

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2018 - 2023



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education



(Available at www.wcdsb.ca/about-us/accessibility/ and all WCDSB locations.
Available in accessible formats upon request to the WCDSB head office.)

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

In the 21st century, with the world changing minute by minute in new and often bewildering ways, it's a bold statement for any school system to claim its schools are at the very "heart of the community" they serve. It's an even bolder statement to say those same schools offer "success for each" and "a place for all". But that's what Waterloo Region's Catholic Schools have been doing since 1836.

One of the reasons for our success over many decades, has been our focus on inclusivity in our schools. In fact, it is our policy to provide an environment in all of our facilities that fosters independence, dignity and respect. We are committed to providing services that are free of barriers and biases to our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff. We strive to ensure that the principle of equity of opportunity is reflected and valued in our learning and working environments. We are therefore deeply committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have the same opportunity of access to our services in a similar way as these services are available to all others we serve.

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the progress we have made since 2012 in removing barriers to access and describes the steps we plan to take going forward.

Our commitment to providing a “quality, **inclusive**, faith-based education” remains as strong as ever.

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

ABOUT THE WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

The **Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB)** is the eighth largest Catholic District School Board in Ontario, serving the ratepayers and students of Waterloo Region. The school system traces its history back more than 180 years, to the opening in 1836 of the first local Catholic schools.

The **Waterloo County Catholic Separate School Board** was formed in 1969 -- amalgamating the 12 independent Catholic 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.

In 2017-18, WCDSB has 44 elementary schools, five secondary schools, a four-campus Adult and Continuing Education program serving more than 13,000 adult learners, and an alternative education high school serving approximately 65 students via various programs.

There are 99 different languages spoken in Waterloo Region's Catholic schools, representing students from 100 nations. Waterloo Region is the fourth area of choice for new Canadians. Accordingly, within our current enrolment, a significant number of students come from homes where English is not the first language. It is not a stretch to say Waterloo Region's Catholic schools literally welcome the world to Catholic education.

INTRODUCTION AND POLICY STATEMENT

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.

The purpose of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) is to improve accessibility standards for Ontarians with physical and mental disabilities to all public establishments by 2025.

The purpose of this [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2018-2023](#), is to provide a public accounting of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board's (WCDSB) compliance with the AODA, as well as to provide an overview of projected or planned public accessibility initiatives across the school system.

It is the policy of the WCDSB to provide an environment in all of its facilities that fosters independence, dignity and respect. This policy is reflected in the Board's **Vision Statement** -- "Heart of the Community - Success for Each; A Place for All" -- as well as in the Board's **Public Tagline**: "Quality, Inclusive, Faith-Based Education".

The WCDSB is committed to providing services that are free of barriers and biases to our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff. We strive to ensure that the principle of equity of opportunity is reflected and valued in our learning and working environments. Our conduct has and will continue to demonstrate our belief in the strength that diversity brings to our communities. Therefore, appropriate training will be provided to ensure all Board staff, all individuals who participate in developing the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision the Board's services, and all individuals who regularly volunteer their services in school settings, know their responsibilities under the AODA and act accordingly.

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan aligns with the following WCDSB [Policies and Administrative Procedures](#):

Policies

- IV 001** – General Executive Limitation
- IV 002** – Treatment of the Public
- IV 003** – Treatment of Students
- IV 004** – Treatment of Staff
- IV 006** – Legal Responsibilities and Liabilities
- IV 009** – Asset Protection
- IV 010** – Facilities / Accommodations

Administrative Procedures

APC 037 -- Equity and Inclusive Education

APF 003 -- Proposed Alterations and/or Renovations to Schools, Grounds and other Board Facilities

APH 020 -- Service Dogs

APO 001 -- The Use of Volunteers in a School Setting

APO 006 -- Purchasing Procedures

APO 012 -- Transportation

ONGOING COMPLIANCE WITH THE INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

[Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) -- establishes accessibility standards in each of the following five areas: information and communications, employment, transportation, the design of public spaces and customer service.

Since the implementation of the Accessibility Standards, the board has filed four mandated compliance reports with the Ontario Government (March, 2010, August, 2012, September, 2015 and November, 2017). The Board reported full compliance in all cases.

To summarize those reports, the Board has and continues to take the following actions in each of the five Integrated Accessibility Standards categories:

Information and Communications

- Creates new internet websites and the content therein to conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A;
- Upon request, provides, procures or acquires by other means accessible or conversion ready formats of print, digital or multimedia resources for persons with disabilities;
- Upon request, ensures that feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging accessible formats or communication supports;
- Provides accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner and at no more than the cost for other persons who ask for the same information;
- Upon request, provides emergency procedures, plans and public safety information that it makes available to the public, in an accessible format.

Employment

- Notifies employees and the public about the availability of accommodations in employee recruitment processes;
- Upon request, provides employees with disabilities information in accessible formats or with communication supports;
- Provides employees with updated information about its policies to support employees with disabilities;
- Provides individualized emergency response information for employees that require it and reviews the information in accordance with the Employment Standards;
- Maintains a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities;
- Maintains a documented return to work process for employees who were absent due to a disability or require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

Transportation

- Ensures that integrated accessible school transportation services are provided for students with disabilities and provides alternative accessible transportation when integrated transportation is not possible for students with disabilities.

Design of Public Spaces

- Ensures the requirements of the AODA are taken into account in the design and construction of all new buildings and renovation projects. As part of the Board's commitment to accessibility and inclusion, construction / renovation projects may also include installation of accessibility features not required by the AODA.
- Ensures all new or redeveloped off-street parking facilities meet all appropriate AODA requirements;
- Ensures all new or redeveloped service counters meet all appropriate AODA requirements;
- Ensures all new or redeveloped exterior paths of travel meet all appropriate AODA requirements;
- Provides for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements of public spaces, including provisions to address temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order.

