



ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

SEPTEMBER 30, 2006

This publication is available on the board website (www.dpcdsb.org)



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Executive Summary

People with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of our population. According to Statistics Canada, about 1.5 million Ontarians (13.5% of Ontario's population) have disabilities. This number is expected to increase to 20% of the population by 2020.

The *Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and *Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) were enacted to ensure improved opportunities for people 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. To this end, the ODA requires that school boards prepare annual accessibility plans.

This is the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board's (the "board") fourth annual accessibility plan (the "Plan"). This Plan describes measures the board has taken to date and those to be taken in 2006-2007 to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities who use the board's facilities and services.

A public survey was conducted by the board in 2004 to assist in identifying existing barriers. In response to feedback received from that survey, Access Dufferin-Peel (the board's accessibility planning working group) has continued to primarily focus on information and public awareness this year. Initiatives and activities completed in this regard are detailed in this Plan.

In May, 2006 a new Steering Committee, entitled "Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools in Dufferin-Peel", was created to oversee the implementation of 11 public interest remedies that have been agreed to with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Three of these remedies specifically pertain to students with disabilities and are included in this Plan.

The board continues to recognize the value of community partnerships and a best practice approach to accessibility planning. The board's Accessibility Coordinator is an active member of Peel Partners in Accessibility, which is comprised of accessibility coordinators from local school boards, municipalities, post-secondary institutions and hospitals. Peel Partners in Accessibility meets quarterly to exchange information and explore opportunities for collaborative planning. This partnership has been instrumental in enabling the board to implement several of initiatives over the past few years. Items of common interest will continue to be pursued by Peel Partners in Accessibility in 2006-2007.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is responsible for educating and

accommodating thousands of students with disabilities on a daily basis. Individualized programs and services are provided throughout the board's jurisdiction by professionally trained teachers, special services staff and other support staff. Professional development opportunities for those who work with students with disabilities are also regularly provided. With such activities forming such an integral and regular part of the board's day-to-day operations, it is extremely difficult to capture every accessibility activity that the board has put in place to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. This Plan does, however, attempt to highlight some of these initiatives.

1. Aim

This Plan describes many measures the board has already taken and those that will be taken this year (2006-2007) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities who work in, use or attend board facilities and services.

2. Objectives

This Plan:

- a) Describes initiatives previously implemented by the board that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities
- b) Describes efforts made to date to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities
- c) Describes measures the board will take in 2006-2007 to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities

3. Description of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is the successor to The Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic District School Board, which was established in 1969 by the merger of eight small separate boards. The board's jurisdiction covers over 1,000 square miles, extending throughout the municipalities of Mississauga, Brampton, Bolton, Caledon, Orangeville and Dufferin County.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is one of the largest school boards in Ontario and one of the largest employers in the region. Its 141 elementary and secondary schools service a day school enrolment of approximately 89,000 students. In addition, over 47,000 students are enrolled in Continuing Education and Alternative Education programs.

Our Mission

The mission of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, in partnership with the family and church, is to provide, in a responsible manner, a Catholic education which develops spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, social and physical capabilities of each individual to live fully today and to meet the challenges of the future, thus enriching the community.

4. Definitions

The ODA, the AODA and this Plan apply to barriers and disabilities that extend well beyond those that are physical. The ODA and AODA contains the following broad definitions of “barrier” and “disability”:

Barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, attitudinal barrier, technological barrier, policy or practice; (“obstacle”)

Disability means,

- a) 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 impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or development disability,
- c) a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”)

A disability may be a temporary or permanent infirmity.

The identification, removal and prevention of barriers for people with disabilities have significant impact for Board departments, locations and general operations.

5. Commitment to Accessibility Planning

The board reconfirmed its commitment to accessibility planning in 2004 by adopting the following Commitment to Accessibility Planning Mission Statement:

Commitment to Accessibility Planning Mission Statement

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is committed to:

- a) The continual improvement of access to school premises, facilities and services for students, employees and members of the community with disabilities.
- b) The participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual access plans
- c) The provision of quality services to all students, parents and member of the community to meet the needs of a wide range of people, including people with disabilities.

The Director of Education has authorized Access Dufferin-Peel to prepare annual accessibility plans that will enable these commitments to be met.

