

Annual Accessibility Plan



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**

2009 / 2010

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE *ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2001*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE ODA	3
DESCRIPTION OF THE WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD.....	3
THE WCDSB's SEVEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES	4
THE ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRAD EXPECTATIONS	4
ABOUT THIS PLAN	5
OBJECTIVES OF THIS PLAN	5
COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING	5
EXISTING BOARD POLICIES SUPPORTING ACCESSIBILITY	6
THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005	7
RECENT BARRIER REMOVAL INITIATIVES	7
SPECIFIC PROJECTS COMPLETED SINCE 2007	8
STUDENT DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURES	9
DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS	10
THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS	10
REVIEW AND MONITORING PROCESS	11
COMMUNICATION OF THEN PLAN	11
APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS – “DISABILITY” & “BARRIER”	12
APPENDIX B: REFERENCE MATERIALS / RESOURCES.....	13

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the *ODA* mandates that each school board prepare an annual accessibility plan.

The *Accessibility Working Group* of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) prepared the initial 2004/05 plan. This plan described the measures that the Waterloo Catholic District School Board had taken in the past as well as proposed future measures to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

This current plan builds on the early work of the *Accessibility Working Group* and supports continued growth in the area of accessibility. WCDSB is committed to the continual improvement of access to school premises, facilities, and services for students and staff with disabilities; the participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual access plans; and the provision of quality services to all students, parents, employees, and members of the community with disabilities.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Each year, every school board in Ontario is required to prepare an accessibility plan and consult with persons with disabilities and others in preparing the plan. The plan must “*address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities in the organization’s by-laws, if any, and in its policies, programs, practices and services*” and must include the following:

- √ a report on the measures the organization has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
- √ the measures in place to ensure that the organization assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- √ a list of the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the organization will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities;
- √ the measures that the organization intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

ABOUT THE WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

The Waterloo County Catholic Separate School Board was formed in 1969 -- amalgamating the separate school boards that serviced what are now the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo and the townships of Wilmot, Wellesley, Woolwich, and North Dumfries.

With the advent of student focused funding in 1998 the Board was renamed the Waterloo Catholic District School Board but still provides Catholic education to the same 1,345 square kilometer area in which its students reside.

Today, the WCDSB is the eighth largest Catholic school system in Ontario, representing more than 100,000 Catholic school supporters, operating 52 schools and five adult education facilities and serving more than 40,000 elementary, secondary and continuing education students in

Waterloo Region – continuing a tradition of quality, inclusive, faith-based education first begun in 1836.

The Board employs 3,500 full & part-time staff and welcomes students from more than 114 countries who speak 70 different languages. The Board's Newcomer Reception Centre assists in making Waterloo Region's Catholic Schools accessible to all.

THE WCDSB'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board's seven Guiding Principles play a key role in informing the Board's efforts to increase and maintain accessibility. The seven Guiding Principles are:

HOLISM -- awareness that all life is interrelated and interdependent. It emphasizes the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual dimensions of each individual.

LIFELONG LEARNING -- recognizing the natural capacity of all people to learn and grow throughout their lives.

EQUITY -- the fundamental truth that all people deserve respect, dignity, and fair treatment. In a Catholic educational community, equity derives from the respect, dignity, and reverence due all persons as created in the image of God, redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

COLLABORATION -- working together in a spirit of mutual trust and co-operation for the common good. It empowers all members to contribute their unique gifts.

EXCELLENCE -- the promotion of high expectations and standards of performance. Accountability is the individual and collective responsibility to meet these high expectations and standards of performance.

REFLECTION -- the process of thinking, examining and evaluating ideas, actions or situations.

RECONCILIATION -- the healing act of restoring harmony after divisiveness in one's life and in one's personal and communal relationships.

THE ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

Like the WCDSB's seven Guiding Principles, the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations also play an important role in developing caring and conscientious citizens. Graduates of Waterloo Region's Catholic Schools are **expected** to be:

DISCERNING BELIEVERS -- formed in the Catholic Faith community who celebrate the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection, and moral living.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS -- who speak, write and listen honestly and sensitively, responding critically in the light of gospel values.

REFLECTIVE, CREATIVE AND HOLISTIC THINKERS -- who solve problems and make responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.