Customer Service

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board is committed to training all staff and volunteers in accessible customer service, other Ontario's accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities. In addition, we will train:

- a) all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- b) all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization

Training of our employees and volunteers on accessibility relates to their specific roles.

We train every person as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to the policies."

In addition, the WCDSB:

- Posts notices at a conspicuous place on Board premises, on the Board website, or by other reasonable methods, of any temporary disruption in facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access the Board's services -- including the reason, duration and any alternatives available;
- Permits people with disabilities to enter the parts of Board premises that are open to the public with their support person, and provides notice of any fee charged for the support person;
- Permits people with disabilities to keep their service animals with them on the parts of Board premises that are open to the public, except where the animal is excluded by law;
- Provides a process to receive and respond to feedback on how the Board's services are provided to people with disabilities;
- Ensures appropriate training is provided to all staff who deal with members of the public, as well as to every person who participates in developing the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of services to members of the public. This training also extends to individuals who regularly volunteer their services in school settings.

All employees were trained when the standard was introduced during 2013-14.

Subsequent to the first 'bulk' training, AODA training became a standard mandatory training requirement as part of each new employee's on-boarding program.

Training for new employees is ongoing, not on a fixed date.

A database documenting the individual training dates of all staff, is maintained by the school board.

Training is completed via video modules provided by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities – Teachable Project, and the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

General AODA training provides instruction on the following:

~~ How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.

~~ How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.

~~ What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods, services or facilities.

Additionally, certain staff who may from time to time need to use specialized assistive devices to aid members of the public in availing themselves of school board premises and services, receive the required training.

The school board also uses a variety of Administrative Procedures Memoranda to assist staff in providing required access and services to the public. These are found on the WCDSB website at: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/about-us/policies-and-administrative-procedures/>

Finally, all of the above is governed by a robust set of Board Policies, likewise found on the WCDSB website at: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/about-us/policies-and-administrative-procedures/>

OVERVIEW OF ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES: 2012 - 2017

During the period 2012 to 2017, a number of initiatives were undertaken to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. Accessibility issues are routinely addressed in the course of ongoing maintenance projects for maximum efficiency and cost savings, and the designs of new schools and renovations automatically address the accessibility needs of the community. The following list of accomplishments -- and plans moving forward from 2018 -- demonstrates the school board's commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities under the AODA:

Hardware

Twenty-nine schools have had door operator hardware upgraded to AODA standards. This means all areas in those schools accessible to staff and students now have AODA-approved lever style handles. There are 18 more schools either fully, or partially, requiring this upgrade -- five of which are scheduled for the 2017-18 school year.

Concurrent with these upgrades, accessible power door operators have been installed at 36 schools. The operators are placed either at the front door, or the door closest to the accessible parking spaces. Eleven WCDSB schools still require power door operators. In all cases where a new student requiring accessible door hardware attends a school that has not yet been retrofitted, the required changes are made immediately. In 2017, two schools made unscheduled upgrades to assist students with special needs. The remaining schools are scheduled to receive their retrofits during the life of this plan.

Doors

Since 2012, all new additions and new schools have had doors built to accommodate the AODA clear opening size. Additionally, all retrofits are completed to, wherever structurally possible, meet the clear opening size parameters. Retrofits to public spaces, learning commons (libraries) and offices are always completed to meet the requirements. All doors that are replaced (or in new construction to classrooms and public spaces) have viewing panes to allow maximum visibility.

Conveying systems

All WCDSB schools, with the exception of the following, either have AODA-compliant conveying systems, or do not require them (i.e. they are built on one floor):

St Anne CES, Kitchener: In the original part of the building (constructed in 1947) there is a three-floor section that is not accessible. The majority of the school -- including the library and gym -- have been retrofitted to be fully AODA compliant.

St. Clement CES, St. Clements: This school (re-built in 1965, replacing the original 1904 building) has several levels, and at this time is not AODA compliant. A request to the Ontario government for funding to replace the school is currently pending.

Washroom Renovations

Since 2012, all schools have been upgraded with either a dedicated accessible washroom or, in some cases, an accessible stall in the male / female washrooms. There is an accessible sink in all locations. Additionally, Universal Washrooms have been installed in five schools, with two more schools scheduled for installations in 2017-18.

Line Marking and Painting

All WCDSB schools (with the exception of St. Clement CES) – and all WCDSB administrative sites -- have been outfitted with dedicated accessible parking spots, including line markings and required signage for identification. The spots are located at the closest possible proximity to an accessible door. All spots are sized correctly for code compliance.

Signage

Since 2015, all WCDSB schools that have undergone major renovations or construction have received new AODA compliant signage. Signage will be upgraded at an additional five schools in 2017-18, and all schools will have compliant signage by 2022.

Finishes

The requirements of the AODA with regard to finishes have become WCDSB standards. All flooring projects since 2012 have used contrasting colours for base/ flooring. Tactile rubber flooring at stairwells is also installed, where possible. Special emphasis has been placed on minimizing trip hazards and bumps at joints between dissimilar materials, to allow smooth transitions from room to room.

Water filling stations

Since 2012, all WCDSB schools have been outfitted with at least one accessible drinking fountain -- in 90% of the cases, also incorporating a water bottle filling station.

PLANNED / PROJECTED ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES: 2018 - 2023

The planned / projected accessibility initiatives known at the writing of this plan are described in the section above. Future plans and projections regarding accessibility will be described in the school board's annual [Capital Renewal Plan](#).

END