



District Accessibility Plan 2023 – 2027



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COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

Commitment to Accessibility:

Ķwsaltktnéws ne Secwepemcúl'ecw School District No. 83 is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all individuals within our organization and those interacting with it. Our District's Accessibility Plan is crafted in accordance with the Accessible British Columbia Act, passed in June 2021, which mandates that prescribed organizations, including school districts, identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. This plan outlines our commitment to creating an inclusive environment by addressing the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in their daily interactions with our organization.

In compliance with the Act, we have established the Accessibility Committee to advise our district on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with our district and developed a public feedback mechanism to ensure ongoing improvement. Guided by the principles of inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design, we will regularly review and update this plan at least once every three years, incorporating feedback from our community to enhance accessibility for all.

Aim of the Accessibility Plan:

The District's Accessibility Plan is developed in accordance with the Accessible British Columbia Act, 2021 as it applies to prescribed organizations including school districts as of September 1, 2023. In alignment with the Act, the plan aims to support the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers that persons with disabilities face in their day-to-day lives. The plan also sets out the steps that we will take to achieve these goals.

GLOSSARY

The District recognizes that language preferences continually evolve and that choices about how to describe identity and disability should be made by each individual. For the purposes of this Accessibility Plan, the District has chosen to use the language and terminology found in relevant legislation. When referring to the disability community more broadly, the District aligns with the BC Government and other Canadian public bodies by using person first language throughout this plan.

- **Accessibility**
- **Barrier:** anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with a disability.
 - Caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and
 - Affected by intersecting forms of discrimination
- **Disability:** an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier.
- **Impairment:** includes a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.
- **Prescribed Organization:** an organization designated by the Regulations.

DISTRICT BACKGROUND

Íwsaltktnéws ne Secwepemcúl'ecw School District No. 83 is located on the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people and encompasses the beautiful geographic area around Shuswap Lake and the valleys of Enderby and Armstrong. The 25 schools, located in the communities of Falkland, Armstrong, Enderby, Grindrod, Silver Creek, Ranchero, Salmon Arm, Canoe, Tappen, Sicamous, Sorrento, and Celista, are surrounded by lakes, rivers, mountains, and agricultural areas where all manner of wildlife thrives.

We strive to provide safe, culturally diverse, and nurturing learning environments from kindergarten through grade 12 to meet unique learning needs. The District offers a wide variety of learning opportunities that align with the values and beliefs reflected in the Strategic Plan, including Career Development, Early Learning, French Immersion, Inclusive Education, Indigenous Education, International Students, Literacy Support, Music, Outdoor Learning, and Strong Start to engage students in stimulating and relevant educational experiences. In addition, our dedication to social responsibility teaches our students to respect themselves, their environment and each other, and encourages them to find ways to give back to their local communities.

District Mission: Empowering students to become confident, curious, and caring individuals who thrive in their learning, relationships, and community.

District Vision: Preparing students to become educated citizens who contribute to a dynamic, sustainable, and diverse world.

Values:

- **Belonging:** We encourage relationships that support a culture of respect, empathy, and collaboration where individuals are supported, represented, and empowered to reach their full potential.
- **Respect:** We nurture respectful and inclusive communities where everyone feels valued, safe, and appreciated.
- **Reconciliation:** We are committed to true Reconciliation through working together and honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.
- **Empathy:** We offer kindness, compassion, and respect while recognizing a deep understanding of others.
- **Equity:** We seek to understand individual perspectives and needs in order to provide access to opportunities, resources, and learning, and we honour our commitment to true Reconciliation.
- **Perseverance:** We foster resilience and self-empowerment, recognizing one's journey toward success involves overcoming difficult challenges.

Connections Between Strategic Plan and Accessibility Plan

Ensure safe, inclusive spaces exist in our schools for all students

Build a shared commitment and capacity to facilitate an inclusive, safe, and healthy work culture.

Create safe, healthy, and functional learning and working spaces.



