



# HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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## **\*DRAFT - MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

**FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022**

Prepared in accordance with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act  
(2005) Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11

This publication is available through Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's website  
at <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/about/compliance/accessibility/>

Administrative Office: 20 Education Court, Hamilton, ON

For accessible formats, upon request, contact the Administrative Office:

Communications and Community Engagement  
20 Education Court  
Hamilton, ON  
L9A 0B9  
905-527-5092

Or [www.hwdsb.on.ca](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca) -> "Contact"

Mailing address: Communications and Community Engagement  
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board  
P.O. Box 2558  
Hamilton, ON  
L8N 3L1

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\*Advice on this plan will be sought, in the winter of 2018 from:

- Persons with Disabilities
- Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC),
- Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
- Board of Trustees

The final version will be posted online by June 30, 2018

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## Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's (HWDSB's) Multi-year Accessibility Plan is developed in accordance with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)*. It incorporates the intentions of HWDSB to meet its obligations under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*.

The plan describes the measures that HWDSB will take, over the five-year period from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2022 to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who work, learn, and participate in HWDSB's community and environment, including students, staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), volunteers and visitors to HWDSB and its schools. The plan will be guided by HWDSB's [Integrated Accessibility Standard Policy](#) and Procedures, as well as HWDSB's Mission, Commitment and Priorities:

### Procedures:

- [Accessibility in Employment](#);
- [Accessibility Plans](#);
- [Accessibility Standards for Information and Communication](#);
- [Accessibility Standards for Student Transportation](#);
- [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](#); and
- [Use of a Support Person by the General Public](#).

**Mission:** We empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.

**Commitment:** We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation.

### Priorities:

<i>Positive Culture and Well-Being:</i>	We will build student and staff well-being through positive climate strategies and supportive relationships.
<i>Student Learning and Achievement:</i>	We will improve student learning and achievement through effective instructional strategies.
<i>Effective Communication:</i>	We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.
<i>School Renewal:</i>	We will optimize opportunities to invest in improved school facilities.
<i>Partnerships:</i>	We will strengthen our collaboration with new and existing community partners to enhance opportunities for students.

## 1.0 Objectives

This Plan:

- 1.1 Describes the process by which HWDSB will identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- 1.2 Reviews recent efforts by HWDSB to remove and prevent barriers;
- 1.3 Describes the measures HWDSB will take in the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2022, to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- 1.4 Makes a commitment to provide an annual status report on HWDSB's implementation of the multi-year accessibility plan;
- 1.5 Makes a commitment to review and update the multi-year accessibility plan at least once every five years; and
- 1.6 Describes how HWDSB will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

## 2.0 Terminology

*Disability:* The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001)* adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Disability is defined as:

- a) 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, 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 insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

*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.

*Architectural barriers* may result from the original design of the building, shape of rooms, size of doorways, or width of hallways, for example.

*Physical barriers* refer to objects added to the environment, such as doors, windows, elevators, furniture, bathroom hardware, etc.

*Information or communication barriers* make it difficult for people to receive or send information. For example, a person with a visual disability may not be able to read print materials, read signs, locate landmarks, or see a hazard. A person with an intellectual disability may not understand information that is not expressed in plain language.

*Attitudinal barriers* refer to persons who do not know how to communicate with people with disabilities, or persons who display discriminatory behaviours.

*Technology barriers* refer to devices such as computers, telephones, inadequate or inappropriate assistive technologies.

*Systemic barriers* can result from an organization’s policies, practices and protocols if they restrict persons with disabilities.

(from: Ministry of Community and Social Services: [www.mcass.gov.on.ca](http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca) )

### **3.0 Commitment to Accessibility Planning**

This plan will be established, reviewed and updated with the advice of persons with disabilities, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), the Accessibility Working Group, and other stakeholder groups as deemed appropriate.

HWDSB is committed to:

- 3.1 Maintaining an Accessibility Working Group;
- 3.2 Continuing the process of seeking advice through the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and with persons with disabilities;
- 3.3 Ensuring, wherever possible, that HWDSB policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of accessibility and inclusive/universal design. The Accessibility Working Group will provide input re: accessibility issues, where appropriate, with regard to new policies and procedures and to those under review;
- 3.4 Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), volunteers and members of the community. Consideration of ongoing identification of barriers will be the responsibility of the Accessibility Working Group and will, wherever possible, be incorporated in the multi-year plan.

