Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Annual Checklist 2020-2021

York Region District School Board (YRDSB or the Board) has renewed its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to describe the goals and measures that will be taken over the period of September 2020 to August 2025 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility at YRDSB. **This Annual Checklist outlines the accessibility plans, goals and objectives for the 2020-2021 school year.**

The Board's commitment to accessibility is defined by 4 new multi-year accessibility goals:

Provide Accessible Customer Service

Provide customer service excellence by promoting accessibility best practices that give meaningful access to all students and staff, including those with disabilities.

Understand Accessibility as a Process

Provide accessibility training, education and outreach to build awareness, knowledge and attitudes to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Engage the AODA Advisory Committee

Engage the AODA Advisory Committee that operates through shared responsibilities and inter-departmental collaboration, while also engaging people with disabilities.

Publish an Annual Accessibility Report

Complete and publish an Annual Accessibility Report to demonstrate accountability for the Board's progress in implementing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

The 4 multi-year accessibility goals are aligned with the 4 core principles of the AODA as well as the 4 priorities of the Trustees' Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the Director's Action Plan.

1.0 General Requirements

1.1 Accessibility Policy

Plain Language Guides and Alternative Formats

☐ Finalize the Plain Language Guide to Policy #407, Accessibility as a more reader- and user-friendly version of the full policy document;

☐ Convert the Plain Language Guide to Policy #407, Accessibility into accessible webpages as a proactive measure to meeting alternative format requests; and

☐ Convert the full PDF version of Policy #407, Accessibility into accessible webpages as a proactive measure to meeting alternative format requests, and also as an exemplar for converting other Board policies and procedures documents into accessible webpages.

1.2 Annual Accessibility Plans

AODA Advisory Committee Meetings

☐ Hold four AODA Advisory Committee meetings throughout the school year to provide and receive accessibility updates and promote opportunities for professional development and learning;

☐ Use September and November 2020 meetings to collectively review and provide feedback on the renewed Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025; and

☐ Include online feedback forms following each meeting to allow advisory committee members to share feedback in order to identify ways to improve future meetings.

Annual Accessibility Report

☐ Complete an annual accessibility status report describing the measures that YRDSB has taken in 2020-2021 school year to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility;

☐ Present the annual accessibility report and multi-year accessibility plan to Executive Council and subsequently to Board Standing Committee for Board approval; and

☐ Post the finalized report online to the public on the Board's Annual Report and Multi-Year Plan webpage.

1.3 Accessible Procurement and Purchasing

Accessible Procurement Statement

☐ Standardize a statement of accessibility (confirming the provision of accessible goods and services) to be included in all purchasing agreements/contracts with external contractors, service providers, vendors and producers of educational materials; and

☐ Consult with the main departments that deal with procurement on behalf of the Board (e.g., Purchasing Services, Plant and Planning Services, ITS) to ensure adoption of the standardized statement of accessible procurement.

1.4 Accessibility Training

Accessibility Training Communication Plan

☐ Develop a communication plan to formalize processes (e.g., system memo, reminders to principals and non-compliance emails) for conveying accessibility compliance training requirements and timelines for completion;

☐ Review and update the Accessibility Compliance Training 2019-2020 system memo, and send out in coordination with all other Board compliance training obligations;

☐ Include in the communication plan additional accessibility training opportunities (beyond compliance training) available through the HRCO; and

☐ Report on all accessibility training delivered through ad hoc learning sessions and/or workshops in the Annual Accessibility Report.

Accessibility Awareness and Professional Development

☐ Continue to collaborate with various departments, units and/or committees across the Board to plan and deliver customized accessibility training sessions with the intention of building awareness about accessibility in more meaningful ways;

☐ Build capacity beyond accessibility compliance training by developing learning and training opportunities that expand focus from accessibility awareness-building to capacity- and knowledge-building;

☐ Convert the Accessibility 101 presentation into an online training module;

☐ Develop an online training module and/or workshop that explores the guidelines and resources within the Accessibility Resource Hub;

- ☐ Provide opportunities for participants to provide feedback (via Google Forms) on the accessibility training modules; and

- ☐ Explore the development of an accessibility learning plan as part of a larger human rights and accessibility professional development pathway for staff.

Monitoring and Tracking (each school year)

- ☐ Review strategies to improve monitoring and tracking of compliance training for current and new employees;

- ☐ Build reports that integrate accessibility training data from the Board's Learning Management System (Connect2Learn) and Plant Services (Plant Maintenance); and

- ☐ Include relevant completion data in the Annual Accessibility Report.

