



# York Region District School Board

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## **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2025**

### **Towards an Accessible and Inclusive York Region District School Board**

A renewed plan on the measures to be taken over a five-year period to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility for everyone who learns, works and/or participates in the YRDSB community.



## How do I access the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan?

The YRDSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is available in the following ways:

- **Online to the public:** Go to [Annual Report and Multi-Year Plan](#) on the YRDSB accessibility webpage;
- **By email:** [aoda@yrdsb.ca](mailto:aoda@yrdsb.ca);
- **By telephone:** Call the Accessibility Officer at 905-884-2046 ext. 311; or
- **In an alternate format upon request.**

## How do I provide feedback?

Feedback regarding the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 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, comments and/or suggestions about any section of this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 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](mailto:aoda@yrdsb.ca)

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# I.0 Accessibility at YRDSB

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## I.1 Purpose

The York Region District School Board (YRDSB or the Board) has prepared this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) 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:

- “establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation;
- post the accessibility plan on their website, if any, and provide the plan in an accessible format upon request; and
- review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years.” ([O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4](#)).

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan describes 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](#) for everyone who learns, works and participates in the Board community.

## I.2 Accessibility Leadership

The accessibility portfolio for YRDSB is a mandate of the Human Rights Commissioner’s Office (HRCO). In January 2018, the AODA Advisory Committee (formerly the Accessibility Working Committee) was established with renewed direction under the HRCO. An Accessibility Officer position was created and filled in January 2019 to further show the Board’s commitment to accessibility. This position resides within the HRCO and includes liaising between the HRCO and each subcommittee and working group within the AODA Advisory Committee (see [Appendix A: AODA Advisory Subcommittees and Working Groups](#)):

- Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee
- Student Services Subcommittee
- Human Resources Subcommittee
- Digital Media, Website Management & Learning Working Group (D5G)
- Curriculum Working Group

The accessibility achievements of each subcommittee and working group for the reporting year are documented in the current [Annual Accessibility Report](#). Relevant information from the Annual Accessibility Report may be included in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plans, however accessibility planning and the implementation strategy for YRDSB is the primary purpose of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 - 2025.

### 1.3 Coordinated Commitment to Accessibility

YRDSB is committed to building towards accessible learning and working environments that support the four core principles of the AODA: integration, equality of opportunity, dignity and independence. These principles are aligned with the four priorities of the Board of Trustees' [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) (refer to image below) and the [Director's Action Plan](#).





### **Foster Well-Being and Mental Health + Integration**

In creating safe, healthy and inclusive learning and working environments...

We promote the meaningful integration of people with disabilities through inclusive practices and universal design.



### **Champion Equity and Inclusivity + Equality of Opportunity**

In developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes to remove barriers in support of all learners...

We proactively identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility in order to create equal opportunities for full participation and inclusion.



### **Build Collaborative Relationships + Dignity**

In building trusting relationships based on respectful and responsive communication...

We actively engage those who support people with disabilities in collaborative and meaningful ways that respect their dignity and self-worth.



### **Empower Ethical Leadership + Independence**

In leading ethically by focusing on students and upholding our values...

We entrust people with decision-making autonomy and independence in order to build leadership capacity and accessibility.

The Board's commitment to accessibility is defined by four multi-year accessibility goals that align with the four Board priorities and the 4 core principles of the AODA.



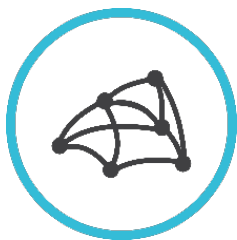
### **Provide Accessible Customer Service**

Provide customer<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> **“Customer”** is defined under [Board Policy #407.0. Accessibility](#) as “any member of the Board community, including but not limited to: trustees, employees, students, parents/guardians, permit holders, vendors, service providers, contractors, volunteers and visitors and all other persons who are invited to or who work on Board property.”

## 2.0 York Region District School Board

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### 2.1 Mission, Vision and Values

The following information about the Board is also available online at [www.yrdsb.ca](http://www.yrdsb.ca).

#### Mission

To advance student achievement and well-being through public education, which motivates learners, fosters inclusion, inspires innovation and builds community.

#### Vision

To be a leader in public education by empowering all students to become engaged and caring citizens of the world.

#### Values

Our School Board operates based on a set of values which guides our actions:

##### Inclusivity

We demonstrate equity and inclusivity in all that we do. We demand an environment in which all students, staff, parents and our community feel valued and have a sense of belonging. We expect empathy, mutual respect and understanding to be demonstrated in our words and actions.

##### Relationships

We value positive, meaningful relationships with students, staff, parents and our community. We value diversity of opinion, sincere dialogue and community engagement.

##### Innovation

We continuously strive to provide the best educational programs for all students. We empower staff and students to take initiative and to be innovative leaders.

##### Optimism

We encourage active participation in all learning and activities by creating an environment that engages students, staff, parents and our community.

##### Responsibility

We are individually and collectively responsible for creating the best possible school community to support the achievement and well-being of all individuals. We are responsible for the delivery of effective and sustainable educational programs and stewardship of Board resources.

##### Optimism

We approach all situations with optimism. We cultivate confidence and resiliency in all students and staff.

## 2.2 YRDSB Students and Schools

York Region District School Board (YRDSB) is the third largest school district in Ontario, with over **127,000 students across 222 elementary and secondary schools**. YRDSB communities include suburban, small town and rural neighbourhoods, and a wide range of racial, ethnic and cultural groups. This diversity includes the recognition that YRDSB is situated on the traditional territories of the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe peoples. In particular, the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation are the Board's closest Indigenous community and its partners in education.

YRDSB serves the Regional Municipality of York (York Region) which has an estimated total population of almost 1.2 million residents.<sup>2</sup> York Region is made up of 9 municipalities that are divided into four areas within YRDSB – North, Central, West and East.

| Municipality / Boundary | Estimated Population<br>(Total Residents) | Elementary<br>Schools  | Secondary<br>School   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>North</b>            | <b>218,000</b>                            | <b>45</b>              | <b>8</b>              |
| Georgina                | 48,000                                    | 12                     | 3                     |
| East Gwillimbury        | 31,000                                    | 7                      | 0                     |
| Newmarket               | 90,000                                    | 18                     | 4                     |
| Whitchurch-Stouffville  | 49,000                                    | 8                      | 1                     |
| <b>Central</b>          | <b>298,000</b>                            | <b>45</b>              | <b>8</b>              |
| Aurora                  | 62,000                                    | 10                     | 2                     |
| King                    | 28,000                                    | 4                      | 1                     |
| Richmond Hill           | 208,000                                   | 31                     | 5                     |
| <b>West</b>             | <b>329,000</b>                            | <b>39</b>              | <b>8</b>              |
| Vaughan                 | 329,000                                   | 39                     | 8                     |
| <b>East</b>             | <b>348,000</b>                            | <b>58</b>              | <b>11</b>             |
| Markham                 | 348,000                                   | 58                     | 11                    |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>1,193,000</b>                          | <b>187<sup>3</sup></b> | <b>35<sup>4</sup></b> |

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Municipality of York. (2020). York Region 2020 to 2023 multi-year accessibility plan.

[https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/41bb28df-a3a0-421c-9159-5b0bb26ada19/2020\\_to\\_2023\\_Multi-Year\\_Accessibility\\_Plan.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=n7chIZs](https://www.york.ca/wps/wcm/connect/yorkpublic/41bb28df-a3a0-421c-9159-5b0bb26ada19/2020_to_2023_Multi-Year_Accessibility_Plan.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=n7chIZs)

<sup>3</sup> Total number of YRDSB elementary schools based on 2019-2020 school year.

