunities for families to utilize their knowledge and skills to engage them as partners in developing, implementing, and evaluating <u>inclusion</u> policies and initiatives.

Curriculum Framework

22. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure the current and subsequent provincial <u>early learning curriculum framework</u> reflects the <u>UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</u> and <u>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</u>. Provincial <u>curriculum frameworks</u> must be developed from a foundation of <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u> and <u>inclusion</u>. They must be integrated, developmentally appropriate, universally designed, flexible, comprehensive and linked to assessment and program <u>evaluation</u> activities.

23. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and <u>early years programs</u> must collaboratively and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the <u>curriculum framework</u> and its implementation related to supporting high-<u>quality</u> inclusive practices.

Play Materials

24. **Accessibility Standard:** When selecting play materials, <u>early years programs</u> must consider:

    - <u>Inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>

    - Integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

    - Availability in multiple, <u>accessible</u>, and flexible formats for various learners, as needed.

Instruction

25. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure <u>early years professionals</u> use child-led, culturally responsive, individualized embedded instruction during naturally occurring routines.

26. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure that children enrolled in their programs have timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible ways to engage with information and play materials.

27. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure <u>early years professionals</u> design <u>intentional teaching</u> and learning opportunities using <u>inclusive education principles</u> and practices, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

28. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must develop or modify the common learning environment, materials, and instruction to ensure children can engage in <u>curricular</u> activities and achieve their individualized goals.

29. **Accessibility Standard:** Early years programs must ensure data about children's learning and progress towards individualized goals is gathered and monitored at a program level and will inform the use of adaptations (environmental or instructional) or additional supports for children.

30. **Accessibility Standard:** Early years programs must ensure early years professionals use culturally responsive and identity affirming practice. This includes:

   - Recognizing diversity in their environment including race, ethnicity, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, family status and disability

   - Recognizing the intersecting diverse experiences and identities of children and families in their care

   - Demonstrating an awareness of implicit and explicit biases as they relate to their teaching

   - Developing relationships with children with disabilities and developmental delay and their families, and providing learning experiences that are aligned with children's cultural and familial norms.[8]

Authentic Assessment

31. **Accessibility Standard:** Early years programs must ensure early years professionals work collaboratively as an assessment team with the family and other professionals as they carry out ongoing observation and authentic assessment practices to understand children's learning and development. The assessment process must:

   - Be culturally responsive, non-biased, in children's primary languages, and in sign language for Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing children.

   - Use a holistic approach, which includes observation of all areas of development to learn about the child's strengths, needs, and preferences.[9]

   - Include information about the child's skills in daily activities, typical routines, and familiar settings such as home, center, and community.

   - Integrate information about the child's functioning in everyday routines, their interests, play materials, caregivers and play partners.

   - Ensure early assessment of sign language and visual access.

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[8] https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/indicators_inclusion_ece.pdf
[9] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018

32. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure <u>authentic assessment</u> materials and strategies are <u>accessible</u> and considered and delivered using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

33. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure <u>early years professionals</u> communicate <u>authentic assessment</u> results in ways that are <u>accessible</u>, understandable, and useful to families. This information must lead to the development of <u>functional goals</u> and strategies that are reflective of and responsive to <u>family</u> priorities and the intersectional <u>diversity</u> of the <u>family</u>.

Program Planning and Delivery

34. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must hold high expectations and intentionally promote <u>meaningful participation</u> in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized planning and programming.

35. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must use <u>evidence-based</u> services and supports to foster children's development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of <u>belonging</u>.[10]

36. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure <u>early years professionals</u> work collaboratively with each other and the <u>family</u> to create outcomes or goals, develop individualized routine-based intervention plans, and implement practices that address <u>family</u>'s priorities and the child's strengths and needs within various contexts.

37. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must establish a central digital resource to provide access for <u>early years professionals</u> to <u>evidence-based</u> resources, supports and services related to inclusive programming and practices.

Language Access

38. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> children have access to:

   - <u>Deaf</u> culture and <u>sign language</u> through <u>linguistic modeling</u> within the early years program.

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[10] <u>https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/DHHS-DOE_policy-statement-inclusion.pdf</u>

- Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing educators, and other professionals and role models within the early years program.

- Peer-to-peer play, interaction, communication, and social skill development with other Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing children.

- Learning opportunities, activities, and play materials in sign language.

- Multi-modality options for language and learning, which include spoken, written, signed, gestural, and touch.

39. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure educators and other professionals who work with Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing children understand the significance of language development, understand the serious impacts of language deprivation on literacy development, and have expertise in developing literacy skills in children who use sign language.

40. **Accessibility Standard:** In collaboration with Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing students and professionals, families, stakeholders, and service providers, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must develop and implement a provincial strategy and action plan to address systemic barriers for Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing children in the early years, elementary, and secondary systems. This must include:

- A bilingual-biliteracy-bicultural approach to educating Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing children in both sign language and English, French or Mi'kmaw.

- Ensuring sign language access and development through linguistic modeling

- Ensuring access to Deaf culture, strong language role models, and social skills development among peers who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing.

- Ensuring access to learning materials in sign language and materials that are professionally captioned.

- Ensuring access to Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing educators and other professionals

- Ensuring access to consistent, high quality, proficient sign language interpretation services

- Providing economic, cultural, and social supports to Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing community stakeholders who may be in the position to mentor, instruct, and work alongside interpreters in teaching and learning spaces.

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[11] This recommendation is repeated in the Public Elementary and Secondary section.

41. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, with the support of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, must develop and implement a language accessibility policy to ensure direct access[12] for Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing children, and children who have complex communication needs, to learning opportunities, activities, and play materials in both sign language and English, French or Mi'kmaw. This policy must be publicly available and communicated to families.

42. **Accessibility Standard:** The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) must ensure APSEA teachers working with Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing children are screened for fluency in sign language at a required level appropriate for early years settings.[13]

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

43. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Health and Wellness must ensure children enrolled in early years programs have equitable access to language, psychological and developmental assessments through external support services. Wait lists for these assessments must be no longer than 3 months. This must be achieved by adequately resourcing these services.

44. **Accessibility Standard:** The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority and Early Childhood Development Intervention Services must ensure children who have been diagnosed with hearing level and vision loss receive access to services within 3 months of diagnosis.

45. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in collaboration with relevant health professionals, must ensure staff in early years programs have access to relevant training and support to carry out required health and personal care management procedures and protocols (e.g., catheterization, g-tube feeding, etc.) with children in their early years program.

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[12] Direct access to sign language means access to learning opportunities, activities and play materials in sign language (not through a sign language interpreter).

[13] This means ongoing professional learning and re-certification in sign language. It also means a minimum rating of 3 on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview, or equivalent. The Education Standard Development Committee understands that there may be other equivalent sign language screening standards currently in use or developed in future.

46. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Department of Health and Wellness will work in collaboration with <u>early years programs</u> to ensure children enrolled with developmental delays and disabilities have timely, <u>equitable</u> and individualized access to effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meets their needs.

   - **Non-Regulatory:** This can be supported by developing a provincial library of assistive technology, resources and training materials to build capacity among <u>early years professionals</u> and families to support the development and use of effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> for children and staff with disabilities.

47. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure staff with disabilities have timely, <u>equitable</u> and individualized access to <u>accessibility services</u> and effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meets their work-related needs.

48. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure:

   - Educational Interpreters working in <u>early years programs</u> hold a degree/diploma in <u>sign language</u> interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program

   - Educational Deaf Interpreters meet all Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) criteria for Deaf Interpreters

   - All interpreters are well-trained, and screened for fluency in <u>sign language</u> and the language of instruction at a required level appropriate for early years settings.[14]

   - Access to ongoing and mandatory professional learning for Educational Interpreters and/or Educational Deaf Interpreters working in the elementary and secondary system, and <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> stakeholders who are mentoring, instructing and working alongside interpreters.

   - Educational Interpreters and/or Educational Deaf Interpreters working in the elementary and secondary system adhere to professional codes of ethics held by the recognized national and provincial sign language interpreting associations

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[14] This means ongoing professional learning and re-certification in sign language. It also means requiring Educational Sign Language Interpreters receive a minimum rating of 4.0 on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment for Educational Interpreters (EPIA) for Elementary Grades every 5 years or less, and that Educational Deaf Interpreters receive a minimum rating of 3 on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI), or equivalent. The Education Standard Development Committee understands that there may be other equivalent interpreter assessment and sign language screening standards currently in use or developed in future."

49. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure staff have consistent, stable access to <u>sign language</u> interpreters. These interpreters must hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program, be well-trained, and screened for fluency in both sign language and the language of employment. Sign language interpretation services must be ensured whenever bilingual services (sign language/language of employment) are required for work-related communication, including meetings and collaborative work with staff, children, families and external service providers.

Navigation and Communication

50. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must work collaboratively within communities to identify clear pathways to external supports and services for families, with clear referral processes and contacts.

51. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must work collaboratively with other professionals providing external supports and services to children to develop a common understanding of the early years context the child is in, and ensure programming is achievable within this context.

52. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must promote efficient, coordinated, and collaborative service delivery for children and families by creating the conditions for <u>early years professionals</u> from multiple disciplines and the <u>family</u> to work together as a team to meet <u>family</u>-identified child or <u>family</u> needs.

53. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure information about programs, services, and policies and interventions is provided in <u>plain language</u>, linguistically diverse, and <u>accessible formats</u>. This information must be inclusive of <u>first voice</u> experiences and be proactively communicated to families, and easy to access.

54. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure families can provide feedback to and communicate with those working in the early years system in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

Transition Planning

55. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure:

- Children can attend <u>early years programs</u> they would naturally attend if they did not have a <u>disability</u>, with other children in their chronological age groups

- Entry into pre-primary is not delayed due to inaccessible built environment, or unavailability of staff, services or supports for students, including transportation.

- Children are not prevented from attending pre-primary full-time or removed from pre-primary because of inaccessible built environment, or unavailability of staff, services, or supports, including transportation.

56. **Accessibility Standard:** In collaboration with <u>early years programs</u>, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must develop and implement provincially consistent <u>transition planning</u> processes that prioritize the voices and choices of families, and ensure that transition plans:

   - Are responsive, flexible, proactive, and updated regularly.

   - Outline how barriers that impact a child's well-being and learning are identified, prevented, and removed.

   - Ensure continuity in access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology.

57. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must ensure families, <u>early years professionals</u> and other partners collaborate with receiving environments before, during, and after transition to support successful adjustment and positive outcomes and to ensure continuity for the child across programs. This includes ensuring that before, during, and after transition, key personnel responsible for the ongoing education and support of the child within both the current and receiving program are involved in <u>transition planning</u> and the exchange of information.

Research and Data Collection

58. **Accessibility Standard:** <u>Early years programs</u> must collect and share disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data on the well-being and programming of children with developmental delays and disabilities accessing <u>early years programs</u>. This data collection and sharing must prioritize confidentiality and the privacy rights of the child and <u>family</u>. The sharing of this data must be a funding requirement, and will inform and effect system change.

59. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must provide data to stakeholders in user-friendly formats that show progress toward clearly established provincial goals related to accessibility within <u>early years programs</u>.

4. Public Elementary and Secondary Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for the public elementary and secondary education sector, and apply to:

- Regional Centres for Education, including Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning programs delivered at adult high schools

- Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Two types of recommendations are included in this section:

- Accessibility standard, enacted as regulation under the Accessibility Act

- Non-regulatory recommendations

Accountability

1. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must establish monitoring, evaluation and accountability policies and procedures to:

   - Evaluate the impact of accessibility standards, policies, and practices on students and staff with disabilities and Deaf students and staff.

   - Identify systemic achievements in accessibility and inclusion, and make system improvements.

2. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must conduct an equity impact assessment when developing, reviewing, and implementing policies, frameworks, guidelines, programs, and services. This assessment must consider impacts on marginalized students and families, such as those who identify as having a disability, Deaf, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer, low income/under resourced, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, and/or other racialized students and families.

