

Legislative References: [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)
[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
[Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11](#)

Related Board References: [Board Policy 1008](#) - Equity and Inclusion
[Board Policy 1016](#) - Use of Service Animals by Students
[Board Policy 1017](#) - Human Rights
[Board Policy 4000](#) - Pupil Accommodation Review
[Board Policy 5000](#) - Employment (Fair, Equitable, and Inclusive Hiring)
[Administrative Procedure 1630](#) - Accessibility
[Administrative Procedure 2020](#) - Use of Service Animals, Guide Dogs and Service Dogs by Students
[Administrative Procedure 3370](#) - Recruitment and Selection Practices
[Administrative Procedure 3810](#) - Workplace Accommodation Programme
[Administrative Procedure 4065](#) - Website & Social Media Management
[Administrative Procedure 4810](#) - Pupil Accommodation Review
[Administrative Procedure 1210](#) - Code-based Human Rights Complaint Resolution Process for Staff
[Administrative Procedure 1215](#) - Code-based Human Rights Complaint Resolution Process for Non-Staff
[Multi-year Accessibility Plan 2021-2026](#)

Effective Date: March 2013

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Reviewed: October 15, 2018; January 18, 2021;

1. Purpose

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is committed to providing an environment that fosters inclusion, equity, and respect for all students, caregivers, guardians, staff, trustees, and the community and to addressing the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner. This Accessibility Policy was developed to support the WRDSB's commitment to achieve the Accessibility Standards established pursuant to the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA), which includes accessibility standards in the five core areas of information and communications, customer service, employment, physical environment, and transportation.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Ableism**¹: a belief system where persons with disabilities are viewed as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities.
- 2.2. **Accessibility Standards**: accessibility standards made by regulation under AODA, Part III, Section 6
- Accessible formats**²: may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.
- Accessibility Standards**: Laws that individuals, government, businesses, nonprofits, and public sector organizations must follow in order to become more accessible. The accessibility standards contain timelines for the implementation of required measures and help organizations identify, remove, and prevent barriers in order to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.
- 2.3. **Barriers**³: anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice
- 2.4. **Disability**⁴:
- 2.4.1. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
 - 2.4.2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - 2.4.3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - 2.4.4. a mental disorder, or
 - 2.4.5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received

¹Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability>

² [O. Reg. 191/11: INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS](#)

³ [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Part 1, Section 2](#)

⁴ [Ontario Human Rights Code, Part II, Interpretation and Application](#)

under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”)

- 2.5. **Discrimination:** Any form of unequal treatment based on grounds protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code), whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may be intentional or unintentional. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, practices, procedures or policies that appear neutral, but disadvantage one or more individuals based on grounds protected by the Code.
- 2.6. **Harassment⁵:** Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.
- 2.7. **Supports:** may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

3. Application

- 3.1. This policy applies to all WRDSB students, caregivers, guardians, employees, trustees, stakeholder, members of consultative committees, clients of the Board, volunteers, permit holders, contractors, and employees of organizations not related to the Board but who work on or are invited onto WRDSB premises.
- 3.2. The WRDSB is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), and under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 (IASR), in a way that ensures equitable access to its buildings, programs and services for all those that the WRDSB serves, including students, families, employees and members of the public.
- 3.3. The WRDSB further commits to providing working and learning environments that are free from discrimination and harassment and to achieving its accessibility goals in a way that promotes and ensures respect for every person’s human rights, dignity and independence. The work is rooted in the responsibilities to the OHRC and AODA; however, the goals lie well beyond the realm of compliance. The WRDSB is committed to action that ensures that we are actively identifying and removing barriers before they impact WRDSB students, staff and community.
- 3.4. The WRDSB understands that obligations under the AODA and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the OHRC or obligations to people with disabilities under any law.
- 3.5. The WRDSB is committed to excellence in serving and providing goods, services or facilities to all customers including people with disabilities.

⁵ [Ontario Human Rights Code, Part II, Interpretation and Application](#)

- 3.6. WRDSB accessible customer service procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.
- 3.7. The WRDSB commits to developing and implementing accessibility standards for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises or such other things as may be identified and prescribed for the elimination and prevention of barriers experienced by persons with disabilities.
- 3.8. The WRDSB is committed to achieving and upholding the requirements specified in IASR for the AODA accessibility standards:
 - 3.8.1. **Customer Service:** The WRDSB provides mandatory training to staff and continues to review and improve its policies, procedures, guidelines, and protocols to ensure that services are provided equitably across the system. The WRDSB utilizes a number of mechanisms to engage feedback from students, staff, stakeholder groups and the public.
 - 3.8.2. **Information and Communications:** The WRDSB continues to ensure that information and communications are available and accessible to everyone in the community.
 - 3.8.3. **Employment:** The WRDSB has made notable improvements to a number of areas associated with accessible employment including, internal and external recruitment processes, workplace accommodation and individualized emergency response plans.
 - 3.8.4. **Physical Environment:** Facility Services works collaboratively with the Special Education Department to identify and prioritize capital expenditures on accessibility enhancements.
 - 3.8.5. **Transportation:** The WRDSB works collaboratively with the Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region (STSWR) to ensure the transportation needs of students with disabilities are identified and provided in a timely, inclusive and integrated manner.
- 3.9. The WRDSB commits to respecting and promoting the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities in WRDSB policies.
- 3.10. Any allegations of harassment and/or discrimination based on disability will be addressed through the Human Rights Board Policy: BP1017.
- 3.11. This document is publicly available. Accessible formats are available upon request.