York Region District School Board

Annual Accessibility Report 2020 to 2021

**Building an Accessible and Inclusive
York Region District School Board**

A status report on measures taken in the past school year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility for everyone who learns, works and/or participates in the YRDSB community.

YRDSB
HRCO

How do I access the Annual Accessibility Report?

The YRDSB Annual Accessibility Report is available in any of the following ways:

- **Online to the public:** Go to [Accessibility Reports and Plans](#) on the YRDSB accessibility webpage;

- **By email:** aoda@yrdsb.ca;

- **By telephone:** Leave a voicemail at 905-884-2046 ext. 311, and the Accessibility Officer will follow-up with you; or

- **In an alternate format upon request**.

How do I provide feedback?

Feedback regarding the Annual Accessibility Report is both encouraged and essential for advancing accessibility at YRDSB in a way that recognizes the needs of all learners and people with disabilities.

To provide feedback or questions about any section of this Annual Accessibility Report, please contact the Human Rights Commissioner's Office at:

Dr. Bette Stephenson Centre for Learning, Room 202
York Region District School Board
36 Regatta Avenue
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4E 4R1

Phone: 905-884-2046 ext. 311
Email: aoda@yrdsb.ca

Table of Contents

Message from the Human Rights Commissioner

This is our first Annual Accessibility Report in which the entire reporting period occurs in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding the incredible challenges associated with operating in such times, we have been particularly mindful of the core principles of the AODA for fostering independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. We have remained proudly committed to accessibility being fully integrated with the overarching values of the Human Rights Commissioner's Office and the York Region District School Board at large. We approach our understanding of accessibility as about people and relationships in furtherance of a culture of inclusion.

Over the past year, the work of our AODA Advisory Committee has been intentionally focused on addressing and removing of barriers to accessibility. In the previous reporting year, our Annual Accessibility Report and Multi-year Accessibility Plan were more purposefully aligned with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). These accessibility standards are also built into the structure of the AODA Advisory Committee and our supporting subcommittees and working groups. This past school year, we have been mindful on the connection between mental health and accessibility due to these pandemic times. In our work, we have been committed to encouraging good mental health practices and supporting the system with accessibility inputs specific to mental health and other key accomplishments during the reporting period, including:

- **Ongoing professional learning** - both in terms of ADOA compliance and accessibility acceptance beyond compliance obligations;
- **Launch of Accessibility Resource Hub** - presented and well-received at the 36th Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity;
- **Refreshing of the HRCO website** – as part of the larger new YRDSB website launch; and
- **Comprehensive review and feedback report** - on the Proposed K-12 Education Standards.

As we move forward to a post-pandemic world, we will remain committed to ensuring that accessibility is integrated into the Board's approach to diversity, equity and inclusivity from a human rights lens.

Sincerely,

Anthony Anirud
Human Rights Commissioner

Annual Accessibility Report

Legislated Purpose

York Region District School Board (YRDSB or the Board) has prepared this Annual Accessibility Report in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

The Board is defined as a "designated public sector organization" in the AODA. All designated public organizations are required to:

- "prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the [multi-year accessibility plan], including steps taken to comply with this Regulation; and
- post the status report on their website, if any, and provide the report in an accessible format upon request. (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4).

The Annual Accessibility Report describes the measures that YRDSB has taken in the past school year and the ensuing summer months (September 2020 to August 2021) to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility for everyone who learns, works and participates in the Board community. The annual status report continues to be prepared as a separate document from the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2025.

The Annual Accessibility Report is presented to Executive Council and subsequently to Board Standing Committee each fall. Following approval, this annual report will be posted on the Board's Accessibility Reports and Plans webpage.

Commitment to Accessibility

The Board's commitment to accessibility is led by the Human Rights Commissioner's Office (HRCO). Specifically, the Accessibility Officer within the HRCO is responsible for managing the accessibility portfolio for YRDSB. Accessibility is further guided through the shared responsibilities and collaborative commitments of the AODA Advisory Committee.

Our commitment to accessibility is aligned with the four priorities of the Board of Trustees' Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP). Four Multi-Year Accessibility Goals have been developed in alignment with the four MYSP priorities and the Director's Action Plan.

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.
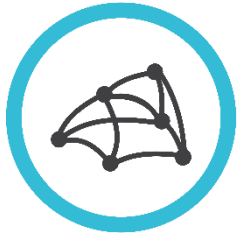
Engage the AODA Advisory Committee

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.

'Check mark' or 'in progress' icons are placed beside each achievement or objective throughout the Annual Accessibility Report to show how accessibility work connects to the multi-year accessibility goals.

'Check mark' icons indicate completion of an accessibility goal during the past school year.

'In progress' icons indicate an accessibility goal is ongoing.
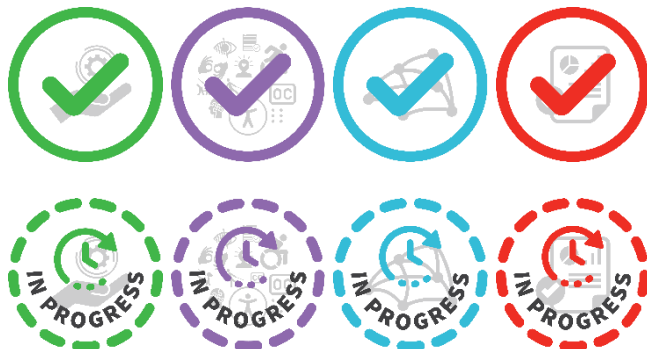
1.0 General Requirements Achieved in 2020-2021

1.1 Accessibility Policy

Plain Language Guides and Alternative Formats

The Plain Language Guide to Policy #407, Accessibility was finalized as a more reader-friendly and accessible version of the full policy document.