3. **Accessibility Standard:** When developing, reviewing, and implementing policies, frameworks, guidelines, programs, and services for students with disabilities and Deaf students, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional

Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure:

- Diverse students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, and their families are consulted about these decisions.

- They examine the positive and negative implications of these policies, frameworks, guidelines, programs, and services on diverse students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

- These decisions are informed by a broad base of <u>evidence</u> that prioritizes <u>first voice</u> experience, expertise, and scholarship.

4. **Accessibility Standard:** The Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must each establish a full-time executive lead for accessibility. This includes:

- Receiving, documenting, and addressing complaints from families and students related to accessibility

- Ensuring monitoring and compliance with the Accessibility Act, including accountability for compliance with accessibility standards

- Accountability for development, implementation, and monitoring of accessibility plans.

- Advocacy for accessibility within the organization

5. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must establish a full-time senior executive lead for accessibility that reports to the Deputy Minister. This includes:

- Working with the executive leads for accessibility within the Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority to receive and address complaints from families and students related to accessibility.

- Developing and implementing a provincial approach to documenting and publicly reporting aggregate data on all complaints received by the Department, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority.

- Advancing accessibility within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and in partnership with other Government departments.

- Supporting the Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority in monitoring and compliance with the Accessibility Act.

6. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure that all policies related to <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, discrimination and harassment explicitly include <u>disability</u> and <u>ableism</u>, address the intersection of ableism with other forms of discrimination, and address the safety of all marginalized students in unsupervised spaces.

7. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must immediately establish a Council on <u>Disability</u> and Accessibility under the Education Act, with the same accountability and status as the Provincial Advisory Council on Education, the Council on Mi'kmaq Education, and the Council on African-Canadian Education. The majority of Council members must be people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people.

8. **Accessibility Standard:** Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must outline in their accessibility plans how they will increase recruitment, hiring and retainment of diverse people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people in all job categories.

Professional Learning

9. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must provide mandatory and ongoing professional learning to all staff in: accessibility, inclusive education, <u>disability</u> rights, <u>ableism</u>, <u>Deaf</u> culture, Deaf learning spaces, <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>, language and communication choices, <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, <u>accessible formats</u>, and barriers to participation. This includes:

   - Providing professional learning for <u>educators</u>, support staff, specialists, and senior administrators in <u>inclusive education principles</u> and practices, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

   - Providing time and resources to support the application of professional learning into practice.

   - Ensuring professional learning is both ongoing, and part of mandatory orientation requirements for new staff.

   - Ensuring professional learning is updated regularly, and informed by <u>evidence</u> that prioritizes <u>first voice</u>.

- Ensuring professional learning and professional learning materials are <u>accessible</u> for all staff with disabilities and those who are <u>Deaf</u>. Ensuring accessibility must be the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, and not be the responsibility of staff members participating in the learning.

- Developing mandatory professional learning that respects collective agreements.

- Developing processes to ensure that staff who are hired late or mid-year/semester have access to professional learning modules in between scheduled professional learning days.

- Ensuring professional learning is coordinated across the Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

10. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff, in alignment with teaching and leadership standards for staff in those positions.

11. **Accessibility Standard:** The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure teachers and educational assistants working with braille readers have proficiency in braille. This includes ongoing professional learning and recertification in braille.

Access and Entry

12. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure the protection of the human right of elementary and secondary students to access inclusive, <u>quality</u>, free learning in schools in their community (as outlined in Article 24 of the <u>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</u>[15], and reflected in the <u>Nova Scotia Education Act</u>[16], and the <u>Government of Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy</u>[17]). This includes ensuring:

    - Entry into grade primary is not delayed due to unavailability of staff, services or supports for students

    - Students are not prevented from attending school full-time or removed from school because of unavailability of staff, services, or supports, including transportation.

    - Access to all aspects of elementary and secondary education, including school-based extra-curricular and recess activities, class trips and events, co-op and work placements, and student awards.

13. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must make information about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports publicly available.

Places and Spaces

14. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure access to learning in an <u>accessible</u>, common, <u>inclusive learning environment</u> for all public elementary and secondary students, as outlined in section 4.3 of the Inclusive Education Policy.[18] This includes ensuring:

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[15] "Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live." United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006
[16] "Every person over the age of five years and under the age of 21 years has the right to attend a public school serving the school region in which that person resides, as assigned by a regional centre." Nova Scotia Education Act, 2018.
[17] "The Inclusive Education Policy objective is to ensure every student has access to an equitable and high-quality education that is culturally and linguistically responsive, accepting, and respectful in supporting and valuing their learning and diverse abilities." Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019
[18] "Every student should be taught within a common learning environment (e.g. a classroom) with students of similar age within the community school, with flexibility that is based on, and responsive to, the student's individual strengths and challenges." Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019.

- <u>Sign language</u> and English, French or Mi'kmaw language access and development for <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students

- The integration of principles of <u>Deaf</u> space in the layout and design of the learning environment.

- That all students, including students who identify as non-binary, have <u>equitable</u> access to washrooms and changerooms. <u>Equitable</u> access means that all-gender washrooms should be in locations that are as <u>accessible</u> as gender-segregated ones.

15. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure <u>accessible</u>, flexible seating and workstations are available in all learning environments.

16. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must work with entities with responsibility for rural internet infrastructure to ensure all school-based physical <u>teaching and learning spaces</u> have adequate internet service.[19] This means ensuring high-speed, high quality video capacity for multi-modality meetings, and supporting the use of effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, amplification systems, and communication services such as interpretation and professional captioning .

17. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure all virtual teaching and learning platforms and activities, both synchronous and asynchronous, are <u>accessible</u>. This includes compliance with the most current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards and ensuring compatibility with effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>.

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[19] While out of scope for these recommendations, the Education Standard Development Committee recommends the Accessibility Advisory Board provide direction to the Goods and Services Standard Development Committee to consider a recommendation regarding ensuring adequate internet infrastructure for schools to support the use of assistive technology, communication services, etc.

Curricula

18. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure accessibility and inclusion of elementary and secondary curricula and curricula outcomes when renewed and developed. This includes:

    - The use of inclusive education principles such as universal design for learning, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

    - Integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including diversity of disability, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

    - Integration of concepts related to accessibility, disability rights, and barriers to participation that prioritize first voice.

19. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must include commitments in the Government of Nova Scotia accessibility plans outlining how and when they will ensure regular and ongoing review of all curricula (at least every 5 years) to ensure accessibility as outlined in the previous recommendation.

Learning Resources

20. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure learning resources procured, developed, and used by educators are available in accessible formats in all instructional languages before they are made available to students.

21. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure accessibility of learning resources purchased for use by staff and students.

22. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure all audio and video materials used for instructional purposes are described and professionally captioned, or a high quality transcript is provided. These must be made available to students with disabilities and Deaf students at the same time as students without disabilities receive materials.

23. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, and the Nova Scotia Education Common Services Bureau must coordinate shared resources within and across Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority to help ensure efficient, effective, and timely access to <u>accessible formats</u>.

24. **Accessibility Standard:** Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must proactively plan for and produce <u>accessible formats</u> and current versions of <u>learning resources</u> for students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students. These must be available at the same time <u>learning resources</u> are provided to students without disabilities. Where <u>accessible formats</u> are not available, alternative means of representing the information that ensures <u>equitable</u> access to learning and opportunity to achieve relevant essential requirements are provided.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

25. **Accessibility Standard:** Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure instruction in all <u>teaching and learning spaces</u>:

    - Integrates and practices <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Provides students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students with timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible, culturally relevant ways to engage with information and participate in learning.

    - Is relevant to and reflective of diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

26. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure <u>learning assessment</u> options procured, developed, and used by <u>educators</u>:

    - Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Integrate diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

    - Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>.

    - Provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

27. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must develop, implement and monitor a policy and clear guidelines outlining criteria used to determine when students are placed on an Individualized Program Plan. This must include timelines and processes for regularly reviewing and updating Individualized Program Plans and determining whether a student should continue to be on Individualized Program Plan.

Language Access

28. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students, and, in some cases, their hearing student peers, have access to:

   - <u>Deaf</u> culture and <u>sign language</u> through <u>linguistic modeling</u> at school via multiple methods and modalities throughout the school year, including asynchronous and synchronous interactions in person and virtually.

   - <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard of hearing</u>, and sign language mentors and role models at school

   - Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing teachers, educational assistants, and other professionals

   - Peer-to-peer play, interaction, communication, and social skill development with other Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students

   - Learning opportunities, activities, and materials in sign language

   - Sign language assessments and support for sign language acquisition and fluency, in addition to English/ French/ Mi'kmaw assessments and support.

29. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure <u>educators</u> and other professionals who work with <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students understand the significance of language development on literacy, understand the serious impacts of language deprivation on literacy development, and have expertise in developing literacy skills in students who use <u>sign language</u>.

30. **Accessibility Standard:** In collaboration with <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students and professionals, families, stakeholders, and services providers, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must develop and implement a provincial strategy and action plan to address systemic barriers for <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> children in the early years, elementary and secondary systems. This must include:

   - A bilingual-biliteracy-bicultural approach to educating Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing children in both sign language and English, French or Mi'kmaw.

   - Ensuring sign language access and development through <u>linguistic modeling</u>.

   - Ensuring access to Deaf culture, strong language role models, and social skills development among peers who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing.

   - Ensuring access to learning materials in sign language and materials that are professionally captioned.

   - Ensuring access to Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing <u>educators</u> and other professionals.

   - Ensuring access to consistent, high quality, proficient sign language interpretation services.

   - Providing economic, cultural, and social supports to Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing community stakeholders who may be in the position to mentor, instruct, and work alongside interpreters in <u>teaching and learning spaces</u>.

31. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must develop and implement a language accessibility policy to ensure direct access[20] for <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students and students who have complex communication needs to learning opportunities, activities, and materials in both <u>sign language</u> and English, French or Mi'kmaw. This policy must be publicly available and communicated to students and families.

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[20] Direct access to sign language means access to learning opportunities, activities and play materials in sign language (not through a sign language interpreter), in addition to those in English, French or Mi'kmaw.

32. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial must ensure non-speaking students and students with complex communication needs have access to:

   - Plain language materials and instruction

   - Instruction, activities, and materials in both sign language and English, French or Mi'kmaw

   - Communication services and supports.

33. **Accessibility Standard:** The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) must ensure APSEA teachers working with Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing students are screened for fluency in sign language at a required level appropriate for elementary and secondary education settings.[21]

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

34. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure students have access to accessibility services and effective and appropriate assistive technology that meet their needs. This means ensuring:

   - Accessibility services and supports are proactive, flexible, responsive, and reviewed at least annually.

   - Accessibility barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented, and removed.

   - Student learning is not impacted or delayed due to a delay or lack of access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology.

   - Continuity in access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology.

   - Access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology continues to be based on need, as identified in collaboration with the student and family, and not dependent on receipt of a medical diagnosis, or learning, language or psychoeducational assessments.

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[21] This means ongoing professional learning and sign language screening and annual ongoing commitment to professional learning. This includes a minimum rating of 3 on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview, or equivalent. The Education Standard Development Committee understands that there may be other equivalent sign language screening standards currently in use or developed in future.

- <u>Equitable</u>, timely access to learning, language, and psychoeducational assessments, if it is determined that they would inform student, <u>family</u> and professional decision-making about <u>accessibility services</u> in elementary and secondary education. These assessments must be <u>accessible</u>. Wait lists for these assessments must be no longer than 3 months.

- <u>Equitable</u>, timely access to learning, language, and psychoeducational assessments required to access post-secondary <u>accessibility services</u>. These assessments must be <u>accessible</u>. Wait lists for these assessments must be no longer than 3 months.

35. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure staff with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> staff have timely access to <u>accessibility services</u> and effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meet their work-related needs. This means ensuring:

   - Access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> is proactive, flexible, and responsive.

   - Accessibility barriers that impact a staff person's ability to do their job are identified, prevented, and removed.

   - Continuity in access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>

   - The staff person's ability to fully participate in the workplace and to do their job is not impacted or delayed due to a delay or lack of access to these services and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>.

36. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must develop, implement, monitor and update a provincial assistive technology strategy and action plan.

37. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure accessibility of technology purchased for use by staff and students.

38. **Accessibility Standard:** Each Regional Centre for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must have a designated staff person with expertise to lead the procurement, training, and use of <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, to determine the effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that will meet the skills and needs of students, and to assist families with procuring assistive technology.

39. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure staff have consistent, stable access to qualified sign language interpreters. These interpreters must hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program, are well-trained, and screened for fluency in both sign language and the language of employment. Sign language interpretation services must be ensured whenever bilingual services (sign language/language of employment) are required for work-related communication, including meetings and collaborative work with staff, students, families and external service providers.

40. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure:

   - Students who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, non-speaking, or have complex communication needs who use sign language have access to qualified Educational Interpreters and/or Educational Deaf Interpreters who:

      - Hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program

      - Are screened for fluency in both languages at a required level appropriate for elementary and secondary settings.[22]

      - Maintain an annual professional development and training plan for continued fluency in both languages in educational setting.

   - Students who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, non-speaking. or have complex communication needs, and their families are supported to navigate sign language interpretation services in the education system.

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[22] This means ongoing professional learning in sign language and in English or French screening and interpretative skills screening. It also means requiring Educational Interpreters receive a minimum rating of 4.0 on both Elementary and Secondary assessments of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment for Educational Interpreters, and that Educational Deaf Interpreters meet all Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) criteria for Deaf Interpreters and receive a minimum rating of 3 on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview, or equivalent. The Education Standard Development Committee understands that there may be other equivalent interpreter assessment and sign language screening standards currently in use or developed in future.

- Access to ongoing and mandatory professional learning for Educational Interpreters and/or Educational Deaf Interpreters working in the elementary and secondary system, and <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> stakeholders who are mentoring, instructing and working alongside interpreters.

- Educational Interpreters and/or Educational Deaf Interpreters working in the elementary and secondary system adhere to professional codes of ethics held by the recognized national and provincial <u>sign language</u> interpreting associations, and the Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy.

Navigation and Communication

41. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure information distributed to families and students, and information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in <u>plain language</u> and in <u>accessible formats</u>.

42. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, and their families are full, active participants in decision-making about their education. This includes:

- Providing students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, and their families with tools and resources to be full, active participants in decision-making regarding their education.

- Ensuring students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, and their families are supported to navigate the elementary and secondary education system and advocate for the needs of students.

- Ensuring students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students and their families can provide feedback to and communicate with staff in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

Transition Planning

43. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must provide <u>transition planning</u> services that support the needs of students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students. This includes:

   - Ensuring students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, and their families are actively involved in transition planning into, within, and out of elementary and secondary education.

   - Providing transition planning resource development and training for all staff to effectively support transitions for students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

   - Ensuring transition plans:

      - Are responsive, flexible, proactive and updated regularly.

      - Outline how barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented and removed.

      - Ensure continuity in access to <u>accessibility services</u> and effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>.

   - Ensuring staff and secondary students are aware of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports available at post-secondary institutions, and related assessment requirements.

   - Ensuring students have access to assessments required to access post-secondary <u>accessibility services</u> and supports.

   - Supporting students to identify and access accessibility supports and services at post-secondary institutions, employment, or community.

   - Identifying transition-related barriers and preventing and removing them.

   - Consulting and liaising with community service providers to support <u>transition planning</u>.

   - Establishing partnerships with social services agencies and business partners to support inclusive, community-based employment paths for graduating students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

44. **Non-Regulatory:** In partnership with Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, service providers and other partners who provide services for students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must develop and implement an integrated <u>transition planning</u> approach to ensure consistency in practices and processes.

Research and Data Collection

45. **Accessibility Standard:** To inform and effect system change, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must develop a standardized mechanism for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority to collect and make publicly available disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data on:

    - Accessibility barriers and their impacts on students and staff with disabilities, and those who are <u>Deaf</u>.

    - Systemic barriers related to Individual Program Plans and their impacts on students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, especially those from other marginalized communities.

    - The well-being and achievement of students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

46. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority must support the growth and development of research on accessibility and <u>disability</u> issues, especially the work of <u>first voice</u> researchers. This includes research to inform the implementation of inclusive education practices, and the development of accessibility standards. This support must include:

    - Embedding accessibility as a criterion for <u>evaluation</u> in research grants and funding opportunities.

    - Stimulating funding for research and scholarship in accessibility and <u>disability</u> issues.

5. Private Elementary and Secondary Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for the private elementary and secondary education sector.

Recommendations for an **accessibility standard**, enacted as regulation under the Accessibility Act, apply to:

- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- Elementary and secondary schools designated as special education private schools under the Education Act

- Private schools recognized by the Minister under the Nova Scotia Education Act with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12.

Recommendations for **accessibility guidelines** apply to private schools recognized by the Minister under the Education Act with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12.

Recommendations for an Accessibility Standard

With the exception of Recommendation #10 which applies to all private schools recognized by the Minister under the Education Act, the following recommendations for an accessibility standard apply to:

- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- Elementary and secondary schools designated as special education private schools under the Education Act

- Private schools recognized by the Minister under the Nova Scotia Education Act with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12.

Accountability

1. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must have a student accessibility policy that outlines how they will ensure the prevention and removal of barriers to learning for students and staff with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students and staff. The policy must be clearly communicated to staff, students and families.

2. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must have a staff accessibility policy that outlines how each school will ensure the prevention and removal of accessibility barriers for staff with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> staff.

3. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must designate a lead staff person to support student <u>accessibility services</u>, and staff/teacher capacity building in accessibility, and ensure compliance with accessibility standards.

4. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure that all policies related to <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, discrimination, bullying, and harassment explicitly include <u>disability</u> and <u>ableism</u>, address the intersection of ableism with other forms of discrimination, and address the safety of all marginalized students in unsupervised spaces.

5. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must consult with students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students and their families in decisions about the development, review, and implementation of policies, programs, and services impacting these students. They must examine the positive and negative implications of these policies, frameworks, guidelines, programs, and services on students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

6. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by staff and students.

7. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must provide support and expertise to schools designated as special education private schools and Private Schools recognized by the Minister under the Nova Scotia Education Act to advance accessibility across the sector. This includes supporting them to:

   - Improve their capacity to provide accessibility services to students

   - Connect students to accessibility services in the community

   - Provide professional learning in inclusive education to staff

   - Provide an accessible learning environment for students.

Professional Learning

8. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must provide mandatory and ongoing learning opportunities to all staff in accessibility, inclusive education, disability rights, ableism, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, and barriers to participation. These learning opportunities must be part of both mandatory orientation requirements for new staff, and ongoing learning.

9. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff.

Recruitment and Admissions

10. **Accessibility Standard:** All Private Schools recognized by the Minister under the Education Act must ensure applicants are not discriminated against (as defined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act) during the admissions process for declaring a disability, having an Individualized Program Plan, or requiring access to accessibility services or appropriate assistive technology.

11. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must regularly review their admission requirements to assess for and remove barriers for students with disabilities and Deaf students.

12. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools, private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 and external recruiters must proactively provide <u>accessible</u> information to all prospective applicants and students about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports, and how to access them. This includes ensuring student acceptance offers outline availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports.

13. **Accessibility Standard:** Application processes and forms, admission tests, and other admission screening at Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must be available in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

    - This includes clearly communicating to prospective applicants that accommodations and <u>accessible</u> and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

Curricula and Learning Resources

14. **Accessibility Standard:** When reviewing and updating <u>curricula</u>, materials and resources used by <u>educators</u> and students, designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure they:

    - Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>

    - Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u> such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Integrate diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

15. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students have timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible, culturally relevant ways to engage with information and participate in learning, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

16. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure <u>learning assessment</u> options procured, developed, and used by teachers:

   - Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

   - Integrate diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

   - Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>.

   - Provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

17. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure students have access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meet their needs. This means ensuring:

   - <u>Accessibility services</u> and supports are proactive, flexible, and responsive

   - Accessibility barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented, and removed

   - Student learning is not impacted or delayed due to a delay or lack of access to these services and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>.

   - Continuity in access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>

   - Access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> is based on need, as identified in collaboration with the student and <u>family</u>, and not dependent on receipt of a medical diagnosis, or learning, language or psychoeducational assessments.

18. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure staff and teachers with disabilities, and those who are <u>Deaf</u> have timely access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meet their work-related needs.

19. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure students who are <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard of hearing</u>,

non-speaking, or have complex communication needs who use <u>sign language</u> have access to qualified Educational Interpreters and/or Educational <u>Deaf</u> Interpreters who:

- Hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program

- Are screened for fluency in both languages at a required level appropriate for elementary and secondary settings.[23]

20. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must provide <u>transition planning</u> services that support the needs of students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students. This includes:

- Ensuring students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families are full and active participants in transition planning

- Ensuring staff and secondary students are aware of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports available at post-secondary institutions, and related assessment requirements.

- Supporting students to identify and access accessibility supports and services at post-secondary institutions, employment, or community.

- Identifying transition-related barriers and preventing and removing them.

- Ensuring transition plans:

  - Are responsive, flexible, proactive and updated regularly.

  - Outline how barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented and removed.

  - Ensure continuity in access to <u>accessibility services</u> and effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>.

21. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must provide schools designated as special education private schools and Private Schools recognized by the Minister under the Nova Scotia Education Act with resources and tools to support <u>transition planning</u> and the development and provision of <u>accessibility services</u>.

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[23] This means ongoing professional learning in sign language and in English or French screening and interpretative skills screening. It also means requiring Educational Interpreters receive a minimum rating of 4.0 on both Elementary and Secondary assessments of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment for Educational Interpreters, and that Educational Deaf Interpreters meet all Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) criteria for Deaf Interpreters and receive a minimum rating of 3 on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview, or equivalent. The Education Standard Development Committee understands that there may be other equivalent interpreter assessment and sign language screening standards currently in use or developed in future.

Navigation and Communication

22. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure information distributed to families and students, and information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in plain language and in accessible formats.

23. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure all virtual teaching and learning platforms and activities, both synchronous and asynchronous, are accessible. This includes compliance with the most current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards and ensuring compatibility with effective and appropriate assistive technology.

24. **Accessibility Standard:** Designated special education private schools and private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12 must ensure students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families are full, active participants in decision-making regarding their education. This includes:

    - Providing students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families with the tools and resources needed to be full, active participants in decision-making regarding their education.

    - Ensuring students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families are supported to navigate the school's services, programs and information, and advocate for the needs of students.

    - Ensuring students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families can provide feedback to and communicate with staff in flexible and accessible ways.

Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines

The following recommendations for accessibility guidelines apply to private schools recognized by the Minister under the Nova Scotia Education Act with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development must ensure that these schools are aware of the guidelines and encourage their use to inform operations.

Accountability

1. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should have a student accessibility policy that outlines how the school will prevent and remove barriers to learning for students and staff with disabilities, and <u>Deaf</u> students and staff. The policy should be clearly communicated to staff, students and families.

2. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should designate a lead staff person to support student <u>accessibility services</u>, and staff capacity building in accessibility.

3. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure that all policies related to <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, discrimination, bullying, and harassment explicitly include <u>disability</u> and <u>ableism</u>, address the intersection of <u>ableism</u> with other forms of discrimination, and address the safety of all marginalized students in unsupervised spaces.

4. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should consult with students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students and their families in decisions about the development, review, and implementation of policies, programs, and services impacting these students. They should examine the positive and negative implications of these policies, frameworks, guidelines, programs, and services on students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

5. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by staff and students.