The Director of Education has authorized the Accessibility Working Group to review and update the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that will enable HWDSB Board to meet these commitments.

### **4.0 HWDSB Quick Facts**

<b>Total Size:</b>	1117 square kilometers	
<b>Total Number of Schools:</b>	Elementary: 88	Secondary: 14
<b>Total Number of Students:</b>	Elementary: 35,564	Secondary: 14,306
<b>Total Number of Staff:</b>	Academic: 4,630	Business /Support: 562
<b>Elementary Students enrolled in French programs:</b>	3,527	
<b>Students served through Special Education:</b>	9,135	
<b>Students enrolled in English as a Second Language:</b>	12,593	
<b>Students traveling by bus:</b>	19,541	
<b>Community Use of School Hours:</b>	391,865	

## 5.0 Accessibility Working and Advisory Group Members

The accessibility committee was originally established in April 2003 and presently consists of the following members:

Working Group	Role	E-mail Address
Peter Sovran	Associate Director, Learning Services	psovran@hwdsb.on.ca
Jane MacPherson	Principal, Special Education	jmacpher@hwdsb.on.ca
Elio Dicienzo	Transportation Coordinator	edicienz@hwdsb.on.ca
Mark Taylor	Communications Officer	mdtaylor@hwdsb.on.ca
Matthew Kwan	Manager, Health & Safety	mkwan@hwdsb.on.ca
Timothy Story	Supervisor of Fire Safety, Accessibility and Special Projects	tstory@hwdsb.on.ca
Ann Hewitt	Executive Assistant, Learning Services, Specialized Services	ahewitt@hwdsb.on.ca

## 6.0 Strategy for Prevention and Removal of Barriers

The principles of inclusionary practice, freedom from barriers and accessible environments inform all HWDSB policies, programs, procedures and services. Through the annual accessibility plan status report process implemented under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001)*, HWDSB's programming, policies and practices have been assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility. This process will continue through the establishment of a multi-year accessibility plan which places particular emphasis on the provisions of the regulations made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)* with regard to customer service, information and communications, employment, and school transportation.

## 7.0 Barrier Identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Working Group uses the following information gathering methods:

Methodology	Description	Status
Public feedback re: commenting on Board Plan and/or Status Report; providing input / suggestions	Comments gathered through webpage access	Ongoing
Employee feedback re: commenting on Board Plan and/or Status Report; providing input / suggestions	Comments gathered through employee web portal and the Staff Voice Survey	Annual
Accessibility Working Group review of the Long-Term Facilities Master Plan.	Identification of schools for action within multi-year strategy and update of annual status report	Annual

Methodology	Description	Status
Accessibility Working Group review of Plan and development of Status Report	Potential actions re: identified accessibility issues discussed within multi-year strategy	Annually
Review of Plan and Status Report by Board, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)	Opportunity for input and feedback prior to approval of status update and posting on website	Annually

## 8.0 Recent Barrier Removal Achievements

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board continues to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities through the following processes. The following information identifies the most recent actions taken in the removal of barriers:

### 8.1 Architectural

HWDSB continues to move forward on its vision of School Revitalization by building new schools with accessibility features. As a feature of HWDSB’s School Revitalization Program, all newly constructed schools incorporate Barrier Free Design. In most cases, minimal requirements identified within the *Ontario Building Code (OBC)* are exceeded to permit improved accessibility for both adult and child occupants.

Wherever possible, major renovation projects undertaken at school sites strive to incorporate OBC requirements, as well as meeting the provisions of the ODA and the AODA.

### 8.2 Physical

HWDSB continues to access the Ministry of Education Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funding, which assists with the costs of equipment essential to support students with special education needs. This equipment provides students with accommodations to attend school (such as adjustable desks, computer tables, positioning devices for sitting/standing/lying, personal care items, and lifts or harnesses for moving students) and/or access curriculum (such as computers or communication devices). In addition to specialized equipment for students, HWDSB continues to provide staff with assistive devices and equipment as determined to be necessary for them to perform the functions of their employment and access HWDSB resources and facilities.