SELF-DIRECTED, RESPONSIBLE, LIFELONG LEARNERS -- who develop and demonstrate

their God-given potential.

COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTORS -- who find meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.

CARING FAMILY MEMBERS -- who attend to family, school, parish, and the wider community.

RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS -- who give witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice, and the sacredness of human life.

ABOUT THIS PLAN

This plan describes the Waterloo Catholic District School Board's commitment to establishing inclusionary policies for students, staff, and the public and to identifying and preventing barriers. The basis for this process is rooted in the **Board's mission**: "To educate and nurture hope in every learner to achieve their full potential to transform God's world" and the **Board's vision**: "Heart of the community – success for each; a place for all".

OBJECTIVES OF THIS PLAN

To ensure compliance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, this plan:

- √ describes the process by which the WCDSB identifies, prevents, and removes barriers for people with disabilities;
- √ reviews earlier efforts at the WCDSB to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities;
- √ lists Board policies that are being implemented and regularly reviewed;
- √ describes procedures for student disability accommodations;
- √ describes how the Board makes this accessibility plan available to the public; and,
- √ describes how the Board is addressing attitudinal barriers at all sites.

WCDSB's COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board is committed to:

- √ developing and publishing an annual accessibility plan;
- √ consulting with people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plan;
- √ ensuring school board policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility; and,
- √ improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community.

EXISTING BOARD POLICIES & PROCEDURES SUPPORTING ACCESSIBILITY

Board Operational & Procedural By-law – Section 4 (Delegations)	By-law
Board Policy IV 002 – Treatment of the Public	Policy
Board Policy IV 003 – Treatment of Students	Policy
Board Policy IV 004 – Treatment of Staff	Policy
Board Policy IV 010 – Facilities & Accommodations	Policy
Communication Guidelines for Parents & Staff	APC001
Promotion / Retention	APC006
Visitors to Schools & Access to School Premises	APC007
Access to Pupils	APC010
Access to Students in Crisis	APC011
Elementary School Policy for Assessment, Evaluation, Grading & Reporting	APC022
Bullying Prevention & Intervention	APC034
Proposed Alterations and/or Renovations	APF003
Addition / Removal of Portables at School Sites	APF004
Maintenance Repairs	APF005
Safe Arrival and Departure Program	APH001
Allergies of Students and Staff to Painting and Carpeting	APH003
Administration of Oral Medication to Students	APH004
Anaphylaxis / Severe Allergic Reactions	APH005
Emergency Planning and Procedures	APH013
Interim Diabetes Management Guidelines	APH015
Wellness	APH018
Use of Guide Dogs in Schools	APH020
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)	APS018
Adult Students Learning Sites	APO002
Purchasing Procedures	APO006
Home / Hospital Instruction	APO020
Employee Workplace Harassment / Discrimination Prevention Policy	APS024
Occupational Health and Safety	APS025
Gender Equity	APS027
Smoke Free Environment	APS028
Antiracism and Ethno-cultural Equity	APS031
Catholic School Councils	APSC001

THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005

The purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025, by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. The *Act* also provides for the involvement of people with disabilities, representatives of sectors of the economy and the Government of Ontario in the development of accessibility standards.

Under the *Act*, school boards will have to meet certain accessibility standards in five important areas:

- √ customer service;
- √ transportation;
- √ information and communications;
- √ built environment; and,
- √ employment.

Ontario Regulation 429/07 (Accessibility Standards for Customer Service) requires school boards to (by January, 2010) develop and publish customer service policies that cover accessibility issues pertaining to members of the public. Policies must be developed in five specific areas:

- √ Monitoring and Feedback on Accessible Customer Service;
- √ Notification of Disruption of Service;
- √ Use of Assistive Devices by the General Public;
- √ Use of Service Animals by the General Public;
- √ Use of Support Persons by the General Public.

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board's *Customer Service Policy* under the *AODA* is provided in a separate document.

RECENT BARRIER REMOVAL INITIATIVES

During the last several years, there have been a number of informal initiatives at the WCDSB to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. Accessibility issues are normally addressed in the course of other maintenance projects for maximum efficiency and cost savings due to the strictures of the provincial funding model.

Accessibility has been facilitated with the inclusion of automatic door openers on major school interior and exterior doorways, elevators in all secondary schools with multiple stories, ramps for all school front and rear access points, accessible washrooms, audio and visual emergency alarm systems, and tactile and high-contrast signage.

Attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities are being addressed through staff and student inservice about diversity, rewriting diversity policy/procedures, and examining other policies and procedures for barriers to accessibility.

The designs of new schools have architectural features that incorporate principles of universal design as much as possible and renovations to existing buildings have accessibility for people with disabilities automatically addressed in the plans.

Communicating in a variety of formats has been accomplished on a limited basis – most

particularly with regard to the Boards website (www.wcdsb.ca) which has a built-in language translation function and has served more than 10 million pages since 2005 -- and this area will continue to be addressed in future plans.

SPECIFIC PROJECTS COMPLETED SINCE 2007

- √ Website Accessibility Enhancements -- following the *World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)*. Every effort has been made to follow the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)* to Priority Level 2.
- √ APS 024 -- Employee Workplace Harassment/Discrimination Prevention Policy
- √ APH 018 – Wellness Policy
- √ APH 020 – Policy on Use of Guide Dogs in Schools

In addition to the above, several important facilities projects were completed during the 2008-2009 school year that had an impact on accessibility. Each project was completed in accordance with both the *ODA* and the *Ontario Building Code* – and the Board's official records were updated accordingly.

HARDWARE

At Monsignor Haller CES, St. Daniel CES and St Michael CES: all existing dome or daffodil type handles were removed and replaced with "Lever Action" type hardware.

EXTERIOR DOORS

At Monsignor Haller CES all exterior doors were removed and replaced with new exit hardware.

WASHROOM RENOVATIONS

At St. Ambrose CES and Monsignor Haller CES all student washrooms were removed and renovated with new wall tiles, washroom stalls, lights and paint. Included in these renovations was the addition of a barrier free stall in both the male and female washrooms.

At St. Aloysius CES a new barrier free washroom was built including a lift track to help lift students out of their wheelchairs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ROOMS

At St. Daniel CES an asphalt ramp was placed at the exit door in a classroom so a student in a wheelchair had easier access to the outside. In addition, crosswalk markings and speed bumps were installed between the school and the church to ensure safe passage.

At Monsignor Doyle CSS a special quiet room was built for the needs of a new student who has special needs, including his own computer which is protected in a Plexiglas cabinet.

At Holy Spirit CES a special quiet room was created by relocating some staff and using the available room as the new quiet room. The staff work room was reconfigured including new millwork to accommodate this change.

LINE MARKING

At St. Mary's H.S. and St. Agnes CES new parking lines were painted including a barrier free location with symbol.

At Holy Rosary CES and Blessed Sacrament CES sidewalk repairs were completed to restore the barrier free access to original condition and lines were repainted including a barrier free location with symbol at Holy Rosary.

At Sir Edgar Bauer CES an additional ramp was installed in support of the existing program and children.

At St. Teresa (Elmira) CES the parking lot was reconfigured to create a new 'kiss n drop' area and new parking lines were painted including a barrier free location with symbol and directional arrows for traffic.

At St. Francis (Kitchener) the parking lot was restored, speed bumps were installed and new parking lines were painted including a barrier free location with symbol on both the school and the church lot.

At Blessed Kateri CES new parking lines were painted including a barrier free location with symbol, a drop off area and directional arrows for buses and traffic.

At St. Teresa (Kitchener) CES and St Brigid CES new parking lines were painted including a barrier free location with symbol and directional arrows for traffic.

At the Catholic Education Centre sidewalks were completed to restore the barrier free access to original condition and safety barriers were installed to protect pedestrians from traffic.

SIGNAGE

At all schools, handicap parking, fire route and no parking signs were inspected and defects corrected.

STUDENT DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION PROCEDURES

These procedures generally apply to the accommodation of student disabilities not addressed through the *Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)* process. However, each student requiring accommodation due to a disability must be considered, assessed, and accommodated individually.

