



**Annual Accessibility Status Report**  
**2020-2021**

**Prepared by the**  
**Halton District School Board**  
**Accessibility Coordinating Committee**

**December 2021**

This publication is available on the Halton District School Board website at [www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca) and available in alternate formats upon request.

## **Introduction**

The Halton District School Board remains committed to supporting and meeting the objectives and requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA). The Board continues to meet all of the accessibility requirements outlined by the AODA.

The purpose of the Annual Accessibility Report is to highlight the progress made during the 2020-21 school year in providing an environment in all its workplaces and learning spaces that builds independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for students, parents/guardians, staff and the public. The Halton District School Board is committed to the goal of giving persons with disabilities the same opportunity of access to its services in a similar way as these services are available to all others we serve. (Note: The impact of COVID-19 restricted the completion of some actions outlined in operational plans for 2020-2021.)

## **Objectives**

The Annual Accessibility Status Report 2020-2021 supports and reflects the objectives of the HDSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2017-2022) to:

- describe the process by which the Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities;
- review recent efforts of the Board to remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities;
- describe the measures the Board has taken in the specified time period to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities;
- provide an annual status report on the Board's implementation of the multi-year accessibility plan;
- provide an update on the status of the multi-year accessibility plan; and
- make the accessibility plan available to the public.

## **General Requirements**

### **Policy & Procedures**

During the 2020-2021 school year, the following HDSB Administrative Procedures were developed, reviewed or updated:

[Employment Equity Policy](#) (Revised 2020)

[Teacher Hiring Practices](#) (New 2021)

[Conflicts of Interest in Hiring Practices](#) (New 2021)

[Accessibility Planning](#) (Reviewed 2021 - Update in Progress)

[Recruitment Accommodation](#) (Reviewed 2020)

[Prescribed Use of Assistive Technology](#) (Reviewed 2020)

## **Training**

Providing training about accessibility and inclusion is necessary in order to facilitate change. During the 2020-2021 school year, the following training opportunities were provided for HDSB employee and community groups:

- Discriminatory & Harmful Language Protocol - Fall through Winter 2020/2021 Attendance, Accommodations, Disability Management Process

  - HDEAA - November 27, 2020 and February 5, 2021

  - CUPE - July 7, 2021

  - OCTU - April 23, 2021

- The Ripple Effect Program - Available to All Staff - April to August 2021

- Respectful Workplace Training - for Managers, Supervisors and School Administrators - Fall 2020

- Equitable and Inclusive Recruitment and Selection practices for Administrators - Fall 2020

- Anti-Bias training for all School Administrators, Superintendents, Senior Managers and Instructional Program Leaders - September 2020

- New Teacher Hiring Practices for Administrators - Spring 2021

- AODA Web Training for School Staff & Librarians - Fall 2020

Halton Student Transportation Services (HSTS)

The five bussing companies that comprise the HSTS consortium, providing service to HDSB students are required to provide the following training to every school bus driver annually:

- AODA - Customer Service Standard

- Sensitivity Training

- Diversity Training

*Required Training:*

All school based staff completed *Accessibility Awareness Training* in the 2020 Fall Start-up online training.

## **Education (Students)**

Special Education Services continued to partner with community organizations and offer professional development learning opportunities to staff. Training sessions or professional development modules were delivered and made available to staff and families to build capacity. Learning and development opportunities in the 2020-2021 school year focused on staff development through videos, slide shows, after hours learning sessions and virtual conferences. We focused on the following areas to ensure our students have access to the academic, the physical and the social-emotional learning that happens:

- Deepening our understanding of alternative programs within the Community Pathways Program
- First year of Structured Reading Pilot for students with a learning disability completed (outcomes and data presented at SEAC September 14, 2021)
  - Developed video resources for Itinerant Resource Teachers (IRT) to reference for intervention strategies, as well as video lessons for the classroom teacher/IRT to use with students
  - Trained teachers of Learning Disability (LD) classes in Science of Reading strategies to embed in their program
  - Self-paced learning modules for all interested staff in Science of Reading strategies; delivered to 100 staff who registered for modules
- Collaborative Problem Solving training and certification opportunities
- Supporting students who are deaf and hard of hearing through technology and virtual learning.
- Assistive Technology support
  - Board wide PD Days for Educational Assistants focused on Boardmaker, Clicker and Communication programs
  - Providing digital PD resources for education staff such as activities, video tutorials, and instructional guides to support student learning.
  - Whole class learning sessions with students and staff to co-teach and co-plan to build student and staff capacity
- Exceptionality-specific resources for education offered through internal website for staff
- Assistive Technology Conferences (to grow use and understanding)
- Exceptionality-specific resources for educations (offered through myhdsb)

The Inclusive Design Framework continues to be embedded in language and lens when reviewing curriculum and programming.

The Special Education Services and Facilities Department have partnered with a collaborative lens to plan long-term for student needs when they start with HDSB. Standards are being developed for new schools building spaces for Life Skills. The departments continue to partner to build accessible outdoor spaces, sensory pathways and rooms.

### **Employment**

In Spring of 2021, the Human Resources Department in collaboration with stakeholders and other departments embarked on a Staff Census initiative. Information collected through the questionnaire pertained to demographic data of the current staffing complement, including persons who self-identify with a disability. Perceptual data relating to employees' well-being was also collected. The initiative will continue throughout 2021-2022 and the data collected will help guide next steps.

