



Upper Grand District School Board

Annual Accessibility Report

For the Period September 2012 to August 2013

Prepared by

**Upper Grand District School Board
Accessibility Steering Committee**

This publication is available through the Upper Grand District School Board's website www.ugdsb.on.ca/accessibility or in other accessible formats upon request

Purpose

The purpose of the Annual Accessibility Report is to report on the board's progress over the 2012-13 school year in identifying, removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities. This report summarizes the initiatives and achievements in a number of areas including Policy, Procurement, Physical, Information and Communication, Attitudes, Education and Training, and Employment.

Procurement

Procurement practices have been reviewed to ensure that accessibility is considered when purchasing goods and services. A handbook was developed to assist staff.

Policy

In March 2013 the Board adopted a new policy and procedures for accessibility. "Accessibility Standards - Policy 214" and the related "Accessibility Standards Procedures Manual 214-A" provide direction to the Board in meeting the regulations outlined in the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarions with Disabilities Act, 2005).

It is the policy of the Upper Grand District School Board to provide an environment in all of its facilities that fosters independence, dignity, respect, integration and equality of opportunity for our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff. We are committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have the same opportunity of access to services in a similar way as these services are available to all others. We are committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner.

The new procedures now cover such topics as customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, procurement, training and educational resources. Work has continued into the fall of 2013 with updates to the Accessibility Standards Handbook, a web-based resource on the UGDSB Staff Web Portal that provides in-depth guidance on methods for achieving accessibility goals.

Physical

New elementary and secondary schools are designed to aid access for students, staff and members of the public with physical disabilities. Glenbrook Elementary

School in Shelburne and John Galt Public School in Guelph opened in September 2013. Both schools include barrier free entrances with automatic door openers, accessible public and student washrooms and designated handicapped parking spaces.

In 2010 – 2011 the Board completed an audit of all board sites to identify physical barriers. The Accessibility Steering Committee and Plant Operations continue to use the audit to plan renovations or upgrades that improve accessibility. The following accessibility projects were completed in 2012-13:

Accessible parking spaces were added to Aberfoyle, Parkinson, and Waverley.

Upgrades were made to the front entrances at Hyland Heights, JD Hogarth and Parkinson.

Ramps were installed at the back doors at Gateway and Salem.

Automatic door openers were installed at Aberfoyle, JD Hogarth, and Waverley.

Student washrooms were upgraded to include accessible washrooms at ODSS, Princess Elizabeth, Parkinson, and Salem.

Accessible washrooms for public and staff were added or upgraded at Alma, JD Hogarth, Priory Park, Salem, and Westwood.

A barrier free shower was added to the student change rooms at ODSS.

An elevator was added and the library entrance was modified to improve accessibility in the ODSS library.

A mobile lift was purchased and is available for all schools. The lift will provide wheelchair access to the stage for events such as school concerts, plays, graduations, awards ceremonies, etc.

The Special Education Department monitors the needs of individual students with disabilities and works with Plant Operations to prioritize modifications as required. Student specific equipment, such as change tables and equipment for students who are deaf or hard of hearing or for students who are blind or have low vision are purchased through Special Equipment Amount (SEA) grants. Many of these modifications also reduce barriers for staff and other persons with disabilities.

Information & Communication

The Board endeavors to ensure that all persons are able to access information provided by the board in a manner that is fair, empathetic, respectful and timely. The use of plain language and the acquisition of services, technologies and other resources that accommodate all persons' needs help eradicate informational barriers.

An initiative was begun to create Board Reports in an accessible electronic format. Templates were created in the summer of 2013, with training and implementation to follow this year.

Adobe Acrobat 10 was purchased and installed on one computer in each elementary and secondary school office and on select computers in the two Board Offices (140 licenses in all). This software will assist staff in creating accessible documents for websites. Training sessions on how to use this software are planned for this fall.