The Plain Language Guide to Policy #407, Accessibility was also converted into accessible webpages as a proactive measure to meeting the subsequent requirement to "make the documents publicly available and, on request, provide them in an accessible format" (O. Reg. 191/11, s. 3).

1.2 Annual Accessibility Plans

AODA Advisory Committee Meetings

Four AODA Advisory Committee meetings were held virtually during the 2020-2021 school year. All approved meeting minutes are available to the public on the AODA Advisory Committee web page.

The first two AODA Advisory Committee meetings (in September and November 2020) were used to collectively review, provide feedback on, and endorse the renewed Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025.

Annual Accessibility Report

This report is the completed annual accessibility report describing the measures that YRDSB has taken in the 2020-2021 school year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

The finalized report will be posted online to the public on the Board's Accessibility Reports and Plans web page following review and approval by Executive Council and Board Standing Committee.

Annual Compliance Report

The accessibility compliance report for YRDSB will be submitted to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility following the presentation and approval of the Annual Accessibility Report to Board Standing Committee. A copy of the compliance report will be shared with the Director's Office.

Joint Letter to the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility

The embedded letter reads (Page 1 of 3):

October 22, 2021

Hon. Raymond Cho
Minister for Seniors and Accessibility
777 Bay St, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Dear Minister Cho,

On behalf of Ontario's public universities, colleges and K-12 English public, French public and English Catholic school boards, we would like to express our appreciation to you and the Ontario government for all you are doing to make the province's physical and digital infrastructure more accessible and inclusive for all Ontarians. The December 31, 2021 deadline for the Ministry's Accessibility Compliance Report for public sector organizations is fast approaching and we would like to provide additional information and proposed considerations for your review.

Ontario universities, colleges and school boards have been working hard to help ensure the province's educational campuses are accessible, inclusive, and promote equity and diversity through a systemic and wholistic approach. All universities, colleges and schools are committed to ensuring institutions meet accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

It is in our collective commitment to AODA implementation and ensuring the best possible outcomes for all Ontarians, that we have undertaken a careful review of the Compliance Report and share concerns, specifically in regards to question 14 which states as follows:

> As of January 1, 2021, do all your organization's internet websites conform to [WCAG] 2.0 Level AA (except for live captions and pre-recorded audio descriptions)? Please indicate in the comment box provided the complete names and addresses of your publicly available web content, including websites, social media pages, and apps.

Given the complex digital environment universities, colleges and school boards exist within, we have noted that question 14 poses great difficulty in terms of accurate and feasible reporting. Universities, colleges and school boards offer various services through department, project-based and individual school websites in order to deliver quality education to all students, create inclusive and accessible learning spaces, and support faculty/teacher-led initiatives.

For these reasons, our universities, colleges and schools maintain extensive and complex web-based infrastructure to adequately support the critical academic and administrative responsibilities required in learning environments. As a result, question 14 does not adequately capture the complexity of institutional web domain systems given the thousands of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) that currently exist within an institution's digital environment.

We propose that all Ontario universities, colleges and publicly funded schools report compliance for the websites and digital areas we are responsible for, and additionally help educate and support others for websites which we are not directly responsible over. We propose that Ontario universities, colleges and schools submit the following information to the Ministry in response to

(Page 2 of 3):

the AODA compliance report, question 14, which would allow institutions to report their web and digital assets effectively and efficiently:

1. Main URL (i.e., www.university/college/school.ca) and top-level subpages managed by the central web/communications departments, as well as any separate microsites managed by those staff

2. Main social media accounts (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) – i.e., the accounts embedded in main websites or used as primary sources of information (with no web-based accessible alternative)

Ontario's universities, colleges and school boards remain committed to providing accessible education and services for Ontarians to ensure a fully inclusive education system, as well as supporting the Ministry to achieve its goal of providing province-wide accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by January 2025. We look forward to continuing to work with your government and stakeholders to advance this important work.

Yours sincerely,

Denis M. Chartrand
Chair
Association des conseils scolaires
des écoles publiques de l'Ontario

Linda Franklin
President and CEO
Colleges Ontario

Steve Orsini
President and CEO
Council of Ontario Universities

Patrick J. Daly
President
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

Cathy Abraham
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

A [joint letter](#) was sent to the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility, Raymond Cho, on October 22, 2021 as a shared correspondence from advocacy groups in K-12 and post-secondary sectors regarding specific concerns with question 14 of the compliance report:

"As of January 1, 2021, do all your organization's internet websites conform to [WCAG] 2.0 Level AA (except for live captions and pre-recorded audio descriptions)? Please indicate in the comment box provided the complete names and addresses of your publicly available web content, including websites, social media pages, and apps."

The joint letter notes that question 14 poses great difficulty in terms of accurate and feasible reporting. Educational institutions have extensive and complex web-based infrastructure and systems with thousands of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) that exist within each institution's digital environment.