<sup>4</sup> Total number of YRDSB secondary schools based on 2019-2020 school year.

# YRDSB Municipalities and Boundaries

**1.2 million**

Total York Region  
population (pop)  
estimate\*

**127,000**

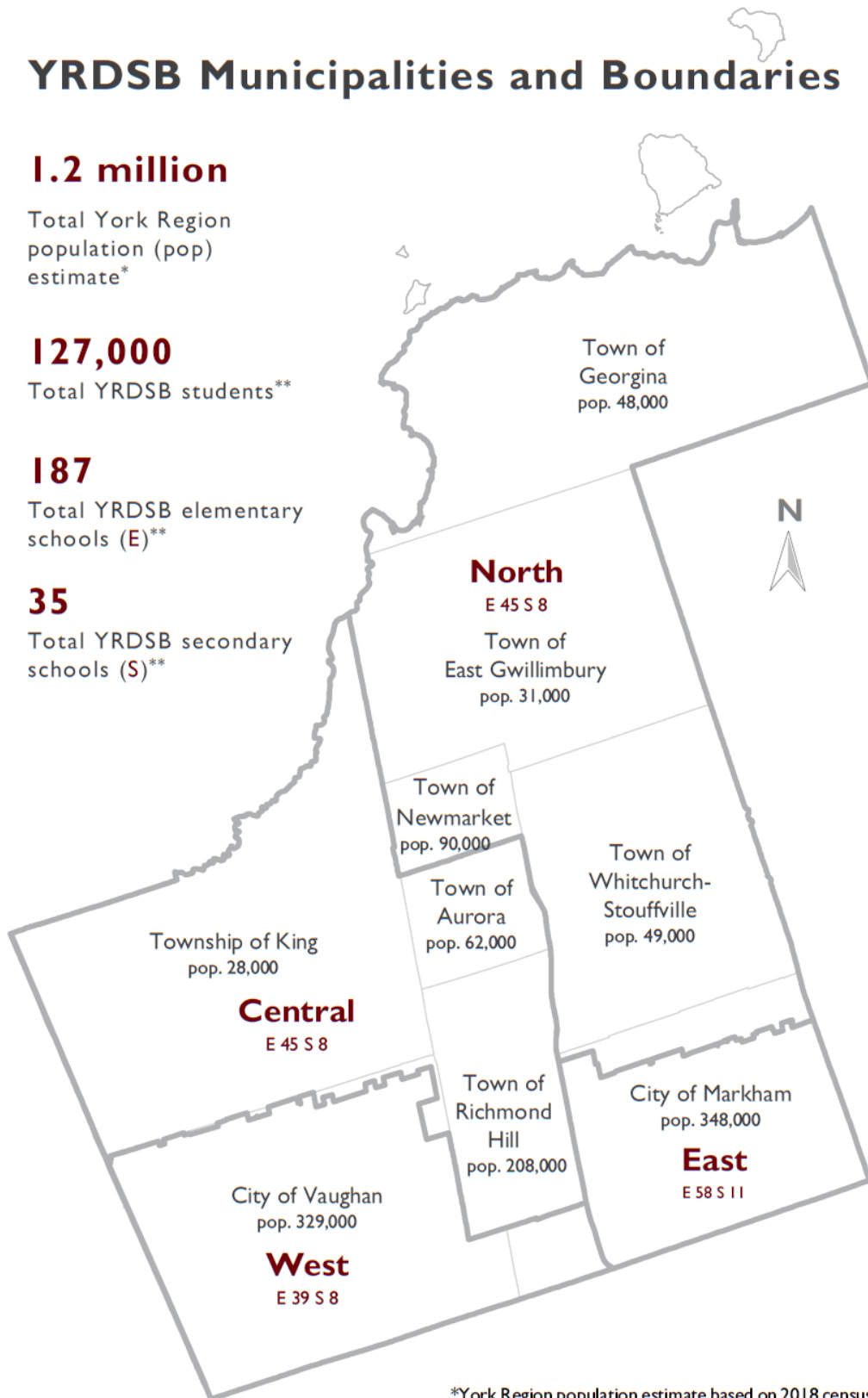
Total YRDSB students\*\*

**187**

Total YRDSB elementary  
schools (E)\*\*

**35**

Total YRDSB secondary  
schools (S)\*\*



\*York Region population estimate based on 2018 census data.

\*\*YRDSB data based on 2019-2020 school year.

## 2.3 YRDSB Employees

YRDSB is the largest employer in York Region with over 15,000 diversely skilled employees, including:

- Board Administrators (superintendents, Associate Directors and Director of Education),
- Clerical and Secretarial (school-based and Board offices),
- Corporate Professionals and Management (non-school based Board operations),
- Plant Operations and Maintenance (caretaking, maintenance and supervisory),
- Professional and Para-professional (regulated health professionals, education consultants, and classroom-based support staff),
- School Administrators (elementary and secondary principals and vice-principals), and
- Teachers (elementary and secondary).

## 2.4 YRDSB Students and Employees with Disabilities

Disability is a broad term that covers a wide range of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time.

Based on the comprehensive definition of “disability”<sup>5</sup> as defined in Ontario’s Human Rights Code, there are approximately 19,000 students with disabilities (exceptionalities or special education needs) who received services and supports through their Individual Education Plan (IEP) during the 2019-2020 school year.

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<sup>5</sup> Disability means:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness, including, but not limited to, diabetes, mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

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**Approximately 15% of YRDSB students were identified as having a disability (or exceptionality) based on the number of students with IEPs.**

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It is worth noting that findings from the [Every Student Counts Survey](#) (Overall Board Report) reinforce the negative attitudes, stereotyping and stigma surrounding disability.<sup>6</sup> Only 6% of intermediate students (grades 7 and 8) and 7% of secondary students (grades 9 to 12) self-reported having a disability; and only 3% of parents/guardians answered “yes” to the question: “Do you consider your child to be a person with a disability?”

YRDSB employees were similarly asked to identify whether they have a disability in the Employment Equity Audit and Workforce Census<sup>7</sup> that was conducted in 2018. Although the Board’s Disability Management Team serviced a total of 2,372 employees during the 2019-2020 school year, only 870 employees self-identified as having a disability in the Workforce Census (out of the 9,327 total responses).

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**Approximately 9% of YRDSB employees (permanent and casual) self-identified as having a disability based on 2018 Workforce Census.**

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The percentage of employees with disabilities was categorized based on 3 broad types of disability:

1. 3.8% identified as having a physical disability or health condition (e.g., visual impairment, hearing impairment, require the use of a wheelchair or service animal);
2. 3.9% identified as having a mental health disability (e.g., depression, bipolar, anxiety); and
3. 2.2% identified as having a learning disability (e.g., dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)

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<sup>6</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2016). Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability. [http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20ableism%20and%20discrimination%20based%20on%20disability\\_accessible\\_2016.pdf](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20ableism%20and%20discrimination%20based%20on%20disability_accessible_2016.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Turner Consulting Group. (2018). Employment Equity Audit: Workforce Census Report. <https://yrdsb.civicweb.net/document/98658>

# Disability at YRDSB

“Disability” is a broad term that includes students with special education needs and exceptionalities.

