

TOGETHER WE ROCK!

School Leadership Program Tool Kit

Building an Accessible and Inclusive School Community



Grades 6 to 12

TOGETHER WE ROCK!

School Leadership Program Tool Kit

Table of Contents

Welcome to <i>Together We Rock!</i>	4
Acknowledgements.....	6
Section One	
Introduction to the School Leadership Program Tool Kit.....	9
Section Two	
Promoting Leadership and Teamwork	21
Section Three	
Creating a Sense of Community.....	37
Section Four	
Understanding Diversity and Disability.....	61
Section Five	
Building an Inclusive School Community	95
Section Six	
Achieving an Accessible School Community	123
Section Seven	
Making a Difference by Taking Action	155
Section Eight	
Learning Activities and Resources	179

Each section of the *Together We Rock!* Tool Kit features:

- **Section Table of Contents**
- **John's Perspective**
- **Learning Information**
- **Action Steps**
- **Ready-to-Use Leadership Tool**

Sample pages of each of these components are provided for your review.



Section Six

Achieving an Accessible School Community

- **John's Perspective**
- **What is Accessibility?**
- **Why is Accessibility Important?**
- **What is an Accessible School?**
- **Why Does an Accessible School Make a Difference?**
- **What are Some of the Barriers to Creating an Accessible School?**
- **What are the First Steps to Promoting Accessibility in Your School?**

John's Perspective

Accessibility provided me with the opportunity to participate in my school. As a student, I believed I had the right to go to the same places and events and share in the same activities that my classmates did.

Being a wheelchair user posed safety issues for me when I was confronted with a step or an uneven surface. The tray on my wheelchair could block my view of a step or other physical barrier and could become literally a life or death situation.

When I attended college, a large number of building exits had one step from the doorway to the sidewalk. I remember the day I brought this to the attention of a college official. It was obvious that he wasn't particularly interested in my concerns. Hoping to put closure to our discussion, he said, "John it's just one step," and politely excused himself to go to a meeting. His response did not address the issue that one small step can be a big obstacle to accessibility.

To help this college official understand the major obstacle that one step is to a wheelchair user, I decided we needed to discuss this matter further. I scheduled a meeting with the college official at one of the entrances that had "just one step." My attendant brought along a wheelchair and

a large bag of hockey equipment, including a helmet with face protection and shoulder and leg protective pads.

I explained to the college official that I wanted to explore the topic of accessibility, including the need for accessible entrances and exits. I suggested that sometimes one of the most effective strategies to help someone understand the importance of accessibility is to experience the problem from the point of view of a person with a disability.

At my request, the college official put on the hockey helmet and pads and strapped himself into the wheelchair. "Now," I said, "we are going to exit the building. As you say, there's just one step." Of course, being the polite person that I am, I added, "After you."

The college official hesitated, and then there was a sheepish response, "Okay. I get it!" In the years to follow, significant improvements have been made to the physical accessibility of that college.



I am not alone. Every day, people who have a disability encounter barriers, and not just physical barriers such as “just one step,” but also attitudinal barriers, technological

barriers, information and communication barriers, and barriers stemming from laws and rules. ■

In this section, we will talk about what accessibility is and why it is important, as well as what an accessible school is and why it makes a difference. We will also talk about the different kinds of barriers that exist for people with disabilities and what first steps you can take to promote accessibility in your school.

What is accessibility?

Accessibility refers to how available something is to everyone. When something is accessible, everyone has the opportunity to use it or to participate in it. Accessibility happens when we discover and break down the barriers and create opportunities for everyone to participate fully in their school and community.

If everyone cannot use something, such as a door, staircase or hallway, it is considered inaccessible. Something that can be used by everyone, such as an automatic door, a ramp or wide hallway, is considered accessible.

Accessibility is a word that is often used in discussions about people who have a disability. People often take for granted how easy it is to enter a room, eat at a restaurant, play in a park, go for a walk or even visit a washroom. For a person with a disability, these daily tasks and outings can be very difficult if there is limited or no accessibility to them.

The places, things and information and communication technologies in our communities should be designed so that they can be used by everyone, regardless of a person's ability, age or situation. This approach to designing buildings, products and technologies is called Universal Design, or Inclusive Design. The move towards Universal Design, which keeps the needs and abilities of everyone in mind, contributes to achieving accessible school communities.