Professional Learning

6. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should provide mandatory and ongoing learning opportunities to all staff in accessibility, inclusive education, <u>disability</u> rights, <u>ableism</u>, <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>, and barriers to participation. These learning opportunities should be part of both mandatory orientation requirements for new staff, and ongoing learning.

7. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff.

Recruitment and Admissions

8. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should regularly review their admission requirements to assess for and remove barriers for students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

9. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 and external recruiters should proactively provide information to all prospective applicants and students about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports, and how to access them. They should ensure student acceptance offers outline the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports.

10. **Guideline:** Application processes and forms, admission tests, and other admission screening at Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should be available in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students. This includes clearly communicating to prospective applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

Curricula and Learning Resources

11. **Guideline:** When reviewing and updating <u>curricula</u>, materials and resources used by <u>educators</u> and students, Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure they:

    - Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>

    - Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u> such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Include diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

12. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students have timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible and culturally relevant ways to engage with information and participate in learning, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

13. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure <u>learning assessment</u> options procured, developed, and used by teachers:

- Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

- Integrate diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

- Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>.

- Provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, accessible, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

14. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure students have access to <u>accessibility services</u> and supports that meet their needs. This means ensuring:

- <u>Accessibility services</u> and supports are proactive, flexible, and responsive

- Accessibility barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented, and removed

- Student learning is not impacted or delayed due to a delay or lack of access to these services and supports.

- Continuity in access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>

- Access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> is based on ineed, as identified in collaboration with the student and <u>family</u>, and not dependent on receipt of a medical diagnosis, or learning, language or psychoeducational assessments.

15. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure staff and teachers with disabilities, and those who are <u>Deaf</u> have access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meet their work-related needs.

16. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure students who are <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard of hearing</u>, non-speaking, or have complex communication needs who use <u>sign language</u> have access to qualified Educational Interpreters and/or Educational <u>Deaf</u> Interpreters who:

    - Hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program

    - Are screened for fluency in both languages at a required level appropriate for elementary and secondary settings.[24]

17. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should provide <u>transition planning</u> services that that support the needs of students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students. This includes:

    - Ensuring students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, and their families are full and active participants in transition planning

    - Ensuring staff and secondary students are aware of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports available at post-secondary institutions, and related assessment requirements.

    - Supporting students to identify and access accessibility supports and services at post-secondary institutions, employment, or community.

    - Identifying transition-related barriers and preventing and removing them.

    - Ensuring transition plans:

        - Are responsive, flexible, proactive and updated regularly.

        - Outline how barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented and removed.

        - Ensure continuity in access to <u>accessibility services</u> and effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>.

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[24] This means ongoing professional learning in sign language and in English or French screening and interpretative skills screening. It also means requiring Educational Interpreters receive a minimum rating of 4.0 on both Elementary and Secondary assessments of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment for Educational Interpreters, and that Educational Deaf Interpreters meet all Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) criteria for Deaf Interpreters and receive a minimum rating of 3 on the American Sign Language Proficiency

Navigation and Communication

18. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure information distributed to families and students, and information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in plain language and in accessible formats.

19. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure all virtual teaching and learning platforms and activities, both synchronous and asynchronous, are accessible. This includes compliance with the most current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards and ensuring compatibility with effective and appropriate assistive technology.

20. **Guideline:** Private schools with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12 should ensure students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families are full, active participants in decision-making regarding their education. This includes:

    - Providing students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families with the tools and resources needed to be full, active participants in decision-making regarding their education.

    - Ensuring students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families are supported to navigate the school's services, programs and information, and advocate for the needs of students.

    - Ensuring students with disabilities and Deaf students, and their families can provide feedback to and communicate with staff in flexible and accessible ways.

6. Public Post-Secondary Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for the public post-secondary sector, and apply to:

- Universities and Nova Scotia Community College, including:
    - Certificate, degree, and diploma programs
    - Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning programs
    - Inclusive post-secondary programs (such as Achieve, Axcess Acadia, MountAbility, and CBU Inclusive)
- Department of Advanced Education
- Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

Two types of recommendations are included in this section:

- Accessibility standard, enacted as regulation under the Accessibility Act
- Non-regulatory recommendations

Accountability

1. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College, with the support of the Department of Advanced Education, and Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, must establish monitoring, <u>evaluation</u> and accountability policies and procedures to:
    - Evaluate the impact of accessibility standards, policies, and practices on students and staff with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students and staff.
    - Identify systemic achievements in accessibility and <u>inclusion</u>, and make system improvements.

2. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Advanced Education, universities and Nova Scotia Community College must conduct an <u>equity</u> impact assessment when developing, reviewing, and implementing policies, frameworks, guidelines, programs, and services. This assessment must consider impacts on marginalized students, such as those with a <u>disability</u>, <u>Deaf</u>, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer, low income/under resourced, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, and/or other racialized students.

3. **Accessibility Standard:** When developing, reviewing, and implementing policies and services impacting students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, the Department of Advanced Education, Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, universities, and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure:

   - Diverse students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students are consulted about these decisions.

   - They examine the positive and negative implications of these policies, programs, and services on students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

   - These decisions are informed by a broad base of <u>evidence</u> that prioritizes <u>first voice</u> experience and expertise.

4. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education must require all universities to revise their student consultation framework to specifically address how they will consult with students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students, including those who are 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomers, low income/under resourced, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, and/or other racialized students.

5. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must develop and implement policies and procedures that proactively seek to engage and appoint persons (including students) with disabilities, and <u>Deaf</u> students to their governance bodies, including those who are 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomers, low income/under resourced, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, and/or other racialized persons.

6. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure their accessibility plans outline how and when their institution will meet the commitments in the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Framework.

7. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must each appoint a full-time executive accessibility lead. The scope of this position includes:

   - Receiving and addressing complaints from students related to accessibility.

   - Documenting and publicly reporting aggregate data on all complaints received related to accessibility.

   - Ensuring monitoring and compliance with the Accessibility Act, including accountability for compliance with accessibility standards.

   - Accountability for development, implementation, and monitoring of accessibility plans.

   - Advocacy for accessibility within the institution

8. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that all policies related to <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, discrimination and harassment explicitly include <u>ableism</u> and <u>disability</u>, and address the intersection of ableism with other forms of discrimination.

9. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must outline in their accessibility plans how they will increase recruitment, hiring and retainment of diverse people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people in all job categories.

Professional Learning

10. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must provide mandatory and ongoing professional learning to all staff, faculty and instructors in accessibility, inclusive education, <u>disability</u> rights, <u>ableism</u>, <u>Deaf</u> culture, <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>, language and communication choices, <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, <u>accessible formats</u>, and barriers to participation.

    - Professional learning for senior administrators, faculty, and instructors must include learning in <u>inclusive education principles</u> and practices, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Professional learning for <u>accessibility services</u> staff must include learning in <u>Deaf</u> culture, language and communication choices, and sign interpreter services.

    - Professional learning must be provided both as part of mandatory orientation requirements for new staff, faculty and instructors, and ongoing professional learning.

    - Professional learning must be updated regularly, and be informed by <u>evidence</u> that prioritizes <u>first voice</u> experience and expertise.

    - Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must develop mandatory training practices that respect collective agreements.

    - Professional learning must be accessible for all staff, faculty and instructors with disabilities and those who are <u>Deaf</u>. Ensuring accessibility must be the responsibility of the universities and Nova Scotia Community College, and not be the responsibility of staff members participating in the learning.

    - Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must develop mechanisms to ensure that faculty and instructors who are hired late have access to such learning opportunities.

11. **Accessibility Standard:** Nova Scotia Community College must regularly (no more than every 5 years) review its Adult Education Foundations Program to ensure it adequately incorporates learning in accessibility, <u>disability</u> rights, <u>ableism</u>, barriers to participation, and <u>inclusive education principles</u> and practices, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

12. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff, faculty and instructors.

13. **Non-Regulatory:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure competencies related to accessibility, <u>disability</u> rights, barriers to participation, the use of <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, and principles and practices of inclusive education, such as <u>universal design for learning</u>, <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u> are integrated into the <u>curricula</u> of all teacher education, teacher assistant and school counsellor programs at universities and Nova Scotia Community College.

14. **Non-Regulatory:** A post-secondary credentialed program in <u>universal design for learning</u> should be established in Nova Scotia.

15. **Non-Regulatory:** A post-secondary credentialed program in assistive technology should be established in Nova Scotia.

16. **Non-Regulatory:** A post-secondary credentialed program in <u>disability</u> studies should be established in Nova Scotia.

Access and Admissions

17. **Non-Regulatory:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must provide access to inclusive post-secondary programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (such as Achieve, Axcess Acadia, CBU Inclusive, and MountAbility). This includes:

- Expanding the programs to all universities

- Ensuring regional access to programs throughout Nova Scotia

- Ensuring stability funding for these programs

- Ensuring students attending these programs have <u>equitable</u> access to all supports, services and amenities at the institution.

18. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure applicants are not discriminated against (as defined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act) during admissions process for declaring a <u>disability</u>, having an Individualized Program Plan, or requiring access to <u>accessibility services</u> or appropriate assistive technology.

19. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must regularly review admission requirements to assess for and remove barriers for qualified people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people. This review must:

    - Be completed at least every 3 years, as a commitment in each new and revised accessibility plan, and as necessary in response to an identified <u>barrier</u>.

    - Consider barriers impacting students with a <u>disability</u> and <u>Deaf</u> students who are also 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomers, low income/under resourced, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous, and/or from other marginalized communities.

    - Be completed in collaboration with relevant regulatory bodies, as required.

20. **Accessibility Standard:** Application processes and forms, admission tests or other admission screening at universities and Nova Scotia Community College must be in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people. This includes clearly communicating to potential applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

21. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must make information about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports publicly available.

Places and Spaces

22. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that all campus-based <u>teaching and learning spaces</u> have adequate internet service to support the use of <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, amplification systems, and communication services such as interpretation and professional captioning.

23. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that accessible, flexible seating and workstations are available in all learning environments.

24. **Accessibility Standard:** All virtual teaching and learning platforms and activities, including learning management systems, both synchronous and asynchronous, used by faculty and instructors at universities and Nova Scotia Community College must be accessible. This includes:

   - Ensuring compliance with the most current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.

   - Ensuring compatibility with effective and appropriate assistive technology.

   - Consideration of the accessibility impacts on students of requiring the use of multiple digital platforms within a course or program.

Curricula, Courses and Programs

25. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities must develop and implement senate policies and procedures to ensure accessibility within course, curricula and program development. This includes:

   - The use of inclusive education principles such as universal design for learning, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

   - Integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including disability, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

   - Integration of concepts related to accessibility, disability rights, and barriers to participation that prioritize first voice.

26. **Accessibility Standard:** In collaboration with relevant regulatory bodies, as required the Department of Advanced Education, and Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, and Nova Scotia Community College must develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure accessibility within course, curricula and program development and approval. This includes:

   - The use of inclusive education principles such as universal design for learning, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

   - Integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including disability, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

   - Integration of concepts related to accessibility, disability rights, and barriers to participation that prioritize first voice.

27. **Accessibility Standard:** The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission must develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure accessibility of newly approved and substantially revised programs from Nova Scotia universities. This includes:

    - Integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

    - Integration of concepts related to accessibility, <u>disability</u> rights, and barriers to that prioritize <u>first voice</u>.

28. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must include commitments in their accessibility plans outlining how and when they will review all current courses, <u>curricula</u> and programs to ensure:

    - The use of <u>inclusive education principles</u> such as <u>universal design for learning</u>, and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>

    - Integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender

    - Integration of concepts related to accessibility, <u>disability</u> rights, and barriers to participation that prioritize <u>first voice</u>.

29. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students do not incur additional tuition fees when taking modified course loads.

