

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



Trillium Lakelands District School Board

January 2025 – January 2030

Prepared by:

Accessibility Advisory Committee

In accordance with

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

January 2025

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Message from the Director of Education

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) is committed to creating learning and working environments for staff and students that are safe, caring, equitable, and accessible.

This Multi-Year Accessibility plan outlines TLDSB's commitment to fostering and supporting accessible schools and workplaces. Under the leadership of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, TLDSB is actively engaging in ongoing identification and monitoring of system needs and priorities, the alignment of policy and procedure with legislation, and the enhancement of equity of access to programming and to our facilities.

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan focuses on:

- Customer service
- Information and communication
- Employment
- Built environment
- Transportation
- Addressing systemic challenges

In alignment with strategic directions, as outlined in TLDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, and with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), this plan supports the rights of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access and fostering an environment that supports all students, staff, and the community.

Wes Hahn
Director of Education
Trillium Lakelands District School Board

Definitions

Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) - Representatives of the AAC include staff from senior administration, Human Resources Services, Specialized Education, Facility Services, Communications Services, Technology Services, Transportation Services, Business Services, as well as elementary and secondary school administrators.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) - Legislation passed in 2005, setting standards that organizations must meet by 2025. The overall goal of the AODA is to prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

Contracted braille - Contracted braille is used by more experienced braille users by adding a series of special signs that represent common words or groups of letters such as “ing” or “and”.

Disability - A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person’s movements, senses, or activities. Below is a list of various types of disabilities that might affect the way someone receives or preserves information: hearing, vision, intellectual, cognitive, mental, and physical.

External customer service - Is customer service in relation to community members and visitors to schools or Board buildings.

Internal customer service - Is customer service in relation to staff and students within TLDSB facilities.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) - A five-year plan that strives to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers across an organization by committing to specific initiatives and outcomes.

Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) - Legislation passed in 2001 with the purpose of improving opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) - Represents the Board in respect to any matter affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional students of the Board. SEAC membership includes trustees, community representatives, and representatives of parent associations.

Uncontracted braille - Uncontracted braille translates each individual letter, number or punctuation mark into a braille sign. Most braille users read uncontracted braille.

Description of the Trillium Lakelands District School Board

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) covers nearly 12,000 square kilometers encompassing the municipalities of the City of Kawartha Lakes, the County of Haliburton, and the District Municipality of Muskoka.

With approximately 16,000 students, TLDSB has 40 elementary schools, seven secondary schools, and six Adult and Alternate Education Centres. The Board also offers a well-attended online learning program accessed world-wide through its Virtual Learning Centre.

In TLDSB we are committed to high levels of student achievement, which we accomplish by further improving student achievement, fostering staff and student well-being, and building

stronger parent/guardian and community partnerships in safe, caring, and equitable working and learning environments.

Together with senior administrators, trustees determine the goals for TLDSB, which can be found in the Board's Strategic Plan.

TLDSB's commitment to accessibility planning

This plan will be reviewed and updated by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) in consultation with persons with disabilities, the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and stakeholders. It will be presented to the Board for approval prior to being posted on the Board website.

TLDSB is committed to:

- Maintaining an AAC.
- Continuing the process of consulting with the SEAC and with persons with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans.
- Ensuring, wherever practicable, that Board policies, procedures, and practices are consistent with the principles of accessibility and inclusive/universal design. The AAC will provide input regarding accessibility issues, where appropriate, with regard to new policies and procedures and to those under review.
- Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and members of the community. Consideration of ongoing identification of barriers will be the responsibility of the AAC and will, wherever practicable, be incorporated in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) aims to create a barrier-free Ontario by establishing and enforcing accessibility standards across services, programs, spaces, and employment, ensuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities. The Act requires that school boards:

- Review the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan annually
- Consult with people with disabilities in the review and revision of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- Make revisions of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan public

The Act allows organizations to determine their own priorities and implement them within existing planning processes, using existing resources. The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been prepared by the TLDSB AAC. The plan describes measures that TLDSB:

- Has taken in the past
- Will implement during 2025-2030 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

The AAC continues to explore strategies to put in place for the following areas covered by O. Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Regulation (IAR) addressing Information and Communication, Transportation, Employment, Customer Services, and the Design of Public Spaces.

Aim

This plan describes the measures that TLDSB will take over the five-year period from 2025-2030 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who work, learn, and participate in the Board community and environment, including students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and visitors to the Board and its schools. The plan will be guided by the Board's Accessibility Policy (BD-2080).