Students with disabilities

15%

19,000+ students with IEPs\*

Staff with disabilities

9%

3.8%

3.9%

2.2%

Disability type among staff

Physical



Mental Health



Learning



## Disability Beyond YRDSB

York Region

18%



Ontario

24%



Canada

22%



Regional, provincial and national data is sourced from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability.

\*19,092 students with special education needs received services and supports through their Individual Education Plan (IEP) during the 2019-2020 school year.

## Comparing YRDSB to Broader Disability Statistics

The percentage of YRDSB employees (9%) with disabilities is lower than the percentages of York Region residents (18%<sup>8</sup>), Ontario residents (24%) and Canadians (22%) aged 15 years or older with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> The higher proportion of people with disabilities beyond YRDSB can be partly attributed to age demographics and the increased prevalence of disability among older adults. Individuals 65 years of age or older account for over 40% of all Canadians with disabilities according to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability. However, only 1% of YRDSB employees were aged 65 years or older based on the 2018 Workforce Census.

In terms of YRDSB students with disabilities, exceptionalities or special education needs (15%), the closest comparable data shows that 11% of Ontarians aged 15 to 24 years were identified as having disabilities. Additional data and analysis would be required to compare YRDSB students to similar school-aged populations with disabilities.

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**However, it is imperative that we consider disability data and statistics beyond only students, employees and other people with disabilities.**

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## Shifting how we think about Disability

Traditional disability statistics focus on the numbers or percentages of people with disabilities, for example that 6.2 million or 22% of Canadians have a disability. However, for the 78% of Canadians who do not have an identified disability, they can still be affected by disability in different ways.

The wider impact of disability was examined in a 2019 study by the Angus Reid Institute in partnership with the Rick Hansen Foundation. The study found that 86% of Canadians are impacted by disability in some way – either directly affected (24%), affiliated through a family member or close friend with a disability (30%), or concerned (32%) about how disability will affect them in the next 5 to 10 years.<sup>10</sup>

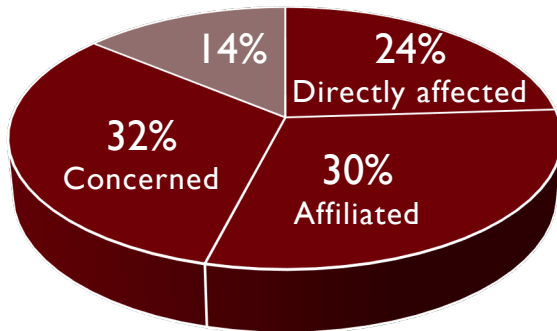
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<sup>8</sup> The Regional Municipality of York. (2020). [York Region 2020 to 2023 multi-year accessibility plan](#).

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. (2020, August 10). [Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex](#).

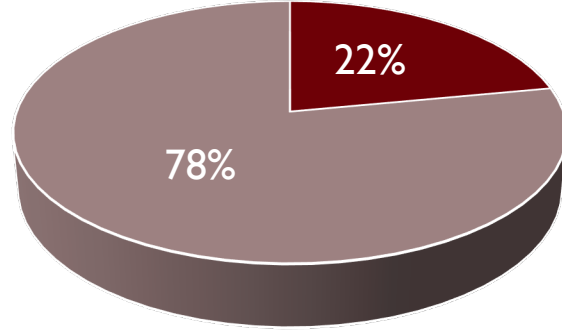
<sup>10</sup> Angus Reid Institute. (2019, January 22). [Accessibility: A source of future anxiety and a significant consideration for Canadian consumers today](#).

**Relationship to Disability  
in Canada (2019)**



- Affected by disability in some way
- Unaffected by disability

**Disability in Canada  
(2017)**



- Canadians with disabilities
- Canadians without disabilities

The 2019 data showing Canadians' relationship to disability better supports the social model of disability which recognizes disability as an evolving concept that "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".<sup>11</sup>

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**In other words, disability is a social construct.**

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In recognizing the social model of disability, the Board's commitment to accessibility is about building environments and creating a culture that benefits everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

The 2019 data also highlights the importance of accessibility by showing how disability does not only impact people with disabilities, but affects almost everyone. Only 14% of Canadians believed that they have no relationship or concerns when it comes to disabilities. While recognizing that 22% of Canadians have a disability, it can be more impactful to also state that disability affects 86% of Canadians either directly or indirectly.

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 – 2025 will outline the YRDSB's commitment to building more accessible learning and working environments by implementing the [four strategic accessibility goals](#), which are set out in alignment with the four core principles of the AODA and the four priorities of the Trustees' Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the Director's Action Plan.

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). (n.d.). [Preamble](#).

## 3.0 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2025

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### A Stand-alone Multi-Year Plan

In consultation with the AODA Advisory Committee, this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been renewed, updated and prepared as a separate document from the previously integrated Annual Accessibility Report and Multi-Year Plan (2018-2022). The preparation of a separate multi-year plan from the annual report is consistent with the reporting format of neighbouring school boards, post-secondary institutions and municipalities.

### A School Year Reporting Period

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be published according to the school year calendar, plus the ensuing summer months (September to August).

