



# **Upper Grand District School Board**

## Annual Accessibility Report

**For the Period September 2017 to August 2018**

**Prepared by**

**Upper Grand District School Board**

**Accessibility Steering Committee**

*This document is available in alternative formats upon request.*

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

## **Introduction:**

The Upper Grand District School Board remains committed to supporting and meeting the objectives and requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA). The Board continues to meet all of the accessibility requirements outlined by the AODA.

The purpose of the Annual Accessibility Report is to highlight the progress made during the 2017-2018 school year in providing an environment in all its facilities that builds independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for students, parents/guardians, staff and the public. The Upper Grand District School Board is committed to the goal of giving persons with disabilities the same opportunity of access to its services, in the same location, and in a similar way as these services are available to all others we serve.

## **Objectives:**

This report supports and reflects all the objectives of the UGDSB's multi-year Accessibility Plan.

- describe the process by which the Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities;
- review recent efforts of the Board to remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities;
- describe the measures the Board has taken in the specified time period to identify, remove and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities;
- provide an annual status report on the Board's implementation of the multi-year accessibility plan;
- provide an update on the status of the multi-year accessibility plan
- make the accessibility plan available to the public.

## **Policy and Procedure:**

This year the Accessibility Policy and Procedures manual was reviewed and updated, as was the Five-year Accessibility plan. The Five-year plan illustrates the Upper Grand District School Board's commitment to accessibility and the goals for the next five years. Both documents are available on the Board website at <https://www.ugdsb.ca/board/accessibility-at-the-ugdsb/>.

## **Training:**

Providing training about accessibility and inclusion is necessary in order to facilitate change. This year principals on the accessibility committee provided regular updates and information regarding accessibility at monthly Principal/Vice Principal meetings. Accessibility updates were also provided at a Cycle of Training session, Board Orientation, and at the Office Coordinators in-services. In addition, all new staff were trained in Accessibility Integrated and Customer Standards procedures.

In order to have current information about accessibility readily available to all Upper Grand employees, the Accessibility Handbook was updated, which includes resources on creating accessible documents, and posted on UGShare.

## **Education:**

The Upper Grand District School Board remains committed to addressing Equity of Access for students who have limited opportunities to obtain professional recommendations for Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA). The Student Support and Program Services department worked alongside school teams to determine students that would benefit from specialized equipment to support student learning and achievement. As a result, requests for SEA technology remained constant. Current EQAO data suggests that these interventions supported student achievement for those with special education needs as illustrated through a notable increase in student performance.

The following represents the largest items for SEA ordering in the area of technology (Sept- May, 2018):

- 876 SEA TECH orders this year
- 34 iPads
- 13 Laptops
- 801 Chromebooks
- 793 headsets
- 775 mice
- 791 pouches
- 4595 Training hours (Learn Style)

The Student Support and Program Services Department continued to receive positive feedback around the use of SEA technology in the classroom. This correlates with SEA usage for EQAO and the documentation of SEA use on the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of students. The anecdotal reporting and data also supported the continued requests for board supports in the use of technology in Elementary schools through the Elementary Inclusion Technology Coaches (EITC).

There have been a number of efficiencies and focus this year on improving capacity both for staff and students:

- There have been efficiencies made this year with the training provider Learn Style. The turnaround time between when a student receives SEA equipment and training for this equipment has been improved. The tracking of training has also been improved ensuring that students who require training or who may no longer require training are tracked allowing for a more responsive system. Training continues to be done both in class and individually to help build capacity for the student.
- There has been a focus this year on embedding the use of technology in both Elementary and Secondary professional development opportunities for both Special Education and classroom teachers.

- Training continues to be provided in the Google Suite tools, Google Read and Write and new extensions and apps that support the learning needs of our students.
- The Elementary Inclusion Technology Coaches (EITC) have continued to build capacity in classrooms and have expanded this practice to include all schools in the system. This year the EITCs have developed board wide games and challenges to encourage the use of SEA technology and assistive technology to solve problems and teach the use of tech tools in a fun and engaging way.

The transition from grade 8 to 9 for students with SEA equipment continues to be an area of concern. Supporting Secondary schools with school based professional development to help specific departments and teachers use technology to bridge the usage gap has begun. This will be continued and expanded in the 2018-2019 school year.

The Terry James Resource Centre continued to provide text in accessible formats when requested. Online resources to support a request for an accessible format of a printed text for a student with a perceptual disability through CELA and AERO were available. Access to AERO (Alternative Education Resources Ontario) and CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access) which provide materials in many different formats was also available for all staff. Audiobooks, read-a-longs and ebooks were also available on Overdrive. In the last two years, there were over 30,000 checkouts on Overdrive, and 1000's of ebook and audiobook formats available for circulation to school populations. Approximately one hundred books were available on UGCloud this school year. These books have been scanned, and can be read by Google Read & Write. Access to Tumblebooks, Tumblebook Cloud Junior and Bookflix are also supported through the Terry James Resource Centre and provided another alternative for students to access texts. When an accessible text could not be accessed using one of these resources, the publisher was contacted directly.

The central collection of DVDs continues to be eliminated in order to prepare for the January 1, 2020 requirement that all school libraries need to be able to provide, procure or acquire accessible or conversion ready formats of digital or multimedia

resources for a person with a disability when requested. Video streaming has become the focus, with the two video streaming platforms being Learn360 and Curio. Learn360 has over 40,000 full length videos and video segments that are closed captioned. The ability for users to control the way closed captioning displays, by changing their user preferences for font and background colour was added this year. Curio has approximately 40% of its content available in closed caption, and continues to add more to this option every month.

