



Accessibility (Barrier-Free)“Pathways” Policy

Date Approved: 1999 05 27

Projected Review Date: 2001 05

POLICY STATEMENT: It is the policy of The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board to educate all students whenever possible in the home school. The ideal would be to provide the student independent barrier free access to all aspects of the school’s programs. The Board is to have an ongoing strategic plan for new construction and renovation projects that includes barrier-free accommodation.

Responsibility: Superintendent responsible for Special Education
Superintendent of Plant

Rationale

- a) Student needs may include social, emotional, behavioural, physical as well as cognitive/academic.
- b) When expertise, specialized equipment or a safe, secure environment is not practical at the home school, parents will be given a choice regarding an alternate site, a “Pathways” school.
- c) To meet highly specialized needs of a student, a transfer to other provincial facilities or services provided by other boards of education may be considered.
- d) Parents will be partners in the planning and decision-making for special needs students. The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has a responsibility to use resources in a practical, efficient manner.

Operational Procedures

1.0 Expectations for Accommodations

- 1.1 All stakeholders are to be involved in the development of the Board’s ongoing strategic plan, which includes barrier free accommodations. The two concepts of barrier-free accessibility in board facilities are to be reviewed in this report.

Dependent Barrier-free Access: accepts that students with disabilities will require significant ongoing assistance from students, staff and educational assistants to function within a school and on the playground (operating elevators/lifts, opening doors, drinking fountains, etc).

Independent Barrier-free Access: accepts that students with disabilities will require minimal ongoing assistance to function within a school and on the playground.

- 1.2 An annual report and the strategic plan will be presented prior to the annual budget process to the board.
- 1.3 Accessibility issues should be addressed in all accommodation planning.

2.0 Process

The sequence of steps for a school to follow are described below:

- 2.1 Parent of student makes a request for child to attend home school.
- 2.2 Home school principal identifies with parent what is needed and what is requested.
- 2.3 Home school Principal collaborates with all partners (for example, parents, child advocates from appropriate associations, Superintendent of Education, Superintendent of Plant, Superintendent responsible for Special Education, support staff, Early Childhood Education Consultant) regarding the following issues:
 - a) Identify what accessibility features are reasonable and are currently available within the home school
 - b) Identify the "Pathway" option.

Note: When the Principal develops the options to be provided "within the school," six measures are to be applied to each option:

- i) academic, social, physical and medical needs**
- ii) safety**
- iii) advantages and disadvantages**
- iv) options**
- v) long term individual education plan**
- vi) transportation**

- 2.4 The home school Principal meets with the parent to describe what is available. The options described in 2.3 (i-iv) will be thoroughly discussed with the parent to assist the parent in making a choice. Child advocates from appropriate associations are welcome partners in the meeting.
- 2.5 The parent makes a choice from one of three possibilities:
 - a) The home school with knowledge of limitations
 - b) A system I.P.R.C. to consider placement in a special class, with knowledge of limitations through determination and I.P.R.C. placement
 - c) The Pathway school which is accessible

If the parent is unable to make a choice, the parent may choose to consult with other Board supervisory staff.

- 2.6 When a parent chooses a Special Class or a "Pathways" school, other than the home school, the home school principal is to schedule an intake meeting with the receiving school. This process should be discussed at an intake meeting wherever students are in transition (Early Identification, Junior to Middle School, Elementary to Secondary Composite or Vocational School). All necessary partners should be in attendance. These can be:
 - a) Parent and student
 - b) Home and receiving school staff
 - c) Board resource staff
 - d) Agency personnel
 - e) Other appropriate support advocates

2.7 A letter of agreement is developed with parent and appropriate Principal(s) signing. The letter will:

- a) State a "start" timeline for the agreement
- b) Indicate a "review" date for review of the agreement. This date is to be part of the IEP review. Agreement must include outline of process used, choices offered and parent choice.

3.0 Long-term Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.)

A long-term I.E.P. will be developed for all students who have ambulatory/mobility needs. The goal of the I.E.P. will be to:

- 3.1 Provide stability and predictability for the student and his/her family.
- 3.2 Facilitate ease of access to outside agencies and support service caregivers.
- 3.3 Enable students to establish and maintain long-term social and emotional relationships through an established "Pathways."
- 3.4 Reduce the restrictions placed on the individual, throughout his/her educational career.
- 3.5 Reduce the number of school transfers in his/her educational career.
- 3.6 Reduce travel and the time taken for transportation.
- 3.7 Facilitate the request for special education funding (Intensive Support Amount - ISA claim) if needed.

Reference: Human Rights Code
Education Act
Ontario Building Code and its companion acts and regulations (includes Fire Code)
Transportation Policy
Trips Policy