YRDSB supports these concerns as there are countless URLs, web addresses and other web assets connected to the Board. Additionally, despite efforts to share accessible content through social media, these social media websites and apps (e.g., Twitter and Instagram) are not fully accessible at this time. Further complicating the

matter is the recognition that not all YRDSB-related web content is approved by the Board (e.g., Google Sites created by educators). However, all Board-approved web content through Corporate Communications does comply with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, including the [new website](#) and [Board-approved videos](#).

The joint letter makes the following proposal for responding to question 14 in a way that would allow educational institutions to report their web assets effectively and efficiently:

1. Main URL (i.e., www.yrdsb.ca) and top-level subpages managed by the central web/communications departments, as well as any separate subsites managed by those departments; and

2. Main social media accounts (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) – i.e., used as primary sources for information sharing.

The Board will respond accordingly to question 14 of the accessibility compliance report by listing only the main URLs, top-level subpages and main social media accounts.

1.3 Accessible Procurement and Purchasing

Updated and standardized a statement of accessible procurement with Purchasing Services to be included in all purchasing agreements, contracts and requests for proposal (RFP) with external contractors, service providers, vendors and producers of educational materials.

The statement of accessible procurement reads as follows:

> "The Proponent covenants and agrees to ensure that the work provided hereunder shall comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its respective Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11), including all legislated training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Proponent covenants and agrees to comply with the Board's [Accessibility Policy #407](#) and its related procedures and practices and accessibility training requirements, as may be in effect during the term of the Agreement and as they apply to the work to be provided hereunder by the Proponent."
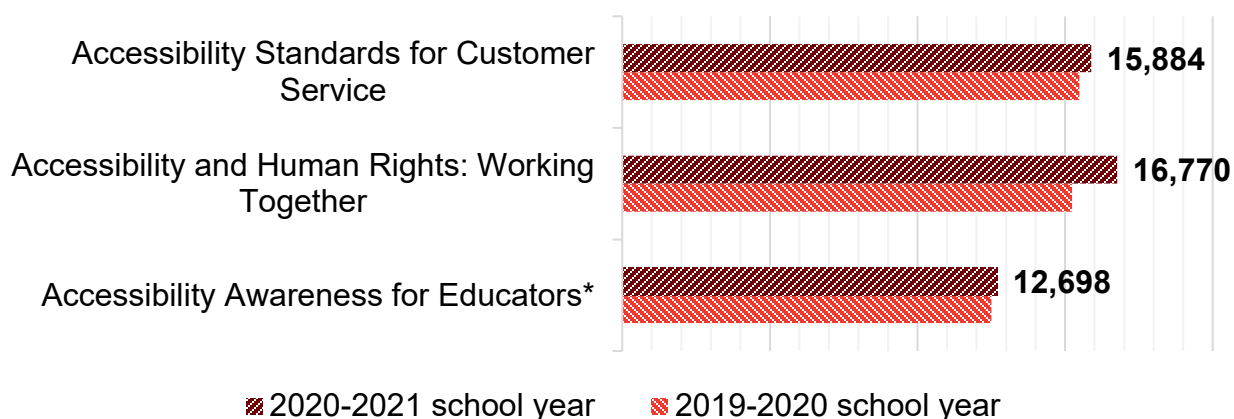
1.4 Accessibility Training

Accessibility Compliance Training

Accessibility compliance training requirements and timelines for completion were communicated as part of the 2020-2021 school year plans for reopening and compliance training requirements.

There continues to be three separate accessibility compliance training modules that all employees must completed as a one-time training requirement. The total completions among active employees for each training module are presented in the bar chart as of August 31, 2021.

Module	2020-2021 completions
Accessibility Standards for Customer Service	15,884
Accessibility and Human Rights: Working Together	16,770
Accessibility Awareness for Educators*	12,698

■ 2020-2021 school year   ■ 2019-2020 school year

*Only "Educators" are required to complete this training under the AODA. Educators include all staff who are involved in program or course design, delivery and instruction, including administrators, teachers, Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs), Educational Assistants (EAs), and all other classroom-based support staff.

Beyond Compliance: Accessibility Acceptance and Professional Development

Collaboration took place with various departments, units and/or committees across the Board to plan and deliver accessibility learning sessions to build awareness and capacity beyond the one-time accessibility compliance training.

The following accessibility learning and training sessions were facilitated during the 2020-2021 school year:

Date	Session Title + Brief Description	Participants	Facilitator(s)
September 2020	**Accessibility 101 (part 1)** - foundational understanding of AODA	Digital Literacy Consultants	Assistive Technology Consultants
November 13, 2020 (P.A. Day)	**Accessibility training (part 2)** on developing accessible materials and resources	Digital Literacy Consultants	Assistive Technology Consultants
January 15, 2021 (P.A. Day)	**Accessibility training** on creating accessible materials and resources (mainly slide decks) for teachers	Elementary EAs	Assistive Technology Consultants
February 2 and February 10, 2021	**Human rights and accessibility update** - What is accessibility and accessible content?	B Group	Assistant to HRC + Accessibility Officer
March 1, 2021	**Poster presentation** - An integrated Approach to Disabilities Inclusion: Connecting Accommodation and Accessibility and Principles of Equity	Pacific Rim International Conference (external)	Human Rights Commissioner + Accessibility Officer
March 2, 2021	**Accessible Content Core Skills**: Building more accessible learning and working environments at YRDSB	Pacific Rim International Conference (external)	Accessibility Officer
May 7, 2021 (P.A. Day)	**Accessibility training** on creating accessible materials and resources (mainly slide decks) for teachers	Secondary EAs	Assistive Technology Consultants
May 7, 2021 (P.A. Day)	**Creating accessible web content (part 1)** – alternative text best practices	Teacher Librarians	Accessibility Officer
June 8, 2021	**Accessible content core skills (part 2)** - best practices for how to make online content more accessible	Teacher Librarians	Accessibility Officer

The Accessibility Officer attended the Rick Hansen Accessibility Professional Network (APN) 2021 Conference, which was held virtually on March 29th and 30th, 2021. Key learnings and session recordings were shared with the AODA Advisory Committee members at the April 29, 2021 meeting as a call to action for "accelerating access" within their respective areas of work.