Develop a facility plan that provides a comprehensive assessment of building infrastructure, accessibility, and projected student numbers to guide future capital decisions.

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE 2023-2027

The Accessibility British Columbia Act focuses on identifying and removing barriers, promoting fairness and equity, and advancing human rights. These themes align with our strategic plan goal of fostering shared commitment and capacity. We strive for equity by promoting awareness, recognition, integration, inclusiveness, and unity. An Accessibility Committee has been established to support the effective implementation of the Act and to assist the District by making recommendations regarding identifying, removing, and preventing barriers faced by persons with disabilities. As per the Accessible British Columbia Act, the appointment of accessibility committee members must, to the extent possible, align with the following membership/composition:

- At least half of the members are persons with disabilities, or individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities;
- At least one member is an Indigenous person; and
- Members reflect the diversity of persons in B.C. and our region.

Current Membership (2023-2026)

Committee Members	Role/Representation
Aaron Fredborg	Indigenous Outreach Worker
Chelsea Prince	Assistant Superintendent, Indigenous Education and Student Support Services
Cindy Ursulak	Occupational Therapist
Eline den Boer	Physiotherapist
Kelly Manduca	Vision Teacher
Kristina Baker	Hearing Resource Teacher
Leah-Ann Cochrane	HR Specialist
Michelle Guillou (Chair)	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Travis Elwood	Director of Operations
Wyona Maddigan	ELL Teacher
Guest Seat	Student, Parent, Community Member, Staff, Other

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develop a plan to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the District
- Establish a process for receiving feedback from the public on the Accessibility Plan and on barriers to individuals in or interacting with the District.

- Review feedback to better understand and identify the issues, challenges, and priorities of stakeholders within our school community.
- Assist the District in reviewing and updating its Accessibility Plan based on the feedback, at least once every three years.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Foundational Legislation

Our district's accessibility plan aims to fit within the framework for improving the wellbeing of persons with disabilities established at various levels, including global, national, provincial, and school district.

Global Context

The United Nations' Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol adopted in December 2006 established the following principlesⁱ, which help to guide the Accessibility Committee in their work:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
- Non-discrimination;
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Accessibility;
- Equality between men and women;
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Canadian Context

As of 2022, 27% of Canadians aged 15 and older have a disability, and these numbers have risen from 22.3% in 2017ⁱⁱ.

The Accessible Canada Act came into force in 2019 and is landmark federal legislation that aims to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. ⁱⁱⁱThe legislation benefits all Canadians, especially persons with disabilities, through the proactive identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility in 7 priority areas:

- employment
- the built environment
- information and communication technologies (ICT)
- communication other than ICT

- the design and delivery of programs and services
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities
- transportation

Provincial Context

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 2021, initially applied only to provincial government organizations. The Accessible British Columbia Regulation effective September 1, 2022, expanded these requirements to include school districts. By September 1, 2023, school districts must have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a feedback tool for accessibility. The Act aims to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and involve them in removing and preventing barriers to their full participation in the province.



This image shows each of the six principles, in the Accessible British Columbia Act, that will be considered in our Accessibility Plan. These include universal design, adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, and self-determination.

Accessible British Columbia Act Principles

The Accessible B.C. Act lists of principles that organizations must consider in the development of an accessibility plan. The Definitions are adapted from the foundational document [BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation](#).

- **Inclusion**: All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
- **Adaptability**: Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

- **Diversity:** Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.
- **Collaboration:** Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for Organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.
- **Self-Determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
- **Universal Design:** The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.”

