

Annual Accessibility Status Report

2021-2022

Learn • Grow • Inspire



T O G E T H E R

Prepared by the

Halton District School Board

Accessibility Coordinating Committee

September 2022

This publication is available on the Halton District School Board website at 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 2021-22 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.

Objectives

The Annual Accessibility Status Report 2021-2022 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 2021-2022 school year, the following HDSB Administrative Procedures were developed, reviewed or updated:

[Working from Home](#) (New 2021)

[Disconnecting from Work](#) (New 2022)

[Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#) (Reviewed 2022)

[Substance Use Intervention/Prevention](#) (Reviewed 2022)

Training

Providing training about accessibility and inclusion is necessary in order to facilitate change. During the 2021-2022 school year, the following training opportunities were provided for HDSB employee and community groups:

- Equitable Hiring Practices and Accommodations Training for New PVP (Fall 2021)
- Selection of Instructional and Library Resources Administrative Procedure training for library staff and resource evaluators (Fall 2021 & Spring 2022)
- The Ripple Effect Program - Available to All Staff (Fall 2021)

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

Education (Students)

Special Education Services continues 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. Special Education Services focuses on many areas to ensure our students have access to the academic, the physical and the social-emotional learning that happens:

- Over 400 students with special needs took part in the Special Athletes' Track Meet, in which the activities were specifically designed around their abilities and needs.
- Accessing reading:
 - Building on the successful pilot work of our Structured Reading, we have now provided training for the Introduction to Structured Reading for SERTs reaching over 100 audience members during the summer months alone
 - Building further on that success, we also provided the 3-day "Introduction to Wilson Training" for all Self-Contained Learning Disability and Behaviour Resources Teachers

- We aligned our two early intervention programs (KELLP and ELPhA) with the science of reading. Between this year and last year all SR-IRTs, KELLP and ELPhA teachers have completed the Top Ten Reading Tools - course which is a full year course supported by the International Dyslexia Association.
- Accessibility in our playgrounds: We successfully trialed communication boards in our school yards, from Kindergarten to the secondary Community Pathway. We are now working with schools to expand communication boards into more locations.
- 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
- 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

The disaggregation of the Staff Census data began in the 2021-2022 school year. Demographic data and perceptual data was released and shared in Spring 2022. Overall participation rate of the Staff Census was 75%. Census data revealed that “in the HDSB, 7% of employees reported that they consider themselves to be a person with a Disability(ies), of which 47% identified as having more than one disability. Mental health disabilities (18%), learning disabilities (13%), and physical disabilities (6%) ranked as the highest single categories. It is noteworthy that all disability types were reported by staff, albeit with varying frequencies, including

pain, mobility and addictions". Information from the census questionnaire continues to inform Human Resources initiatives and strategies.

The Staffing and Recruiting Department continues to improve upon equitable and inclusive selection processes, free of barriers. The team continues to explore inclusive methods for applicants and accommodations continue to be offered through the recruiting process based on individual needs. Human Resources continues to offer individual accommodations for all staff throughout the employment process.

As part of recruitment and selection process, voluntary staff-identification questions were added to all Halton District School Board job postings in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and HDSB's Employment Equity Policy. Questions included those who self-identify with a disability and the data will inform our understanding of the diversity of our applicant pool as well as the progress of applicants throughout the hiring process. This data will inform our goals, actions and our progress towards creating and sustaining an inclusive and equitable workforce.

The Employee Health and Wellness Department in collaboration with a third-party consultant launched a Mental Health Audit of the workforce in Spring 2022. The focus of the audit is on prevention, promotion and support for staff. Questions that were included in the Have your Say Survey in Spring 2022 will be analyzed in the 2022-2023 school year.

A Mental Health First Aid Program for staff began in its infancy in Spring of 2022. HDSB has procured the support that has been developed with a third-party for the implementation of building capacity in the system to address and support staff in mental health crises. Next steps will continue into the 2022-2023 school year, including communication plans, mental health first aid selection and training.

Information & Communication

Communications and Information Services teams have completed migration of all remaining school websites to the new Google Suite Sites platform and AODA standardized school template. Departments continue to gather data to review educator Google Suite Sites for accessibility and training needs.

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 legislation. Departments are investigating tools that can be used on all HDSB sites to assist in maintaining AODA compliance.

Ongoing review and research is underway to enhance AODA awareness and technology capabilities building best practice guides when using online meeting, streaming and communication tools.

Consultation continues between the Communication & Engagement and Information Services departments in an effort to explore alternative long-term solutions that educate and train key staff on AODA compliance.

Library Services annually communicates the AODA documentation in HDSB libraries with all School Administrators in August/September. These documents 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 & Engagement 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.

The Communications & Engagement Department is exploring third-party plugins/tools to support system-wide accessibility compliance within Google Workspace. The Department is also creating an accessibility resource for all staff to reference with the employee intranet.

Built Environment

The following barrier-free projects were completed by the Facilities Department in the 2021-2022 school year:

Ramps

- EJ James
- Tom Thomson

Elevators

- Heritage Glen
- Nelson

Door Operators

- Tom Thomson
- Harrison
- Iroquois Ridge
- WI Dick

Universal Washrooms

- WI Dick
- Stewarttown
- Frontenac
- Oakwood
- Pauline Johnson

Parking

- JT Tuck

In addition to the above upgrades, accessible outdoor learning spaces were constructed at numerous schools in the region.

The Facility Services Department will continue to work with teachers, students, and the Accessibility Committee to apply an accessibility lens and incorporate recommendations in planned upgrades.

Accessibility Coordinating Committee Membership (2021-2022)

Ian Gaudet	Co-Chair Superintendent, Facility Services
Allison Ippolito	Co-Chair General Manager, Human Resources
Elaine Westerhof	ACC Secretary, Office Supervisor, Facility Services
Shelita Walker	System Principal, Human Rights, Equity & Inclusive Education Education
Dave Bennett	Manager, Purchasing, Business Services
Suzanne Burwell	Specialist, Environmental Sustainability, Facilities Services
Lisa Cadotte	Manager, Employee Health and Wellness
Donna Danielli	Trustee, Halton District School Board
Marnie Denton	Manager, Communications & Engagement
Joanne Eliuk	Halton Secondary Principals Association Representative
Jane Gibson	Forest Trail, OCTU
Lynn Goodwin	Manager, Instructional Media
David Colley	General Manager, Halton Student Transportation Services
Danielle MacDonald	Halton Elementary Principals Association Representative
Sean Marks	System Principal, Student Services
Stacey Farrell-Bangerter	System Principal, Special Education
Terry Janach	Manager of Plant Operations, Facility Services & Planning
Lucielle Morris	Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
Margo Shuttleworth	Trustee, Halton District School Board
Marsha Sulewski	Manager, Recruitment, Selection & Staffing
Cathy Thier	General Manager, Information Services
Jewel Amoah	Human Rights & Equity Advisor

Looking Forward to 2022-2023

The Accessibility Coordinating Committee will continue to meet in the 2022-2023 school year with an aim to collaboratively work together to identify and eliminate barriers. Membership of the committee has been expanded to ensure engagement with students, staff and community members with lived experience relative to the AODA, which ensures the HDSB has a responsive plan that meets the needs of our diverse communities and individual's needs.