Peel District School Board

Accessibility Plan Status Report - 2019

February 2020

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1. Introduction

Peel District School Board Accessibility Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Peel District School Board District School Board (the Board) to provide an environment in all of its facilities that builds independence, dignity and respect for our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff. The Board is committed to the continual improvement of accessibility and the on-going removal of barriers in order to provide greater equity for all in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Our conduct will demonstrate our belief in the strength diversity brings to our communities.

Connection to the Peel District School Board's Overall System Goals

The Board's Accessibility Policy is one of the many policies comprising the building blocks of the Board's Report Card for Student Success. The Report Card for Student Success is the strategic plan for the Peel Board, based on a proven, research-based methodology called the balanced scorecard. Its power is in using data to transform our strategic plan into action. The Report Card for Student Success shows us whether our actions are having an impact, because each goal clearly sets out targets for improvement. There are eight goals in the strategic plan. The goals represent the most important areas of focus for our Board and are developed based on broad consultation with and consensus from all of our stakeholders[i].

Report Card for Student Success Goals:

- Set High Expectations
- Positive Relationships
- Use Resources Effectively
- Achieve Equity
- Safe and Appropriate Places to Learn and Work
- School Success Planning
- Effective Use of Technology
- Attract, Develop and Retain Staff

Each goal has an impact on accessibility within the Board and any initiative taken to improve a goal will be considered through an accessibility lens with the intention of achieving a fully accessible Board. The Board's values of equity and inclusion are directly tied to accessibility.

2. Overview of the Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) applies to public, broader public and private sector organizations and calls for the development of enforceable accessibility standards in the areas of: customer service; the built environment; employment; information and communication; and transportation. Among other requirements, the Board must develop multiple year accessibility plans at least every five years along with annual status reports for the plans.

Accessibility Standards under the AODA
a. Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
This Standard addresses the manner in which goods and services are delivered to the public and other third parties.

b. Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation
The Integrated Accessibility Standard (IASR) establishes standards for accessibility in the areas of information and communication, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces (built environment). A high level description of the standards is provided below.

i. Accessibility Standards for Information and Communication
This Standard establishes requirements for providing accessible information and communication to persons with disabilities including accessibility standards for websites and website content.

ii. Accessibility Standards for Employment
This Standard addresses the hiring and retaining of paid employees and involves, but is not limited to, providing accessible job postings and reasonable accommodation for individuals selected for interviews and for employees with disabilities.

iii. Accessibility Standards for Transportation
This Standard applies to school Boards and providers of public transportation services, including but not limited to public transit, and taxi and limousine services in Ontario

iv. Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)
The Standard provides accessible design requirements primarily focussing on exterior areas such as accessible parking, pedestrian routes, exterior ramps, play spaces and includes a few public interior areas such as service counters and waiting areas. The standard applies to new construction and areas undergoing renovations.

The following guiding principles are the foundation of the AODA and the accessibility standards enacted under it. Organizations such as the Board must make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with these principles. The principles include demonstrating respect for the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities; providing goods and services to persons with disabilities in a manner that is integrated with others unless another method is required due to the person's disability; and equality of opportunity.

3. Accessibility Plan Status Report - 2019

The Peel District School Board is committed to accessibility, inclusion and equity for persons with disabilities and to fulfilling its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This Accessibility Plan Status Report – 2019 provides an update on the Board's Accessibility Plan.

Aim

This status report outlines accessibility initiatives that have been undertaken for the purpose of addressing accessibility issues that affect persons with disabilities who work, use or attend school Board facilities and services.

4. Internal Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Internal Accessibility Advisory Committee is led by the Abilities, Wellness and Attendance department with representatives from Board departments to create, monitor and improve the objectives of the Board Accessibility Plan as well as accessibility standards stipulated in the AODA.

When public stakeholder consultation is required, feedback is gathered through existing groups or data that may exist through already established committees; S.E.A.C., Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Operational Support Services, Planning and Accommodation Support Services, Facilities and Environmental Support Services.

5. Accessibility Accomplishments

The Board has continued to make accessibility improvements and to work to fulfill its obligations under the AODA. Accessibility initiatives focused on addressing the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) under the AODA. Furthermore, efforts are continuously made to build awareness of the wide range of accessibility issues and of AODA obligations.

Information and Communication Standards

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) is a generic term for equipment or products used by people who experience barriers to performing specific tasks. AT is meant to be a means to improve functional capabilities, foster independence and provide equitable access to the curriculum. AT can be used in many learning environments beyond the classroom to support student success.

Specific assistive technologies can be grouped into various categories of application: Vision, Communication, Mobility, Sensory and Cognition. In these categories, the focus is on supporting student success by addressing key areas of need, as opposed to purely focusing on the products available. This approach helps ensure that students have a complete solution to address their unique learning needs. Assistive technology has the most impact when the student receives training and support from an assistive technology specialist. As such, students receive ongoing training as needed on how to best use AT to support their learning. Staff are also provided with support and training around how to implement technology into their program in a way that makes learning accessible to all students.

