

Accessibility

1.0 Rationale

- 1.1 The Durham District School Board (“DDSB”) adopts this policy to promote and uphold accessibility and to prevent accessibility barriers in all DDSB learning and working environments.
- 1.2 Providing accessible services, service delivery and employment are necessary to meet the mandate of the DDSB and to create and foster a culture of care where students and employees can thrive and have a sense of safety, well-being, engagement and belonging.
- 1.3 The DDSB adopts this policy to:
 - a) Better fulfill its responsibilities and obligations under and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario’s accessibility laws, and the Ontario Human Rights Code (“the Code”); and
 - b) Identify, prevent, and address ableism, discrimination, and discriminatory barriers based on ability/disability and neurodivergence (and intersectional discrimination) in DDSB services, employment, and learning and working environments.
- 1.4 Systemic ableism and disability-related discrimination are deeply entrenched and operate in society, institutions, structures, and policies, including in educational institutions and the DDSB. Students and staff who are neurodivergent or who have diverse abilities and disabilities continue to confront numerous barriers in school and at work, and these barriers negatively affect their education and employment.
- 1.5 The DDSB recognizes the:
 - a) Broad and evolving definition of “disability” under the AODA, the Code, and case law, and increasing understanding of diverse abilities, neurodiversity and the social model of disability;
 - b) Stigmatization and negative biases, attitudes, perceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes based on ableism, disability, diverse abilities, and neurodivergence, including and not limited to assumptions about functional limitations, low expectations, learning disabilities, differences in behaviours, social interactions, cognitive processing, communications, etc.);
 - c) Unique accessibility barriers (for example, attitudinal, physical, architectural, information/communication, or technological barriers) for neurodivergent people, or because of mental health challenges, addictions and disabilities that may be “invisible”, episodic, temporary, or permanent;

- d) Inequitable and disproportionate educational and employment experiences and outcomes, including and not limited to discipline, access to programs, assessments, services, supports, transition planning, activities, events, transportation, etc.;
- e) Bullying, harassment, and discrimination [including intersectional discrimination because of accommodation needs and/or based on neurodivergence, disability, different abilities, and other prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Human Rights Policy (for example, another type of disability, ancestry, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, creed/religion, socioeconomic status, etc.) and which may affect accessibility and accommodation needs and plans; and Individuals may experience disability-related barriers differently (in other words, not everyone with the same type of disability may have the same accessibility or accommodation needs).

1.6 The DDSB is committed to:

- a) Addressing ableism and discriminatory accessibility barriers related to the medical and functional models of disability (including through professional development and learning);
- b) Recognizing and affirming neurodiversity and the social model of disability;
- c) Meaningfully engaging with people/communities with who are most impacted by systemic ableism and to learn more about their lived experiences;
- d) Teaching and learning about the diverse identities, histories, accomplishments, strengths, talents, and experiences of neurodivergent peoples and people with different abilities and disabilities;
- e) Supporting inclusive and accessible services, employment, and learning and working environments for DDSB community members; and
- f) Accommodating accessibility needs in accordance with the AODA, the Code, and the DDSB's Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy (the "Human Rights Policy") and Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure (the "Accommodation Procedure"), to the point of undue hardship.

1.7 The DDSB recognizes the roles and responsibilities it has to support teaching and learning about accessibility and anti-ableism, and to take intentional action consistent with laws and this policy, including and not limited to:

- a) Promoting accessibility and anti-ableism;
- b) Identifying, preventing, addressing, and responding to ableism and accessibility barriers for students, staff and community members when accessing DDSB services, employment, and learning and working environments (including the duty to accommodate under the Code, the Human Rights Policy, and the Accommodation Procedure);
- c) Learning and building capacity about how to apply accessibility principles to all aspects of DDSB services, employment, and learning and working environments; and
- d) Providing a mechanism for students, staff, and community members to report accessibility issues and concerns and to raise accessibility complaints.

2.0 Policy Objective

- 2.1 A key objective of this policy is to embed anti-ableism, accessibility, human rights, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and inclusive design principles to all aspects of DDSB services, employment and learning and working environments. These include:
- a) Disrupting ableist structures, policies, practices, and rules to address individual and systemic accessibility barriers;
 - b) Upholding principles of dignity and respect; and
 - c) Maximizing integration, independence, and participation.
- 2.2 This policy is to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the DDSB's commitment to promoting and upholding Indigenous rights and human rights in all of its learning and working environments. This includes anti-colonial, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist approaches and actions to provide services and employment that are safe, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, equitable, accessible and free from discrimination and harassment consistent with the DDSB's Indigenous Education Policy, Human Rights Policy, Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy, and related procedures.
- 2.3 This policy must also be read together with the:
- a) [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Procedure](#);
 - b) [Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure](#);
 - c) [Human Rights Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability Framework](#) (the "Accountability Framework");
 - d) [Student/Family Human Rights Issue, Incident and Complaint Resolution Procedure](#);
 - e) [Complaint Procedure – Human Rights, Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention](#); and
 - f) [Code of Conduct](#).

These procedures further outline the DDSB's commitment to prevent all forms of discrimination and ableism, and to promote accessibility in DDSB learning and working environments.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 In this policy,
- 1. "Ableism" is belief systems and attitudes about neurodivergent people and people with disabilities 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 neurodivergent people and people with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities. Ableist attitudes are often based on the view that disability is an "anomaly to normalcy," rather than an inherent and expected variation in the human condition.