The board remains seriously concerned, however, that the provincial government continues to expect school boards to develop and implement accessibility plans using existing resources even though the current public education funding model still does not provide any additional funding to support accessibility planning. The continued absence of targeted public funding is increasingly impeding the board's ability to implement new barrier removal initiatives that would further improve access for people with disabilities. The board has sent correspondence to the provincial government regarding these concerns several times over the past few years however no response or acknowledgement has ever been received.

Access Dufferin-Peel – Members & Role

Access Dufferin-Peel was formally constituted by the board in May 2003 and consists of the following members:

MEMBER	ORGANIZATION/DEPARTMENT REPRESENTED
Nichilo, Vince (Chair)	Supervisory Officers-Instructional Services
McCloskey, Bob (Vice Chair)	OECTA - Secondary Unit
Tallevi, Nancy	Accessibility Coordinator
Buchan, Lawrence (to Feb.'06)	CUPE - Local 1483
Campbell, Bruce	Mid-Mgmt.Assn/Community Relations Dept.
DeEyre, Maria (to Aug.'06)	Mid-Mgmt./Health Promotion/Wellness
D'Souza, Chris	Mid-Mgmt.Assn/Equity Officer
Kazimowicz, Liz	Supervisory Officers-Instructional Services
Kossel, Diane	Educational Resource Workers' Assn.
Lawton, Roland	Mid-Mgmt.Assn/Plant Department
Leavitt, Charlotte	OECTA - Elementary Unit
Marcon, Doris	Assn. of Professional Student Services Personnel
Martel, Dorothy	Special Education Advisory Committee
Morizio, Maria	Special Education Department
Moussa, Wassim (to Nov.05)	Assn. of Professional Student Services Personnel
Papaloni, Lucy	Principal/Vice Principal Assn.-Elementary
Proietti, Dolores	Principal/Vice Principal Assn.-Secondary
Smit, Jason (to April '06)	Mid-Mgmt.Assn/Health & Safety Dept.
Stevenson, Larry (eff. Feb.'06)	CUPE - Local 1483
Teply, Lesia	OECTA - Occasional Teachers
Welsh, Wendy (eff. Oct.06)	Mid-Mgmt./Health Promotion/Wellness
Di Iorio, Ann	Recorder
(vacant - 1 seat)	CUPE - Local 2026
(vacant - 1 seat)	Central Cmte. for Catholic School Councils
(vacant - 1 seat)	Mid-Mgmt.Assn/Health & Safety Dept.
(vacant - 1 seat)	Member At Large
(vacant - 1 seat)	Special Education Advisory Committee

Notes:

CUPE = Canadian Union of Public Employees

OECTA = Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association

Board trustees confirmed the role of Access Dufferin-Peel in 2004 as follows:

Role of Access Dufferin-Peel

The Director of Education has established the Accessibility Planning Working Group (Access Dufferin-Peel) to carry out the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board's commitment to accessibility planning. Access Dufferin-Peel is authorized to:

- a. Conduct research on barriers to people with disabilities in all facilities, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services offered by the board.
- b. List facilities, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services that cause or may cause barriers to people with disabilities.
- c. Recommend barriers to be removed or prevented.
- d. Describe how these barriers would be removed or prevented.
- e. Prepare an annual report on these activities, and after its approval by the board of Trustees, make the plan available to the public.

Access Dufferin-Peel meets monthly from September to June. Several Sub-Committees were also active in 2006-2007. Sub-Committees, which in some instances include individuals beyond Access Dufferin-Peel membership, are established as specific needs are identified. Meetings are scheduled as needed.

There will again be significant change in Access Dufferin-Peel membership for 2006-2007. The board acknowledges the invaluable contribution made by all members of Access Dufferin-Peel and thanks those whose terms have recently ended.