13 Assistive Technology Resource Teachers (ATRT) are funded through Ministry Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funding and have been in place for almost 3 years. In that time they have supported students, staff and parents in building their capacity around the use of assistive technology in a variety of ways. Further, there are a variety of focused projects that the ATRTs work on collaboratively with others within the Special Education department and in other departments which are aimed at improving support for students.

Approximately 1800 new claims for technology are approved each year. These would typically be for Chromebooks, Laptops or IPads though there are also claims for more specialized equipment as needed. Further, over 2000 new claims per year are submitted for mobility and sensory equipment which could include standers, walkers, sensory tools to name just a few.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), all public-sector organizations are required to make their websites accessible by Jan. 1, 2021. The board's Communications and Community Relations Support Services and Learning Technology Support Services department are currently collaborating to develop new board and school websites to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0 level AA. These new sites are expected to launch in January 2021, and will be accessible for individuals with:

- Blindness and low vision
- Deafness and hearing loss
- Learning disabilities
- Cognitive impairments
- Mobility impairments
- Speech impairments

The project began in March 2019 by inviting employee groups, board advisory groups, families, School Councils, and students to provide feedback on the current board and school websites through an online survey and focus groups. Their valuable input is currently being used to help develop the new sites.

Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment)

There are two departments within the Board whose work has an impact on the accessibility of physical environments:

- Facilities and Environmental Support Services
- Planning and Accommodation Support Services

Facilities and Environmental Support Services has two arms, Facilities and Maintenance Services, whose work may impact accessibility improvements. The second, Maintenance Services, also has a renewal team undertaking school renewal initiatives and that work sometimes has an accessibility component. Facilities and Environmental Support Services is currently engaging in an exercise mandated by the Ministry of Education to gather data on physical accessibility of schools. Each year the Board is asked to review a specific groups of schools (based on age). Currently, approximately 90 schools have been assessed. It is anticipated that over the next few years the remaining schools will be assessed.

Planning and Accommodation Support Services' projects may have accessibility components as they are responsible for new schools, additions and larger renovation projects.

The Facilities and Environmental Support Services department is responsible for the letter grade assigned to each school. This is based on information from all the above departments. Sometimes, although a project may have had an accessibility component, it may not change the letter grade assigned to a facility. A review is done yearly and will be available in March 2020 when the Accessibility Plan Status Report – 2019 is released.

Accessibility is always evolving. Schools built 20 years ago, although accessible at the time, need upgrading, replacement of items and further work to meet current legislation and building and accessibility standards.

New schools and Additions/Renovations

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
New Schools	6	3	6	4	1	2	22
Additions/renovations			11	4	3	3	21

Elementary/Middle Schools

Item	Elementary				Totals
	2013	2014	2015 -2018	2019	
Accessible Parking and Ext. Ramping		6	16	1	23
ALE & Life Skills Rooms	3	4	24	3	34
Automatic Door Openers		7	58	17	82
Barrier Free or Universal Washroom	1	6	20	7	34
Braille Signage	11	5	43	8	67
Door Hold Open Magnet System		2	9	2	13
Elevator	1		3		4
Orthopedic Washroom		2	6	5	13
Personal Lifts			2	1	3

Secondary Schools

Item	Secondary				Totals
	2013	2014	2015 -2018	2019	
Accessible Parking and Ext. Ramping			14	3	17
ALE & Life Skills Rooms	2		9	2	13
Automatic Door Openers		13	14	3	30
Barrier Free or Universal Washroom			6	14	20
Braille Signage	2	5	13	0	20
Door Hold Open Magnet System		10	5	1	16
Elevator			4	2	6
Orthopedic Washroom	1		5	6	12
Personal Lifts			4	2	6

2019 also saw 91 elementary schools have updates to the safe schools arrival system on the main entrance.

2019 also saw 35 locations have improvements to automatic door openers.