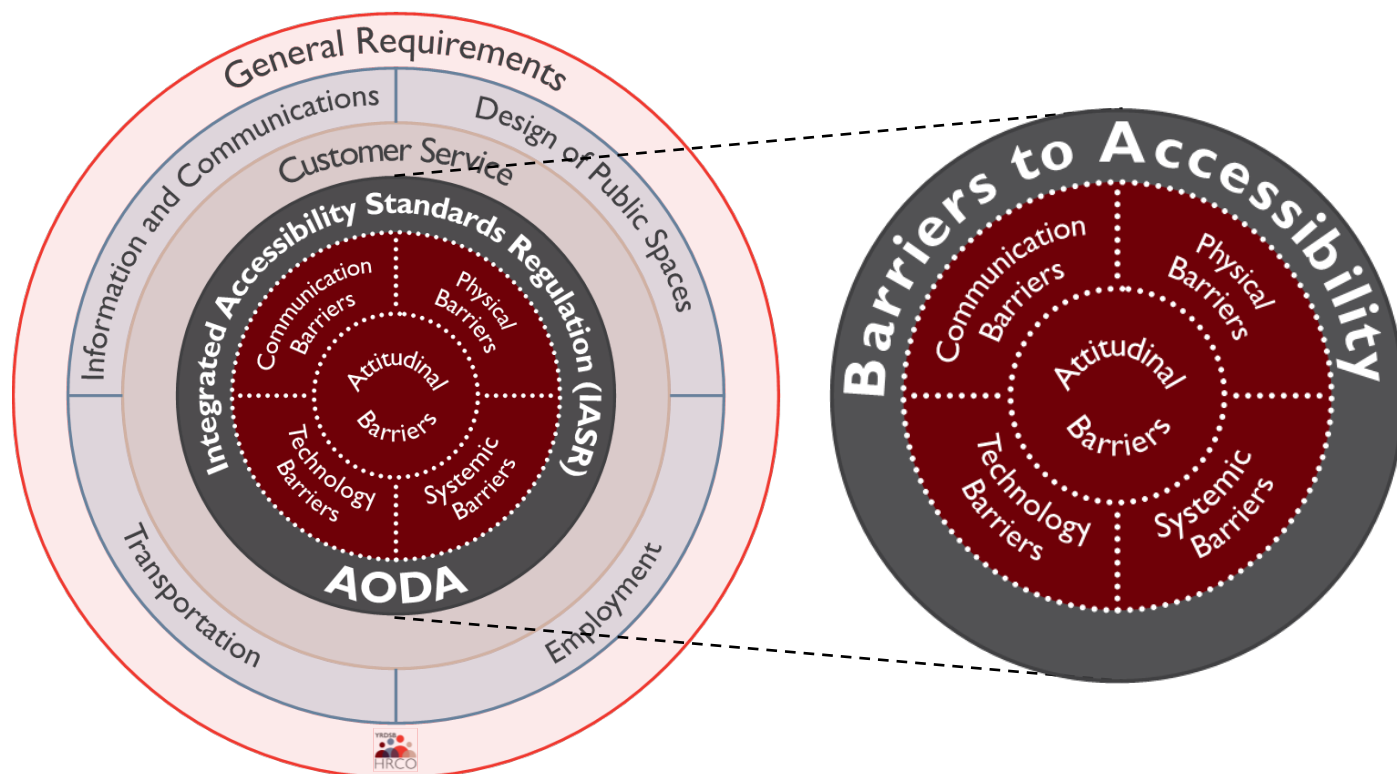
### A Renewed 2020 to 2025 Timeframe

The stand-alone Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been updated with a new five-year timeframe of September 2020 to August 2025. The renewed timeframe re-establishes the Board's commitment to accessibility planning based on the [four multi-year accessibility goals](#), and also aligns with the provincial AODA goal of making Ontario accessible by the year 2025.

### An IASR Framework to Accessibility

The accessibility standards under the AODA, along with some general requirements, are collectively known as the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The IASR is formalized in [Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) (O. Reg. 191/11) under the AODA.

The IASR represent the building blocks for how the AODA Advisory Committee is working to advance accessibility at YRDSB. The IASR were also used as the foundation for revising and renewing the Board's [Accessibility Policy](#). As a way of illustrating the IASR goal to identify and remove barriers, the HRCO has designed a custom IASR diagram that uniquely incorporates the barriers to accessibility in the centre of the diagram.



The **Customer Service** standard is situated within its own ring as it is the most substantive and was the first of the five accessibility standards to be introduced. The remaining four accessibility standards – **Information and Communications**, **Design of Public Spaces**, **Employment**, and **Transportation** – are represented in each quadrant of next outer ring. The outermost ring encompasses the IASR diagram at the broadest level in the same way that the **General Requirements** broadly encompass the AODA.

Dotted lines are used in outlining the barriers to represent permeability and our aim to “break through” the five main types of barriers to accessibility:

### Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers are inaccurate beliefs and perceptions about people with disabilities based on assumptions and stereotypes. Attitudinal barriers are the most pervasive type of barrier.

**Example:** The belief that people with disabilities are inherently less able to contribute and participate (i.e., ableism).

### Physical Barriers

Physical (or architectural) barriers are anything in the built environment or design of public spaces that prevent access to goods, services, and/or facilities.

**Example:** A classroom design that makes it difficult for students or staff to move around or navigate easily.

## Communication Barriers

Communication (or information) barriers prevent people from understanding or accessing information in a meaningful way.

**Example:** Audio-video content that does not include media alternatives, such as captions or transcripts.

## Systemic Barriers

Systemic (or organizational) barriers are usually created through policies, procedures and practices that apply to everyone, but are unfair or inequitable to certain people.

**Example:** Assessment and evaluation that is based on only one learning style and requires students to demonstrate their understanding in one specific way.

## Technology Barriers

Technology barriers are digital or virtual platforms that are not designed to be user-friendly or with consideration for people with disabilities. Technology barriers often relate to communication barriers.

**Example:** Websites or webpages that work on a computer or laptop, but do not work properly on a tablet or smart phone.

The remaining sections of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outline the accessibility planning goals and objectives for meeting and exceeding (where possible) the IASR. Sections 4.0 through 9.0 are presented in alignment with the each procedure under Accessibility Policy #407 and laid out using the following subsections:

### Accessibility Commitment(s)

The relevant statement(s) of commitment take directly from the Accessibility Policy and related Procedures (with hyperlinked references to the cited section of the policy).

### Leadership and Responsibility

A list of departments, unit and/or committees with key leadership roles and responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the accessibility policy commitment(s).

### Compliance and Implementation

A description of each accessibility planning goal and objective for the next five school years (2020 to 2025) that will be implemented in order to achieve the Board's accessibility commitments in compliance with the AODA and related legislation.

## 4.0 General Requirements

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### 4.1 Accessibility Policy

#### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Establish an accessibility policy ([Procedure #407.0, s. 2a](#)).

#### Leadership and Responsibility

- Human Rights Commissioner's Office (HRCO),
- Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services (Corporate Policy), and
- Accessibility Policy Review Subcommittee (ad hoc).

#### Compliance and Implementation

**Cyclical Policy Review:** Beginning in the **2018-2019 school year**, the renewal process for [Board Policy #407.0, Accessibility](#) was initiated as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle. The revisions were carried out by the ad hoc Accessibility Policy Review Subcommittee, which was established with the mandate to review Policy #407.0, Accessibility and Policy #425.0, Provision of Barrier-Free Facilities for the purpose of updating and consolidating them into one comprehensive accessibility policy.

In March of the **2019-2020 school year**, the renewed Accessibility Policy #407 was approved as the official policy of the Board and presented to various departments and units across the system.

#### 2020-2021 School Year

##### Plain Language Guides

- Finalize the [Plain Language Guide to Policy #407, Accessibility](#) as a more reader- and user-friendly version of the full policy document. The plain language guide meets the AODA requirement for organizations "to prepare one or more documents describing its accessibility policy" ([O. Reg. 191/11, s. 3](#));
- Convert the Plain Language Guide to Policy #407, Accessibility 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](#)).

### **Alternative Policy Formats**

- 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.

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **Alternative Policy Formats**

- Convert the full PDF version of [Policy #240.0, Human Rights: Code-Related Harassment and Discrimination](#) into accessible webpages as a second exemplar for alternative format Board policies.

## **2023-2024 School Year**

### **Cyclical Policy Review**

- Begin the process of reviewing and renewing Policy #407.0, Accessibility as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle;
- If required, re-establish the Accessibility Policy Review Subcommittee (ad hoc) to carry out the review;
- Present revisions to the Policy and By-Law Committee for First Review; and
- Receive approval to "circulate the policy as a working document for six school months during which time it replaces the previous version and becomes the official policy of the Board" as per [Policy #285.0, Board Policies, Procedures and Supporting Documents](#).

## **2024-2025 School Year**

### **Cyclical Policy Review**

- Review all feedback received, make additional revisions as required, and present revisions to the Policy and By-Law Committee for Second Review; and
- Upon approval, present Policy #407.0, Accessibility to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

## 4.2 Annual Accessibility Plans

### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and post the report on the Board website, ensuring the report in an accessible format upon request ([Procedure #407.0, s. 3.1d](#)).

### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Human Rights Commissioner's Office (HRCO), with consultation and input from
- AODA Advisory Committee (AODA subcommittees and working groups to provide status updates on progress of accessibility projects/work).

### **Compliance and Implementation**

#### **Each School Year (2020 to 2025)**

##### **AODA Advisory Committee Meetings**

- Hold four AODA Advisory Committee meetings throughout each 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 in consultation with the AODA Advisory Committee describing the measures that YRDSB has taken in the past school year to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility;
- Present the completed annual accessibility report (and any revisions to the multi-year accessibility plan, as applicable) to Executive Council and subsequently to the Board of Trustees each fall for Board approval; and
- Post the final report online to the public on the Board's [Annual Report and Multi-Year Plan](#) webpage (in PDF and HTML formats).