Instructional Materials

30. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure instructional materials procured, developed, and used by faculty and instructors are <u>accessible</u>. This includes ensuring:

    - They are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u> at the same time instructional materials are provided to students without disabilities. Where <u>accessible formats</u> are not available, alternative means of representing the information that ensures <u>equitable</u> access to learning and opportunity to achieve relevant essential requirements, are provided.

    - All audio and video materials used by faculty and staff for instructional purposes are described and professionally captioned, or a high quality transcript is provided.

    - Centres for teaching and learning, libraries, and bookstores have accountability for supporting faculty and instructors in developing and procuring accessible materials.

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31. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure accessibility of instructional materials purchased for use by staff and students.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

32. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College departments, faculty and instructors must ensure students with disabilities and Deaf students have timely and equitable access to multiple, accessible, flexible, culturally relevant ways to engage with information and participate in learning.

33. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure learning assessment options procured, developed, and used by faculty and instructors are accessible. This means ensuring:

   - They are designed using inclusive education principles, such as universal design for learning and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

   - They are available in multiple, accessible formats.

   - They provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, accessible, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using appropriate assistive technology, if required.

   - Centres for teaching and learning, libraries, and bookstores must have accountability for supporting faculty and instructors in this area.

34. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that departments, faculty and instructors explicitly identify how each assessment option within courses and programs connects to essential academic requirements.

35. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that all seminars, symposia, colloquia, conferences and special events that are part of the formal and informal learning requirements of programs of study are accessible and inclusive.

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

36. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education must collaborate with universities and Nova Scotia Community College to ensure all institutions and Department of Education's Post-Secondary Accessibility Services have the same requirements for documentation required to establish eligibility for academic accommodations and accessibility services. These requirements must align with those required by the Government of Canada.

37. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure timely access to interim academic accommodations while waiting for any medical or psychological documentation required to confirm accommodations and accessibility services.

38. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure students have access to accessibility services that meet their needs by their course start date. This means accessibility services:

   - Are proactive, flexible, and responsive.

   - Ensure barriers that impact a student's well-being and learning are identified, prevented and removed.

   - Ensure continuity in access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology.

   - Are provided by trained and qualified individuals.

39. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure staff, faculty, and instructors with disabilities and those who are Deaf have timely, confidential access to accessibility services and effective and appropriate assistive technology that meet their work-related needs. This means ensuring:

   - Access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology is proactive, flexible, and responsive.

   - Accessibility barriers that impact a staff person's ability to do their job are identified, prevented, and removed.

   - Continuity in access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology

   - The staff person's ability to fully participate in the workplace and to do their job is not impacted or delayed due to a delay or lack of access to these services and appropriate assistive technology.

40. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education's Post-Secondary Accessibility Services should more effectively communicate to current and prospective students that accessibility equipment and services grant funding is accessed via completion of a federal student loan application, but does not require requesting or being approved for student loan funding.

41. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students have access by their course start date to effective and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meets their learning and communication needs.

42. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that staff, faculty, and instructors with disabilities and those who are <u>Deaf</u> have timely access to effective, appropriate, and adequately resourced assistive technology that meets their needs to perform any work-related tasks.

43. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure accessibility of technology purchased for use by staff and students.

44. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education and Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) should collaborate with universities, Nova Scotia Community College, private career colleges, language schools, and Community Learning Organizations to establish an assistive technology library to provide temporary access to <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> for students who are unable to access it privately or through Government funding programs.

45. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure qualified and screened <u>sign language</u> interpreters working at the institutions hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program, are well-trained, and screened for fluency in both sign language and the language of instruction at a required level appropriate for post-secondary settings.[25]

46. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that consistent, stable <u>sign language</u> interpretation services are provided to staff whenever bilingual services (sign language/ language of employment) are required for work-related communication, including meetings and collaborative work with staff, students, and colleagues.

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[25] This means ongoing professional learning in sign language, and English or French screening and interpretative skills screening, such as the British Columbia Institute of Technology's Post-Secondary Sign Language Interpreting Screen.

47. **Accessibility Standard:** Each university and Nova Scotia Community College must have access to a <u>sign language</u> interpreter coordinator. This could be a staff person within the institution, or through a collaborative, centralized model of sign language interpretation services for all institutions. The sign language interpreter coordinator must be responsible for:

- Providing the institution with collaborative resources and expertise on sign language interpretation services.

- Ensuring stable, consistent access to a qualified staff sign language interpreter for all faculty, staff, and students at the institution who require them, including those in rural areas.

- Working with <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students and staff to support navigation of sign language interpretation services at the institution.

- Developing and implementing institutional policies, guidelines, and procedures related to ensuring access to consistent, quality sign language interpretation services.

- Providing ongoing and mandatory professional learning for staff or contract sign language interpreters, and Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing stakeholders who are mentoring, instructing and working alongside interpreters.

- Ensuring sign language interpreters adhere to professional codes of ethics held by the recognized national and provincial sign language interpreting associations, and the university or Nova Scotia Community College.

- Developing and administering a complaints and conflict management and resolution system related to the provision of sign language interpretation services at the institution.

- Ensuring appropriate interpreting and multi-modality services for each teaching and learning space, including trades and training, undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, and in laboratories, workshops, studios, classrooms, etc.

- Ensuring interpreters have safety training appropriate for the teaching and learning space.

- Overseeing quality assessment for each interpreter.

48. **Accessibility Standard:** In collaboration with <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students and stakeholders, the Department of Advanced Education, universities and Nova Scotia Community College must develop and implement a provincial strategy and action plan to address systemic barriers to post-secondary education for <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> students.

49. **Accessibility Standard:** In collaboration with interpretation service providers, and <u>Deaf</u>, <u>deaf</u>, and <u>hard of hearing</u> stakeholders, the Department of Advanced Education, in partnership with universities and Nova Scotia Community College must develop an action plan to address the shortage of qualified <u>sign language</u> interpreters in Nova Scotia, including Educational Interpreters and <u>Deaf</u> Educational Interpreters. This could include expansion and further development of Nova Scotia Community College's American Sign Language/ English Interpretation Services diploma program, including advanced and specialization options, and increasing postsecondary offerings for 4-year sign language interpretation degree programs for hearing and <u>Deaf</u> interpreters. It could also include providing economic, cultural and social supports to Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing stakeholders who may be in the position to mentor, instruct and work alongside interpreters in various settings.

Navigation and Transition Planning

50. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) are actively involved in <u>transition planning</u> into, within, and out of post-secondary education.

51. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure that all career planning staff are trained and knowledgeable about workplace rights and supporting students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students to obtain and successfully transition to employment.

52. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must employ a transition facilitator/ navigator who will lead the institution's response to supporting the transition needs of students with disabilities and Deaf students. Transition facilitators/navigators will:

   - Develop information and resources for the elementary and secondary sector about services and supports available at the institution for students with disabilities and Deaf students, and related assessment requirements

   - Ensure students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) are supported to navigate the post-secondary system and advocate for their needs.

   - Coordinate with a range of institutional departments (including admissions and recruitment, student life, residence and others) to provide resources and training for staff on the transition needs of students with disabilities and Deaf students.

   - Advise the institution on transition-related barriers and make recommendations for their prevention and removal.

   - Ensure students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) are actively involved in transition planning and decision-making about their education, and provide required tools, resources and supports to ensure participation.

   - Establishing partnerships with social services agencies and business partners to support inclusive, community-based employment paths for graduating students with disabilities and Deaf students.

53. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure all information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in plain language and in accessible formats.

54. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must ensure students with disabilities and Deaf students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students), can provide feedback to and communicate with those working at the institutions in accessible ways.

Research and Data Collection

55. **Non-Regulatory:** Universities, Nova Scotia Community College, and the Government of Nova Scotia must support the growth and development of research on accessibility and <u>disability</u> issues, especially the work of <u>first voice</u> researchers. This includes research to inform the implementation of inclusive education practices, and the development of accessibility standards. This support must include:

    - Embedding accessibility as a criterion for <u>evaluation</u> in provincial and institutional research grants and funding opportunities.

    - Stimulating funding for research and scholarship in accessibility and <u>disability</u> issues.

    - Creating scholarships for students to support research and scholarship in accessibility and <u>disability</u> issues.

56. **Accessibility Standard:** To inform and effect system change, the Department of Advanced Education, and Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration must develop a standardized mechanism for universities and Nova Scotia Community College to collect and make publicly available disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data on:

    - Accessibility barriers and their impacts on students and staff with disabilities, and those who are <u>Deaf</u>.

    - The well-being and achievement of students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

57. **Accessibility Standard:** Universities and Nova Scotia Community College must collect and share disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data related to:

    - The well-being and achievement of students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students.

    - Identified institutional barriers to accessibility and human rights complaints.

7. Private Career Colleges Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for the private career colleges sector, and apply to:

- Private career colleges registered under the <u>Nova Scotia Private Career Colleges Act</u>

- Department of Advanced Education

Four types of recommendations are included:

- Amendments to the Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations (PCCOR) – Applicable to all private career colleges registered under the Nova Scotia Private Career Colleges Act

- Accessibility standard under the Accessibility Act – Applicable to all private career colleges registered under the Nova Scotia Private Career Colleges Act, with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students per college, as reported under the Private Career Colleges Act. (With the exception of Recommendation #15, which applies to all Private Career Colleges registered under the Nova Scotia Private Career Colleges Act).

- Accessibility guidelines – Applicable to all private career colleges registered under the Nova Scotia Private Career Colleges Act, with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students per college, as reported under the Private Career Colleges Act. The Department of Advanced Education must ensure that these Private Career Colleges are aware of the guidelines and encourage their use to inform operations.

- Other non-regulatory recommendations

Accountability

1. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must have an accessibility policy that outlines how each Private Career College will prevent and remove accessibility barriers for staff, instructors and students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> staff, instructors and students. This policy must be clearly communicated to staff, instructors and students.

2. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should have an accessibility policy that outlines how each Private Career College will ensure the prevention and removal of accessibility barriers for staff, instructors and students with disabilities and Deaf staff and students. This policy should be clearly communicated to staff, instructors and students.

3. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must designate a lead staff person to support student accessibility services, and staff capacity building in accessibility, and monitor compliance with accessibility standards.

4. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should designate a lead staff person to support student accessibility services, and staff capacity building in accessibility.

5. **PCCOR Amendment:** Section 35 of the Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations (PCCOR) must be amended to require that the bullying and harassment policy explicitly includes ableism and disability, and addresses the intersection of ableism with other forms of discrimination.

6. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by staff and students.

7. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by staff and students.

8. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education's Post-Secondary Accessibility Services must provide support and expertise to Private Career Colleges to advance accessibility across the private career colleges sector. This includes supporting them to improve their capacity to provide accessibility services to students, to provide professional learning in inclusive education to staff and instructors, and to ensure an accessible learning environment for students.

Professional Learning

9. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must provide regular, mandatory learning opportunities in accessibility, inclusive education, and barriers to participation to all staff, instructors, and instructor assistants, excluding short-term and guest instructors.

10. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should provide regular, mandatory learning opportunities in accessibility, inclusive education, and barriers to participation to all staff, instructors, and instructor assistants, excluding short-term and guest instructors.

11. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education and the Private Colleges Association of Nova Scotia should be involved in developing and offering learning opportunities to build capacity in accessibility and inclusive education across the sector and to provide consistency in professional learning across the province.

12. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff and instructors.

13. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff and instructors.

14. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education must ensure competencies in accessibility, universal design for learning, disability rights, and barriers to participation are integrated into the curriculum of approved adult training methods programs for Private Career College instructors.

Recruitment and Admissions

15. **Accessibility Standard:** All Private Career Colleges must ensure applicants are not discriminated against (as defined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act) during the admissions process for declaring a disability, having an Individualized Program Plan, or requiring access to accessibility services or appropriate assistive technology.