6. Barrier-Removal Initiatives

The Accessibility of Services Sub-Committee was established to compile a general list of existing board accessibility resources and provide information on how to access such resources. While this information gathering remains on-going, the following constitutes an overview of the sub-committee's findings to date. Initiatives completed in 2006-2007 are incorporated into these findings.

a) Physical Barriers

The board has recognized in many ways the need to ensure access to all board buildings and services, including providing appropriate student transportation as needed and ensuring the accommodation of employees and students with disabilities in a manner appropriate to their needs. Specialized health support services for students are provided in consultation with local health agencies. Injured/ill employees who are returning to work are provided with individual vocational rehabilitation plans to promote integration into the workplace. Some of the physical barrier removal initiatives implemented to date include:

- Appropriate student transportation opportunities
- Specialized health support services
- Assistance with mobility
- Ergonomic modifications
- Workstation accessibility
- Designated handicap parking and curb cuts at school and board office sites
- Handicapped washroom facilities, including ceiling lifts where needed
- Lightweight/customized tools
- Individualized vocational rehabilitation plans
- Specialized equipment (transfers and lifts)
- Orthopedic facilities
- Health Promotion & Wellness Department
- Health & Safety Department
- Health & safety plant audits

Special Education staff monitors the needs of individual students with disabilities and advises the board's Plant Department when renovations, such as handicapped washrooms, installation of ramps, curb cuts, change tables, automatic door openers and additional handicapped parking are needed at a particular school location. These types of projects are funded through the general Facilities Renewal budget.

There are also many initiatives that enable students with disabilities to participate in events that are similar to their able-bodied student counterparts, such as:

ROPSSAA (Region of Peel Secondary School Athletic Association) Track and Field Special Events and ROPSSAA Track and Field Special Events Awards Banquet: These annual events are held for secondary school students enrolled in the board's Planning For Independence Program. These students, who all have moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, participate in specialized track and field events over two days. An awards banquet with students, support staff and teachers is held at a later date to celebrate the achievements of these students.

Joe Sax Activity Festival: This annual Olympic-themed activity day is named after

a deceased former secondary school teacher of the board who once held the Canadian record for the 3,000-metre steeplechase and who preached tolerance and inclusion to his students. Elementary students with disabilities have the opportunity to represent their schools in a competition of athletic activities that are modified to fit their unique abilities. The event is held at a board secondary school, with able-bodied secondary students assisting as event volunteers.

b) Architectural Barriers

Board-approved Design Guidelines for new elementary and secondary schools identify many components to aid access for those with physical disabilities, including designated barrier-free parking, ramps, power-assisted entrance doors, lifts, elevators and barrier-free washrooms. Doors and washroom sinks have lever handles, while some built-in workstations and student lockers are wheelchair accessible. Certain classrooms have a barrier-free kitchen, orthopedic washroom and barrier-free millwork components where warranted.

Board design guidelines address the needs of those with hearing and vision impairments by providing Braille elevator signage; highly visual strips on stair edges; strobe lights near fire alarms that flash when the fire alarm discharges; and modifications that enable those with hearing loss to attach individual headsets to amplification systems.

The province recently introduced design standards for government buildings, while the local municipalities in Peel Region have each finalized their own design guidelines. In 2006-2007 an Access Dufferin-Peel Sub-committee was established to review these documents to determine if the board's current design guidelines can be improved upon with respect to accessible planning. This review and associated recommendations are expected to be completed in 2006-2007.

Board Design Department staff also attended the Developing a Universal Design Lens for City Planning presentation hosted by the City of Mississauga in June 2006. Information obtained from this session will assist in the review of the Board's Design Guidelines.

c) Informational Barriers

Access Dufferin-Peel identified from the survey results the need to increase public awareness of accessibility issues and to communicate the board's accessibility planning initiatives as an on-going priority. The Communication and Public Awareness Sub-Committee remains active in developing and carrying out a strategy in this regard. Initiatives to increase public awareness include:

- An accessibility logo that appears on board communications regarding accessibility to provide a quick visual indication of the subject matter.
- A dedicated Access Dufferin-Peel website that is prominently linked from the main board website.
- The Access Dufferin-Peel newsletter is published twice annually and is widely distributed to staff, community partners, local MPP's, municipalities and others and is posted on the board website. Newsletter articles include updates on new legislation (e.g. Sabrina's Law 2006), board accessibility initiatives and various topics of interest such as Sunoco's gas pump equity program.
- Accessibility symbols are now included in the board's Directory of Schools and Occasional Teachers' Atlas.
- Periodic updates regarding accessibility issues are provided in the Director of Education's Bulletin to staff and other board publications.
- Accessibility Coordinator participation with Peel Partners in Accessibility.
- Participation in North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Many other provisions are also in place to provide alternatives to assist those with disabilities to access information. Specially trained staff works with students to teach skills and provide opportunities that will improve their current and future ability to access information. Some of the available services and technologies are:

- Braille available on request
- Staff trained to sign
- Picture Exchange Computer System
- BoardMaker
- Staff development and training
- Special Education Department (including Special Education Consultants; Psychologists; Child & Youth Workers; Social Workers; Speech, Language, Hearing and Vision specialists)
- Special Education staff assigned to school locations to work with students and staff

The board is also actively involved in many annual activities that raise awareness of organizations that service people with disabilities and their clients, including:

- Participation in National Denim Day to support Breast Cancer research.
- Hosting three golf tournaments that benefit various charities and organizations that service people with disabilities. 2005-2006 recipients included the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Canadian Cancer Society, Ukrainian Canadian Care Centre, Sick Kids Foundation, St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario.

- Various activities to support United Way throughout the Board, including an annual walk/run/rollerblade event.
- In a joint-school board effort, all local Catholic and public schools raised funds on September 16, 2005 for the Terry Fox Foundation through various activities, such as National School Run Day events.
- Student and employee participation in such events as the “Big Bike for Stroke”, which raised funds and awareness for the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Citizens Challenge present A Hair Cutting and Hair Donation Fundraising event which raised funds and awareness for Dreams Take Flight and Angel Hair For Kids.
- Hosting a community craft show by L’Arche, a faith-based community founded by Jean Vanier. L’Arche members, all of whom have developmental disabilities, participate in activities such as craft making and wood-working. The craft show provides them with an opportunity to publicly display and sell their artifacts.

The Accessibility Coordinator has also presented information regarding the Board’s accessibility initiatives to such groups as York University Special Education Part II students and the Joint Peel Caledon Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Information regarding community events and seminars presented by groups representing people with disabilities is also distributed to all employees on an on-going basis. A recent example of such an event is the 7th Annual Community Resource Fair for Persons with Disabilities, which was presented in May 2006 by the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities and Erinoak.

d) Communication Barriers

Several initiatives to reduce communication barriers have been established. Teachers are able to provide alternatives that are tailored for students with special needs. New assistive technology is also offered to employees who have specific disabilities that interfere with communication. Initiatives to remove communicational barriers include:

- Kurzweil
- Oral exams
- Books on tape
- Enlarged text on computers
- Large print material
- FM systems
- Voice Amplification systems
- Text messaging services

- Special assistance for visually impaired
- High volume telephones
- Email access
- Voicemail access
- Special Education Department (including Special Education Consultants; Psychologists; Child & Youth Workers; Social Workers; and Speech, Language, Hearing and Vision specialists)
- Special Education staff assigned to school sites to work with students and staff

e) **Attitudinal Barriers**

The board's commitment to the elimination of attitudinal barriers is evidenced by the establishment last year of an Equity Officer position. The Equity Officer is responsible for ensuring that Human Rights, including the rights of people with disabilities, are respected in all dealings of the board.

A variety of programs and services are also offered to students and staff to increase their understanding of the needs of those with disabilities. Attitudinal barrier removal initiatives include:

- Equity Officer
- Bullying prevention programs
- Conflict resolution programs
- Public awareness programs (e.g. Access Dufferin-Peel newsletter)
- Staff training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Religion and Family Life programs

As indicated on the Accessibility Directorate's Best Practices website, McMaster University has introduced a poster series as part of their disabilities awareness campaign. The 2005 posters, featuring McMaster students with different disabilities, address negative stereotypes by using simple yet poignant messages that students with disabilities are no different than other students in their dreams and ambitions. With the cooperation of McMaster University, the board adopted this poster campaign and displayed them prominently in all Dufferin-Peel facilities in June 2005. This poster campaign was tremendously well received within the board community and is an initiative that the board hopes to pursue again in 2006/2007. The board sincerely thanks McMaster University for making this initiative possible.

f) **Technological Barriers**

The board's Web Architect works collaboratively with board stakeholders to develop and implement an action plan that will continue to realize the board's short and long-term Web services objectives, which includes the ongoing review of the board's website to ensure that it is accessible to those with disabilities.

The board also provides options within Windows XP that provide text-to-speech for students and staff with reading challenges and text magnification for students and staff with visual impairments.