Each year HWDSB allocates an amount from the annual School Renewal Grant (SRG), provided by the Ministry of Education, to address school accessibility issues. Identified projects may be part of an annual building renewal program (i.e.: washroom upgrades, auditorium upgrades), or to meet the emerging needs of differing abilities (accessibility upgrades – ramps, visible fire alarms, acoustic treatments). This program also includes improvements to HWDSB Administrative Facilities, as required.

Many of HWDSB’s facilities were constructed when accessibility features were not a high consideration. Consequentially, there are limitations at some sites where accessibility features are not feasible, or practical, to meet all the provisions of the ODA.

### 8.3 Information / Communication

HWDSB's website complies with AODA requirements and staff are continuing to train and educate schools staff on ensuring website posts are accessible. HWDSB's Special Education Report addresses access for students with disabilities through program modifications, accommodations and alternative expectations.

Amendments to the Report are reviewed annually, and the Report is available on HWDSB's website. Special Education and Curriculum staff continue to provide support to schools for learning in diverse, inclusive environments through the principles and guidelines provided by universal design and differentiated instruction, as outlined in the Ministry of Education document, *Education for All (2005)* and *Learning for All (2013)*.

### 8.4 Attitudinal

Each year, schools are provided with websites and information about the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December, and encouraged to have their staff and students participate in activities associated with the day.

Through various system and school-based strategies (i.e., Character Building; Mental Health Strategy; Student Success Initiatives), HWDSB endeavours to help every student strengthen their character, become caring and contributing citizens.

Student Leadership initiatives provide opportunities for students to develop their leadership potential and to assume responsibility for leadership initiatives at their local schools that can address issues such as bullying prevention and raising awareness of issues facing youth and adults with diverse physical or learning needs.

HWDSB believes in and promotes inclusive education as defined by the Ministry of Education: *"Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected."* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009)

HWDSB's Equity and Inclusive Education Policy states its commitment to the principles of equity through inclusive programs, curriculum, services, and operations, in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Education Act*. The Learning Services Department provides equity awareness opportunities for both students and staff, and these are provided throughout the school year.

Equity is the lens through which all decisions are made.

### 8.5 Technology

Assistive technology plays an increasing role in the provision of differentiated instruction. HWDSB continues to access the Ministry of Education Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funding to provide students with accommodations to access the Ontario curriculum and/or a board-determined alternative program and/or course. This equipment includes such items as soundfield systems, FM systems, computer hardware, computer software that provides access to curriculum, Braille, and other communication aids. HWDSB employees also receive appropriate accommodations, which may include assistive technology, based on identified needs.



## 8.6 Systemic

As policies/procedures are developed and/or revised, they will be examined to reflect HWDSB's directions with regard to accessibility.

## 9.0 Barriers to be addressed under the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11*, consolidated July 1, 2016 pursuant to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, identified specific requirements to achieve accessibility in the areas of:

- Information and Communications;
- Employment;
- Transportation;
- Designs for Public Space; and
- Customer Service.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is aggressively working towards the removal of all barriers related to customer service, information and communications, employment, procurement and training to ensure compliance with AODA requirements by 2025. This is in addition to ongoing work HWDSB is undertaking with regard to identification and removal of barriers in HWDSB's physical environment.

Our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is connected to both our [annual budget process](#) and our annual update to the [Long-Term Facilities Master Plan](#). Therefore, the annual update will be provided to the Board of Trustees, no later than June 30 of each academic year.

## 10.0 Review and Monitoring Process

The Accessibility Working Group meets to review the progress and evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of barrier removal and prevention strategies and to plan for increased accessibility throughout the Board.

The Accessibility Working Group will ensure that in respect of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan the following steps take place:

- a) An annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan is prepared and posted on the Board website;
- b) At least once every five years the plan is reviewed and updated with the advice of persons with disabilities, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), the Accessibility Working Group, and other stakeholder groups as deemed appropriate.

## 11.0 Communication of the Plan

In addition to the public availability of the plan on the website, HWDSB will post an annual status report on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Board will accommodate requests for accessible formats of the Plan.

Questions, comments, or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to:

Communications and Community Engagement  
20 Education Court  
Hamilton, ON L9A 0B9  
905-527-5092

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**Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board  
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan  
For the years January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2022**

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Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1