The Terry James Resource Centre has an [Accessibility web page](#) on its website that provides all this information for staff. Staff at the Terry James Resource Centre, take every opportunity available to remind Teacher-Librarians and classroom teachers about the options they have for gaining access to materials in accessible formats for their students.

## **Procurement:**

The Purchasing Department worked collaboratively with other departments within the Board to ensure that accessibility design, criteria and features were considered when procuring or otherwise acquiring goods or services.

To assist in meeting the accessibility goals across the system, the following work was completed in 2017-18:

1. All schools: Assistive Technology Training - Purchasing prepared, issued, reviewed and awarded a Request for Proposal for Assistive Technology Training.
2. Centre Wellington DHS – Purchasing assisted in obtaining competitive quotes and purchase orders for Operations to paint classrooms, entrances/exits, doors and frames in order to make them more visible to the visually impaired (previously the same colour as the wall).
3. College Heights: 3D Printer: Purchasing sourced new 3D printer for Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program to produce prosthetic hands. This 3D printer is now a contracted model in the Multi Media and Technology catalogue that is available for all schools.
4. Gateway Public School: Purchasing assisted with the design and arranged the purchase and install of a new main office workstation that meets code for

accessible walkways and improved accessibility for the office coordinator (i.e. lower counter area).

5. John F. Ross: Purchasing assisted in the procurement of a mobile lift for John F. Ross for backdoor stage use or front stage use.
6. Rockwood Centennial Public School: Purchasing assisted with the design and arranged the purchase and install of new main office workstations that meets code for accessible walkways and improved accessibility to the office coordinator (i.e. lower counter area).
7. Victoria Cross PS Playground – Purchasing assisted in the selection of the rubberized surface material used to create an accessible play surface/pathways for the Victoria Cross Public School playground.

## **Information and Communication:**

The Upper Grand District School Board endeavours to ensure that all people are able to access information in a manner that is fair, empathetic, respectful and timely. Documents, forms, web content and other materials with accessibility are created with this 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.

All school websites and the Board website meet Level A criteria of WCAG 2.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). They are navigable using a screen reader by people who are blind or have low vision, with properly coded headings providing semantic structure, and alternative text for images. Users who cannot use a mouse due to a physical disability can navigate using only a keyboard. The colours used in the school sites' design have sufficient contrast for people with colorblindness or a colour deficiency.

This year training was provided to Principals and Office Coordinators so that they were able to post content to their own websites and ensure content was accessible. Schools were further informed that by September 2018 all newsletters posted on school websites must meet the accessibility requirements. Self-training materials

(manuals, videos) were posted for staff in the ugShare, internal communication system (UGDSB intranet).

A review of accessibility features of all updates and purchases related to Board and school websites in anticipation of WCAG, 2.0, Level AA standards was ongoing in 2017-2018 in preparation for the January 2021 deadline.

### **Employment:**

All job advertisements were 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 were advised to contact the Manager of Employee Health and Wellness to make their accommodation needs known.

The Board's Employee Health and Wellness Department developed processes to meet accommodation requirements requested by job applicants. Additionally, the Upper Grand District School Board consistently provided medically supported accommodations for staff members who require accommodations on either a permanent or temporary basis.

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

The Human Resources Department regularly reviewed 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.

### **Transportation:**



Transportation plans were created for students who are designated requiring special education or accessibility supports either through an IEP or IPRC. These *Individual Student Transportation Plans* are updated on a yearly basis and support school, board and the transportation consortium staff to work together to provide individualized bussing supports for students in the UGDSB. Key processes in place to ensure this work is effectively done include:

1. Ongoing collaboration between board representatives and the transportation consortium
2. Clear and well communicated board wide processes that enable schools to gather and communicate individual student needs
3. Coordinated the data sharing between Board IT staff and the consortium staff
4. Continued with the ordering and training of equipment to school teams (E.g., harnesses)
5. Continued to develop processes to share and update student safety information between the board and the consortium
6. Modified and updated plans to ensure student needs were being met

This work has continued to be revised and refined over the last few years in collaboration with all stake holders. As a result, this work has successfully improved transportation planning and responsiveness to individual student needs within the context of a very geographically large Board.

### **Built Environment, Outside Play Spaces:**

The Accessibility Steering Committee and Plant Operations continued to use the Accessibility audit which was completed in 2015 to prioritize renovations and 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 universal washrooms for public use.

To assist in meeting these goals across the system, the following accessibility projects were completed in 2017-18:

1. Aberfoyle Public School: New universal washroom
2. Arbour Vista: Kindergarten playground entry received accessible door opener
3. Centennial CVI: Magnetic hold open devices added to main corridor doors
4. Centennial CVI: Upgraded door hardware in several rooms to be lever type
5. Centre Dufferin: Accessible door openers added to priority rooms (Office, Guidance, Library)
6. Gateway Drive Public School: New universal washroom
7. Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute: Accessible lift in the original building (Phase 2 of adding an accessible lift for the original building has begun)
8. John F. Ross: Phase 2 of accessibility projects include adding an accessible lift between the main and second floor
9. John F Ross: Magnetic hold open devices added to corridor doors
10. Victoria Cross: Additional Barrier-free parking space added in parking lot
11. Victoria Terrace: Upgraded door hardware in several rooms to be lever type

In conjunction with the Special Education Department, Plant Operations continues to monitor the needs of individual students with disabilities, and prioritize modifications as required to identify, remove and prevent barriers for all.

Next steps in all areas of accessibility are listed in the five-year Accessibility Plan.