New hiring practices were introduced in Spring 2020 with a focus on diversity, perspectives, equity, fairness, and transparency. A new Administrative Procedure was introduced and the Employment Equity policy was revised. Drop-in training sessions were held for Principals to support the implementation and ensure understanding and the importance of the change.

The Staffing and Recruiting Department continues to improve upon equitable and inclusive selection processes, free of barriers. Written assessment questions have been accommodated for individuals by including a reader. The team continues to explore other methods for applicants with visual impairments. Digital interviews are now being offered as a new accommodation option. Accommodations continue to be offered through the recruiting process based on individual needs.

New accommodations for staff with medically-supported disabilities were explored and provided due to challenges presented by COVID-19. PPE-related accommodations were provided to remove virtual setting barriers or other barriers associated with COVID.

### **Information & Communication**

During the 2020-2021 school year, Communications and Information Services teams migrated all remaining school websites to the new Google Suite Sites platform and AODA standardized school template. In October 2020 joint training sessions were hosted by IT and the Communications Department for remaining

school staff on AODA standard school websites. Ongoing AODA training and monitoring will continue.

AccessiBE (Accessibility software) has been fully implemented on the HDSB website and monitors accessibility. AccessiBE provides a monthly report which states that HDSB is now Level AA compliant as required by January 2021.

Library Technicians worked on updating school library websites based on AODA web training provided by the HDSB Communications Department. Additionally Library Services staff continues to promote accessible furnishings and library layouts during the development of new school libraries (e.g., Nelson, Elsie MacGill) and library renewal projects (e.g., Frontenac, Dr. Charles Best). Accessibility meetings have been re-initiated in Fall 2021.

Accessibility and safety in school libraries continues to be improved with the ongoing removal and replacement of the 84" tall freestanding shelving units.

Library Services annually communicates the AODA documentation in HDSB Libraries with all School Administrators in August/September. These documents were finalized in the 2019-2020 school year to support accessibility in school libraries and include:

- Accessible eResources
- Accessible School Library Spaces
- Accessible Video Resources
- Providers of AODA Compliant Resources
- Provision of Accessible and/or Conversion-Ready Formats

The library accessibility documentation will be reviewed again in Fall 2022. Updated documentation will be shared with library staff.

The Communications Department has identified various methods of communication tools, including newsletters, email, and teacher websites. Next steps will include confirming the accessibility levels of each tool and identifying the challenges, needs, and compliance levels of the communication methods.

## **Built Environment**

The following barrier-free projects were completed by the Facilities Department in the 2020-2021 school year:

Accessible washroom upgrades were completed at Eastview PS, Glen Williams PS, Nelson HS, River Oaks PS, and Sir E. Macmillan PS with a universal washroom being added at Nelson.

A new elevator was added at Nelson, and elevator renewal was completed at White Oaks North.

Fire alarm upgrades complete with visual strobes were installed at Pine Grove and W.I. Dick.

Barrier free access improvements (ramps and site enhancements) were completed at Rolling Meadows and T.A. Blakelock front entrance.

Leveraging the Covid Resilient Infrastructure Fund Stream (CVRIS) from the provincial and federal government, 56 new accessible outdoor learning spaces have and will continue to be constructed within the region.

Building on the success of the Nelson Community Pathways Program (CPP) outdoor space, significant enhancements supporting accessibility and CPP were completed at T.A. Blakelock through CVRIS and other capital resources.

As outdoor spaces continue to be created and revitalized, the Facility Services Department will continue to work with teachers, students, and the Accessibility Committee to apply an accessibility lens and incorporate recommendations in the upgrades.

In addition to the physical environment upgrades by the Facilities Department, White Oaks Secondary School created and finalized a fully accessible fitness room, which was created ensuring the space was free of barriers and supported accessibility needs.

**Accessibility Coordinating Committee Membership (2020-2021)**

Robert Eatough	Superintendent
Mary Marshall	Co-Chair System Principal, Equity and Inclusive Education
Allison Ippolito	Co-Chair General Manager, Human Resources
Dave Bennett	Manager, Purchasing, Business Services
Suzanne Burwell	Specialist, Environmental Sustainability, Facilities Services
Lisa Cadotte	Manager, Health and Wellness Services
Dave Colley	Manager, Transportation Services
Donna Danielli	Trustee, Halton District School Board
Marnie Denton	Manager, Communication Services
Joanne Eliuk	Halton Secondary Principals' Association Representative
Ian Gaudet	Executive Officer, Facility Services
Jane Gibson	OCTU Representative
Lynn Goodwin	Manager, Instructional Media
Gail Gortmaker	Manager, Director's office
Karen Lacroix	General Manager, Halton Student Transportation Services
Danielle MacDonald	Halton Elementary Principals' Association Representative
Sean Marks	System Principal, Special Education Services
Jim Moher	Assistant Manager, Plant Operations
Lucielle Morris	Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
Margo Shuttleworth	Trustee, Halton District School Board
Marsha Sulewski	Supervisor, Staffing and Recruiting
Cathy Thier	General Manager, Information Services

**Looking Forward to 2021/22**

The Accessibility Coordinating Committee will continue to meet virtually in the 2021-2022 School year with an aim to collaboratively work together to identify and eliminate barriers.

Efforts to engage with students, staff, and community members with lived experience relative to the AODA will be explored to ensure the HDSB has a responsive plan meeting the needs of our diverse communities and individual's needs.