



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

# **MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

2024-2029

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Developed in accordance with the  
*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities  
Act.*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

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At the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB), we are deeply committed to providing a high-quality, inclusive, and faith-based education system. Guided by our pastoral plan and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, we strive to foster an environment where every student feels supported in their growth, both spiritually and academically.

We continue to measure the success of our system through tools like our Multi-Year Strategic Plan, ensuring that we remain focused on delivering a well-rounded educational experience for our students and fostering a healthy, inclusive work environment for our employees. Central to our mission is the commitment to inclusivity, which remains at the core of everything we do.

As part of this commitment, we recognize the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities are not only represented but fully accommodated within our sites. We understand that a truly inclusive environment is one where every individual, regardless of ability, feels valued and has equitable access to opportunities and resources.

This multi-year accessibility plan marks a continuation of the important work we have done and serves as a roadmap for the work we will continue to do in the coming years. It reflects our unwavering commitment to removing barriers to access and ensuring that all members of our community—students, staff, and families—can fully participate in the life of our schools.

Together, we will continue to build a school system that is not only inclusive but one that reflects the values of our Catholic faith, promoting dignity, respect, and equity for all.

**Tyrone Dowling**

**Director of Education, Waterloo Catholic District School Board**



# ABOUT US

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB), the eighth largest Catholic school board in Ontario, serves the diverse needs of students and families across the Waterloo Region. With a history dating back more than 180 years to the establishment of the region's first Catholic schools in 1836, WCDSB has a long tradition of providing faith-based education.

Today, WCDSB operates a comprehensive network of schools and programs, including 44 elementary schools, five secondary schools, and an Adult and Continuing Education program serving over 13,500 adult learners. An alternative education high school with two sites provides specialized programs to 153 students, while the board's total student population across elementary and secondary levels stands at 26,500.

As the region continues to grow, WCDSB has seen a steady increase in enrolment, driven by its welcoming faith-based curriculum, which attracts students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including nearly 110 languages spoken by students from over 110 countries.

Looking ahead, WCDSB is committed to ensuring its schools are accessible and inclusive for all learners. This comprehensive accessibility plan will focus on removing barriers in both physical environments and educational resources, while fostering a supportive and inclusive community. With projected enrolment growth for 2024 and beyond, WCDSB remains dedicated to providing high-quality, inclusive, Catholic education to all students in the Waterloo Region.



# INTRODUCTION AND POLICY STATEMENT

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## OVERVIEW

The [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#) (ODA) was established to enhance opportunities for individuals with disabilities and to involve them in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to their full participation in society. Similarly, the Accessibility for [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA), aims to improve accessibility standards for individuals with physical and mental disabilities, with the goal of ensuring full access to all public establishments in Ontario by 2025.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2024-2029, outlines the Waterloo Catholic District School Board's (WCDSB) compliance with the AODA and provides a roadmap for planned and projected accessibility initiatives within the school system.

The WCDSB is dedicated to offering services that are free from barriers and biases for our students, parents/guardians, staff, and the broader public. We are committed to ensuring that equity of opportunity is a guiding principle in both our learning and working environments. Our commitment to diversity is central to our belief in the strength it brings to our communities. To support this, we will provide appropriate training to ensure that all Board staff, policy makers, and regular school volunteers understand and fulfill their responsibilities under the AODA.



## **RELEVANT 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**

- 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.
- The board incorporates accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so and when not practicable, it will provide explanation, upon request.



## **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 capital projects are compliant with the Ontario Building Code which specifies accessibility requirements for major renovations, building additions, and new builds.
- 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.
- The board incorporates accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so and when not practicable, it will provide explanation, upon request.

## **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 practical, 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/>