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Why is accessibility important?

Out of every 100 people in your community, there could be as many as 15 who have a disability. If you expand that number to include all the people in your city or country, we're talking about millions of people with a disability. Despite this large number, there continues to be a lack of understanding of and concern about accessibility. Without a continued effort to promote full accessibility, the basic rights of too many people will continue to be neglected.

Our society is known for the value it puts on equality and human rights. We believe and accept that everyone who obeys the law and plays by the rules of society should be given equal rights. Having equal rights implies that everyone – no matter what cultural, religious, ethnic or physical differences there are – has an equal opportunity to experience everything society has to offer. This means the opportunity to go to school, enjoy popular forms of entertainment and even something as simple as taking a walk down the street.

In other words, everyone has the right to access and to enjoy the same places, events, services and products as everyone else. When those basic rights are unavailable, it means that basic human rights are being violated.



Accessibility, then, ensures that everyone in your school community has access to the same activities and opportunities.



What are some of the barriers to creating an accessible school?

Barriers are obstacles that prevent a student who has a disability from fully participating in all aspects of a school community.

There are different types of barriers to accessibility.

- **Physical and Architectural Barriers** include such things as a narrow doorway that prevents a person who uses a wheelchair from entering a classroom.
- **Attitudinal Barriers** include the idea, opinion or thought that someone with a disability cannot do something because of the disability.
- **Technological Barriers** include websites with font sizes that are too small for a person who has a visual impairment to read.
- **Information and Communication Barriers** include classroom lessons that are not available in both audio and visual formats.
- **Barriers Due to Laws or Rules** exclude people with disabilities from participating fully in school activities and lessons.

You cannot think about accessibility without thinking about barriers. Barriers can turn the possible into a near impossible or impossible situation. By removing barriers, you create possibilities for everyone.



Section Six: Achieving an Accessible School Community

Some barriers may be on purpose, such as a student or group of students who do not allow a student with a disability to join in a game at recess. Other barriers may happen accidentally, such as a narrow hallway or awkward corner that is impossible to navigate in a wheelchair. Regardless of whether or not they are meant, barriers must be removed so that every student can participate fully.

It may seem, at first, that barriers affect only the students who have the disability. However, when one student cannot participate in a school community, everyone is less enriched. When a student with a disability cannot participate, other students may lose out on a potential friend. Teachers may not be able to spend as much time with all of their students. And the school as a whole may suffer if a student with a disability cannot fully contribute to the school.

You cannot think about accessibility without thinking about barriers. Barriers can turn the possible into a near impossible or impossible situation. By removing barriers, you create possibilities for everyone.

Let's talk about some of the barriers to creating an accessible school community.



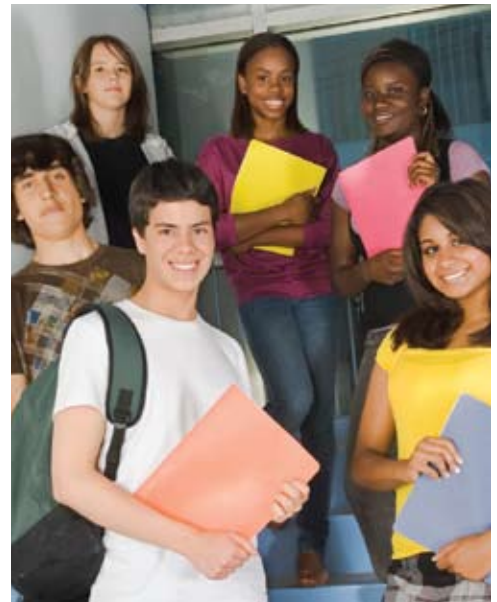
What are the first steps to promoting accessibility in your school?

The first step to promoting accessibility in your school is to have the Leadership Team find out how accessible your school is to people who have a disability. Once they have completed their assessment, the Leadership Team will need to find out what changes need to be made in your school and whether making any of these changes will be part of the Action Plan.

To take this first step, the Leadership Team may want to do an assessment of the school. The following are suggestions for the Leadership Team to find out how accessible your school is for people who have a disability.

1 **Step One:** Do your own research to learn more about accessibility and what it means for people who have who have a disability. Some suggested research topics are Universal Design, Accessibility Guidelines and Assistive Technology.

2 **Step Two:** Compare your research with the current Accessibility Plan of your school board to compile any further information.