2. “Accessibility” is a general term for the degree of ease that something (for example, a device, service, physical environment, and information) can be accessed, used, and enjoyed by neurodivergent people and persons with disabilities. The term implies conscious planning, design, and/or effort to make sure something is barrier-free to neurodivergent people and people with disabilities. Accessibility also benefits the general population, by making things more usable and practical for everyone.
3. “Customer” refers to any person who uses the services of the DDSB.

Key human rights and accessibility terms used in this procedure are defined in the Human Rights Policy’s Glossary of Terms (Appendix of the Human Rights Policy)

4.0 Policy

- 4.1 This policy applies to DDSB employees, trustees, students, parents/guardians, volunteers, permits holders, contractors, customers, and other members of organizations not related to the DDSB but who nevertheless work on or are invited onto DDSB premises or utilize DDSB services.
- 4.2 If a provision of the AODA, an accessibility standard or any other regulation under AODA conflicts with a provision of another statute or regulation, the provision that provides the highest level of accessibility to person with disabilities will prevail.

Integrated Accessibility Standards: Inclusive Design and Proactive Prevention

- 4.3 The DDSB delegates responsibility to the Director of Education to develop appropriate procedures (refer to the Accommodation Procedure and the Accessibility Procedure) and plans (for example, the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, Accessibility Plan, Inclusive Student Services Special Education Plan, etc.) that set out how the DDSB will:
 - a) Adhere to the Integrated Accessibility Standards;
 - b) Proactively promote anti-ableism and accessibility;
 - c) Prevent discrimination and discriminatory barriers based on ability, disability, and neurodivergence; and
 - d) Accommodate individual accessibility needs in a timely manner and to the point of undue hardship.

Responsibilities and Accountability

- 4.4 All DDSB community members have a responsibility to contribute to and support safe, welcoming, equitable, respectful, accessible, and inclusive learning and working environments and to:
 - a) Treat other DDSB community members with dignity and respect;
 - b) Promote and uphold accessibility; and
 - c) Meet duties, responsibilities, and accountabilities for accessibility as outlined in this policy, the Human Rights Policy, and the Accountability Framework.

- 4.5 Employees shall, within the scope of their responsibilities, authority, and influence, incorporate and apply accessibility principles to:
- a) Comply with the AODA accessibility standards for service, employment, transportation, public spaces, and information and communications;
 - b) Address barriers and support accessibility and quality participation for students, employees, and community members with diverse abilities/disabilities and who are neurodivergent. For school-based staff, this also includes applying UDL principles to teaching and learning and school/classroom practices; and
 - c) Contribute to shared organizational roles and responsibilities for promoting and upholding accessibility.

Requesting Accessibility-Related Accommodation

- 4.6 DDSB community members may request accessibility-related accommodation under the Code, Human Rights Policy, and this policy using the Accommodation Procedure.

Accessibility Issues, Concerns, and Complaints

- 4.7 DDSB community members may report an issue or concern, or make a complaint about accessibility, using:
- a) *For students:* the [Student/Family Human Rights Issue, Incident and Complaint Resolution Procedure](#);
 - b) *For staff:* the [Complaint Procedure – Human Rights, Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention](#);
 - c) *For community members accessing DDSB learning and working environments:* the [Code of Conduct](#).

Protection from Reprisal

- 4.8 DDSB community members will not be subjected to reprisal or threat of reprisal for raising accessibility issues, concerns, or complaints, or for requesting accommodation under the AODA or the Code.

Confidentiality

- 4.9 Except as may be permitted or required by law, the confidentiality and privacy of personal information related to accessibility-related needs, issues, accommodation requests, and complaints shall be maintained.

Trends Analysis

- 4.10 The Director of Education and designates shall develop processes to collect and analyze accessibility-related data to identify and address potential systemic accessibility barriers or trends, in accordance with the Human Rights Policy, procedures, and Accountability Framework.

Communication

- 4.11 This policy and related procedure shall be posted on the DDSB's website together with any supporting accessibility-related resources.

5.0 Evaluation

- 5.1 This Policy may be reviewed and updated as may be deemed necessary or appropriate, but it shall be reviewed at least every 5 years.

6.0 Reference Documents

6.1 Policies

- [Indigenous Education Policy](#)
- [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy](#)
- [Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy](#)
- [Use of Service Animals in Schools Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)

6.2 Procedures

- [Indigenous Education Procedure on Classroom Practices – Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Procedure](#)
- [Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure](#)
- [Student/Family Human Rights Issue, Incident and Complaint Resolution Procedure](#)
- [Human Rights Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability Framework](#)
- [Complaint Procedure-Human Rights, Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention](#)
- [Accessibility Procedure](#)
- [Use of Service Animals in Schools Procedure](#)

6.3 Other Documents (Legislation, Provincial Regulations, etc.)

- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)
- [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- [Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)
- [The Education Act](#)
- [Development of Proposed Kindergarten to Grade 12 \(K-12\) Education Standards 2022 – Final Recommendations Report](#)
- [Ontario Building Code](#)
- [Blind Person's Rights Act](#)
- [Service and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act](#)
- [DDSB Accessibility Plan](#)
- [DDSB Accessibility Guide](#)
- [DDSB Special Education Plan](#)

Appendix:

None

Effective Date:

2025-01-14

Reviewed and Amended:

YYYY-MM-DD

Reviewed without Amendment:

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