A redesign of the Board website was begun, with a target launch in early 2014. At a minimum the site will be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A, achieving Level AA and AAA where possible. A key goal of the project is to make the board website user-friendly and accessible to all users and across many devices. Prior to the launch of the new site the Board's design team will conduct usability testing that includes scenarios for persons with disabilities.

The Human Resources section of the Board website is in the process of moving toward an accessible format. The information pages are accessible and job postings are in the process of being converted to an accessible format.

Fifty-eight of the 71 school websites have been upgraded with accessibility improvements.

Attitudinal

The Board continues to provide training in Customer Service Standards for all new employees. As of June 2013, 90% of employees have been trained. A new training program for the Integrated Accessibility Standards and Human Rights Code has been purchased and will begin to be used this year.

The legislation requires all teaching staff to undertake accessibility awareness training. A half day workshop was provided for two teachers from each school. These teachers were provided resources to share with their colleagues (picture books, sample lesson plans, videos, and powerpoints). The goal was to assist

teachers with planning and teaching lessons through the lens of accessibility awareness.

Additional workshops were provided for a variety of staff to promote greater understanding of how to support students with special needs (for example, mental health needs, learning disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind, and Developmental Disabilities). A variety of workshops supported teachers' implementation of technology for students who require it to access the curriculum.

A Mental Health Lead was hired (Dr. Lynn Woodford). She surveyed student reps, staff, SEAC and PIC members to determine areas of strength and needs in the area of mental health. This information was used to guide the development of a mental health plan for the board.

Education and Training

In excess of 600 Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claims were processed to enable students to attend school and to access the curriculum, programs and resources. SEA claims provided hardware and software for students (for example, laptops, IPADS, text to speech and speech to text software). Other types of equipment purchased through SEA funding include: hearing systems and associated equipment for deaf and hard of hearing students, as well as other equipment to address physical or sensory needs of students.

The Board purchased a board-wide license for Speak Q, thus enabling all students and staff to access this voice to text software.

Students and staff were trained in a variety of software to assist students with accessing information and curriculum including assistive technology (for example, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweill, Word Q).

Work was begun to meet the requirement of providing educational resources or materials in accessible formats. Textbooks and other educational materials were made available in alternate formats (for example, digital books, Braille). UG2GO also provided many resources in a variety of formats.

Training was provided to different groups including in-services for classroom teachers, special education teachers and members of Program Services in the area of alternative formats of teaching and learning resources. Emphasis was placed on using UG2GO to access the following alternative learning resources:

- Over Drive for e-books and audio-books;
- research and reading materials with built-in accessibility features (e.g. Britannica School) ; and
- Learn 360 for videos including closed caption and described video;

In addition, staff were introduced to the board-wide license for Read and Write to use with Chrome. This app provides many accessible features such as text to speech for on-line documents and internet searches. UGDSB School 2Go was highlighted as a way for elementary students to access curriculum when away from school. Secondary staff learned about Oxford Next that offers selected literature in a multi-media format.

A category called Alternative Formats of Educational Resources was added to the Accessibility and Special Education areas of the Staff Portal. Under this category, staff can find definitions of alternative formats and directions to obtain different formats of resources (e.g. novels at the Terry James Resource Centre to use with Kurzweil software).

Employment

Procedures and a flow chart were developed to ensure that all employees receive information about Emergency Response Plans and that employees with disabilities are aware of the opportunity to request an Individualized Emergency Response Plan in an accessible format if required.

Human Resources focused on assisting staff members through Individualized Accommodation Plans. A third party Kinesiologist assists with workplace design and individual accommodation plans. These plans have included direct and increased access to physiotherapy and massage therapy for rehabilitation and improved function and pain management. Staff has been provided direct access to third party medical assessments. Specific technology and equipment has been purchased in order to support staff. This includes medical chairs, ergonomic office chairs and carts, voice amplification systems, hands free headsets, arm supports, smart boards, printers, projectors, laptops and software.

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

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