Have students learn more about accessibility and what it means for people who have a disability by doing their own research.



3 **Step Three:** Create a School Accessibility Checklist. The Sample Accessibility Checklist at the end of this section may be helpful in this endeavour. You can expand on this checklist by adding items that you have come up with from your own research.

4 **Step Four:** Divide students into groups who will use the School Accessibility Checklist to find out how accessible the school is for people who have a disability. Alternatively, the Leadership Team can use the Accessibility Checklist to do the assessment themselves. Student teams will require a tape measure to undertake this task. Note that on the checklist, “Yes” is checked off if the feature exists, “No” if it doesn’t exist, and “Not Applicable (N/A)” if it doesn’t apply to the school.

5 **Step Five:** Once the assessments have been completed, identify what, if anything, needs to be changed in your school to make it more accessible.

6 **Step Six:** Make a list of the most important accessibility changes that need to be made in your school. These priorities can then be included in the Action Plan. ■



Achieving an Accessible School Community

Sample Accessibility Checklist

A	Parking	Rating																
		Yes	No	N/A														
A.1	<p>Recommended minimum number of accessible parking spaces.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Total Parking Spaces</th> <th>Accessible Spaces Required</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1-10</td> <td>1 car space and 1 van space</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11-20</td> <td>2 car spaces and 1 van space</td> </tr> <tr> <td>21-50</td> <td>3 car spaces and 1 van space</td> </tr> <tr> <td>51-75</td> <td>4 car spaces and 2 van spaces</td> </tr> <tr> <td>76-100</td> <td>5 car spaces and 2 van spaces</td> </tr> <tr> <td>101-200</td> <td>6 car spaces and 2 van spaces</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total Parking Spaces	Accessible Spaces Required	1-10	1 car space and 1 van space	11-20	2 car spaces and 1 van space	21-50	3 car spaces and 1 van space	51-75	4 car spaces and 2 van spaces	76-100	5 car spaces and 2 van spaces	101-200	6 car spaces and 2 van spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total Parking Spaces	Accessible Spaces Required																	
1-10	1 car space and 1 van space																	
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51-75	4 car spaces and 2 van spaces																	
76-100	5 car spaces and 2 van spaces																	
101-200	6 car spaces and 2 van spaces																	
A.2	Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Access on a vertical sign.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.3	Accessible parking spaces are clearly identified by markings on the pavement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.4	Accessible parking spaces are located on hard and level ground.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.5	Accessible car spaces are at least 2400 mm in width.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.6	Accessible van spaces are at least 3500 mm in width.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.7	Accessible parking spaces are located near the main entrance so that people who have exited the vehicle do not have to pass between parked cars or through traffic to reach the main entrance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.8	Parking space surface is smooth, level, and slip-resistant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.9	There are access aisles located beside the accessible parking space that are at least 1500 mm in width.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.10	Markings are cut into the sidewalk at the curb to warn people who have a visual impairment of the step down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.11	Curbs are sloped so that people who use wheelchairs, walkers or other mobility aids can navigate easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.12	Sloped curbs are located near by the disability parking spaces.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														
A.13	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>														

Achieving an Accessible School Community

Sample Accessibility Checklist

B	Doors/Entrance	Rating		
		Yes	No	N/A
B.1	Entrances are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Access.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.2	Main school entrance is located along a barrier-free path of travel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.3	Main entrance has an automatic door.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.4	Automatic button to open door is set at a height that can be reached by someone in a wheelchair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.5	Automatic door switch/button is not obstructed by other objects (garbage cans, ash trays, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.6	Automatic door has a timer that is set for enough time to allow people to go in and out at a comfortable pace.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.7	At any inaccessible door, there is a sign indicating where the closest accessible door is located.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.8	Mats/carpets are secured and have no raised or uneven edges, so that they do not pose a tripping hazard or cause difficulty for wheelchair use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.9	Width of door openings is a minimum of 915 mm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.10	Doors have levers instead of door knobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.11	All doors are able to be opened without much effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.12	Clear glass doors have a contrasting colour strip mounted 1350 mm above the floor for visibility by people with a visual impairment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.13	Corridors/hallways are free from obstructions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.14	Hallways are wide and level enough to accommodate a person who uses a wheelchair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.15	Surface of floor in hallways is non-slip.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.16	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.17	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>