METHODOLOGY

Phase 1: Initial Planning & Research: September 2023 – August 2024

- Create Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Committee
- Grow relationships among members of the Accessibility Committee
- Craft the Accessibility Survey, distribute to the public in tandem with National Accessibility Week – May 26 to June 1, 2024, and gather feedback
- Draft Plan completed

Phase 2: September 2024 – August 2025

- Accessibility Committee will consult and identify opportunities to remove or prevent access barriers that align with the district’s strategic plan
 - Prioritize initiatives and continue to revise the draft plan
 - Site specific signage review at identified schools
 - Ongoing purposeful consultation to support access to curriculum and the school and community environments
 - Building awareness through education, such as accessible presentation video
 - Identifying and communicating systemic barriers to accessibility
 - Continue to grow relationships
 - Raise awareness during National Accessibility Week (the week that begins on the last Sunday in May)
-

Phase Three: Monitoring and Reporting September 2025 – January 2027

- Consult with the public on the Accessibility Plan to inform the work of the Accessibility Committee in drafting the plan
- Ongoing purposeful consultation and education to support access to curriculum and the school and community environments
- Continue to grow interdepartmental relationships and identifying partnerships
- Consider metrics to measure effectiveness of Accessibility Plan implementation over time (hold for next year.
- Review and update this Accessibility Plan to develop a new three-year implementation plan that identifies barriers that can be removed or prevented and prioritizes initiatives
- The Accessibility Committee will regularly review and monitor the feedback received to identify and address current or future accessibility issues.

Data Collection

- Request feedback from the public about the Accessibility Plan through the Feedback Tool
- Internal Facilities Audit Checklist to identify universal priorities

Types of Disabilities:

The Accessible British Columbia Act defines *disability* as: “an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier”. An *impairment*, according to the Act, includes: a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary or episodic. In the development of this plan, the District has considered the functional limitations associated with several different kinds of disability and the effects of these limitations on an individual’s ability to perform everyday tasks:

- Physical Impairment
- Hearing Loss
- Speech Loss
- Vision Loss
- Deaf-Blind
- Smell or Taste Limitation
- Touch
- Intellectual
- Mental Health
- Learning
- Other – resulting from an accident, illness, or disease

Types of Barriers:

The Accessibility British Columbia Act defines a *barrier* as: anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with a disability.

- a) Caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and
- b) Affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

The following types of barriers have been considered in the initial development of this plan:

- Architectural Barriers
- Communication Barriers
- Information Barriers
- Physical Barriers
- Systemic Barriers
- Technological Barriers
- Environmental Barriers

FEEDBACK TOOL

To ensure continuous improvement in accessibility, our district encourages the public to provide input on the organization's accessibility plan and barriers to individuals in or interacting with the district.

To help achieve this goal, our district has established processes for receiving comments from the public.

Online Accessibility Survey

This includes an online **Feedback Tool** designed to gather valuable insights about accessibility from students, staff, and the broader community. The Accessibility Survey features a series of questions about personal experiences with accessibility, which can be completed anonymously. The Accessibility Tool will continue to be available to identify current or future accessibility issues.

The Accessibility Committee will regularly review and monitor the feedback received to identify and address current or future accessibility issues.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN – ACTIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

As outlined in Phase 2 of our methodology, the District will develop specific goals, initiatives, and actions based on the consultation and feedback from stakeholders within the district community. Domain areas of focus may include: Information and Communication, Transportation, Employment, Build Environment, Education, and Systemic.

Domain areas to be updated January 2027 based on current feedback.

Draft Domain Area: Facilities and Spaces

What We Heard:

Goal:

Initiatives (simple terms for what this means)	Actions (how are we going to get there?)	Outcomes & Measurement to be Considered

Draft Domain Area: Education

What We Heard:

Goal:

Initiatives (simple terms for what this means)	Actions (how are we going to get there?)	Outcomes & Measurement to be Considered

Draft Domain Area: Accessibility Awareness and Advocacy

What We Heard:

Goal:

Initiatives (simple terms for what this means)	Actions (how are we going to get there?)	Outcomes & Measurement to be Considered

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES & RESOURCES

[United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

[Accessible British Columbia Act](#)

[Disability Alliance of BC](#)

[Untapped Accessibility](#)

[BC Accessibility Hub](#)

[Accessibility Statistics](#)

[Frequently asked questions about the Accessible B.C. Regulation for organizations - Province of British Columbia](#)

