



Barrier-Free Learning Environments

Date Approved: 2016

Projected Review Date: 2020

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PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board believes in providing learning environments for all students, whenever possible, at their home school. The board will strive to provide students independent, barrier-free access to all aspects of a school's programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Student needs may include physical, behavioural, social, emotional, as well as cognitive/academic.
- When a student requires specialized equipment or an alternative learning environment that is not accessible in their home school to meet their personalized educational, safety or physical needs, an alternative school that is able to accommodate the student's needs will be recommended to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s).
- As students progress through grades, they may transition with their classmates to the next appropriate school, even if it is not their home school, in consultation with the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s).
- To meet the highly specialized needs of a student, a transfer to other provincial facilities or services provided by other district school boards may be considered.
- Parents/Guardians/Caregivers will be partners in the planning and decision-making for students with special needs.
- To use resources in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure barrier-free learning environments.
- HWDSB will have an ongoing plan for new construction and renovation projects that includes barrier-free learning environments.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

To provide an environment that builds independence, dignity and respect for students, parents/guardians/caregivers, the community, and staff.

To provide people with disabilities the same opportunity of access to HWDSB services in a manner that accommodates their disability.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
Members of Executive Council



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TERMINOLOGY:

Accessibility Working Group: An internal group made up of staff that 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.

Annual Accessibility Plan: As part of the *Ontario with Disabilities Act (2002)*, all school boards in Ontario are required to prepare an annual accessibility plan, after consultation with people with disabilities, and to make the plan public. This plan is used to meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, where all public-sector organizations, as well as private and non-profit organizations with 50 or more employees must create written multi-year accessibility plans, update them at least once every five years and post them on their websites, if they have one.

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.

Home School: The school that students are eligible to attend based on the geographic area in which they reside.

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

ACTION REQUIRED:

Establish a procedure that facilitates access by people with disabilities to the services and facilities of the Board through:

- Expectations for accommodations
- The steps required for accommodation
- Long-Term Individual Education Plan
- Request for facility accommodation

Staff will present HWDSB's Annual Accessibility Plan to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis.



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PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
To provide an environment that builds independence, dignity and respect for students, parents/guardians/caregivers, the community and staff.	This will be monitored by the Accessibility Working Group and an annual status report on the progress of the physical environment at schools will be presented to the Board of Trustees and posted on the Board website.
To provide people with disabilities the same opportunity of access to HWDSB services in a manner that accommodates their disability.	This will be monitored through an annual internal audit of various services.

REFERENCES:

Government Documents

Human Rights Code

Education Act

Ontario Building Code and its companion acts and regulations (includes Fire Code)

HWDSB Policies

Transportation

Educational Excursions