



AODA Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 29, 2021
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Zoom

In Attendance (23 members, 2 guest speakers)

Hirosh Abeywardane	Dawn Forsyth	Ralph Masciello	Paul Woods
Anthony Anirud	Sue Hastings	Steve Rutledge	Brandon Wu
Megan Bamford (guest)	Shelly Khushal	John Sellers	Nadia Zamzul
Pam Beetlestone	Paul Lee	Patrick Smith	Lynn Ziraldo
Teresa Estriga	Laura Leesti	George Vellathottam	
Angelina Faraone (guest)	Gail Long	Scott West	
	Gilbert Luk	Tina Wieringa	

Regrets

Dale Brusselers; Rizwana Kaderdina; John Kostic; Stephanie Luong; John Malcolm; Bob McRoberts; Susie Nunes; Derek Petri; Shane Taylor.

1. Primer / Reflection Exercise

Brandon opened meeting with visual introduction and by sharing a quote (“Diversity is what you have. Inclusion is what you do with it.”), followed by a contrasting audio clip on the “matter of so-called ‘inclusion’”. [Audio/video clip by Sara Hendren](#) is available online with open captions and ASL interpretations.

Action Item

Committee members asked to reflect on the quote and audio/video clip, and consider to what extent they agree or disagree.

2. New member Introduction

Lynn Ziraldo welcomed and introduced as new AODA Advisory Committee. Lynn provided a brief introduction and overview on work of Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). More information and members list are available on [SEAC website](#). Lynn also emphasized the importance of person-first language.

3. Land / Relationship Acknowledgement

Anthony shared land acknowledgement by first reading the Board's standardized land acknowledgement, and then spoke to significance of the statement. Land acknowledgements gives context and history which is constantly changing and being revised.

Territorial acknowledgements have existed thousands of years for Indigenous cultures. As they becomes more prevalent today, it shows people are willing to give voice to Indigenous people and recognize their political, legal, social and cultural space in the place we now call Canada.

For non-indigenous communities, land acknowledgements are the beginning of our learning process. They are an act of reconciliation and crucial first step to re-establishing our relationship to the land.

4. Approval of Previous Minutes

Minutes reviewed and motion carried to approve February 25, 2021 minutes. Minutes have been posted online and available to the public under [AODA Advisory Committee web page](#).

5. Professional Learning – The Experience of a YRDSB Staff Member

Guest speaker: Angelina Faraone, Principal, Lorna Jackson Public School

Angelina has been an administrator for about 20 years and had previously connected with Brandon and the HRCO regarding concerns about “equity” at YRDSB.

Angelina recognizes her position of privilege as a principal, but she also

identifies as profoundly hard of hearing, and as the mother of four children who all have disabilities. Her life's work as teacher and now principal is to promote equity, inclusivity and diversity so that her family can function in a world not set up for them.

Angelina hopes that by sharing her honest experiences, it helps people to better understand the legacies within institutions that continue to oppress and marginalize certain groups. People who are Deaf and hard of hearing travel similar paths to others in the disability community as well as other oppressed groups.

Angelina recounted a few experiences with the health care system and the various communication barriers that her family faced at the start of the pandemic last year. In anticipation of similar barriers at her school, Angelina tried to get Clear Masks ordered for her staff and students. Her efforts were in vain despite communication with various YRDSB units, and she was eventually told to go online to be accommodated.

Angelina felt oppressed and devalued throughout this whole process. The power structures in this Board speak on behalf of people they don't understand. They put structures and processes in place that only create more barriers. Angelina then recounted similar barriers she encountered trying to get captions for online meeting and learning sessions.

Brandon thanked Angelina for sharing her firsthand and candid experiences within the Board. He hoped it served as a wake-up call that we are far from perfect and there is always rooms for improvement.

Action Items

- Angelina hopes her narrative can be an avenue for others to discuss their experiences and express themselves without fear of discipline. She also calls on the Board to do better in accommodating employees with disabilities.
- Brandon and HRCO to bring forward online accessibility to Executive Council to ensure the most accessible video conferencing tools are being used at a system level; and that any Board staff hosting a video conference is aware of

the various accessibility features.

6. Staff Mental Health and Well-Being Presentation

Guest Speaker: Megan Bamford, Interim Wellness Advisor

Megan provided an overview of the Employee and Family Wellness Assistance Program (EFAP) and its related resources and workshops online. Megan also shared various mental health and wellness resources available through the [Staff Well-Being Sharepoint](#) web page and the [BWW](#) (hyperlinks are only accessible to YRDSB employees). [Mental Health Week](#) also takes place from May 3 to 9, 2021.