Monies are included in the board's annual budget to support school technological investments. Technology upgrades may include the provision of devices and programs that provide support to those with disabilities as needed.

g) Policy/Practice Barriers

Through the Special Education Department, the Health Promotion & Wellness Department, the Health & Safety Department and the Equity Officer, many of the board's policies and practices are reviewed and amended on an on-going basis in order to ensure that students and staff with disabilities are able to access all board services and programs. Some of these reviews are mandated by and subject to the Education Act; Workplace Safety and Insurance Act; and the Human Rights Code. Efforts to remove policy and practice barriers include:

- Special Education plans and programs
- Special Education Advisory Committee
- Identification, Program and Review Committees (IPRC)
- Individual Support Amount (ISA) grant submission process
- Grants to meet special accommodation needs
- Itinerant Special Education teachers (Hearing, Vision, Speech, Language)
- Alternative Education Programs
- Disability Management Practice
- Workplace Accommodation
- Health Promotion & Wellness Department
- Health & Safety Department
- Special Education Department (including Special Education Consultants; Psychologists; Child & Youth Workers; Social Workers; and Speech, Language, Hearing and Vision specialists)
- Equity Officer
- General Administrative Procedures
- By-Laws and Policies of the board (including an anaphylactic policy)

The Education Act also requires that the board develop an annual Special

Education Plan. The board's June 2006 Special Education Plan outlines action taken to address access for students with disabilities through modification and accommodation of academic programs and services such as individual education programs for students with special needs, staff training, accessibility of school buildings and transportation. Information regarding the Special Education Plan can be obtained through the board's Special Education Department.

In May 2006, a new Steering Committee, entitled "Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools in Dufferin-Peel", was also created to oversee implementation of 11 public interest remedies agreed to with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Three of the public interest remedies specifically pertain to students with disabilities as follows:

- All administrators will be provided with disability accommodation training before the conclusion of the 2006-2007 year.
- Prior to imposing suspensions and expulsions, administrators will be required to consider mitigating factors, including whether the student might be disproportionately affected by the imposition of a suspension and/or expulsion as a result of having the characteristics of one or more of the following grounds protected by the Human Rights Code (Ontario), specifically race, disability, ethnicity, place of origin and/or colour.
- The Board's Investigation Guidelines will include an expectation that when a student is a minor or is disabled, the school administration will attempt to contact the student's parent/guardian prior to imposing a suspension and/or expulsion.

In the Fall 2006 administrators will attend a two-day seminar on anti-racism, conducted by the law firm of Keele Cottrelle. This session will include training on the new Investigations Protocol and will outline how disability should be examined as a mitigating factor.

It is the further goal of the Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools in Dufferin-Peel Steering Committee to engage a disability association/consultant to conduct a training session for all administrators in the Spring 2007.

7. Identification of Existing Barriers

Access Dufferin-Peel conducted a public survey in 2004 to assist in identifying existing barriers. The survey format mirrored the categories and terminology contained in the tool kit developed through the Accessibility Directorate. In addition to providing detailed information regarding identified barriers, survey

participants were also able to briefly comment on the barriers indicated. Almost 300 detailed submissions were received, with over 90% of the respondents being employees of the board.

While some responses did indicate barriers in specific board locations, programs or practices, the majority of identified barriers fall within the categories of Informational and Attitudinal. These results confirm the need for Access Dufferin-Peel to focus on communication and public awareness as main priorities.

In 2006-2007, an Access Dufferin-Peel Sub-Committee worked on developing a poster that will confirm that service and assistance is available for people with disabilities and will indicate where to access such assistance. It is anticipated that this poster will be finalized and implemented in 2006-2007.

8. Next Steps: 2006-2007 Work Plan

The board has already initiated and implemented many measures to improve opportunities for people with disabilities, many of which are outlined in this report. Access Dufferin-Peel will continue to build on and expand these earlier initiatives in 2006-2007, with a primary focus on taking measures to remove and prevent communication and attitudinal barriers.

9. Communication of the September 30, 2006 Accessibility Plan

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board's September 30, 2006 Accessibility Plan is posted on the board website at www.dpccsb.org. Hard copies are also available upon request by contacting the board's Planning Department.

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Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

Submitted: on behalf of Access Dufferin-Peel