### **Accessibility Compliance Report**

- Before the end of every other calendar year (i.e., December 31, 2021, 2023 and 2025), file an [accessibility compliance report](#) to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility in accordance with Ontario accessibility laws.

## **4.3 Accessible Procurement and Purchasing**

### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Consider accessibility in procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities (including self-service kiosks) ([Procedure #407.0, s. 2c](#)); and

Incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when purchasing new equipment (including self-service kiosks), designing new systems or planning a new initiative ([Procedure #407.0, s. 3.3a](#)).

### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Plant, Planning and Purchasing Services,
- Information and Technology Services (ITS),
- All other Board departments, schools and/or staff involved in purchasing decisions.

### **Compliance and Implementation**

#### **2020-2021 School Year**

##### **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.

## 2021-2022 School Year

### Accessible Procurement Audits

- Follow-up with the departments involved in procurement to confirm use of accessible procurement statements in all purchasing agreements/contracts;

## 2022-2023 School Year

- Develop a process for ensuring all producers of educational or training materials who supply the Board have provided accessible or conversion-ready versions of all textbooks and any other printed learning resources; and
- Where accessible or conversion-ready versions are not currently available, make a request to all contracted producers of educational or training materials for accessible and/or conversion-ready versions all textbooks and other learning resources as per [O. Reg. 191/11, s. 17](#).

## 4.4 Accessibility Training

### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Monitor implementation and keep record of the accessibility training provided, including the dates on which training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided ([Procedure #407.0, s. 3.1e](#)).

Provide school-based staff with accessibility awareness training to ensure that course and lesson planning, delivery and assessment reflect universal design and differentiated instruction ([Procedure #407.2, s. 3.3b](#)).

### Leadership and Responsibility

- Human Rights Commissioner's Office,
- Education and Community Services,
- Human Resource Services,
- Information Technology Services,
- Leadership Development, and
- Plant Services (Plant Maintenance).

## Compliance and Implementation

**Compliance Training Modules:** For the start of the **2019-2020 school year**, the Board's 3 accessibility training modules were reviewed, refreshed and integrated into the Board's Rise 360 e-learning and training suite. The updated compliance training modules were introduced for the annual Compliance Training Day (September 23, 2019).

### 2020 to 2022 School Years

#### Accessibility Training Communication Plan (each school year)

- Develop a communication plan based on the school year cycle and current practices 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 to ensure clear messaging, 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 (e.g., variations of Accessibility 101) 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 distributed to all YRDSB volunteers; and
- Ensure revisions to existing volunteer forms/paperwork that ensures requirements for completing appropriate accessibility and human rights training is clearly communicated to all volunteers.

## **2022-2023 School Year**

### **Professional Development Pathway**

- Work with Leadership Development to build an accessibility (and human rights) learning plan and professional development pathway for staff that is integrated into the Board's Learning Management System (currently Connect2Learn);
- Promote the suite of accessibility professional development modules in the annual accessibility training communication plan along with accessibility compliance training requirements;
- Incorporate feedback and continue to build capacity and knowledge on accessibility by developing and introducing 1-2 new online training modules (e.g., accessibility vs. accommodation, duty to accommodate, meaningful access for students with disabilities); and
- Monitor and evaluate new and existing accessibility training modules through both anecdotal and empirical feedback (Google Forms).

### **Volunteer Training and Tracking**

- Assess the requirements to more effectively confirm accessibility training is completed by all volunteers (contingent on the Board building increased capacity to manage all volunteers through a centralized system).

## **2023-2024 School Year**

### **Professional Development Pathway**

- Finalize the suite of accessibility training modules, and continue to promote the accessibility professional development pathway in the annual accessibility training communication plan along with accessibility compliance training requirements.

## 5.0 Customer Service Standards

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### 5.1 Formal Feedback Processes

#### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Establish and manage an accessible process (i.e., Barrier Buster) for receiving and responding to feedback about barriers to accessibility and/or concerns about access to Board programs, services or facilities for persons with disabilities ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.1a](#));

Prepare a guideline/protocol describing the Barrier Buster process that specifies the actions the Board will take if a complaint is received, and shall circulate the guideline/protocol across the Board ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.1b](#)); and

Ensure that the feedback processes are accessible and readily available to the public in print (see Customer Service Feedback Form) and on the Board's public website (see Barrier Buster) by providing accessible formats or communication supports upon request ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.1c](#)).

#### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Human Rights Commissioner's Office, and
- Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee.

#### **Compliance and Implementation**

##### **2020-2021 School Year**

##### **Barrier Buster Protocol**

- Finalize the Protocol for Barrier Buster Process (a supporting document to Board Procedure #407.1, Accessibility, Customer Service Standards) as way of making the Barrier Buster process more transparent and accessible to the public; and
- Convert the Barrier Buster protocol into accessible webpages.

## 2021-2022 School Year

### Accessible Feedback Communication Plan

- Formalize a communication plan based on current and best practices to continue building awareness across the system of the Barrier Buster electronic reporting tool and the related Barrier Buster process;
- 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 additional 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 at the start of the following school year cycle.

## 2022-2023 School Year

### Accessible Customer Service Audits

- Complete auditing of all work locations to ensure that printed Customer Service Feedback Forms are available on site to everyone, including the public;
- Verify that updated and customized “How May We Help You?” signs are posted at all main entrances and other appropriate locations (e.g., reception areas and school offices); and
- Ensure schools that have chosen to continue distributing PDF versions of school newsletters have accessible formats options, and work with appropriate school staff to build capacity for creating accessible school newsletters (refer to [Accessible Format School Newsletters / Blogs](#) under section 6.3 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports).

### “How May We Help You?” Signage

- Revise and update existing “[How May We Help You?](#)” signs (which are available electronically on the BWW) to include individualized direct line phone number to the administrative reception area and/or school office in each YRDSB building should any customer require assistance entering the building.

## 2023-2024 School Year

### Barrier Buster Process

- Review and update the Barrier Buster process, as required, consistent with the 4-year cyclical review and renewal of Accessibility Policy #407.

## 2024-2025 School Year

### Accessible Customer Service Audits

- Conduct follow-up audits of all work locations to ensure that printed Customer Service Feedback Forms are still available, and that “How May We Help You?” signs are still posted with accurate contact information at all main entrances.

## 5.2 Assistive Devices

### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Welcome and promote the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from programs, services or facilities ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.1a](#)); and

Ensure notice is posted in the front office and/or reception area(s) indicating that the school welcomes the use of assistive devices and encourages user to seek support from staff as required ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.1c](#)).

### Leadership and Responsibility

- Superintendents, Principals, Managers and Supervisors,
- Frontline staff (e.g., clerical, secretarial, administrative support), and
- All other staff who deal with the public.

### Compliance and Implementation

#### Each School Year (2020 to 2025)

#### Communication Plan

- As part of the [Accessible Feedback Communication Plan](#), include information about the use of assistive devices for people with disabilities, as well as best practice reminders about accessible customer service and online training refreshers.

## 2022-2023 School Year

### Assistive Devices Signage

- Current “[How May We Help You?](#)” signage includes the following message: “It is our policy to allow people to use their personal assistive devices to access our services.” As part of the [accessible customer service audit](#) (refer to Section 5.1 Formal Feedback Processes), ensure notice is posted in the front office and/or reception area(s) of all Board buildings indicating that the use of assistive devices are welcomed.