16. **PCCOR Amendment:** The Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations (PCCOR) must be amended to require that, as part of the required program approval and renewal process, Private Career Colleges demonstrate they have reviewed admission requirements to assess for and remove barriers for qualified people with disabilities and Deaf people. This must be done in collaboration with relevant licensing bodies, as required.

17. **PCCOR Amendment:** Section 45 of the Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations (PCCOR) must be amended to require that Private Career Colleges and external recruiters proactively provide <u>accessible</u> information to prospective applicants and students about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports, and how to access them.

18. **PCCOR Amendment:** Section 46 of the Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations (PCCOR) must be amended to require that Private Career Colleges ensure student contracts outline the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports.

19. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure application processes and forms, admission tests, and other admission screening are available in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people. This includes communicating to prospective applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

20. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure application processes and forms, admission tests, and other admission screening are available in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people. This includes communicating to prospective applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

Curricula and Learning Resources

21. **PCCOR Amendment:** The Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations (PCCOR) must be amended to require that, as part of the required program approval and renewal process, Private Career Colleges demonstrate progress and effort made to advance accessibility of <u>curricula</u> and <u>learning resources</u> used by instructors. This could include increasing availability of <u>accessible formats</u>, the use of <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>, and the integration of diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

22. **Guideline:** Recognizing constraints imposed by external licensing bodies, all Private Career Colleges should aim to ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students have timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible ways to engage with information and participate in learning, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

23. **Guideline:** Recognizing constraints imposed by the accessibility of assessments required by external licensing bodies, all Private Career Colleges should aim to ensure learning assessment options procured and developed by instructors:

   - Are designed using inclusive education principles, such as universal design for learning and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

   - Are available in multiple, accessible formats.

   - Provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, accessible, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using appropriate assistive technology, if required.

24. **Non-Regulatory:** Private Career Colleges, the Department of Advanced Education, and other relevant government departments should work with industry licensing bodies to advance the accessibility of assessments developed and required by these bodies.

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

25. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure timely access to interim academic accommodations while waiting for any medical or psychological documentation required by the Private Career College to confirm accommodations and accessibility services.

26. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure timely access to interim academic accommodations while waiting for any medical or psychological documentation required by the Private Career College to confirm accommodations and accessibility services.

27. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education should collaborate with the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning), universities, Nova Scotia Community College, Private Career Colleges, Language Schools, and Community Learning Organizations to establish an assistive technology library to provide temporary access to appropriate assistive technology for students who are unable to access it privately or through Government funding programs.

28. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure students have access to accessibility services, accommodations, and appropriate assistive technology that meet their needs in a timely manner after the student makes the request.[26]

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[26] The Education Standard Development Committee understands institutions require time to ensure services are in place after a student enrols and communicates accessibility requests. It is recommended that the Department of Advanced Education, in consultation with the sector, determines how to define "in a timely manner"

29. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure students have access to <u>accessibility services</u> and <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> that meet their needs before their program start date and no later than the beginning of the first class.

30. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure certified <u>sign language</u> interpreters working at the colleges hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program, are well-trained, and screened for fluency in both sign language and the language of instruction at a required level appropriate for post-secondary settings.[27]

31. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure certified <u>sign language</u> interpreters working at the colleges hold a degree/diploma in sign language interpretation from a recognized and accredited post-secondary interpreter training program, are well-trained, and screened for fluency in both sign language and the language of instruction at a required level appropriate for post-secondary settings.[28]

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[27] This means ongoing professional learning in sign language, and English or French screening and interpretative skills screening, such as the British Columbia Institute of Technology's Post-Secondary Sign Language Interpreting Screen.
[28] This means ongoing professional learning in sign language, and English or French screening and interpretative skills screening, such as the British Columbia Institute of Technology's Post-Secondary Sign Language Interpreting Screen.

Navigation and Communication

32. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure all information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in <u>plain language</u> and in <u>accessible formats</u>.

33. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure all information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in <u>plain language</u> and in <u>accessible formats</u>.

34. **Accessibility Standard:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) can provide feedback to and communicate with staff and instructors in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

35. **Guideline:** Private Career Colleges with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students should ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) can provide feedback to and communicate with staff and instructors in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

8. Language Schools Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for the language schools sector, which apply to:

• Language schools registered under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act

• Department of Advanced Education

Four types of recommendations are included:

• Amendments to the Language Schools Act Regulations – Applicable to all language schools registered under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act

• Accessibility standard, enacted as a regulation under the Accessibility Act – Applicable to all language schools registered under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act that are operated by a university. (With the exception of recommendation #15, which is applicable to all language schools registered under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act.)

• Accessibility guidelines – Applicable to all language schools registered under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act that are not operated by a university. The Department of Advanced Education must ensure that Language Schools are aware of the guidelines and encourage their use to inform operations.

• Other non-regulatory recommendations

Accountability

1. **Language Schools Act Regulation:** Language Schools must have an accessibility policy that outlines how the school will prevent and remove accessibility barriers for staff and students with disabilities and Deaf staff and students. This policy must be clearly communicated to staff, instructors and students. This should be implemented through a regulation under the Language Schools Act, section 25(1).

2. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must designate a lead staff person to support student accessibility services, and staff capacity building in accessibility, and monitor compliance with accessibility standards.

3. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should designate a lead staff person to support student accessibility services, and staff capacity building in accessibility, and monitor compliance with accessibility standards.

4. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must ensure that all policies related to <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, discrimination, bullying, and harassment explicitly include <u>ableism</u> and <u>disability</u>.

5. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should ensure that all policies related to <u>equity</u>, <u>diversity</u>, discrimination, bullying, and harassment explicitly include <u>ableism</u> and <u>disability</u>.

6. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by staff and students.

7. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by staff and students.

8. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education's Post-Secondary <u>Accessibility Services</u> must provide support, expertise and resources to Language Schools to advance accessibility across the sector. This includes supporting them to improve their capacity to provide <u>accessibility services</u> to students, to provide professional learning in inclusive education to staff and instructors, and to improve the accessibility of the learning environment for students.

Professional Learning

9. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must provide regular, mandatory learning opportunities in accessibility, inclusive education, and barriers to participation to all staff and teachers.

10. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should provide regular, mandatory learning opportunities in accessibility, inclusive education, and barriers to participation to all staff and teachers.

11. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education should be involved in developing and offering learning opportunities to build capacity in accessibility and inclusive education across the language school sector, and to provide consistency across the province.

12. **Accessibility Standard:** Language schools operated by a university must ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff and teachers.

13. **Guideline:** Language schools not operated by a university should integrate competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff and teachers.

14. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education and Nova Scotia's language schools should collaborate with Languages Canada and TESL Canada to advocate for increased accessibility of curricula, and the integration of competencies related to accessibility, and principles and practices of inclusive education, such as universal design for learning, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy into the curricula of existing language teacher certificate programs.

Recruitment and Admissions

15. **Accessibility Standard:** All Language Schools must ensure applicants are not discriminated against (as defined in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act) during admissions process for declaring a disability, or requiring access to accessibility services or appropriate assistive technology.

16. **Language School Act Regulation:** Before entering into a contract, Language Schools must provide information to all students about the availability of accessibility services and supports, and how to access them. This should be implemented through an amendment to Section 7 of the Language School Accreditation and Accountability Regulations under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act.

17. **Language School Act Regulation:** Language Schools must ensure student contracts outline availability of accessibility services and supports. This should be implemented through an amendment to Section 5 of the Language School Accreditation and Accountability Regulations under the Nova Scotia Language Schools Act.

18. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must ensure application processes and forms, admission tests or other admission screening are available in formats that are accessible for people with disabilities and Deaf people. This includes communicating to potential applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

19. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should ensure application processes and forms, admission tests or other admission screening are available in formats that are accessible for people with disabilities and Deaf people. This should include communicating to potential applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

20. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students have timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible ways to engage with information and participate in learning, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

21. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students have timely and <u>equitable</u> access to multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible ways to engage with information and participate in learning, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

22. **Accessibility Standard:** Recognizing potential limitations due to inaccessibility of assessments required by external certification bodies, Language Schools operated by a university must ensure other <u>learning assessment</u> options procured and developed by teachers:

    - Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>.

    - Provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, accessible, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

23. **Guideline:** Recognizing potential limitations due to inaccessibility of assessments required by external certification bodies, Language Schools not operated by a university should ensure other <u>learning assessment</u> options procured and developed by teachers:

    - Are designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>.

    - Are available in multiple, <u>accessible formats</u>.

    - Provide the option for students to demonstrate learning in multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, if required.

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

24. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must ensure access to <u>accessibility services</u>, <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, and accommodations in a timely manner after the student makes the request.[29] They must not require medical or psychological documentation to confirm services and accommodations.

25. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should ensure timely access to <u>accessibility services</u>, <u>appropriate assistive technology</u>, and accommodations and not require medical or psychological documentation to confirm services and accommodations.

26. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Advanced Education should collaborate with the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning), universities, Nova Scotia Community College, Private Career Colleges, Language Schools, and Community Learning Organizations to establish an assistive technology library to provide temporary access to <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> for students who are unable to access it privately or through Government funding programs.

Navigation and Communication

27. **Accessibility Standard:** Language schools operated by a university must ensure all information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in <u>accessible formats</u>.

28. **Guideline:** Language schools not operated by a university should ensure all information about programs, services, and policies for students is provided in <u>accessible formats</u>.

29. **Accessibility Standard:** Language Schools operated by a university must ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) can provide feedback to and communicate with those working at the Language Schools in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

30. **Guideline:** Language Schools not operated by a university should ensure students with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> students (and their designated supporter, if requested by students) can provide feedback to and communicate with those working at the Language Schools in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

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[29]The Education Standard Development Committee understands institutions require time to ensure services are in place after a student enrols and communicates accessibility requests. It is recommended that the Department of Advanced Education, in consultation with the sector, determines how to define "in a timely manner".

9. Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning Recommendations

This section includes recommendations for the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) and Community Learning Organizations that deliver Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning programs under the Nova Scotia Adult Learning Act.

Three types of recommendations are included:

- Accessibility standard, enacted as regulation under the Accessibility Act – applicable to the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning)

- Accessibility Guidelines – applicable to Community Learning Organizations. The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration must ensure that these organizations are aware of the guidelines and encourage their use to inform operations.

- Other non-regulatory recommendations

Note: Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning programs offered at adult high schools, Nova Scotia Community College and Université Saint Anne are included in the Public Elementary and Secondary and Public Post-Secondary recommendations.

Accountability

1. **Accessibility Standard:** Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must develop and implement an accessibility policy that outlines how Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning service delivery providers will ensure the prevention and removal of barriers to learning for adult learners with disabilities and Deaf learners enrolled in Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning programs.

   - This policy must address barriers in areas of instruction, assessment, materials, built environment, communication, and access to appropriate assistive technology, accessibility services and accommodations.

   - The policy must be clearly communicated to current and prospective learners.

2. **Accessibility Standard:** Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must ensure that all Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning policies related to equity, diversity, discrimination, bullying, and harassment explicitly include ableism and disability.

3. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should include accessibility criteria in procurement processes and policies to ensure consideration of accessibility when purchasing technology, equipment and resources used by Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning staff and learners.

4. **Accessibility Standard:** Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must provide support, expertise and resources to Community Learning Organizations to advance accessibility across the organizations. This includes supporting them to improve their capacity to provide accessibility services to Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning students, to provide professional learning in inclusive education to staff and instructors, and to ensure an accessible learning environment for learners.

Professional Learning

5. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure all staff, instructors, teachers, tutors, and volunteers have access to regular, mandatory learning opportunities in accessibility, inclusive education, disability rights, ableism, and barriers to participation.

   - Learning opportunities for instructors, teachers and tutors should include learning in inclusive education principles and practices, such as universal design for learning and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

   - These learning opportunities should be provided as part of mandatory orientation requirements for new staff, instructors, teachers, tutors, and volunteers, and ongoing professional learning.