Objectives

This plan:

- Describes the process by which TLDSB will identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.
- Reviews accessibility accomplishments from the previous Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Lists the policies, procedures, programs, practices, and services that TLDSB will review in the coming years to identify barriers for people with disabilities.
- Describes the actions TLDSB will take in the coming years to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.
- Describes how TLDSB will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

Barriers to accessibility

In order to eliminate barriers, an understanding of what a barrier consists of is required. Under the AODA, barriers are defined as “anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability.” The ODA and AODA both outline requirements of barrier-removal, with the ultimate goal of eliminating obstacles for persons with disabilities. There are different types of barriers stipulated in the provincial requirements and addressed by the Board in its Accessibility Plan, such as:

- Architectural and physical
- Information and communications
- Attitude and awareness
- Technological
- Organizational policies, procedures, and practices
- Systemic

Examples of barriers are:

- Steps without ramps, elevators, or lifts
- Websites or digital documents without screen reader capabilities
- Engaging with a service animal instead of the person with disabilities
- No closed captioning capability for virtual meetings

The following outlines TLDSB's process for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to people with disabilities.

Identifying barriers - Barriers are identified through the use of facility audits, individual reports and surveys that request feedback from staff, students and the TLDSB community. Further, the “Report an Accessibility Issue” fillable form on the Board Website's Accessibility page can be completed by individuals to identify barriers and to make suggestions for accessibility improvements.

Removing barriers - The Board is committed to removing barriers that are identified in a timely manner on a case-by-case basis; assigning the identified issue to the applicable department for resolution. When a “Report an Accessibility Issue” fillable form is received

it will be forwarded to the AAC for review. If the barrier is deemed to require immediate action, or is beyond the scope of the AAC, the submission will be referred to the appropriate department for action.

Preventing barriers - The Board is committed to working towards a barrier-free environment for students, staff, and community members. To this end the following are some of the actions/steps that are being taken to prevent barriers:

- Regular facility site inspections
- Monitoring of the TLDSB website for potential issues
- Providing ongoing support and accommodations for technology to students/staff
- Providing accessibility training to staff and volunteers

Strategy for prevention and removal of barriers

The principles of inclusionary practice, freedom from barriers and accessible environments have informed all TLDSB policies, programs, procedures, and services. Through the annual Accessibility Plan Status Report process implemented under the ODA, TLDSB's programming, policies, and practices have been assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility. This process will continue through the establishment of a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which places particular emphasis on the provisions of the regulations made under the AODA with regard to policy and procedures, training, information and communications, across Business Services, Communication Services, Facility Services, Human Resources Services, Special Education Services, Technology Services and Transportation Services.

Accessibility accomplishments from 2018 - 2023

Customer service

Technology Services continued to provide assistance for students who require technology support to access learning. Technology Services continued to maintain and update staff and student equipment through hardware and software. Yearly reviews with Human Resources Services ensured the correct accessibility devices were assigned to staff. Ongoing collaboration with Special Education to ensure ease-of-access for students, which includes the implementation of TDSnap: software that allows staff to create and manage TLDSB student accounts to eliminate delays for password resets or account recoveries.

Special Education updated and implemented the School to Work Continuum in all high school Practical Academics and Life Skills classes to assess readiness, scaffold skills, and support work opportunities for students with developmental disabilities.

Information and communications

Communications Services prepared and created Board and school websites that conformed with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards, and provided on-going maintenance to ensure that new and existing websites conformed with these standards. Communications Services also continued to:

- Promote using HTML web pages as content instead of Portable Document Format (PDF) for better and easier WCAG compliance.
- Scan websites for non-compliant accessibility issues and took corrective action.
- Continuously support staff to create and maintain accessible documents with applications such as Word, Google Docs, and Adobe Acrobat.
- Improve the performance, availability, readability, and ease of use of all websites.

- Support the use of accessiBe - a tool used on the Board and all school websites which provides accessibility adjustments to the end user.
- Provide closed captioning features on all Board videos, where possible - example: messages from the director of education and good news stories.
- Provide AODA training in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat to staff in Communications Services and executive assistants.

Special Education Services identified that the closed captioning feature within Google Meet should be utilized during monthly Special Education Resource Teacher online video meetings. Empower Reading was also launched at 10 schools.

Employment

Human Resources Services maintained their commitment to accessible services for all staff.

Language continued to be posted on all job ads, noting that “Trillium Lakelands District School Board complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). If you require accommodation for a disability during any stage of the recruitment process, please contact the Principal/Supervisor to whom you are submitting your application.” For successful applicants, Human Resources Services ensured that a paragraph on accommodations for employees with disabilities is indicated in all offer letters/emails.