## 5.3 Support Persons

### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Welcome all persons with disabilities who are required to be accompanied by a support person and ensure that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.2a](#)); and

Ensure that staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public receive training in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.2b](#)).

Ensure that notice is given in advance for any cost associated with the support person’s admission to any Board-related events ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.2e](#)).

### Leadership and Responsibility

- Superintendents, Principals, Managers and Supervisors,
- Frontline staff (e.g., clerical, secretarial, administrative support), and
- All other staff who deal with the public.

### Compliance and Implementation

#### Each School Year (2020-2025)

##### Communication Plan

- As part of the [Accessible Feedback Communication Plan](#), include and/or review information and training refreshers about visitors with disabilities who need a support person to access Board programs, services and/or facilities.

## 5.4 Service Animals

### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Welcome all visitors with disabilities to Board administrative buildings who are required to be accompanied by a service animal and ensure that they are permitted to keep the service animal with them, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.3a](#));

Ensure that staff who deal with the public receive customer service training in how to interact with persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.3b](#)); and

Review [Board Procedure #662.14, Student Use of Guide Dogs, Service Dogs or Service Animals](#) which outlines the process to be followed if an application is made to have a guide dog, service dog or service animal support the disability-related learning needs of a student while they are attending school or a school-related event ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.3c](#)).

### Leadership and Responsibility

- Student Services,
- Superintendents, Principals, Managers and Supervisors,
- Frontline staff (e.g., clerical, secretarial, administrative support), and
- All other staff who deal with the public.

### Compliance and Implementation

**Service Animal Procedure:** During the **2019-2020 school year**, the HRCO supported Student Services in creating [Board Procedure #662.14, Student Use of Guide Dogs, Service Dogs or Service Animals](#), and to ensure alignment with Policy #407.0, Accessibility as well as applicable legislation. Ministerial direction for this procedure was provided through [Policy/Program Memorandum No. 163 \(PPM 163\): School Board Policies on Service Animals](#).

### Each School Year (2020-2025)

#### Communication Plan

- As part of the [Accessible Feedback Communication Plan](#), include information and training refreshers about the use of service animals for people with disabilities; and

- Make sure to clearly distinguish between the Board's position on welcoming service animals in any Board administrative buildings (as required under the AODA) and applying for a service animal accommodation in school through [Board Procedure #662.14](#) (as required by PPM 163).

## 5.5 Disruption of Services

### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Ensure that a Disruption of Service Notice is posted in an openly visible location at the site when services normally provided to a person with a disability are temporarily unavailable ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.4a](#)); and

Ensure that the notice of disruption includes information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available ([Procedure #407.1, s. 3.2.4c](#)).

### Leadership and Responsibility

- Plant Services, and
- Corporate Communications.

### Compliance and Implementation

#### Each School Year (2020-2025)

##### 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.

## 6.0 Information and Communication Standards

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### 6.1 Accessible Websites and Web Content

#### Accessibility Commitment(s)

Make all internet websites and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) ([Procedure #407.2, s. 3.2](#)).

#### Leadership and Responsibility

- Corporate Communications,
- Information Technology Services (ITS),
- Human Rights Commissioner's Office (HRCO), and
- Web content contributors.

#### Compliance and Implementation

##### 2020-2021 School Year

##### New Accessible 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 2.1 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 website to a more accessible contrast ratio (from WCAG 2.1 Level AA to AAA).

## Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Formats (PDFs)\*

Adobe now uses a named user licensing model whereby Adobe software is now assigned to individual emails. As a result, an informal needs assessment was conducted during the **2019-2020 school year** to determine how and to what extent various departments use and rely on PDFs in their daily work.

- 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<sup>12</sup> 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 other general issues with PDFs (e.g., not designed for digital use, navigation and orientation issues, harder to update, etc.).<sup>13</sup>

## Accessible Content Capacity Building

- Refocus efforts and education on source content and documents (instead of relying on the Adobe accessibility check and report tools) with the goal of building capacity across the system to create more accessible content (refer to [Accessibility Resource Hub](#) in section 6.2 Accessibility Awareness for Educators); 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)

During the **2019-2020 school year**, the Board completed an evaluation process for a new SIS that involved stakeholder consultations, subject matter experts and product demos. In

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<sup>12</sup> Prior to the new website launch, there were approximately 58,000 PDFs uploaded on the Board website. Approximately 20% of these PDFs were accessible based on the Siteimprove accessibility checker.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, N. (2018, July 16). [Why GOV.UK content should be published in HTML and not PDF](#).

March 2020, the Board announced that PowerSchool was approved as the new SIS with a multi-year implementation plan to follow.

- For the **2020-2021 school year**, conclude negotiations of the 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.

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **Accessible BWW Redesign**

- Begin process of redesigning the Board Wide Web (BWW) with considerations for accessibility and in compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA.

### **New Accessible SIS Launch**

- Deploy PowerSchool's SIS to YRDSB schools in compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA, starting with elementary schools at the start of the school year cycle and then secondary schools in the second half of the school year.

### **Website Monitoring and Evaluation (each school year)**

- Continue to monitor public facing websites and web content for WCAG compliance, and continue to provide staff training to new content contributors, as required.

### **Adobe Acrobat PDFs**

- Develop a resource cautioning the use of PDFs and with best practice alternatives options to support staff in creating more accessible online content for people with and without disabilities (to be added to the to [Accessibility Resource Hub](#));
- Actively monitor the number of PDFs uploaded onto Board websites and continue to encourage content contributors to place information directly onto Board websites as HTML content, where possible, instead of uploading PDFs;

- Publish the Adobe Acrobat communication plan at the beginning of the school year, and continue to assess Adobe Acrobat software requests and distribute software based on established criteria; and
- Review the communication plan following the end of the school year, update as needed and finalize for dissemination in the following school year cycle.

## **2022-2023 School Year**

### **New Accessible BWW Launch**

- Launch a new employee-facing website – the Board Wide Web (BWW) – in compliance with the January 1, 2023 deadline; and
- Include similar accessibility features to those of the new public-facing website, including (but not limited to): accessible keyboard navigation, real-time accessibility tips for content contributors, and accessibility checker that generates weekly accessibility reports.

### **New SIS Post-Launch Assessment**

- Conduct an assessment and review of the new SIS by collecting feedback and actively working with the vendor to make adjustments, as required, with considerations for accessibility.

### **Adobe Acrobat PDFs**

- Actively monitor the number of PDFs uploaded onto Board websites and continue to encourage content contributors to place information directly onto Board websites as HTML content, where possible, instead of uploading PDFs.

## **2023-2024 School Year**

### **New Accessible BWW Post-Launch Assessment**

- Conduct an assessment and review of the new BWW by collecting feedback and actively working with the vendor to make adjustments, as required, with considerations for accessibility.

### **Adobe Acrobat PDFs**

- Actively monitor the number of PDFs uploaded onto Board websites and continue to encourage content contributors to place information directly onto Board websites as HTML content, where possible, instead of uploading PDFs.

## 6.2 Accessibility Awareness for Educators

### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Identify, develop and promote educational or training resources or materials in an accessible or conversion-ready format that takes into account the accessibility needs of the person with a disability ([Board Procedure #407.2, s. 3.3a](#)).

### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Curriculum and Instructional Services (Learning Design and Development),
- Human Rights Commissioner's Office, and
- Student Services.