2.0 Customer Service Standards Achieved in 2020-2021

2.1 Barrier Buster

Barrier Buster remains the Board's formal process for receiving and responding to feedback about barriers to accessibility. The Barrier Buster and Built Environment subcommittee review Barrier Buster submissions and determine actions to remove barriers where appropriate.

Barrier Buster Protocol

The [Board Protocol for the Barrier Buster Process](#) (PDF) was finalized as way of making the formal process for receiving and responding to feedback about barriers to accessibility more transparent and accessible to the public.

The Barrier Buster Process is also available as HTML content directly on the [Barrier Buster web page](#).

Barrier Buster Reporting

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Barrier Buster and Built Environment subcommittee received, responded to, and/or followed up on a total of 10 Barrier Buster submissions.

7 Barrier Buster files were carried over from the previous school year, and 3 new submissions were received. Two submissions related to the lack of captions on videos, while the third new submission reported on the removal of the Barrier Buster button/icon from the new YRDSB main page. A total of 4 submissions were closed in the 2020-2021 school year. The open submissions carried over from previous school years are related to larger projects, such as all-access washrooms or accessible paths of travel to playgrounds or track and fields.

It is important to note that most barrier removal requests are made informally and locally at the school or work location. Physical barriers identified are often communicated and addressed directly through Plant Services, as reflected in the [Accessibility Projects](#) table on pages 21 to 22.

## 2.2 Assistive Devices (for students with special education needs)

Special Equipment Amount (SEA)

Accommodations for students with identified special education needs often include access to assistive technology through Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claims.

The Ministry of Education approved **1,109 SEA claims** for the purchase of assistive technology for students with special needs during the 2019-2020 school year. This equipment includes (but it not limited to): hearing assistive technology, vision assistive technology, positioning devices (for sitting, standing and lying) and software that provides access to curriculum.

Hearing Assistive Technology

Student Services processed new SEA claims for Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) to ensure all students who are deaf or hard of hearing had personal amplification technology or a soundfield speaker in their classrooms. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) department launched a **personal captioning pilot project** 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 has multilingual capacity so students in French Immersion also have access to closed captioning.
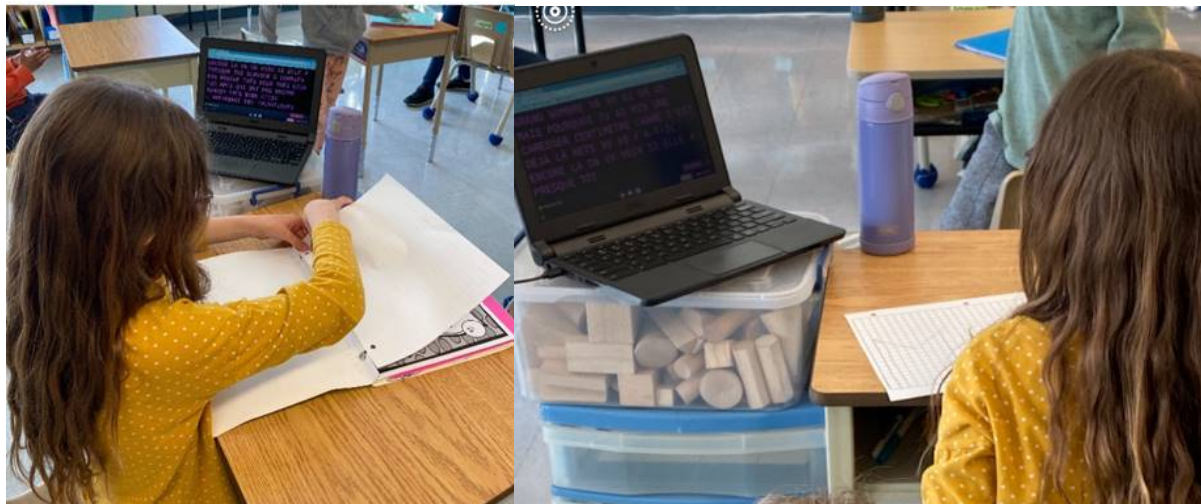
For virtual students, Boom microphones have been purchased for teachers with additional cables, cords and splitters for students/families to connect HAT to their laptops and/or Chromebooks. Teachers of the DHH continued to collaborate with

classroom teachers, Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) and parents to support the use of HAT in face-to-face and virtual classrooms.

Vision Assistive Technology

PC computers and laptops with screen reader software tools (i.e., JAWS) and refreshable electronic braille devices (i.e., BrailleNote Touch) continued to be the best option for students who are blind in terms of online accessibility.

However, during the 2020-2021 school year, the Blind / Low Vision (BLV) Services team launched a **MacBook Accessibility Pilot Project**. The team participated in professional learning with an Apple Accessibility Consultant who delivered workshops on how to navigate and utilize MacBook Air accessibility features for students with low vision. The pilot project was formally launched with two MacBook Pro SEA claims being fully imaged by ITS and distributed to students with low vision.

