

Barrier-Free Learning Environments Procedure

RATIONALE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board believes in educating all students, whenever possible, in their in-catchment 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.

TERMINOLOGY:

Dependent Barrier-free Access: accepts 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.

Facility Accommodation: Structural changes to a school such as, but not limited to, installation of ramps, paint or tape to assist with vision, chair lifts, designated parking spaces, barrier free washrooms etc.

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.
- 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

- 2.1 The sequence of steps for a school to follow is described below:
 - 2.1.1 Parent/Guardian/Caregiver of student makes a request for the child to attend home school.

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2.1.2 The home school principal identifies with parent/guardian/caregiver what is needed and what is requested.

2.1.3 The home school Principal collaborates with all partners (for example, parent/guardian/caregiver, 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 at 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

2.1.4 The home school Principal meets with the parent/guardian/caregiver to describe what is available. The options described in 2.1.3 (i-iv) will be thoroughly discussed with the parent/guardian/caregiver to assist the parent/guardian/caregiver in making a choice. Child advocates from appropriate associations are welcome partners in the meeting.

2.1.5 The parent/guardian/caregiver makes a choice from one of three possibilities:

- a) The home school with knowledge of limitations
- b) A system Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) to consider placement in a special class, with knowledge of limitations through determination and IPRC placement
- c) The Pathway school which is accessible

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

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2.1.6 When a parent/guardian/caregiver 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/Guardian/Caregiver and student
- b) Home and receiving school staff
- c) Board resource staff
- d) Agency personnel
- e) Other appropriate support advocates

2.1.7 A letter of agreement is developed with parent/guardian/caregiver 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. The agreement must include an outline of the process used, choices offered and parent/guardian/caregiver choice.

3.0 Long-term Individual Education Plan (IEP)

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

- 3.1.1 Provide stability and predictability for the student and their family.
- 3.1.2 Facilitate ease of access to outside agencies and support service caregivers.
- 3.1.3 Enable students to establish and maintain long-term social and emotional relationships through an established “Pathways.”
- 3.1.4 Reduce the restrictions placed on the individual, throughout their educational career.
- 3.1.5 Reduce the number of school transfers in their educational career.
- 3.1.6 Reduce travel and the time that is taken for transportation.

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4.0 Facility Accommodation Request Process

- 4.1 When structural changes are required to accommodate a student, the Principal will initiate the “Student Facility Accommodation” process by submitting to the Superintendent responsible for Special Education:
 - a) A completed “Student Facility Accommodation Request Form”;
 - b) Documentation from a professional (Occupational Therapist, Ophthalmologist, Physiotherapist, etc.) detailing essential accommodations;
- 4.2 Facility Accommodation Requests will then be reviewed by the Superintendents responsible for Special Education, Business and Facilities taking into the consideration the following factors prior to approval.
 - a) Feasibility of the request
 - b) Scope
 - c) Schedule
 - d) Budget
- 4.3 The decision to proceed or not, and projected timelines or alternate solutions will be communicated to the principal and superintendent of the school following the review.
- 4.4 The Principal will inform the parent/guardian/caregiver of the decision, timelines or possible alternate solutions.