Volunteer Accessibility Training

- ☐ Finalize an acknowledgement of accessibility and human rights training form for volunteers, to be included as part of the welcome package for YRDSB volunteers; and

- ☐ Ensure revisions to existing volunteer forms/paperwork that ensures requirements for completing appropriate accessibility and human rights training is clearly communicated.

2.0 Customer Service Standards

2.1 Formal Feedback Processes

Barrier Buster Protocol

- ☐ Finalize the Protocol for Barrier Buster Process as way of making the Barrier Buster process more transparent and accessible to the public; and

- ☐ Convert the Barrier Buster protocol into accessible webpages.

Accessible Feedback Communication Plan

- ☐ Formalize a communication plan to continue building awareness across the system of the Barrier Buster electronic reporting tool and the related Barrier Buster process; and

- ☐ Include relevant information on the provision of accessible customer service as it relates to: assistive devices, support persons, service animals and service disruptions;

☐ Outline recommendations for ensuring feedback processes (e.g., Customer Service Feedback Forms or similar feedback mechanisms) are accessible and available to the public at all school locations and Board offices;

☐ Develop a process for ensuring the opportunity to provide feedback (e.g., through Google Forms) are available to participants following all professional learning/ development (including conferences, training sessions, workshops, etc.); and

☐ Review the communication plan following the end of each school year, update as needed during the summer months, and finalize for dissemination the following school year.

2.2 Assistive Devices, Support Persons and Services Animals

Communication Plan

As part of the Accessible Feedback Communication Plan, include and/or review the following:

☐ Information about the use of assistive devices for people with disabilities, best practice reminders about accessible customer service, and online training refreshers;

☐ Information and training refreshers about visitors with disabilities who need a support person to access Board programs, services and/or facilities;

☐ Information and training refreshers about the use of service animals for people with disabilities, while making sure to clearly distinguish between the Board's position on welcoming service animals in any Board administrative buildings versus applying for a service animal accommodation in school through Board Procedure #662.14.

2.3 Disruption of Services

Board-wide Service Disruptions

☐ Continue to ensure Board-wide service disruptions (e.g., due to inclement or emergency weather, or Ministry ordered school board shutdowns) are posted on the YRDSB website and includes information about the reason for the disruption and its anticipated duration.

Site-specific Service Disruptions

☐ Continue to ensure appropriate disruption of service signage (available on the BWW to download and customize as required) is posted with information about the reason for the disruption and its anticipated duration.

3.0 Information and Communication Standards

3.1 Accessible Websites and Web Content

New Website Launch

☐ Launch a new, redesigned and more accessible public-facing website in compliance with the IASR requirement that "By January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA" ([O. Reg. 191/11, s. 14](#));

☐ Include various accessibility features, including (but not limited): accessible keyboard navigation, real-time accessibility tips for content contributors, and an automated accessibility checker that generates weekly accessibility reports.

☐ Continue training of key content contributors on the new website platform, as required;

☐ Reduce barriers to creating accessible web content by encouraging and supporting content contributors to publish web content in HTML (i.e., placing content directly onto the web rather than creating PDFs that are uploaded online); and

☐ Finalize adjustment of the official red colour (Pantone 485) for the Board logo to a more accessible contrast ratio (from WCAG 2.1 Level AA to AAA).

Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Formats (PDFs)*

☐ Based on the needs assessment, finalize criteria for determining eligibility of staff who request Adobe Acrobat and/or Adobe Creative Cloud software; and then use criteria to assess requests and distribute software accordingly;

☐ Develop a communication plan to outline Adobe Acrobat criteria for licensing, software request process and accessible document resource/training options;

☐ Significantly reduce the number of PDFs on Board websites as part of the [new accessible website launch](#); and

☐ Continue to adopt Adobe Acrobat as a means for creating accessible PDF documents (with the understanding of its barriers to accessibility).

*Despite the value of PDF documents, we recognize the barriers to creating accessible PDFs (e.g. know-how, licensing costs, added time) as well as many issues with PDFs in general (e.g., not designed for digital use, navigation and orientation issues, harder to update, etc.).

Accessible Content Capacity Building

☐ Refocus efforts and education on source content and documents with the goal of building capacity across the system to create more accessible content (refer to "Accessibility Resource Hub"); and

☐ Begin to shift away from using PDFs at a system level by introducing alternative forms of content (e.g., HTML content, Microsoft SharePoint).