Action Items

- Megan asks us for recommendations to better promote these resources with staff.
- Brandon further asks for Committee members to distribute this presentation with their respective staff and/or departments, and spend time during an upcoming team meeting to go through resources as a team.
- Megan to also share employee resource related to coping with COVID-19.

6. Subcommittee Status Updates

Representative(s) from each subcommittee or working group shared accessibility and/or related updates with the committee.

Human Resources Subcommittee

- **Accessible Virtual Interview Processes** - HRS has fully transitioned to Zoom as the primary video conferencing platform for virtual interviews; GoToMeeting is no longer used. Recruitment and Promotion team has reviewed [Accessible Video Conferencing Guidelines](#) and will include in Administrator Toolkit for use with school-based interviews.
- **Workplace Emergency Response Plan** - DM currently provides this information upon return to work. Principal completes Employee

Workplace Emergency Response Plan form with employee, which was presented to Committee. Form uploaded in Google Share Drive for reference.

- **Return to work processes** – Overview of Disability Management Meeting form shared with Committee. Meeting held to review employee's current functional abilities based on medical documentation and ensure suitable work accommodations are in place. Form (1196 template) uploaded in Google Share Drive for reference.
- **[Review of Employment Standards Final Report](#)** – Final recommendations from Employee Standards Development Committee published online to public. Includes eight recommendations, of which six are applicable to YRDSB. Applicable recommendations were focus of discussion in recent Human Resources Subcommittee meeting.

Digital Media, Website Management & Learning Working Group

- **Chromebook procurement** – Board purchased a large volume of Chromebooks to support remote learning during the pandemic, which has served two main objectives:
- **Support local school needs** – Devices were shipped directly to schools in November 2020 and February 2021. Elementary schools were prioritized given the learning model.
- **Support Remote Learning** – Remaining devices managed centrally at Dr. Bette to support EVS/SVS students. ITS has deployed 8000+ devices to students since September 2020. Demand for devices increases during lockdowns and the move to remote. If local school cannot fulfill requests, ITS provides central support through Student Technology Exchange Program (STEP).
- **Internet packages** – ITS purchased Rogers internet packages to support remote needs by students and staff. To date, ITS has deployed 1000+ internet packages.
- **Teacher Technology Exchange Program (TTEP)** – ITS leveraged TTEP laptop returns to support the system by providing refreshed laptops to departmental and school staff, as needed. Deployment was prioritized based on critical business continuity due to limited supply.

- **New website launch** – Refreshed public-facing website officially launched March 26, 2021. New website is much more accessible and user-friendly from the front-end (as a public user) and back-end (as a content contributor). HRCO web pages have been migrated into the new Board website.

Barrier Buster and Built Environment

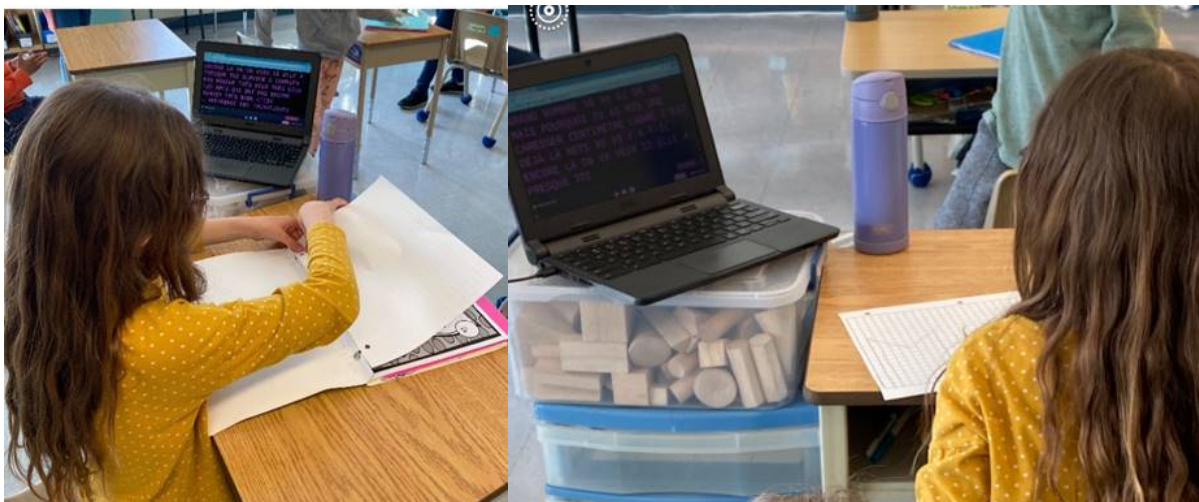
- **Automatic door openers** – Plant Services continues to install automatic door openers as needed.
- **Sutton District High School ramp** – installation of a ramp to the dance studio was requested through Barrier Buster. The ramp has been approved and installation is expected to take place in the summer months.
- **Fire alarm replacements** – As fire alarms are due for replacement, they are upgraded the visual fire alarm systems which includes strobe lighting to accommodate individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Braille Signage Multi-Year Plan** – Plant Services worked with Blind and Low Vision Services to identify and confirm new priority schools where Braille signage is required. Two public schools have been approved for Braille signage this year, with a multi-year plan developed to manage future Braille signage projects.