Student Technology Exchange Program (STEP)

The Board purchased a large volume of Chromebooks to support both local school needs and remote learning. The Student Technology Exchange Program (STEP) is managed by Information Technology Services (ITS) and Enterprise Application Support (EAS) centrally from the Dr. Bette Stephenson Centre for Learning.

During the 2020-2021 school year, a total of **8,586 Chromebooks** were deployed through STEP. Specifically:

- 7,083 Chromebooks were deployed to Elementary students; and
- 1,503 Chromebooks were deployed to Secondary students.

STEP serves two main objectives:

1. Supporting local school needs

Devices were shipped directly to schools in November 2020 and February 2021. Elementary schools were prioritized given the learning model. Demand for devices increased during Board-wide shutdown periods and shifts to remote learning for all students. ITS provided support centrally if local schools could not fulfill requests.

2. Supporting virtual schools

Remaining devices were loaned out, as needed, to students enrolled Elementary Virtual School (EVS) and Secondary Virtual School (SVS) during the 2020-2021 school year. ITS also continued to distribute Rogers internet packages to support remote needs by students and staff. ITS has deployed over 1,000 internet packages to date.

Teacher Technology Exchange Program (TTEP)

ITS also leveraged laptop returns through the Teacher Technology Exchange Program (TTEP) to support the system by providing refreshed laptops to departmental and school staff. Deployment was prioritized based on critical business continuity as supply was limited for supporting staff needs.

For information on assistive devices provided to YRDSB employees with disabilities, refer to Workplace Accommodations for Staff under Section 8.1 Accessible Employment.

2.3 Disruption of Services

Board-wide Service Disruptions

Board-wide service disruptions (e.g., due to inclement or emergency weather, or Ministry ordered school board shutdowns) were posted on the YRDSB website and included information about the reason for the disruption.

Site-specific Service Disruptions

Appropriate disruption of service signage (available on the BWW to download and customize as required) was posted with information about the reason for the disruption and its anticipated duration. Example signage is shown below.

NOTICE

DISRUPTION OF SERVICE

Washrooms Access

To: Parents, Guardians and Community Users of our Building

Our accessible washroom is out of service due to [insert reason for disruption].

Repairs are underway and the washroom is expected to be in service again by [insert date]. In the interim, we have made arrangements for our visitors to use the accessible washroom located at [insert alternate location].

We apologize for this inconvenience.

Thank you.

Site Administrator

3.0 Information and Communication Standards Achieved in 2020-2021

3.1 Accessible Web Content

New Website Launch

The Board officially launched a new, redesigned and more accessible public-facing website (www.yrdsb.ca) on March 26, 2021. The new website meets the AODA requirement that "all internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA" ([O. Reg. 191/11, s. 14](#))

Discussions and planning for the new website began during the 2018-2019 school year. Key highlights of the website development process are outlined below:

2018-2019 school year

- Engaged staff and community in gathering accessibility needs to inform design of new website.
- Engaged an external vendor to design website with accessibility features in mind.
- Chose a platform that enforces accessibility features (e.g., accessible font and spacing, accessible default headings, required alt text on images, etc.)

2019-2020 school year

- Embedded SiteImprove accessibility tool into the architecture of the website to check and ensure accessibility of all web content
- Built online training modules for staff that incorporated accessibility considerations and requirements.
- Began facilitating migration of existing web content in coordination with content contributors to ensure accessibility compliance.

2020-2021 school year (and beyond)

- Continued migration of existing web content into new website platform.
- Content contributors required to complete self-directed online training module.
- **New website (www.yrdsb.ca) officially launched on March 26, 2021.**
- Continued to provide support to content contributors to ensure website accessibility.
- Ongoing monitoring of web content by Web Portal and Communications Officer to ensure AODA compliance (2019-20 and beyond).

3.2 Accessibility Awareness for Educators

Accessibility Resource Hub

The HRCO officially launched of the YRDSB Accessibility Resource Hub on November 20, 2020 for YRDSB staff, students and community members. The Accessibility Resource Hub is an open-access and centralized web space that was re-established on the new website on March 26, 2021.

The Accessibility Resource Hub has been a passive strategy for educating and supporting the system about how to make learning and working environments more accessible for all through general core skills and specific accessibility guidelines. The following best practice resources and guidelines were finalized and published as PDF documents and accessible webpages in the 2020-2021 school year:

- Accessible Content Core Skills
- Accessible Document Guidelines
- Accessible Slide Deck Guidelines
- Accessible Web Conferencing Guidelines

Accessible Document Training

The in-person accessible document training was converted into virtual training sessions offered by Enterprise Application Support (EAS). Training content continues to be focused on making accessible documents in Microsoft Word, including the conversion process to a PDF document and passing the accessibility check in Adobe Acrobat.

Considerations for Developing Online Content

A resource outlining considerations for developing online content was created by Learning Design and Development and shared internally with educators. The resource included accessibility considerations and links to the Accessibility Resource Hub, as well as equity, inclusivity and copyright considerations.