New Accessible Student Information System (SIS)

☐ Conclude negotiations of the PowerSchool master service agreement with considerations for accessibility and confirmations of AODA compliance.

IASR Information and Communications Standards

☐ Review the Information and Communications Standards Development Committee's 2020 final recommendations report; and

☐ Share and discuss the recommendations report with the AODA Advisory Committee and begin to proactively develop strategies for implementing any new standards.

3.2 Accessibility Awareness for Educators

Accessibility Learning Sessions

☐ Build capacity of educators to make educational materials more accessible, beyond minimum requirements for completing the "Accessibility Awareness for Educators" compliance training module;

☐ Continue to collaborate with various committees and working groups connected to Curriculum and Instructional Services to plan and deliver information and learning sessions that promote accessibility and AODA compliance among curriculum consultants; and

☐ Align objectives with those outlined in section 1.4 Accessibility Training.

Accessible Document Training

☐ Convert in-person accessible document training into virtual training sessions offered by Enterprise Application Support (EAS) with a heavier focus on learning the accessibility elements in Microsoft Word (and less focus on the PDF conversion); and

☐ Continue to provide additional support for creating accessible documents through ServiceDesk tickets and individual follow-ups (instead of in-person drop-in sessions).

Accessibility Resource Hub

☐ Establish a centralized web space for all new and updated accessibility resources, guidelines and checklists developed to educate and support the system about how to make Board learning and working environments more accessible for all;

☐ Develop a best practice and core skills resource to support staff in creating accessible online content that people with and without disabilities can access in a meaningful way;

☐ Develop a best practice resource with accessible document guidelines to support staff in creating documents that people with and without disabilities can access in a meaningful way;

☐ Develop a best practice resource with accessible slide deck guidelines to support staff in creating slide decks that people with and without disabilities can access in a meaningful way;

☐ Build awareness about the new accessibility resource hub through the AODA Advisory Committee and ad hoc learning sessions.

Awareness and Attitudes towards Accessibility

☐ Add and/or modify questions to relevant Board-administered surveys to collect staff and student baseline data regarding general attitudes towards accessibility and disability (e.g., that recognizes the social model of disability versus the medical model).

IASR Education Standards

☐ Monitor the [Education Standards Development Committee website](#) for progress and updates regarding the proposed K-12 education standard.

3.3 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Accessible Format Board Policies

☐ Update and finalize the Accessible Policy Style Guide as a template format for ensuring all Board policies and related procedures are approved as accessible documents;

☐ Continue systematic process of updating all policies and procedures into an accessible formats as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle (with a goal of remediating 25% of Board policies into accessible PDF documents); and

☐ Create a Plain Language Guide to Policy #240.0, Human Rights: Code-Related Harassment and Discrimination as a second exemplar of a more reader- and user-friendly version of the full policy document.

Accessible Format Board Videos

☐ Continue to provide links to the alternative version of all Board-approved prerecorded videos in meeting WCAG 2.1 Level A requirements;

☐ Convert all HRCO videos into accessible versions that include open (always visible) captions, voice-over audio descriptions, sign language interpretations, as well as transcripts containing image descriptions as a media alternative (all in meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AAA requirements); and

☐ Adopt and circulate the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) Captioning Key as the standard and best practice for all videos captions.

Accessible Format School Newsletters / Blogs

☐ Introduce the blog feature on the new school websites as a recommended option for schools to communicate important information, reminders and updates to parent/guardians (i.e., a web-based alternative to traditional school newsletters); and

☐ Review and redesign existing school newsletter templates as an accessible format for schools that choose to continue distributing PDF versions of school newsletters.

Accessible Online Learning and Training

☐ Develop a best practice resource with accessible online learning and training guidelines to support staff in making online/virtual learning (e-learning), training (e-training) and information sessions more accessible to all learners and/or participants (resource to be added to the Accessibility Resource Hub);

☐ Confirm process for requesting accessible or conversion-ready formats of educational textbooks and/or any other printed learning resources for students with disabilities, as required under the AODA (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 15); and

☐ Develop a process for staff to support requests from the public for accessible formats.

