



Upper Grand District School Board

Annual Accessibility Report

For the Period September 2013 to August 2014

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

The purpose of the Annual Accessibility Report is to report on the board's progress over the 2013-14 school year in identifying, removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Attitudinal

As required by legislation, we continue to require all new employees to complete the Customer Service Standards training. In addition, we began to train all employees in the Integrated Standards (Employment, Communication, Transportation) and the Human Rights Code.

Throughout the 2013-14 school year, additional school-based training was provided to increase teachers' awareness of accessibility issues and to assist them in planning their teaching through an accessibility lens. Trainers from each school were provided with resources to share with their colleagues (e.g. videos, sample lesson plans and Powerpoint presentations). In addition, resources to help teachers provide alternative formats as required by students were made available through the Staff Web Portal and included as part of the school-based accessibility awareness training.

A variety of workshops were provided to staff to address attitudinal barriers and provide information about issues related to accessibility. Some workshops addressed specific disabilities such as auditory processing disorder and augmentative and alternative communication. Other workshops addressed broader areas of need such as, Supporting Minds: An Educators Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being and Google Apps for Education.

Education and Training

New educational resources were added to UG2GO including Overdrive which offers thousands of novels in eBook and Audiobook versions. Pebble Go and Power Knowledge are resources that provide digital books and information in accessible formats which include spoken word audio. Investigation into alternative formats of textbooks and other learning resources was conducted and some materials were obtained for specific needs. Alternative formats of textbooks have been provided, when requested through the Terry James Resource Centre (e.g. math textbook in an alternative format). Terry James also has over 80 novels and textbooks in Kurzweil format available for circulation and they have Audiobook versions of numerous popular novel units.

In March 2014, the first Digital Saturday was held. This was sponsored by the Information Technology department with the involvement of the Terry James Resource Centre and the Program Department. This event gave parents and

community members the opportunity to explore various types of technology and attend mini-workshops on the use of technology.

In addition, parents whose children require technology to access the curriculum were given a letter to promote home use of Special Equipment Amount (SEA) technology. Four different ways students with SEA equipment could access the necessary technology outside of the classroom were described in the letter. The four ways include: taking the SEA device home; using the SEA memory stick to access material outside of class; accessing board-wide licenses of software and other electronic resources through UG2GO; and, through the use of UGCloud (i.e. including the Read and Write app).

A board-wide purchase of the Read and Write for Google license has helped to provide accessible technology to all students. Since Upper Grand students and staff use Google as a basis for cloud computing, the Read and Write license provides an easily accessible app for all students using computers and Chromebooks. Students with special needs are now able to access a wide variety of tools essential for their learning needs within an online environment that is available to all students.

Transportation

As of January 2014, Transportation Plans are required as part of the accessibility standards. The Special Education Department and the Information Technology Department worked together to develop an electronic/online transportation planner. This tool enables staff to develop an individualized transportation plan for students with special transportation needs. The Transportation Planner was piloted in the spring of 2014 and is now being used in all schools.

Staff Handbook

Work has continued to update the Accessibility Standards Handbook, a web-based resource on the Staff Web Portal that provides in-depth guidance on methods for achieving accessibility goals.

Procurement

The AODA Guidelines for Meeting Accessibility Obligations When Procuring or Acquiring Goods and Services is available to assist schools/sites in determining if accessibility impacts a procurement/acquisition.

Information & Communication

The Board endeavours to ensure that all persons are able to access information in a manner that is fair, empathetic, respectful and timely. We create documents, forms, web content and other materials with accessibility in mind. Techniques range from the technical, such as using software to ensure documents and web pages have a proper semantic structure, to best practices like the use of plain language.

In 2013-2014 we redesigned the Board website to make it accessible to users with various disabilities. The site is navigable using a screen reader by persons who are blind or have low vision, with special shortcuts activated with the tab key. Users who cannot use a mouse due to a physical disability can navigate the site using only a keyboard. The colours used in the site's design have sufficient contrast for persons with colour blindness or a colour deficiency. The site has a responsive and flexible design that adapts to a wide range of devices, from desktop computers to mobile phones and tablets.