The Disability Management Policy and Procedure were also made to be more easily accessible on the Board intranet (Our Dock) in all formats.

Special Education Services worked to increase full-time equivalent staff supporting students by hiring an American Sign Language (ASL)-English Interpreter and Language Acquisition Worker. They also piloted two communication programs that support students with autism.

Procurement

The Business Services and Technology Services departments reviewed procurement procedures for software, hardware, and services to ensure that the most current accessible features are requested ensuring accessibility.

Training

Human Resources Services continued to provide mandatory AODA/Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR) training to new employees as a requirement of employment.

Special Education Services provided Orientation and Mobility Training for individuals who are blind/have low vision through Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Design of public spaces

Facilities Services installed universal washrooms, and completed main washroom upgrades, including accessible stalls and additional seats at multiple locations within the TLDSB. Multiple exterior doors and frames were replaced, which allowed the widening of doors and multiple power door operators were installed as well. Light fixtures throughout the TLDSB were upgraded to work with LED bulbs along with multiple plaza and site accessibility enhancements, which included grading and curb cuts.

Special Education Services leveraged partnerships with community service providers (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, Canadian National Institute for the Blind) to conduct environmental assessments for students who have orientation and mobility needs. The Facilities

Accommodation Request process was then utilized to ensure facilities are accessible for the unique needs of students with disabilities. Monthly meetings were also held between Special Education and Facilities Services to plan for future building modifications, which would ensure accessibility for students with disabilities.

Technology Services created a provision of display options to support people with low vision needs.

Transportation

An Individual School Transportation Plan (ISTP) was provided for all students with disabilities who use school transportation services. The plan was developed by the school in consultation with Special Education and/or Transportation Services, parents/guardians, and, where appropriate, the student. Plans were updated regularly to reflect changes in students' needs.

Other

The following accessibility related policies and procedures were updated:

- BD-2086 Accessibility (2024-2029)
- ES-5031 Student use of Service Animals in Schools (2024-2029)
- ES-5501 Specialized Equipment for Learning (2021-2026)
- HR-4046 Disability Management (2022-2027)
- OP-6540 Emergency Response Plan - Lockdown (2023-2028)

Accessibility plan for 2025 - 2030

Internal customer service - support for TLDSB students and staff

Attendance and Disability Management Officers (ADMOs) from Human Resources Services will continue to meet with Facilities Services and Technology Services to discuss accommodations for staff to ensure they are supported at work.

Special Education Services will continue to implement and refine the Alternate Skills Scope and Sequence in all high school Practical Academics and Life Skills classes to assess readiness, scaffold skills, and support work opportunities for students with developmental disabilities. Planning for emergency and safety during fires will also be updated in the corresponding procedure.

Technology Services will continue to support Special Education Services by providing FM systems to support the needs of individual students requiring soundfield systems and monitoring the Specialized Equipment for Learning procedure to ensure equipment necessary for learning is made available to students in a timely and accountable manner. Technology Services will also work with Special Education Services to create a process to help assign assistive devices to students in a timely manner, ensuring students with disabilities are not disadvantaged due to lack of technology.

External customer service - support for non-TLDSB students and staff

Communications Services will continue to support all alternative format requests received from the public to meet the needs of the school community. The "Report an Accessibility Issue" fillable form on the TLDSB website's Accessibility page will be utilized to receive feedback from the community regarding barriers to accessibility within the Board by forwarding submissions to the AAC for review and response.

Information and communications

Communications Services, in partnership with Technology Services, will continue to use SiteImprove to monitor and scan TLDSB websites for non-compliant accessibility issues and take corrective action while also improving the performance, availability, readability, and ease of use of all TLDSB websites. Communications Services will also continue to support staff to create and maintain accessible documents with applications, such as Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and Adobe Acrobat.

Communications Services in collaboration with Curriculum Services, will adjust the student registration form to include a section for physical disabilities, allowing for a proactive approach when a student with disabilities enrolls in the school. A note will also be added to the website encouraging parents/guardians to disclose any physical disabilities during registration so that accessibility accommodations can be implemented.

By 2026, Human Resources Services will implement a bi-annual accessibility bulletin that will highlight procedural reminders, updated policies and procedures related to accessibility, important AODA items and best practices.

Employment

TLDSB will continue to ensure accessibility provisions are noted on all job postings: “Trillium Lakelands District School Board complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). If you require accommodation for a disability during any stage of the recruitment process, please contact the Principal/Supervisor to whom you are submitting your application.” For successful applicants, the Human Resources Services department will continue to include a paragraph on accommodations for employees with disabilities in all offer letters/emails.

