

Tips for How Principals can Support the Inclusion of Students with Physical Disabilities

Accessibility

- Ensure classrooms, school facilities and outdoor spaces are accessible with features such as elevators, ramps, wide aisles, curb cuts, etc.
- Hold regular building accessibility audits, that include students with and without disabilities, to identify accessibility barriers
- Identify and remove barriers in the school that can be fixed at the school level
- Advocate for building modifications and accessibility improvements with the school board and facilities administration
- Provide professional development on the Ontario Human Rights Code, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Duty to Accommodate

Advocacy

- Promote opportunities for student groups and individuals to be involved in advocacy efforts to promote change in attitudes and behaviors or to address barriers to inclusion
- Ensure individual students have goals to develop self-advocacy skills as part of their Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Communication and Assistive Technology

- Ensure that teachers have the opportunity to learn about assistive technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Ensure teachers have the knowledge to support the instruction and assessment of students who use assistive technology, including AAC, to access the curriculum
- Ensure multiple staff members know how to communicate with students who use AAC devices
- Ensure that when assistive technology and AAC equipment requires repairs or maintenance replacement equipment is available



Health and Personal Supports

- Ensure that adequate educational assistants are available to support the health and wellbeing of students
- Ensure that educational and other assistants providing health and personal care support have been adequately trained
- Ensure that educational assistants and other staff who implement regular or daily therapy activities or programming are trained or supervised by the appropriate professionals
- Provide appropriate referrals to community agencies for nursing, rehabilitation, and mental health services
- Ensure there is adequate space and privacy for health and rehabilitation services to be provided to students

Inclusion

- Ensure special education classrooms are located centrally and individual students with disabilities are not isolated or positioned away from other students
- Ensure students with disabilities have the opportunity and supports to participate in all school activities, field trips and experiential learning
- Provide inclusive sport opportunities enabling students without disabilities to participate in para-sports such as wheelchair basketball, or sledge hockey
- Provide opportunities for students to experience the challenges faced by people with disabilities, including using walkers and wheelchairs for daily activities

Social Relationships

- Provide a range of extra-curricular activities and encourage students with disabilities to participate
- Foster the development of peer relationships for students with disabilities by developing peer support programs and mentorship opportunities
- Model inclusive communities by hiring staff with disabilities
- Invite people with disabilities as guest speakers and to support educational programming

Transitions

- Provide multiple experiential educational opportunities, including co-op placements that are supported to build successful outcomes
- Provide opportunities for obtaining volunteer hours and employment experience
- Plan for community involvement, employment and/or post-secondary
- Build connections with community resources