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**Subject:** OHRC launches Right to Read public inquiry | La CODP lance l'enquête publique Le droit de lire



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## OHRC launches Right to Read public inquiry

October 3, 2019

TORONTO – Today, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) launched Right to Read, a public inquiry into human rights issues that affect students with reading disabilities in Ontario's public education system.

There are children in classrooms across Ontario who fail to learn to read. According to recent Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results, more than one-quarter of Grade 3 students, and 53% of Grade 3 students with special education needs, did not meet the provincial standard for reading.

Students who can't read will struggle in all aspects of school, and are more vulnerable to mental health disabilities, behavioural issues, bullying and dropping out. Life-long consequences can include under-employment, homelessness, involvement with the criminal justice system, and even suicide.

Students with reading disabilities have the right to learn to read. Yet, the OHRC is concerned that students with reading disabilities are not getting the supports they need. This is all the more troubling because reading disabilities can be remediated with early intervention and support.

As part of its inquiry, the OHRC will hear from parents, students and educators across the province. It will also assess whether school boards use scientific evidence-based approaches to meet students' right to read. The OHRC will assess school boards against five benchmarks that are part of an effective systematic approach to teaching all students to read:

- Universal design for learning (UDL)
- Mandatory early screening
- Reading intervention programs
- Effective accommodation
- Psycho-educational assessments (if required).

The OHRC selected the following eight school boards to provide a representative sample of boards across Ontario:

- Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
- Keewatin-Patricia District School Board
- Lakehead District School Board
- London District Catholic School Board
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Peel District School Board
- Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board
- Thames Valley District School Board.

The OHRC may also request information or assistance from the Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, as well as faculties of education. It has retained Dr. Linda Siegel to assist with the inquiry. Dr. Siegel is Professor Emeritus with the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education and an international authority in the field of reading disabilities.

"Reading is the foundation for success in school, work and life," said OHRC Chief Commissioner Renu Mandhane. "Learning to read is not a privilege, it is a human right. This inquiry will assess whether school boards use evidence-based approaches to meet their human rights obligations."

The OHRC will release a formal report on findings and recommendations in 2020.

The OHRC wants to hear directly from parents, students, educators and others, and invites them to email [legal@ohrc.on.ca](mailto:legal@ohrc.on.ca), or call 416-314-4547 or 1-800-387-9080.

## **Resources**

[Right to Read Inquiry terms of reference](#)

[Backgrounder](#)

[Voices from the community](#)

[Voices from community partners](#)

[Right to Read flyer](#)

[OHRC initiatives related to disability and education](#)

[Inquiry privacy policy](#)

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