The Attendance & Disability Management Officers of Human Resources Services and Technology Services Staff will continue to work together to review staff equipment on a yearly basis.

Procurement

Standard language regarding AODA training will be included in all Transportation Services related Request For Tender (RFT), Request For Proposal (RFP), Request For Prequalification (RFSQ), Request For Quote (RFQ), Request For Information (RFI) documents.

Technology Services will continue to ensure the procurement of technology resources supports a wide range of accessibility needs or can be adapted as necessary to meet accessibility needs.

Business Services in collaboration with Technology Services will continue to review procurement procedures for software, hardware, and services to ensure current accessible features are requested. Business Services will also support Technology Services by providing alternative products and technology to replace aging equipment. Business Services will support Special Education by collaborating on Vendor Of Record (VOR) through Supply Ontario and Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM); making recommendations to Global Procurement Organization (GPO) for missing collaborative VORs. Tender templates will also be modernized to include building standards for accessibility.

Training

Special Education will provide ongoing Orientation and Mobility Training for individuals who are blind/low vision through Vision Loss Rehabilitation.

Human Resources Services will provide an Accessibility Tip Sheet to school administrators which outlines best practices including:

- Supporting individuals with assistive devices (e.g. wheelchairs, service animals, etc.).
- Providing accessible access to materials and refreshments for those with accessibility needs.
- Ensuring announcements and communications are available in multiple formats for students.

Transportation will offer AODA overview training for operators at annual meetings before the start of the school year. Special Education Consultants/Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) will complete training regarding ISTPs to ensure that the documents are more comprehensive in indicating how to evacuate students as well as what needs to be provided for them to address the student's unique needs.

During the 2025-2026 school year, Special Education Services will:

- Provide training for educational assistants, teachers and administration regarding appropriate practices and strategies for Neurodiverse learners.
- Implement sign-off forms for training of staff in regards to meeting accessibility needs of students such as professional development around Individual Education Plans (IEP), in either digital or physical versions, denoting which staff participated.

During the 2025-2026 school year, Transportation Services will:

- Develop a mechanism for school bus drivers to declare they have completed the AODA customer service training as well as any route/student specific training related to AODA/ISTP/accessible transportation requirements.
- Develop a process where Special Education Services/school staff will assist and support school bus operators with hands-on training where required.

By 2026, Human Resources Services will:

- Implement additional AODA training for all new hires, ensuring completion is recorded in an employee training database.
- Implement AODA training for volunteers, including a sign-off form that is submitted to the school principal or designate.

Design of public spaces

Special Education Services will continue to leverage partnerships with community service providers (ex. Vision Loss Rehabilitation, Five Counties Children's Centre) to conduct environmental assessments for students who have orientation and mobility needs. The Facilities Accommodation Request process will also continue to be used to ensure accessibility for unique needs of students with disabilities.

Technology Services and Facilities Services will collaborate to ensure that PA systems function and that there are warning lights for those who are deaf/hard of hearing to ensure that people with disabilities are aware when emergency lockdowns are initiated.

Facilities Services will continue to design and implement:

- Exterior door and frame replacements
- LED lighting replacements
- Black and white uncontracted braille signs and door numbers
- Elevator upgrades
- Curb cuts, exterior ramps, and door operators
- Main universal washroom upgrades with installation of a wheelchair accessible stall

Facilities Services will also continue to leverage community service provider partnerships to conduct environmental assessments for students who have orientation and mobility needs.

Transportation

Transportation Services will develop a process with a confirmation/tracking mechanism to ensure that ISTPs are reviewed and updated annually. They will also continue to evaluate the determining factors of who should have an ISTP.

Other

The following accessibility related Policies and Procedures will be reviewed:

- BD-2086 Accessibility (2029)
- ES-5031 Student use of Service Animals in Schools (2029)
- ES-5501 Specialized Equipment for Learning (2026)
- HR-4046 Disability Management (2027)
- OP-6540 Emergency Response Plan - Lockdown (2028)

Review and monitoring process

The AAC meets quarterly to review progress, evaluate the effectiveness of implementing barrier-removal and prevention strategies, and to plan for increased accessibility throughout the Board.

The AAC will ensure that, in respect to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the following steps take place:

- An annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan is prepared.
- At least once every five years the plan is reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities, with the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and other relevant committees.

Communication of the plan

In addition to the public availability of the plan as referenced earlier, TLDSB will post an annual status report on the progress of the plan on the Board's website. The Board will accommodate requests for accessible formats of the plan.

Questions, comments, or feedback regarding the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan may be directed to the AAC by email at info@tldsbc.on.ca.