	Accessibility

- Use font larger than 12 points
- Use a consistent sans serif font (ie. Gill Sans, Arial, Verdana)
- Avoid use of all caps, italics, underlines and justified text alignment
- Use **bold** to emphasize important information
- Avoid using table tools to create columns or format the layout of information in a document
- Ensure videos or audio content have captions (for videos) or transcripts (audio)
- Ensure strong contrast ratios between text and background colours
- Ensure hyperlink text is brief, descriptive and meaningful even without context
- Include audio buttons as an alternative format to access text when possible
  Adding Audio to Google Slides
- Offer a plain text doc as an alternative format to a slide deck (this can be translated and used with a screenreader)
- Add alternative, or "alt" text to images. This is especially important with graphs and charts or other images where students need to retrieve information. **How to Add Alt Text to Images Video**
- Ensure activity can be accessed independent of a teacher (ie. avoid log ins that young children may not be able to access independently)
- Limit the amount of 'clicks' it takes to get to the activity

Full list of considerations for **accessible slide decks.**
Full list of considerations for **accessible documents**.

A plain text version of the accessibility considerations for developing online content is listed in Appendix A.

Proposed K-12 Education Standards

The 2021 Initial Recommendations Report for the Proposed Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) Education Standards were shared with the public on July 7, 2021.

The Accessibility Officer worked with AODA Advisory Committee members to review the proposed K-12 Education standards, as well as received additional feedback from members of the Board community at large. A YRDSB Feedback Report on the Proposed K-12 Education Standards was completed and submitted to the Education Standards Development Committee on September 22, 2021.

While the YRDSB feedback report was submitted at the start of the 2021-2022 school year, much of the preparation took place in the summer months of the previous school year. As led by the HRCO, the Board's internal review and feedback process for the proposed K-12 Education standards is depicted in the graphic on the next page.
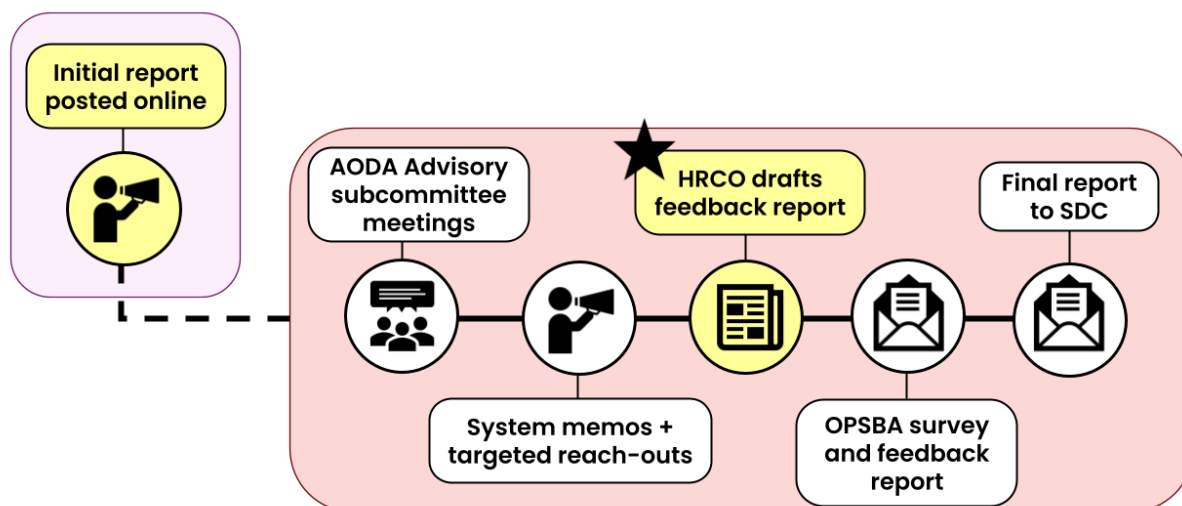
Following a meeting with members of Senior Leadership team, a series of system memos were shared internally via the Board's "News Digest" email. The memos included options for reviewing the recommendations, and a Google Form link for providing feedback. The completed Google Forms, along with the AODA Advisory subcommittee and working group meetings, were used to draft the feedback report.

The YRDSB feedback report was also shared with Ontario Public School Boards Association (OBPSA), the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and presented to the AODA Advisory Committee at the September 30, 2021 meeting.

The YRDSB feedback report is available online to the public as a PDF document and accessible webpages via the [Accessibility Reports and Plans web page](#).

3.3 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Accessible Format Board Policies

The Accessibility Officer supports the ongoing process of updating Board policies and procedures into an accessible formats as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle.

A Plain Language Guide to Human Rights Policy #240 was created as a second exemplar of a more reader-friendly version of the full policy document.
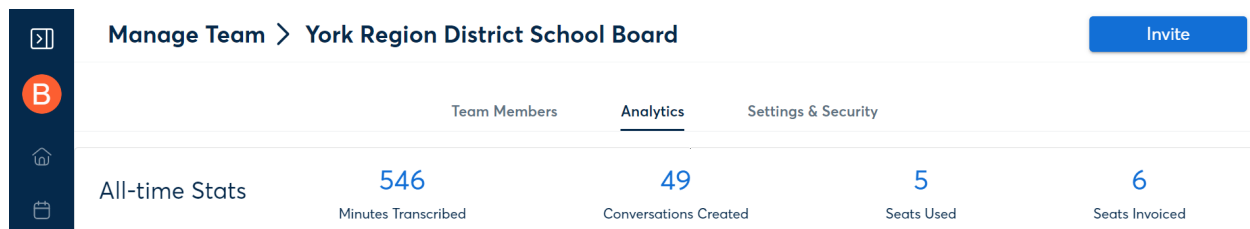
Accessible Board Videos

All Board-approved prerecorded videos produced by Corporate Communications and/or Learning Design and Development included open captions in meeting WCAG 2.1 Level A requirements.

