



REPORT TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES

May 24, 2016

Dan Parr, Director of Education

SUBJECT: Accessibility Plan 2016-2017

PREPARED BY: James Duff, Executive Manager – Human Resources Services

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers and to promote their full participation in the life of the province. The ODA requires each school board to prepare an annual accessibility plan; to consult with people with disabilities in the preparation of this plan and to make the plan public. As a result, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board has been developing annual accessibility plans.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the “AODA”) is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards to make the province accessible for all people with disabilities by 2025. Since 2005, two regulations outlining accessibility standards have been made under the AODA. The first regulation was the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O. Reg. 429/07). The second was the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) (IASR). One of the requirements of the IASR is to develop, implement and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan to outline strategies to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements of the IASR. As a result, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board developed a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for the period 2013 to 2015.

This year, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board decided to integrate both accessibility plans to meet our obligations under the above noted Acts and will develop future plans accordingly.

The attached Accessibility Plan for 2016-2017 describes the process by which the St. Clair Catholic District School Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The plan will review the efforts taken at the St. Clair Catholic District School Board to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities during the past year and outlines the policies, procedures, programs, practices and services that the St. Clair Catholic District School Board will review in the upcoming school year (2016-2017) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board continues to recognize the need for improvement of access to school board facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community with disabilities. The plan also reports on the participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of the accessibility plan and the consultation of community partners to ensure that school board policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility.

This year Student Forums were held at the following schools:

- Our Lady of Fatima, Chatham

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- St. Michael, Ridgetown
- Sacred Heart, Port Lambton
- Holy Trinity, Sarnia
- Good Shepherd, Thamesville
- Ursuline College, Chatham

In these forums students in grades 6 through 12 reflected upon the challenges faced by people with disabilities after participating in a Diversity Kit Workshop. Students gave feedback to the Accessibility Workgroup regarding accessibility at their schools.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Accessibility Working Group identified five barriers for people with disabilities. The following measures were taken to address these five barriers:

Attitudinal

- Professional development opportunities and training sessions were provided for all staff throughout the year. These included: Mentally Healthy Schools; Safe Talk; Resiliency; Mental Health Literacy; Parent Engagement; Building Resilient Children; Mental Health Learning Series; Behaviour Management Systems Training; Applied Behaviour Analysis; Functions of Behaviour; Structured Learning and Assistive Technology training.

Architectural

- Facilities Services worked in consultation with the Special Education Department and school communities to plan and provide accessible facilities ensuring that all renovations and additions meet building code requirements.

Technological

- Training sessions for school staff and students on assistive technology have been provided. This training for students on an individual school basis by the Itinerant Assistive Technology Teacher. The focus has been on a range of software programs including *Boardmaker Studio*; *Dragon Naturally Speaking 11* (voice to text); *Word Q* (word prediction software); *Worksheet Wizard* and *Read and Write for Google*.
- The Program Resource Teacher as well as the Itinerant Assistive Technology Teacher continues to provide additional training to Grades 2-6 Classroom Teachers and students, specifically with *Premier Suites*, *Kurzweil*, *Word Q* and *Dragon Naturally Speaking 11*. This also provided additional support for students in Grades 3 and 6, in preparation for the EQAO assessment.
- Students with Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funded assistive technology continue to be provided with several hours of individualized training by the Itinerant Assistive Technology Teacher as well as an SEA Technology Trainer.
- To provide a continuity of support for the exceptional learners in school and home environment, training opportunities for parents on various programs are available upon request by the individual school principal.

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- A process has been developed to ensure that SEA equipment is upgraded as needed. Equipment is upgraded if there are changes in student need or if the equipment is inoperative.
- Designated technical support is provided for SEA equipment.
- Board to Board and elementary to secondary transfer process for students with SEA equipment has been reviewed to ensure prompt response to the needs of the incoming or outgoing student.
- Elementary and Secondary Teachers were provided with various professional development opportunities that address accessibility issues.

Information and Communication

- Continued deployment of new technologies.
- Continued and expanded access to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) to all students and staff working in learning areas.
- Increased network capacity (bandwidth) to meet network users' increased needs.
- On-going strategic planning to consider evolving technology trends and resource options.

Policy

- All policies are reviewed on a cyclical basis and will include consideration of Equity and Inclusion and Accessibility legislation.
- The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy and the associated procedures were reviewed and revised as needed this year. Other policies reviewed include: Uses of Assistive Devices by the General Public; Use of Support Person by the General Public; Use of Service Dogs; Equity and Inclusive Education; Notification of Disruption of Service; and Monitoring and Feedback on Accessibility Customer Service.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the St. Clair Catholic District School Board receive the report: *Accessibility Plan 2016-2017*, for information.