4.0 Standards for the Built Environment

41. AODA Design of Public Spaces

Exterior Spaces

☐ Ensure all new and redeveloped exterior paths of travel are designed and constructed in or beyond compliance with O. Reg 191/11, section 80.21 to 80.31 under the AODA;

☐ Ensure all new and redeveloped parking facilities, including curb cuts and routing from parking lots to buildings, are designed and constructed in or beyond compliance with O. Reg. 191/11, section 80.32 to 80.39 under the AODA; and

☐ Ensure all outdoor grounds enhancement projects/plans that are pre-approved through the School Grounds Enhancement Advisory Committee are fully compliant with all applicable legislation (e.g., the AODA and the Ontario Building Code).

4.2 Ontario Building Code Barrier-Free Design

Scheduled Accessibility Projects

☐ Schedule and complete annual updates, modifications and retrofitting (e.g., installing automatic door openers, replacing fire alarm systems, upgrading elevators) to existing buildings in order to make them more accessible, with priority given to barriers identified by students, staff and/or community members; and

☐ Present a complete list of all accessibility projects/work started or completed on YRDSB buildings during the school year in the [Annual Accessibility Report](#).

Barrier Buster (each school year)

☐ Receive, assess and respond to Barrier Buster submissions through the Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee; and

☐ Continue to track Barrier Buster submissions, provide quarterly updates to the AODA Advisory Committee, and follow up on submissions as needed.

All-Access Washroom Project

☐ Complete full-scale implementation phase of the Board's [All Access Washrooms Project](#), including finalizing hardware modifications and ordering replacement parts;

☐ Establish and prioritize plans on the remaining schools identified with no single-use washroom available for conversion into an all-access washroom; and

☐ Create and make available to the public an all-access washroom education and information sheet, including frequently asked questions.

Braille and High Contrast Signage Pilot Project

☐ Complete installation of braille and high contrast signage throughout the three schools (Stonehaven Public School, Michael Cranny Public School and Keswick High School) identified by Blind and Low Vision Services as priority schools; and

☐ Confirm new priority schools with Blind and Low Vision Services and begin process of ordering and installing braille and high contrast signage for the identified priority schools.

5.0 Employment Standards

5.1 Accessible Employment

Recruitment and Promotion Policy

☐ Renew Policy #532.0, Recruitment and Promotion as part of the policy review cycle and ensure language promoting accessible employment practices are reflected throughout;

☐ Align the renewed policy with Procedure #407.4, Accessibility: Employment Standards as well as the AODA, where required; and

☐ Incorporate Recommendation 11 of the Employment Equity Plan, "that the Recruitment and Promotion Policy and Procedures be updated to specify the Board's responsibility to provide accommodation based on any human rights protected ground".

Healthy Schools and Workplaces Policy

☐ Renew Policy and Procedures #218.0, Healthy Schools and Workplaces as part of the policy review cycle and ensure language promoting accessible work environments is reflected throughout; and

☐ Address Recommendation 43 of the Employment Equity Plan, "that the Board develop a policy on providing accommodation to persons with disabilities, consistent with guidelines from the Ontario Human Rights Commission".

Disability Management (DM) Satisfaction Tool

☐ Analyze client satisfaction survey and focus groups data with the goal of better understanding client concerns and improving the overall DM program; and

☐ Publish and communicate a final report to inform and guide program improvements.

Candidate Support

☐ Review all job postings to ensure only bona fide occupational requirements and educational credentials are included to reduce barriers to entry, consistent with Recommendations 14 and 15 of the [Employment Equity Plan](#);

☐ Include a standardized accommodation statement in all communication with candidates at each stage of the recruitment process; and

☐ Update hiring procedures to support staff by more accurately describing the interview and practicums so that candidates are able to determine whether they will require accommodation, consistent with Recommendation 13 of the [Employment Equity Plan](#).

Workplace Accommodations for Staff (each school year)

☐ Continue to explore, research and provide appropriate workplace (including work from home) accommodations for employees with identified accommodation needs; and

☐ Include a complete list of all assistive devices/services purchased and provided as workplace accommodations during the school year in the [Annual Accessibility Report](#).

6.0 Transportation Standards

6.1 Accessible Transportation

Parent/Guardian Consultation (each year)

☐ Continue to ensure parents/guardians of students with disabilities (or special education and transportation needs) are consulted as part of the transportation planning process.

Service Disruptions (each year)

☐ Ensure service disruptions (i.e., bus cancellations) are posted on the [STSYR website](#) and includes information about the reason for the disruption and its anticipated duration.