   - These learning opportunities should be informed by evidence that prioritizes first voice.

6. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must develop and offer regular learning opportunities for Community Learning Organization staff, instructors, teachers, tutors, and volunteers to build capacity in accessibility and inclusive education across the sector and provide consistency in professional learning across the province. This could include:

   - Further development of the Literacy Nova Scotia Resource Hub to include additional resources related to accessibility, disability and inclusive education.

   - Developing an online learning module in accessibility, disability, and inclusive education

   - Increasing access to professional learning funding for Community Learning Organizations through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning Professional Development Fund

7. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure competencies, criteria, and goals related to accessibility and inclusive education are integrated into job descriptions, contracts, performance plans, and career development plans for all staff, instructors, teachers and tutors.

Access and Admissions

8. **Accessibility Standard:** Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must ensure application processes and forms, assessments or other admission screening tools developed by the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning are in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people.

9. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure application processes and forms, assessments or other admission screening tools developed by the organization are in formats that are <u>accessible</u> for people with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> people. This includes clearly communicating to potential applicants that accommodations and accessible and alternate formats are available and how to access them.

10. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should proactively provide information to all potential applicants and current learners about the availability of <u>accessibility services</u> and supports, and how to access them. This includes ensuring this information is <u>accessible</u>.

Curricula and Learning Resources

11. **Accessibility Standard:** When Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning <u>curricula</u> used by Community Learning Organizations is renewed and developed, the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must ensure the <u>curricula</u>:

    - Is designed using <u>inclusive education principles</u>, such as <u>universal design for learning</u> and <u>culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy</u>

    - Integrates diverse experiences and perspectives, including <u>diversity</u> of <u>disability</u>, race, culture, sexuality and gender

12. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must ensure <u>learning resources</u> provided to Community Learning Organizations are available in multiple, <u>accessible</u>, flexible formats.

13. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure that all synchronous and asynchronous virtual Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning teaching and learning activities are accessible with effective and appropriate assistive technology.

14. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure their learning resources are readily available for adult learners in multiple, accessible, flexible formats.

Instruction and Learning Assessment

15. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organization instructors delivering Nova School for Adult Learning programs should ensure adult learners have access to multiple, accessible, flexible culturally relevant ways to engage with information and participate in learning.

16. **Accessibility Standard:** Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must require the individualized learning plans jointly developed by Community Learning Organizations with each adult learner, as required under the Adult Learning Act, include the accessibility needs of each adult learner, and be in an accessible format. The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must ensure the learning management system used to maintain these plans accommodates this information.

17. **Accessibility Standard:** The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) must ensure Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning assessment options and processes:

    - Are designed using inclusive education principles, such as universal design for learning and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

    - Are available in multiple, accessible formats

    - Provide the option for adult learners to demonstrate learning in multiple, accessible, flexible, and culturally relevant ways, using appropriate assistive technology, if requested.

Accessibility Services and Assistive Technology

18. **Guideline:** The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) and Community Learning Organizations should ensure adult learners have access to accessibility services and appropriate assistive technology that meet their needs in a timely manner after the request for services and technology is made.

19. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) should collaborate with the Department of Advanced Education, universities, Nova Scotia Community College, private career colleges, language schools, and Community Learning Organizations to establish an assistive technology library to provide temporary access to <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> for learners who are unable to access it privately or through Government funding programs.

20. **Non-Regulatory:** The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning) should improve access to funding for Community Learning Organizations to provide <u>appropriate assistive technology</u> and <u>accessibility services</u>. This should include increased funding to and changes to eligibility criteria of the <u>Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning IT fund and Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning Community Grant Program</u>.

Navigation and Communication

21. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure all information about programs, services, and policies for Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning learners is provided in <u>plain language</u> and <u>accessible formats</u>.

22. **Guideline:** Community Learning Organizations should ensure Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning learners with disabilities and <u>Deaf</u> learners (and their designated supporter, if requested by learners), can provide feedback, and communicate with those working at Community Learning Organizations in flexible and <u>accessible</u> ways.

Glossary of Terms

This glossary of terms is an integral part of these recommendations. The definitions provided are key to understanding the meaning and intent of the advice provided.

Ableism – The practices, attitudes, systems, and structures in a society that prioritize normalcy and stigmatize, devalue, or limit the participation, inclusion, and potential of all people with disabilities and Deaf people. Such practices discriminate against and devalue people with disabilities and Deaf people. They often rest on the assumption that they need to be "fixed" in order to be included or to be considered successful.

Accessibility Services – Programs, services, processes, and policies related to accessibility accommodations, communication, language interpretation, assistive technology, assessment processes, transition planning, and others that ensure access to learning and learning communities.

Accessible – Free of barriers that hinder the full and effective participation of people with disabilities and Deaf people.

Accessible Formats – Current, quality print, electronic, audio, or visual material that is formatted so that all people with disabilities and Deaf people can equitably access the information presented. This may include (but is not limited to) ensuring compatibility with appropriate assistive technology, captioning, described video, large print, plain language, braille, translation and interpretation to sign language, easy read, and video transcripts.

Appropriate Assistive Technology – Any device, software, service or product system, including service animals, that reduces individual barriers to accessing and engaging in all aspects of a learning community including social, emotional, academic, and daily living activities and experiences. matches the specific functional skill needs, strengths and challenges of the individual with a disability, and is, as much as possible, current and up to date technology.

Audism – The practices, attitudes, systems, and structures in a society that prioritize hearing individuals and stigmatize, devalue, or limit the participation, inclusion, and potential of Deaf and hard of hearing people. Such practices discriminate against and devalue people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. They often rest on the assumption that they need to be "fixed" in order to be included or to be considered successful.

Authentic Assessment (Early Years) – A form of assessment that measures children's skills and abilities by observing how children perform in real-life everyday activities; it is carried out by observing and documenting children's play, their interactions with peers, and conversations with parents, and other educators and professionals. Authentic assessment takes into account the situation or context in which the child performs the task as well as what the child is asked to do. Such an assessment requires that children apply their knowledge and skills in a situation that is meaningful to them and is within the range of typical classroom activity.[30]

Barrier – Anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of diverse people with disabilities and Deaf people. Barriers may be systemic, structural and individual, and can take the form of physical barriers, architecture, information, communications, attitudes, technology, policies, or practices.

Belonging (Early Years) – The experiences of security, inclusion, respect, and competence in a group setting.[31]

Cisgenderism – The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders (man and woman), and that the "normal", natural, or preferred state is for one's gender to align with assigned sex (male and female). Cisgenderism oppresses people of diverse gender identities and expression, and has the effect of making them feel "less than" their cisgender counterparts and excluded from mainstream society and culture.[32]

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy – Empowering learners by intentionally connecting learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and knowledge to their learning. Leveraging that knowledge to create environments in which learning is advanced, learners' cultural and ethnic identities are affirmed and appreciated, and learners are supported to recognize, analyze, and solve real world problems; especially those that are caused by and result in societal inequalities.[33] This includes Deaf-developed sign language pedagogy.

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[30] Basics of Assessment: A Primer for Early Childhood Educators by Deborah J. Leong, Elena Bodrova, and Oralie McAfee and Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018
[31] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018
[32] Adapted from Government of Nova Scotia Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Positive Spaces Program Terms and Concepts, and UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary
[33] Informed by Department of Education and Early Childhood Development https://www.ednet.ns.ca/psp/equity-inclusive-education/culturally-responsive-pedagogy, and Gloria Ladson Billings.

Curricula/ Curriculum – Expectations of learning through objectives and outcomes that are aligned to principles, competencies, skills, and concepts. Curricula is relevant for all learners across curricular areas, and grounded in effective, evidence-based instruction and assessment practices. It is inclusive, culturally responsive, and developed using principles of universal design for learning. Curriculum takes into consideration and caters to the diverse needs, previous experiences, interests and personal characteristics of all learners. It attempts to ensure that all learners are part of the shared learning experiences of the classroom and that equal opportunities are provided regardless of learner differences. In early childhood education settings, curriculum means the sum of experiences, activities (child or adult initiated), and events that occur within an inclusive environment designed to foster children's well-being, learning, and development. This implies collaboration between educators, children, and parents.

Curriculum Framework (Early Years) – An established set of values, principles, goals, and strategies that encourage a shared sense of purpose and communication between parents and early childhood centres. A curriculum framework is different from a prescribed curriculum because in early childhood settings, learning is integrated, episodic, experiential, and facilitated through social relationships. Curriculum frameworks guide the pedagogical practices of educators.[34]

Deaf – A sociological term referring to those individuals who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on sign language.[35]

deaf – A medical/audiological term referring to those people who have little or no functional hearing. May also refer to people who are medically deaf but who do not necessarily identify with the Deaf community.[36]

Disability – In the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, disability is defined as a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society.[37] Some people may not have a diagnosed disability, but still experience accessibility barriers. Others who experience accessibility barriers may not identify as having a disability. This may include people who are Deaf, those who identify as neurodivergent, those who have a chronic illness or condition, and others. In this document, the term "people with disabilities" is intended to include all people who experience accessibility barriers in education.

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[34] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018
[35] Canadian Association of the Deaf https://cad.ca/issues-positions/terminology/
[36] Canadian Association of the Deaf https://cad.ca/issues-positions/terminology/
[37] Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, 2017

Diversity – Differences and unique qualities that each person brings to education settings such as their culture, ethnicity, values, beliefs, language(s), abilities, education, life experiences, socio-economic status, spirituality, gender identity, age, and sexual orientation.[38]

Early Learning – A natural, holistic, and exploratory process that children engage in from birth and that lays the foundation for later learning, whether formal or informal. Early learning is a part of early childhood development.[39]

Early Learning Environment – An environment focused on the relationships between children, parents, and early childhood professionals that provides care, nurturing and education as a complex and coherent whole. It has the goals of holistic development and overall well-being, and includes schedules, routines, physical environments, interactions, materials, activities, and experiences.[40]

Early Years Professionals – Professionals who are working with young children, birth to school entry, and their families. This could include, early childhood educators and associated personnel/internal support roles, developmental interventionists, external inclusion coaches, speech language pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, developmental psychologists, mental health service providers, etc.

Early Years Programs – Pre-primary programs, licensed childcare facilities, family home child care agencies, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, Nova Scotia Early Childhood Intervention Services and the department that sets the standards and regulations for these programs.

Educators (Elementary and Secondary) – Teachers, administrators, educational/ teacher assistants, and other learning specialists.

Environment as Teacher (Early Years) – A concept used in early childhood education, where the environment provides children with a sense of beauty, allows for an organization of time, presents materials and activities for learning, provides space for play and exploration, encourages friendships and relationships, allows for privacy, recognizes diversity, and welcomes families. Loris Malaguzzi referred to this as the environment as "third teacher", and Maria Montessori referred to it as the "prepared environment".[41]

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[38] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018
[39] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018
[40] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018
[41] Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014

Equity/ Equitable – Equity means ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access and participate in all aspects of society. This means expecting and welcoming diversity, understanding and addressing discriminatory and exclusionary systems, practices, and policies, and removing specific and diverse barriers to access and participation.

Evaluation – The systematic assessment of an ongoing or completed project or program, its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.[42]

Evidence / Evidence-Based – The research findings of high quality, rigorous, peer-reviewed research. Evidence can be qualitative or quantitative, and can represent diverse theoretical and lived perspectives and knowledge systems. "Evidence-based" means a decision-making process that integrates available research evidence with student, family and professional wisdom and values.[43]

Family – The person or persons primarily responsible for the day-to-day care of the child and taking on the commonly understood parenting role. The term family refers to biological or adoptive parents, stepparents, legal guardians or representatives, or extended family such as, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Family Voice (Early Years) – The ways in which children and/or their families have opportunities to indirectly or directly, participate in and influence education decisions that shape children's learning.[44]

First Voice – First voice refers to the knowledge generated by diverse people with disabilities and Deaf people that emerges from lived experience, community connections, knowledge traditions, and scholarly activities that are typically undervalued and underrepresented.