Student Services Subcommittee

- **World Autism Acceptance Month (April)** – The Board is moving from Autism ‘awareness’ to Autism ‘acceptance’ by focusing on commonalities we share and accepting people from who they are. A [Supporting Materials for World Autism Acceptance Month memo](#) included links to activities, books, texts and videos to help shift the mindset and learning away from awareness and towards acceptance.
- **Blind/Low Vision MacBook Pro pilot project** – Pilot formally launched with two MacBook Pros being fully imaged by ITS and distributed to students with low vision.
- **“Camp-In-A-Bag” program** – Orientation and Mobility specialists have developed their fourth iteration of “Camp-In-A-Bag” to engage students with games, crafts, inquiry-based learning, and an interactive

series of online events. All activities focus on developing spatial skills and mobility strategies in their home, neighbourhood and community.

- **Accessible online gaming** - Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVIs) are engaging students through online games that are accessible for people with low vision. Some mainstream online games have been adapted with tactile materials so that they can play alongside their sighted friends and foster friendships, while remaining socially distant.
- **DHH personal captioning pilot project** - Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) department has created a system whereby the Rogers NeckLoop, Touchscreen, SoundField and Webcaptioner software collectively provide automated real-time captions and transcripts for students in face-to-face learning environments (refer to images below). The system also has multilingual capacity so students in French Immersion also have access to closed captioning.



- **Speech and Hearing Awareness Month (May)** - DHH department will recognize the month with their annual “Dress Up Loud” event with staff, students and families.
- **Accessibility training** - Assistive Technology Consultants (ATCs) have taken a lead role in providing training to Student Services staff on creating accessible materials, mainly slide decks which are used often for professional learning. ATCs and Digital Literacy Team partnered to build shared capacity for creating accessible resources for both classroom teachers and consultants. Professional learning for

elementary EAs took place on January 15, 2021 PA Day. Also working with Leadership Development to offer accessibility training to secondary EAs for May 7, 2021 PA Day.

Curriculum Working Group

- **Draft accessibility 101 module** – New accessibility module in development entitled “[Beyond Compliance: A Re-Introduction to Accessibility](#)”. The training module is intended to be separate from three existing accessibility compliance training modules, which are only one-time training requirements.

Action Item

Committee members asked to review draft Google Slides storyboard and provide feedback/commentary before end of school year.

6. Accessibility News Items and Member Q & A

Accessibility Learning

Brandon attended two virtual accessibility and disability conferences in March 2021 and shared video links to following recorded sessions:

- [Pac Rim 2021 Closing Keynote](#) – A Conversation with Haben Girma
 - Haben’s Call to Action: “society, especially schools, need to help do the work to remove barriers so that disabled students, and disabled professors, and all other disabled people can give their talents and fully participate.”
- [APN 2021 Opening Plenary Session](#) with Rick Hansen and the Honorable Minister Qualtrough
- [APN 2021 Plenary Session 1](#) – Meeting the Built World with our Bodies
- [APN 2021 Plenary Session 2](#) – Diversity and Inclusion in the Executive Community

Accessibility Professional Network (APN) 2021 Conference: Accelerating Access was a model for how to host an accessible and engaging virtual conference. Screenshot of the virtual conference lobby is shared on the next page.



Action Item

Committee members encouraged to watch/listen to sessions as professional learning and motivation to accelerate access within our respective areas of work.

7. Upcoming Meeting Dates and Adjournment

- Next meeting scheduled for September 30, 2021.

Meeting adjourned.