### **Compliance and Implementation**

#### **2020-2021 School Year**

##### **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 (e.g., C3 and eProfs) to plan and deliver information and learning sessions that promote accessibility and AODA compliance among curriculum consultants and other educators; and
- Align objectives with those outlined in [section 4.4 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 (e.g., Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint) guidelines to support staff in creating slide decks that people with and without disabilities can access in a meaningful way; and
- 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 models of disability versus the traditional medical model).

## **IASR Education Standards**

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

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **Accessibility Resource Hub**

- Consolidate all existing AODA checklists/guidelines documents that exist across the system and in the BWV into more cohesive resources that are centrally located in the new accessibility resource hub;
- Develop additional best practice resources and guidelines to support staff in creating documents, content and other educational materials that are more accessible to people with and without disabilities; and
- Continue to build awareness about the accessibility resource hub.

## **Education Standards**

- Review the anticipated recommendations report for the proposed accessibility standard for K-12 education once posted for public review;
- Share and discuss the recommendations report with the AODA Advisory Committee and submit collective feedback to the standard development committee; and
- Begin to proactively develop strategies for implementing the proposed education standards.

## **2022-2023 School Year**

### **Awareness and Attitudes towards Accessibility**

- Ensure appropriate questions are still included in Board-administered surveys to collect longitudinal data on staff and students for determining the extent of any attitudinal shifts towards accessibility and disability (e.g., that recognizes the social models of disability versus the traditional medical model).

### **IASR Education Standards**

- Review and revise Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, as required, to incorporate and/or align anticipated education standards once passed into AODA legislation; and
- Communicate new accessibility standards for education to the system and begin implementation of education standards.

## **6.3 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

### **Accessibility Commitment**

All Board-approved information and communications shall be posted or provided in an accessible format and/or with appropriate communication supports for persons with disabilities. Notice shall also be given to the public that accessible formats are available upon request ([Procedure #407.2, s. 2](#));

Provide all emergency procedures, plans or public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports ([Procedure #407.2, s. 3.1](#));

In the capacity of its libraries provide, procure or acquire an accessible or conversion-ready format of print, digital or multimedia resources or materials for a person with a disability, upon request ([Procedure #407.2, s. 3.3c](#)); and

Provide student records and information on program and/or course requirements, availability and descriptions in an accessible format to persons with disabilities. ([Procedure #407.2, s. 3.4](#)).

## **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Corporate Communications,
- Curriculum and Instructional Services,
- Human Rights Commissioner's Office, and
- Student Services.

## **Compliance and Implementation**

### **2020-2021 School Year**

#### **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;
- Create and make available to the public in timely manner accessible versions of the Director's video messages in response to the COVID-19 shutdown 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);

- Convert all HRCO videos into accessible versions that include open captions, voice-over audio descriptions, sign language interpretations, as well as transcripts containing image descriptions as a media alternative; and
- Adopt and circulate the [Described and Captioned Media Program \(DCMP\) Captioning Key](#) as the standard and best practice for all videos captions.

### **Accessible Remote Learning and Training**

- Develop a best practice resource with accessible remote learning and training guidelines to support staff in making remote/online/virtual learning, training and information sessions more accessible to all learners and/or participants (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.

### **Annual Checklists (each school year)**

- Condense the full Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020 to 2025 into an annual checklist version that outlines the accessibility plans and objectives for the given school year.

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **Accessible Format Board Policies**

- Continue systematic process of updating all policies and procedures into an accessible format as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle (with a goal of remediating 50% of Board policies into accessible PDF documents); and
- Receive approval to begin supporting creation of plain language guides for additional Board policies as an alternate format and more reader- and user-friendly versions of the full policy documents (refer to [Plain Language Guide](#) in section 4.1 Accessibility Policy).

### **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
- Redesign existing school newsletter templates as an accessible format for schools that choose to continue distributing PDF versions of school newsletters.

### **Accessible Libraries**

- Engage with new teacher librarians and library technicians to continue to build capacity around the expectations of requests for alternate formats, accessing alternative formats, accessible school library websites are included as part of the website redesign).

## **2022-2023 School Year**

### **Accessible Format Board Policies**

- Continue systematic process of updating all policies and procedures into an accessible format as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle (with a goal of remediating 75% of Board policies into accessible PDF documents).

### **Accessible School Newsletters / Blogs**

- Ensure all school have capacity to create accessible school newsletters (refer to [Accessible Customer Service Audits](#) in section 5.1 Formal Feedback Processes); and
- Develop a process for determining how many school have adopted the blog feature on the new school websites as web-based alternative to traditional school newsletters.

## **2023-2024 School Year**

### **Accessible Format Board Policies**

- Continue systematic process of updating all policies and procedures into accessible format as part of the Board's four-year policy review cycle (with a goal of remediating 100% of Board policies into accessible PDF documents).

## 7.0 Standards for the Built Environment

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### 7.1 AODA Design of Public Spaces

#### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Ensure that all new schools and Board administrative buildings as well as those undergoing major renovations are designed to facilitate access for persons with disabilities ([Procedure #407.3, s. 3.2](#)).

#### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Plant Services,
- Planning Services, and
- Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee.

#### **Compliance and Implementation**

##### **Each School Year (2020 to 2025)**

##### **Exterior Spaces**

- Ensure all new and redeveloped exterior paths of travel (including walkways, ramps and stairs) are designed and constructed in or beyond compliance with [Ontario Regulation 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 [Ontario Regulation 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).
- School staff identify areas needing preventative or emergency maintenance through the work order system. Work orders are sent to the maintenance department, or send it to the Assistant Manager of Construction and Maintenance to address. School caretakers use high visible paint to identify unsafe walkways until repaired. For play spaces, the school will put up caution tape to cordon off the play space that is not safe, until repaired. Template “Disruption Notice” signs are also used by schools and Board office buildings, including for disruption of entrance door accessibility, building elevators and washrooms.

## 7.2 Ontario Building Code Barrier-Free Design

### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Ensure that all new schools and Board administrative buildings as well as those undergoing renovations are designed to conform to the requirements of the current Ontario Building Code, including provisions such as, but not limited to: entrances, elevators, ramps, special washrooms, designated accessible parking spaces, exterior lighting, and accessibility signs ([Procedure #407.3, s. 3.3](#)).

### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Plant Services, and
- Planning Services.

### **Compliance and Implementation**

#### **2020-2021 School Year**

##### **Accessibility Projects (each school year)**

- 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 hardware modifications, ordering and replacing doors, frames and/or signage;

- Establish and prioritize plans on the Category 4 remaining schools and/or school floors identified with no single-use washroom available for conversion into an all-access washroom, and that will require an addition or major renovation; 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 two elementary (Stonehaven Public School and Michael Cranny Public School) and one secondary school (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.

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **All-Access Washroom Project**

- Begin construction and renovations to build all-access washrooms into Category 4 schools identified with no single-use washroom available for conversion into an all-access washroom.

### **Braille and High Contrast Signage Project (each school year moving forward)**

- Complete installation of braille and high contrast signage throughout priority schools as identified by Blind and Low Vision Services; 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.

### **Barrier Impact Analysis**

- Begin developing barrier impact analysis to assess ways in which students and staff are impacted by barriers to accessibility.