The Accessibility Officer was consulted by various departments (e.g., Learning Design and Development, Corporate Communications, Education and Community Services) throughout the 2020-2021 school year to share strategies and best practices for providing more accessible videos.

Purchasing Services approved the procurement of five business licenses for an automatic transcription software called Otter.ai. The transcription software supported and will continue to support a more efficient process of captioning Board-approved videos as a regular practice.

One license was provided to Corporate Communications, two licenses were provide to Learning Design and Development, and two licenses were retained by the HRCO. To date, a total of 546 minutes have been transcribed through Otter.ai.

Manage Team > York Region District School Board				Invite
	Team Members	Analytics	Settings & Security	
All-time Stats	546 Minutes Transcribed	49 Conversations Created	5 Seats Used	6 Seats Invoiced

Blind Low Vision Services and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments

Blind Low Vision (BLV) Services ensured that students with low vision were provided with accessible materials in a timely manner during virtual learning. Many educators were new to Google Classroom and creating Google Docs, and did not consider that students with low vision need both captions and described video to access video content in a meaningful way.

Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVIs) were available to assist in procuring copies of videos with described video or could provide the described video for their students. TSVIs also worked to reformat Google Docs to make them accessible for screen reading software, and provided in-servicing to educators on how to make more accessible Google Docs.

Accessible Online Gaming

TSVIs engaged students through online games that are accessible for people with low vision. Some mainstream online games were adapted with tactile materials so that they can play alongside their sighted peers and foster friendships, while remaining socially distant.

Camp in a Bag Program

Orientation and Mobility Specialists 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 focused on developing spatial skills and mobility strategies in their home, neighbourhood and community.

Accessible Online Learning and Training

Developed a best practice resource with accessible online learning and training guidelines to support staff in making online/virtual learning (e-learning) and training (e-training) sessions more accessible to all learners and/or participants.

The Accessible Video Conferencing Guidelines are available online to the public as part of the YRDSB Accessibility Resource Hub.

Confirmed the process with Purchasing Services 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).

An **Accessible Format Request for Printed Textbooks** resource is available internally to Board educators via the BWW.

4.0 Standards for the Built Environment Achieved in 2020-2021

4.1 Scheduled Accessibility Projects

Plant Services annually schedules and completes projects to update, modify and retrofit existing buildings in order to make them more accessible. Plant Services works in conjunction with Student Services, Human Resource Services and the HRCO to identify and support the needs of students, staff and the wider community. During the 2020-2021 school year, approximately $1.98 million was spent on accessibility projects and work on YRDSB buildings and facilities.

A complete list of accessibility projects started and/or completed on YRDSB facilities during the 2020-2021 school year is presented in the table below.

Facility Name	Description / Scope of Work	Status	Cost
Alexander Mackenzie High School	Installing ramp to field (part of larger project)	Substantial Completion	$100,000
Armadale Public School	Replaced fire alarm horns with horn/strobe visual fire alarm devices Installed curb cut at crosswalk and repaired surrounding asphalt	Complete	$22,873
Armitage Village Public School	Installed automatic door opener for barrier-free washroom Provided asphalt ramps at two exterior exits; and repaired two catch basins in front driveway to garbage bins.	Complete	$15,372
Aurora Heights Public School	Upgrading elevator	Substantial Completion	$85,690
Aurora High School	Relocated and installed bidet; and installed automatic door opener on office	Complete	$15,000
Beckett Farms Public School	Installed braille signage	Not Started	$10,000
Blue Willow Public School	Replace fire alarm system (as part of larger project)	In Progress	$150,000

Facility Name	Description / Scope of Work	Status	Cost
Carrville Mills Public School	Install ramp and sidewalk to play structure from rear tarmac area	Site Plan Approval	$200,000
Crossland Public School	Replace fire alarm system	Contract Awarded	$119,900
Education Centre - Aurora	Replacing fire alarm system	Substantial Completion	$150,000
H.G. Bernard Public School	Installed automatic door opener on the gym doors (complete) Install braille signage throughout school	Not Started	$17,300
Highview Public School	Replaced fire alarm system	Complete	$150,000
James Robinson Public School	Installed ramp to portable 1153	Complete	$8,733
King City Secondary School	Remove urinal and partition from washroom 121 in order to convert to all access / all gender washroom	Not Started	$2,500
Lakeside Public School	Replacing fire alarm system	Substantial Completion	$143,900
Maple High School	Replacing passenger elevator controls, hydraulic storage tank, valve and pump	In Progress	$78,025
Markham District High School	Installed automatic openers on main office door and entrance to library	Complete	$8,360
Nellie McClung Public School	Added barrier-free door opener to existing barrier free washroom 103	Complete	$6,740
Randall Public School	Installed automatic door openers on barrier-free washroom 139	Complete	$6,000
Richmond Hill High School	Create all access washroom (part of a larger project)	In Progress	$200,000
Sir William Mulock Secondary School	Replacing passenger elevator controls, hydraulic storage tank, valve, pump	Substantial Completion	$95,000
Stonehaven Elementary School	Replacing fire alarm system	Substantial Completion	$108,800
Stuart Scott Public School	Replacing fire alarm system	Substantial Completion	$114,975