Early mock-ups of the new site included a carousel, an automated gallery of promotional items that changes every 5 to 10 seconds. Our research, however, told us that most carousels do not meet accessibility standards, and that users of all abilities often have difficulty interacting with carousel content and navigation. The decision to simplify this promotional area by using a static image and caption, changed once or twice a week, contributed to a forward-thinking design that is accessible and user-friendly for everyone.

We maintain the accessibility of the board website by ensuring that all new content meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA criteria. In the fall of 2013 we embarked on a plan to create Board Reports in an accessible electronic format. Staff were provided with accessible templates and training. By January 2014, all departments were using the templates to create Board Reports.

In 2013-2014 the Board also created 15 new accessible websites for schools, nearing completion of an effort – spanning several years – to make all of our websites accessible. Older non-compliant websites for 11 schools were replaced. Four new schools, opening in September 2014, started the year with accessible sites. In total, 76 of our 78 school websites have received accessibility upgrades. A priority in the 2014-2015 school year is to replace the last two websites. We will also conduct a district-wide audit of all sites to review accessibility compliance and identify opportunities for improvement.

Employment

Human Resources Department has reviewed and developed procedures and practices with regard to recruitment, job accommodations, return to work plans, redeployment, performance appraisal and career development to ensure compliance with the AODA as well as to respect the independence and dignity of applicants and employees with disabilities.

All job advertisements are produced in an accessible format and state that accommodations are available to applicants with disabilities during all stages of the recruitment process. Applicants requesting accommodations during the recruitment process are advised to contact the Manager of Health, Safety and Disability to make their accommodation needs known. The Board's Disability Department has developed processes to meet accommodation requirements requested by job applicants.

Additionally, the Board's Disability Department has continued to consistently provide medically supported accommodations for staff members who require accommodation on either a permanent or temporary basis.

The Board's Wellness Program also provides information and support for individuals who may be dealing with either temporary or permanent disabilities, by conveying information regarding available supports and programs designed to improve overall health and wellness.

Physical

The Special Education Department has continued this year to monitor the needs of individual students with disabilities and worked 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 were purchased through Special Equipment Amount (SEA) grants. Many of these modifications also reduce barriers for staff and other persons with disabilities.

New schools are designed to aid access for students, staff and members of the public. The four new elementary schools which opened in September 2014 all include a barrier free front entrance with automatic door openers, accessible public and student washrooms and designated accessible parking spaces. Two story schools also include an elevator.

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 in three

main areas. These areas, as prioritized by the Accessibility Steering Committee are: barrier free front access (including parking spaces, level access and automatic door opener), accessible washrooms for students and accessible washrooms for public use. To assist in meeting these goals across the system, the following accessibility projects were completed in 2013-14:

- Accessible parking spaces were added to Drayton, Palmerston Public, Salem and Taylor Evans.
- Upgrades were made to the front entrance at Paisley Road.
- Automatic door openers were installed at Palmerston, Con Ed, Aberfoyle
- Student washrooms were upgraded to include accessible washrooms at East Garafraxa, Eramosa, James McQueen, Paisley Road PS, Rockwood Centennial, Victory.
- Accessible washrooms for public and staff were added or upgraded at East Garafraxa, Eramosa, James McQueen.
- Aurus lights were installed in tech rooms in all Secondary Schools. These lights are used to indicate emergencies such as fire alarms, lockdown drills.
- Sound Amplification systems were installed to improve sound in the Eco Portables at Island Lake, JD Hogarth, Minto Clifford.

Accessibility Feedback Forms

Accessibility Feedback Forms are available in hard copy at all Board sites as well as on the Board website. Feedback received is reviewed monthly and acted upon by the Accessibility Steering Committee. An example of an action that was initiated by such a feedback form is the installation of a ramp to a portable at Edward Johnson so that a parent in a wheelchair was able to access her child's classroom to meet with the teacher.

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

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