

District School Board Ontario North East

2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Message from the Director of Education

At District School Board Ontario North East (DSB1) one of our strategic priorities is that of Equity, which we define as the work we do to anticipate, identify and work to remove barriers. DSB1 continues to work to better understand the needs of students, staff and families throughout the district in order to serve our communities.

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was established with the purpose of improving opportunities and removing barriers for persons with disabilities. Within our school district approximately 28% of students are living with a disability. At DSB1, we are committed to creating opportunities, removing barriers, providing training for staff and creating accessible and positive spaces for all students, staff and families.

Introduction

On June 13, 2005, The Accessibility for Ontarians Act, 2005 (AODA, 2005) received Royal Assent and is now law. The purpose of AODA, 2005, is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by providing for the development, implementation, and enforcement of mandatory accessibility standards respecting food, services, facilities, accommodation, buildings and employment by January 2025. The Ministry of Education is in coherence with this act and committed to supporting the goal of an accessible Ontario.

DSB1 has established a plan to improve accessibility within the Board's jurisdiction. This plan has resulted in the pathway to make all facilities and premises accessible and in turn meet the needs of families, students, and staff to remove and prevent barriers that comply with the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

Principles of accessibility include: demonstrating respect for the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, providing goods and services to persons with disabilities in a manner that is integrated with individuals who do not have disabilities unless another method is required due to the person's disability, and equality of opportunity. DSB1 is committed to ensuring its policies, procedures, and practices are consistent with these principles.

Businesses and organizations that provide goods and services to people in Ontario will have to meet certain accessibility standards in five (5) key areas defined by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The five standards are:

1. Information and Communications Standards
 - Schools need to provide educational materials in accessible ways
 - Staff access to accessible formats and communications supports
2. The Employment Standards
 - Employment practices accessible and accessible hiring
3. The Transportation Standards
 - Students with disabilities must be able to travel to schools in accessible ways
 - Individual transportation plans for those students with disabilities
4. The Design of Public Spaces Standards
5. The Customer Service Standards
 - Students must be able to access all goods, services and facilities related to education
 - Staff must have training on how to teach students with disabilities

Purpose

This plan describes how DSB1 will work towards the obligations of ODA and AODA, and its commitment to accessibility throughout our schools and learning environments.

Objectives

This Plan:

- Shares the obligation DSB1 holds for all students, families and staff to abide by all ODA and AODA.
- Describes the process by which DSB1 works to identify, remove and prevent barriers.
- Reviews progress and recent efforts to remove and prevent barriers.
- Makes a commitment to provide update on progress towards Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and how it relates to the DSB1 Strategic Plan.
- Makes a commitment to continue the process of consulting with the Special Education Advisory Committee and with persons with disabilities.

Obligations

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)

The purpose of the *Ontarians for Disability Act 2001 (ODA 2001)* is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the ODA 2001 mandates that each school Board prepare an Annual Accessibility Plan.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The purpose of the AODA, 2005, is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by providing for the development, implementation and enforcement of mandatory accessibility standards respecting food, services, facilities, accommodation, buildings and employment by January 2025. Standards that will be developed under the AODA, 2005, are to apply to both public and private organizations. These mandatory and enforceable standards are inclusive of Customer Service Standards, Information and Communications Standards, Employment Standards, Transportation Standards and Design of Public Spaces.

Commitment to the Accessibility Plan

DSB1 is committed to continually improving accessibility to school and Board facilities, premises and services for students, staff and families with disabilities.

Barrier Identification

Group	Methods
Students and Families	Barriers to accessibility are identified by students, and families. Building Services, Special Education and staff work with stakeholders to remove/prevent barriers and develop accommodation plans.
Staff	Barriers to accessibility are identified by staff. Building Services, Human Resources and Special Education and staff work with stakeholders to remove/prevent barriers and develop accommodation plans.
Special Education Advisory Committee	Members identify barriers to accessibility and provide input to the board to remove barriers and develop accommodation plans.

Recent Barrier Removal Achievements

- New websites and content meet WCAG 2.0 Level A standards.
- Communications Department is incorporating alternate text captions on social media posts.
- Communications Department is incorporating the PDF/UA standard on public documents uploaded to the DSB1 website.
- School transportation plans continue to be developed and reviewed with parents for students with disabilities.
- Accessibility continues to be factored into school renovation plans.

DSB1 Road to Accessibility

Barriers to be addressed in 2023-2028

Type	Location	Action
Systemic	Board Wide	Creation of an Accessibility Committee to identify barriers, provide input into the plan and actions. The group will come together in January 2024.
Systemic	Board Wide	Continue to implement mandatory (AODA) accessibility awareness training to ensure new staff have been trained.
Communications	Board Wide	Continue to provide more internal and public resources in accessible formats.

Review and Monitoring

Accessibility issues are addressed on an ongoing basis in DSB1. Wherever possible, proactive measures are put in place to ensure accessible working and learning environments. Feedback and input are through input received from school board staff, families, and community members.

In respect to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan the following steps take place:

- An annual report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the Plan is brought to the Board for information in November.
- At least once every 5 years the Plan is reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities, with the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee and other relevant stakeholders. The new plan is brought to the Board for information in November.

Communications of the Plan

In addition to the public availability of the Plan, DSB1 will post an annual update report on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan on the Board's website at: www.dsb1.ca.

Requests for accessible formats of the Plan will be accommodated. Questions, comments, or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to:

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