Accessibility Rating of Schools

Secondary Schools

Category	2013	2015
A	10	12
B	19	21
C	4	3
D	2	0
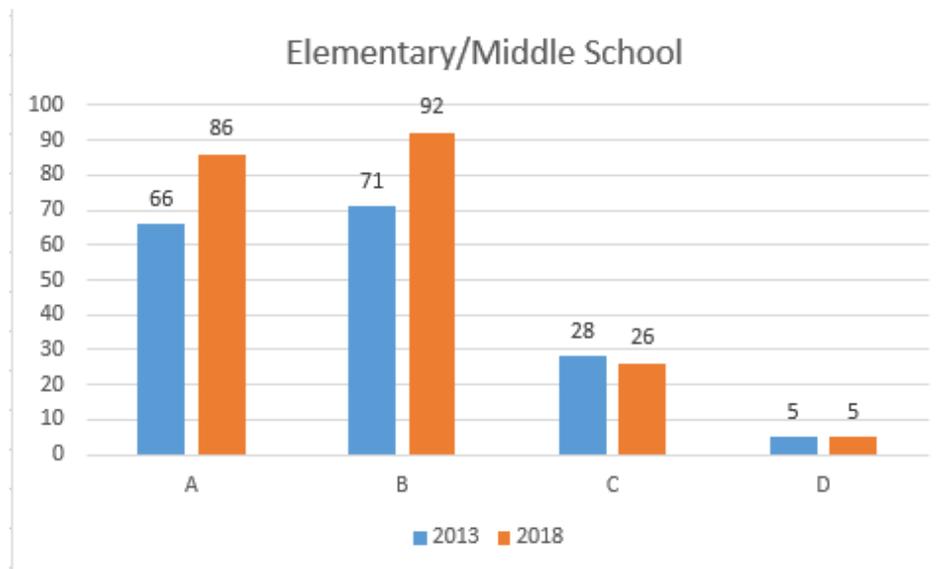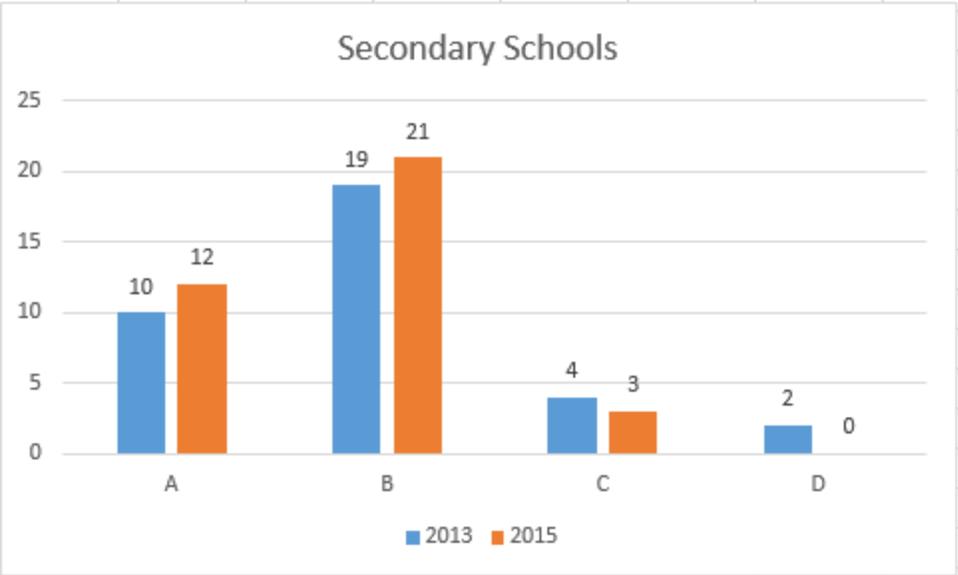
Compliance

The Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation sets out the deadlines for complying with the items listed. It also sets out when compliance reports by the organization need to be filed. The Board is required to file an Accessibility Compliance Report every 2 years, beginning December 31, 2013.

6. Moving Forward: AODA and Accessibility Related Actions

The guiding principles of the AODA and accessibility in general, have been embraced within the Board. During the coming years the Board will continue to focus on AODA compliance and on improving the accessibility of its older facilities. The Board will also continue to improve accessibility awareness among staff through experiential workshops, information sessions, and on-going AODA training.

AODA and Accessibility Related Actions	Deliverable	Status
Build awareness among supervisors and managers of AODA obligations, policies, operational procedures, guides and resources.	Information sessions	On-going
On-going staff and volunteer training to meet the training requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and of the IASR.	Existing Accessibility training module modified.	On-going Training

Update and promote *Accessibility Resources* intranet site. Reorganize growing resources.	Improved organization and ease of use of the site	On-going
Continue to Construct and Renovate to meet or exceed AODA and OBC accessibility standards.	Improvements in the accessibility of Board facilities for students and other persons with disabilities	On-going
Continue to address accessibility related feedback	Respond to feedback, investigate issues and make changes/ renovations where possible	On-going

7. Peel District School Board Facilities: Accessibility Improvements to the Built Environment

The Board continues to improve the accessibility of its older buildings and spaces for persons with disabilities and to construct new premises that incorporate accessible design and features.

New School Construction

For more than ten years the Board applies accessibility design features to school construction and renovation projects. More recently the new Design of Public Spaces Standards made under the AODA are being applied to applicable exterior areas and customer service areas such as accessible parking spaces, ramps and service counters. Furthermore accessibility design criteria applied by the Board to new school facilities both meet and exceed requirements stipulated in the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and suggestions made by the Canadian Standards Association Standard B651-04. For example, Board expectations related to elevator requirements are higher than required by the OBC as well as the provision of one roll-in shower stall in orthopaedic washrooms at each school (which is also not required by the OBC).

Summary

In accordance with the AODA, the Peel District School Board is pleased to provide this Annual Status Report. This report demonstrates the Boards strong commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the AODA and in accessibility and inclusion for all persons including persons with disabilities. This report will be made available to the public on the Board's website and is available in alternative formats upon request.

References

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http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2011/elaws_src_regs_r11191_e.htm

Region of Peel Planning Documents,
http://www.region.peel.on.ca/planning/pdc/data/quickfacts.htm