Facility Name	Description / Scope of Work	Status	Cost
Summitview Public School	Installed automatic door opener on third floor stairwell door (by room 301)	Complete	$3,800
Sutton District High School	Installed ramp to dance studio; request through Barrier Buster	Complete	$150,000
Tommy Douglas Secondary School	Added barrier-free opener to main office door	Complete	$6,690
Wilshire Elementary School	Install braille signage throughout school	Design Phase	$10,000
Total Cost of Accessibility Projects in 2020-2021 School Year			**$1,979,658**

All Access Washroom Project

All access washrooms are intended for use by students or staff who self-identify as gender diverse or feel the need for privacy due to religious or other personal reasons.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Plant Services continued with the full-scale implementation phase of the Board's All Access Washrooms Project. A total of 483 school washrooms have been converted to an all access or all gender washroom (gender-neutral but not barrier-free).

Braille Signage Project

Blind / Low Vision (BLV) Services continues to identify and update a priority list of YRDSB schools with students who require Braille signage to access their school environment in a meaningful way.

Priority Schools (as of April 2021)

1. Wilshire Public School
2. H.G. Bernard Public School
3. Beckett Farms Public School
4. Maple High School
5. Newmarket High School
6. Doncrest Public School
7. Hodan Nalayeh Secondary School

Completed Schools in 2020-2021

- Stonehaven Elementary School
- Michael Cranny Elementary School
- Keswick High School

5.0 Employment Standards Achieved in 2020-2021

5.1 Accessible Employment

Disability Management

The Disability Management (DM) team within Human Resource Services had a total of **3,449 DM files** for the 2020-2021 school year.

- DM files carried over from the 2019-2020 school year: **1,213**
- New DM files opened in 2020-2021: **2,236**
- DM files closed in 2020-2021: **1,718**

Workplace Accommodations for Staff

Disability Management approved 1,282 employees with virtual workplace accommodations in the 2020-2021 school year. Assistive devices provided by HRS for workplace accommodations included:

- Air cleaners and humidifiers for scent sensitivities / allergies,
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters,
- Arranging worksite ergonomic assessments,
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and computerized notetaker services
- Custom noise cancelling ear plugs,
- Document cameras,
- Mobility devices (scooters, wheelchairs, wheeled carts, stools),
- Modified work stations (e.g., special chairs, desks, keyboards, monitors and lighting),
- Specialized phones and headsets,
- Speech to text software,
- Voice amplification and hearing systems (e.g., FM transmitters, receivers, auto hubs, microphones, Rogers NeckLoop, iPad apps and sound barrier devices)
- Zoomtext Plus technology.

Hearing Accommodations Process

A new process was implemented if an employee requested a hearing accommodation through Disability Management during the 2020-2021 school year.

- DM partnered with Regional Special Education Services and worked with an Education Audiologist during periods of remote learning.

- DM advised all the unions and federations that they may have members who have hearing impairment(s) and who may require continued or revised accommodations related to their hearing impairment.

- The employees were asked to have the Functional Abilities Report completed with information that was required to assist DM in determining how best to accommodate their hearing impairments.

- Once DM received the Functional Abilities Report, they worked with their Assistive Technology / Education Audiologist to determine an appropriate accommodation.

- Accommodations were explored and put in place based on individualized needs, hearing abilities, hearing aid(s), position within the Board, and other factors.

- DM worked with employees on an ongoing basis to review their accommodation needs and revise any accommodations, as needed.

Candidate Support

Human Resource Services (HRS) has fully transitioned to Zoom as the primary video conferencing platform for virtual interviews. GoToMeeting is no longer used by HRS. The Recruitment and Promotion team reviewed the [Accessible Video Conferencing Guidelines](#) and included the resource in the Administrator Toolkit sent out in June for use with school-based interviews.

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

A standardized accommodation statement is now included in all communication with candidates at each stage of the recruitment process.

6.0 Transportation Standards Achieved in 2020-2021

6.1 Accessible Transportation

Parent / Guardian Consultation

Parents/guardians of students with disabilities (or special education and transportation needs) were consulted as part of the transportation planning process.

Service Disruptions

Service disruptions (i.e., bus cancellations) were posted on the [Student Transportation Services of York Region website](#) and included information about the reason for the disruption and its anticipated duration.

Appendix A: Accessibility Considerations for Developing Online Content

- Use font larger than 12 points

- Use a consistent sans serif font (ie. Gill Sans, Arial, Verdana)

- Avoid use of all caps, italics, underlines and justified text alignment

- Use **bold** to emphasize important information

- Avoid using table tools to create columns or format the layout of information in a document

- Ensure videos or audio content have captions (for videos) or transcripts (audio)

- Ensure strong contrast ratios between text and background colours

- Ensure hyperlink text is brief, descriptive and meaningful even without context

- Include audio buttons as an alternative format to access text when possible ([Adding Audio to Google Slides Video](#))

- Offer a plain text doc as an alternative format to a slide deck (this can be translated and used with a screen reader)

- Add alternative, or "alt" text to images. This is especially important with graphs and charts or other images where students need to retrieve information ([How to Add Alt Text to Images Video](#))

- Ensure activity can be accessed independent of a teacher (ie. avoid logins that young children may not be able to access independently)

- Limit the amount of 'clicks' it takes to get to the activity

- Full list of considerations for [accessible slide decks](#).

- Full list of considerations for [accessible documents](#).