The following philosophy of disability accommodation shall apply:

- √ Students ideally attend school in a barrier-free environment;
- √ Accommodation is to facilitate the student's achievement of the applicable learning requirements and/or to facilitate the student's participation in the learning environment;
- √ The responsibility for providing accommodation rests with the Board; the student and the parent/guardian are responsible to request accommodation and to cooperate in the provision of accommodation;
- √ The needs of students with disabilities are to be accommodated in a manner that respects their dignity;

- √ There is no set formula for accommodation – each individual has unique needs and it is important to consult with the student and his or her parent/guardian;
- √ Taking responsibility and showing willingness to explore solutions is a key part of treating people respectfully and with dignity;
- √ Specialized transportation appropriate to student needs will be provided.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

The student and/or parent/guardian of a student with a disability is required to:

- √ Request accommodation of a disability under these procedures to the principal (although the principal need not necessarily know what the disability is);
- √ Make the student's needs known to the best of their abilities, preferably in writing, in order that the principal may make the requested accommodation;
- √ Answer questions or provide information regarding relevant restrictions or limitations, including information from health care professionals, where appropriate, and as needed;
- √ Participate in discussions regarding possible accommodation solutions;
- √ Cooperate with any experts whose assistance is required to manage the accommodation process or when information is required that is unavailable to the student with a disability;
- √ Work with the principal/teacher on an ongoing basis to manage the accommodation process;
- √ Discuss the student's disability only with persons who need to know; this may include the teacher(s), school administration, school superintendent, and/or other Board personnel.

The Board is required to:

- √ Accept the request for accommodation in good faith, unless there are legitimate reasons for acting otherwise;
- √ Obtain expert opinion or advice where needed;
- √ Take an active role in ensuring that alternative approaches and possible accommodation solutions are investigated and canvass various forms of possible accommodation and alternative solutions, as part of the duty to accommodate;
- √ Keep a record of the accommodation request and action taken;
- √ Maintain confidentiality;
- √ Limit requests for information to those reasonably related to the nature of the limitation or restriction so as to be able to respond to the accommodation request;
- √ Grant accommodation requests in a timely manner, to the point of undue hardship, even when the request for accommodation does not use any specific formal language.

ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

1. The parent/guardian (or the student – if 18 years of age) discusses the issue of student's need for disability accommodation with the Principal.

2. Specific barriers should be identified in writing and provided to the Principal, along with possible solutions to remove the barriers.
3. The Principal shall share the accommodation request with the classroom teacher(s).
4. In many cases, the classroom teacher(s) will be able to make the required accommodation informally as requested. In such cases, the teacher shall advise the Principal in writing that the accommodation has been arranged.
5. In other cases, the parent/guardian (or the student – if 18 years of age) and designated school administrator shall work to determine and implement the appropriate accommodation for the student. In the event additional resources are requested in order to provide accommodation, the school administrator shall investigate in a timely manner whether the resources are available.

REVIEW AND MONITORING PROCESS

The plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary annually by the Office of the Director of Education.

COMMUNICATION OF THE PLAN

Copies of this plan are available in the Principal's office at all schools and on the Board's Web site at www.wcdsb.ca. On request, the report will be made available in alternative formats.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS – “DISABILITY” & “BARRIER”

What is a Disability?

The ODA adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. “Disability” is:

- √ any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes 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;
- √ a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- √ a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- √ a mental disorder; or,
- √ an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, 1997.

What is a Barrier?

A “barrier” is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Examples of Types of Barriers

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heavy doors at entrances and in building interiors.• Doorknobs that must be twisted.• Narrow library or cafeteria aisles.• Benches and tables too high in science laboratories.
Architectural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.• A portable/modular classroom that does not have an accessible washroom.
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typefaces too small to be read by a person with low vision.• Décor which may be confusing or disorienting for disabled pupils with visual impairments.• Signage that is confusing or inadequate.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An employee who talks loudly when addressing a person who is deaf.• School communications to parents are not provided in accessible formats.
Attitudinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff who ignore students/visitors who have disabilities or speak only to the people accompanying them.• Students with disabilities who are socially isolated and bullied.

Barrier Type	Example
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical wiring that is inadequate to support the various versions of assistive instructional technology. • Science laboratory materials placed too high (e.g., microscopes) or requiring the use of two hands.
Policy/Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly, or at all. • School teaching and non-teaching staff and students are not encouraged to share a philosophy of inclusion. • School board workplace policies do not accommodate the needs of persons with mental illness

APPENDIX B: REFERENCE MATERIALS / RESOURCES

AccessON -- Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services

www.accesson.ca/ado/splash.htm

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_01o32_e.htm

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm

The Ontario Human Rights Commission

www.ohrc.on.ca/en