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[42] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2002.
[43] Buysse & Wesley, 2006; Buysse et al., 2006
[44] https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_PA_Including_Voice_in_Education_Addressing_Equity_Through_Student_and_Family_Voice_in_Classroom_Learning.pdf

Functional Goal (Early Years) – A functional goal outlines a target skill to be acquired in measurable terms, while including a precise behavior to be accomplished and a specific criterion. It identifies the behavior or skill caregivers/instructors want the individual to learn or accomplish, the context in which the skill will be taught, and a quantifiable level of mastery. Functional goals should be developed so that they are implemented and practiced within the individual's daily routine.

Hard of Hearing – A person whose hearing loss ranges from mild to profound and whose usual means of communication is speech. It is both a medical and a sociological term.[45]

Holistic (Early Years) – An approach to early learning that encompasses the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and creative development of a child. This approach focuses on the development of the whole child, rather than only concentrating on individual components of development.

Inclusion/ Inclusive Education Principles – Inclusion is essential to realize equity and accessibility in education. The intent of inclusion is to ensure that all learners' experiences are recognized and valued, and that all learners have equitable access to resources and participation, opportunities to demonstrate their learning, and learn to value difference. Inclusive education principles intentionally centre the diversity of learners, and include the following:

- Presume Competence – All learners can learn when conditions are created that allow for enough time, provide sufficient accessible resources, accessibility services, and support, and utilize relevant responsive teaching that integrates diverse knowledge systems.

- Diversity Enriches Education – Learners bring perspectives and diverse experiences to the classroom. Inclusive environments welcome, engage, and challenge all learners and set high expectations for learning and engagement.

- Strengths-Based – Every learner has specific strengths and talents that should be centered alongside identified needs in curriculum planning and implementation. A strengths-based approach affirms and centres difference, and it provides different and appropriate learning support according to children's strengths, needs, interests, and backgrounds.

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[45] Canadian Association of the Deaf https://cad.ca/issues-positions/terminology/

- Learner Engagement, Agency, and Voice – It is important to intentionally seek learner perspectives to ensure they can make meaningful contributions to their education experience. It is important to seek learner perspectives in active rather than consultative ways, and to facilitate the contribution of learner perspectives through the development of trusting and respectful relationships.

- Meaningful Engagement – Meaningful engagement with all participants (learners, families, communities) can ensure all learners have and can maximize the opportunity to learn. Learners, families, and communities provide important perspectives about learners and what they bring to learning, and educators can provide important feedback on progress, areas in need of further development, and strategies for growth.[46]

Inclusive Learning Environment/ Practice – Inclusive learning environments and practices adhere to the belief that all learners have equal worth and rights. They commit to valuing diversity and to dismantling the systemic barriers preventing a diversity of learners from full participation in their learning communities. Inclusive learning environments and practices are accessible, utilize inclusive education principles, and prioritize first voice and the well-being and achievement of all learners. They are ethical spaces and practices that are culturally, linguistically and racially responsive, culturally, physically and emotionally safe, and challenge ableism, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Intentional Teaching (Early Years) – A form of teaching that encourages educators to be deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have always been done that way.

Leaders (Early Years) – Early years program leaders influence what happens in the classroom by fostering an organizational climate where educators and other staff members optimize learning opportunities for children and strive to improve their own practice. Leaders in early years programs include government representatives, board directors, administrators, managers, pedagogical leaders and lead educators.

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[46] Informed by: Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy, 2019; Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018; https://www.monash. edu/education/teachspace/articles/five-principles-of-inclusive-education; and Biklen, D. (2020). Presuming competence, belonging, and the promise of inclusion: The US experience. Prospects, 49(3), 233-247.

Learning Assessment – A process or activity used to determine whether, and to what extent, a learner is making progress. This can take different forms and approaches including, but not limited to, diagnostic, formative, summative, authentic, and standardized assessments, including provincial assessments and exams.

Learning Resources – Resources and tools used by educators to support learning, such as syllabi, articles, videos, online resources, teacher guides, textbooks, and all materials and resources distributed to learners and staff for virtual learning and those uploaded to and used on virtual teaching and learning spaces.

Linguistic Modeling – Providing linguistic modeling is often confused with the provision of language exposure. Language exposure means being surrounded by persons who are using a language; the immersive experience draws upon the expertise of a wide selection of individuals who are fluent in a language. For instance, infants are able to learn language through exposure to a fully accessible language. Children learn languages best from multiple users and particularly benefit from direct communication with peers. Linguistic modeling on the other hand, provides opportunities for explicit language instruction, particularly in older children. Language or linguistic modeling is an instructional pedagogy enacted by those who are trained in language education. Explicit and immersive language instruction is a reliable means of overcoming language deprivation. Sign language interpreters are not generally trained in language education, nor do they have the authority or means to provide language instruction. There is no empirical evidence that children can overcome language deprivation through exposure to a single interpreter in an inclusive education setting. "Interpreters should not replace interventions for language deprivation" (Caselli et al, 2020, p. 1326).[47]

Meaningful Participation (Early Years) – A child's role is valued by all those involved in the activity including the child themselves. Meaningful participation is more than being present in various environments and activities. Children must be actively engaged, and their involvement must be more than an appearance of equity in activities and environments.[48]

Natural Environments (Early Years) – Settings that are natural or typical for a same-aged infant or child without a disability, may include the home or community settings where children live and play.

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[47] Caselli, N. K., Hall, W. C., & Henner, J. (2020). American Sign Language Interpreters in Public Schools: An Illusion of Inclusion that Perpetuates Language Deprivation. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 24(11), 1323–1329.
[48] Adapted from New Brunswick Association for Community Living, New Brunswick Government, Inclusion Program Support Guide: Achieving Quality Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care in New Brunswick 2016.

Neurodivergent – Neurodivergent means having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of "normal". It recognizes diverse neurologies and ways of being, as variation of human experience, rather than deficiency in need of remediation or cure. It includes those who identify with/ as autistic, ADHD, Tourette's syndrome, and dyslexia, to name a few.[49]

Pedagogical Leader (Early Years) – Pedagogical leaders influence children's learning by fostering family engagement, ensuring fidelity to the organization's curricular philosophy, using data to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning program, and meeting standards established to optimize learning environments. Pedagogy is the art and science of teaching with an emphasis on the dispositions and behaviors of educators and their interactions with children. Pedagogical leadership can apply to infant/toddler classrooms and pre-primary classrooms alike. Pedagogical leaders keep the collective focus of the educators and families on whole child development and protect against mission drift.[50]

Pedagogy – The understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that supports that understanding of learning. Pedagogy involves educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching, and learning.[51]

Plain Language – Communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information.[52]

Quality (Early Years) – The demonstration of meeting the standards around certain criteria, such as human resources, staff qualifications, group size, ratio of educators-to-children, supports, methodology, environment, materials, interactions, activities, and child and family supports. When measuring quality in an early childhood education setting, the perspective and experiences of children must always be considered.[53]

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[49] Scorgie, K. & Forlin, C. (2019). Promoting Social Inclusion: Co-Creating Environments that Foster Equity and Belonging, and https://neuroqueer.com/neurodiversity-terms-and-definitions/

[50] https://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/library/why-pedagogical-leadership/

[51] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018

[52] International Plain Language Federation

[53] Capable Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework, 2018

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Routine Based Intervention Plan (Early Years) – An evidence-based approach to programming that capitalizes on children's learning opportunities within daily routines. Routine based intervention plans are developed using a family centered approach and a collaborative team. Routine based intervention plans are founded on functional outcomes/goals which are developed from a functional assessment.

Sign Language – Sign languages are complete, complex, visual languages, using hand movements as well as facial expressions and body movement to convey information. Sign languages are languages of access; they evolved out of a need for people with different hearing levels to access spoken communication and connect with fellow community members. Each country has its own sign language, and regions have dialects, the same way many languages spoken all over the world do. American Sign Language (ASL) is used predominantly in the United States and Canada. Residents of Nova Scotia also use other sign languages, including, but limited to, Maritime Sign Language, Mi'kmaq Sign Language, and Langue des signes du Québec.

Teaching and Learning Spaces – Physical and digital spaces, where teaching and learning occurs. This includes both indoor and outdoor spaces, and spaces utilized during class trips, extra curricular activities, breaks between classes, and while at conferences, in meetings, and on practicums and work and community placements.

Transition Planning – The collaborative, learner-centered process to develop and implement plans to guide the transition from one stage of learning to another. This includes transitioning between courses, learning spaces, grade levels, education levels, and from education to employment or community living.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – A framework that guides the development of teaching strategies to ensure all learners can engage in meaningful and challenging learning opportunities. The UDL framework encourages educators at all levels to utilize multiple modes of engagement, multiple modes of representation, and multiple modes of action and expression. UDL is a key contributor to the creation of socially and academically inclusive classrooms and promotes self-worth, belonging, cognitive challenge, and social learning.[54]

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[54] Informed by http://www.threeblockmodel.com/the-three-block-model-of-udl.html and https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl

Appendix A: Recommendation Types by Education Sector and Entities

Sector	Recommendation Type	Applies to Following Entities
Early Years	Accessibility Standard[55]	• Licensed child care facilities • Family home child care agencies • Pre-primary Programs • Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services • Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority • Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
	Early Learning and Child Care Act Amendment	• Licensed child care facilities • Family home child care agencies
	Pre-Primary Act Amendment	• Pre-primary Programs
	Other Non-Regulatory	• Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Public Elementary and Secondary	Accessibility Standard	• Regional Centres for Education • Conseil scolaire acadien provincial • Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority • Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
	Other Non-Regulatory	• Regional Centres for Education • Conseil scolaire acadien provincial • Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority • Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

[55] An accessibility standard is enacted as a regulation under the Accessibility Act

Sector	Recommendation Type	Applies to Following Entities
Private Elementary and Secondary	Accessibility Standard	• Department of Education and Early Childhood Development • Elementary and secondary schools designated as special education private schools under the Education Act • Private schools recognized by the Minister under the Education Act, with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students in grades primary to 12. • *Recommendation #10 applies to all private schools recognized by the Minister under the Education Act
	Guidelines	• Private schools recognized by the Minister under the Education Act with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students in grades primary to 12.
Public Post-Secondary	Accessibility Standard	• Universities • Nova Scotia Community College • Department of Advanced Education • Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (NSSAL)
	Other Non-Regulatory	• Universities • Nova Scotia Community College • Department of Advanced Education • Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (NSSAL)
Private Career Colleges	Accessibility Standard	• Private career colleges registered under the Private Career Colleges Act, with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of 200 or more students • *Recommendation #15 applies to all private career colleges registered under the Private Career Colleges Act

Sector	Recommendation Type	Applies to Following Entities
Private Career Colleges	Private Career Colleges Act Operational Regulations Amendment	• All private career colleges registered under the Private Career Colleges Act
	Guidelines	• Private career colleges registered under the Private Career Colleges Act, with a 5-year average annual enrolment rate of fewer than 200 students • Recommendations #22 and #23 apply to all private career colleges registered under the Private Career Colleges Act
	Other Non-Regulatory	• Department of Advanced Education • Private career colleges registered under the Private Career Colleges Act
Language Schools	Accessibility Standard	• Language schools registered under the Language Schools Act that are operated by universities • *Recommendation #15 applies to all language schools registered under the Language Schools Act
	Language Schools Act Regulations Amendment	• Language schools registered under the Language Schools Act
	Guidelines	• Language schools registered under the Language Schools Act that are not operated by universities
	Other Non-Regulatory	• Department of Advanced Education • Language schools registered under the Language Schools Act that are not operated by universities
NS School for Adult Learning	Accessibility Standard	• Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (NSSAL)
	Guidelines	• Community Learning Organizations
	Other Non-Regulatory	• Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

Appendix B: Education Standard Development Committee Members

Current Members

Rosalind Penfound, Chair
Chair, Accessibility Advisory Board

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