### **New Schools**

- Explore Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFAC) as a national rating system to measure and certify the level of meaningful access of new YRDSB schools and additions to schools identified in the Board's [Capital Strategy](#);

- Work with Plant and Planning Services to ensure all new schools meet and exceed Ontario Building Code regulations regarding accessibility and barrier-free design (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.8), including portable classrooms (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.9); and
- Ensure all new and replaced service counters for school and Board office front reception areas are designed and installed in compliance with [Ontario Regulation 191/11, section 80.40](#) to 80.42 under the AODA.

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **All-Access Washroom Project (each school year moving forward)**

- Continue construction and renovations to build all-access washrooms into Category 4 schools identified with no single-use washroom available for conversion into an all-access washroom.

## **2022-2023 School Year**

### **New School Replacement Location (E.J. Sands Public School)**

- Ensure [E.J. Sands Public School replacement location](#), as approved in 2015, meets and exceeds Ontario Building Code regulations regarding accessibility and barrier-free design (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.8), including portable classrooms (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.9).

## **2023-2024 School Year**

### **New School (Aurora 2C Elementary School)**

- Ensure the new elementary school, as approved in July 2020, to be located in northeast Aurora meets and exceeds Ontario Building Code regulations regarding accessibility and barrier-free design (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.8), including portable classrooms (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.9).

## **2024-2025 School Year**

### **New School Replacement Location (Dr. G.W. William's Secondary School)**

- Ensure [Dr. G. W. William's Secondary School replacement location](#), as approved in 2018, meets and exceeds Ontario Building Code regulations regarding accessibility and barrier-free design (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.8), including portable classrooms (O. Reg. 332/12, s. 3.9).

## 8.0 Employment Standards

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### 8.1 Accessible Employment

#### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment and promotion process, as detailed in [Board Policy and Procedure #532.0, Recruitment and Promotion](#) ([Procedure #407.4, s. 2a](#));

Inform employees of the policies and procedures used to support employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to [Board Policy and Procedure #218.0, Healthy Schools and Workplaces](#) ([Procedure #407.4, s. 2b](#)); and

Take into account the accessibility needs and any relevant workplace accommodation plans when conducting performance appraisals, considering career development and advancement, and/or carrying out staff re-deployment for employees with disabilities ([Procedure #407.4, s. 3.2d](#)).

#### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Human Resource Services, and
- Principals, Managers and Supervisors.

#### **Compliance and Implementation**

##### **2021-2022 School Year**

##### **Recruitment and Promotion Policy**

- Renew [Board Policy and Procedure #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 [Board 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 [Board 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 Satisfaction Tool**

- Analyze client satisfaction survey (completed in Summer 2019) and focus groups (completed in Fall 2019) data with the goal of better understanding client concerns and improving the overall Disability Management program; and
- Publish and communicate findings, implications and/or recommendations in a final report to inform and guide program improvements.

## **Candidate Support**

- Review all job postings to ensure only bona fide occupational requirements (e.g., a driver’s license) and educational credentials (e.g., a bachelor’s degree or equivalent education and experience) are included to reduce barriers to entry, consistent with Recommendations 14 and 15 of the Employment Equity Plan;
- Ensure that candidates are aware that they can request accommodation at each stage of the recruitment process by including a standardized accommodation statement in all communication with candidates; 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, including assistive devices, 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.

## 9.0 Transportation Standards

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### 9.1 Accessible Transportation

#### **Accessibility Commitment(s)**

Request transportation for students with disabilities as required and in following the procedural responsibilities as outlined in [Board Policy and Procedure #680, Student Transportation \(Procedure #407.5, s. 3.2a\)](#); and

Follow appropriate protocols for boarding, securement and debording of each student with a disability based on Personalized Transportation Plans as well as recommended best practices as outlined in the AODA ([Procedure #407.5, s. 3.3b](#)).

#### **Leadership and Responsibility**

- Student Services (Student Services Coordinators), and
- Student Transportation Services of York Region (STSYR).

#### **Compliance and Implementation**

##### **2020-2021 School Year**

##### **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)**

- Continue to 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.

## **2021-2022 School Year**

### **Accessible Transportation Forms and Documentation**

- Convert all required transportation forms and additional documentation (i.e., individual transportation plans) into accessible formats, and meet alternative format requests in a timely manner.

## **2022-2023 School Year**

### **Student Transportation Policy**

- Revise [Board Policy and Procedure #680.0, Student Transportation](#) as part of the policy review cycle to ensure language promoting accessible transportation are reflected throughout, and are aligned with [Board Procedure #407.5, Accessibility: Transportation Standards](#) as well as the AODA.

# Appendix A:

## AODA Advisory Subcommittees and Working Groups

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To best operationalize the work of the AODA Advisory Committee, a number of specialized subcommittees and working groups were created to advance various areas of accessibility at YRDSB:

- [Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee](#)
- [Student Services Subcommittee](#)
- [Human Resources Subcommittee](#)
- [Digital Media, Website Management & Learning Working Group \(D5G\)](#)
- [Curriculum Working Group](#)
- [Accessibility Policy Review Subcommittee \(ad hoc\)](#)

The Accessibility Officer acts as liaison between the HRCO and each subcommittee and working group within the AODA Advisory Committee.

### Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee

**Mandate:** The Barrier Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee operates primarily through Plant and Planning Services, and with the two-part objective of ensuring compliance with the AODA and all other relevant legislation:

1. **Barrier Buster:** Review, assess and resolve submissions received through the [Barrier Buster online reporting tool](#). Recommendations arising out of this review process are communicated the relevant Board staff for follow-up and/or implementation, as well as to the individual(s) who submitted the Barrier Buster reporting form. All Barrier Buster submissions are tracked chronologically and resulting accessibility work are reported in the HRCO Annual Accessibility Reports.
2. **Accessibility Projects:** Determine feasibility, timelines and implementation of initiatives to remove physical and/or structural barriers within the learning and working environments of YRDSB. Status reporting on all [accessibility \(pilot\) projects](#) related to the built environment are communicated through the Barriers Buster and Built Environment Subcommittee.

## Student Services Subcommittee

**Mandate:** The Student Services subcommittee is responsible for meeting the learning needs of students as outlined in the Special Education Plan through the development of accessible resources, programs, services and learning environments.

## Human Resources Subcommittee

**Mandate:** The Human Resources subcommittee is responsible for reviewing all aspects of human resources and employment at the Board including: recruitment, hiring, training, disability management, duty to accommodate, and any other accessibility issues that may impact the employee-employer relationship.

## Digital Media, Website Management & Learning Working Group (D5G)

**Mandate:** The Digital Media, Website Management & Learning Working Group (D5G) is responsible for AODA compliance with regard to all Board communications, Information Technology Services (ITS) and accessibility training requirements. These responsibilities include ensuring that all public-facing website and web content are compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

## Curriculum Working Group

**Mandate:** The Curriculum Working Group is responsible for promoting inclusive design and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) through the development and distribution of accessible multimedia resources, learning materials and curriculum across the system.

## Accessibility Policy Review Subcommittee (ad hoc)

**Mandate:** The Accessibility Policy Review subcommittee is responsible for reviewing Policy #407.0, Accessibility and Policy #425.0, Provision of Barrier-Free Facilities for the purpose of updating and consolidating them into one comprehensive accessibility policy.

Following formal approval at the February 2020 Policy and By-Law Committee meeting, the revised [Accessibility Policy #407](#) became the official policy for the Board. The mandate of the Accessibility Policy Review Subcommittee is now complete and **this ad hoc committee was formally disbanded at the May 7, 2020 AODA Advisory Committee meeting.**