

**Niagara Catholic**

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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**MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

**(Working Document)**

**Submitted to**

**NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

**December 2012 to December 2017†**

**Prepared by**

**Accessibility Planning Committee**

**In accordance with**

**Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**

**Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation**

April 2015

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**Aim**

This multi-year Accessibility Plan is developed in accordance with the Integration Accessibility Standards Regulation under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.* It incorporates the intentions of the Board to meet its obligations under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*. The Plan describes the measures that the Board will take over the five year period from 2012-2017 to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who work, learn and participate in the School Board community and environment including students, staff, parents and guardians, volunteers and visitors to the Board and its schools. The plan will be guided by the Niagara Catholic District School Board Accessibility Standards Policy and Guidelines No. 800.8.

1. **Objectives**

This Plan:

* 1. Describes the process by which the Niagara Catholic District School Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers;
  2. Reviews recent efforts of the Niagara Catholic District School Board to remove and prevent barriers;
  3. Describes the measures the Niagara Catholic District School Board will take in the period 2012-2017 to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
  4. Makes a commitment to provide an annual status report on the Board’s implementation of the multi-year accessibility plan;
  5. Makes a commitment to review and update the multi-year accessibility plan at least once every 5 years;
  6. Describes how the Niagara Catholic District School Board will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

1. **Commitment to Accessibility Planning**

This document has been written with the intent that the recommendations prepared by the Accessibility Planning Committee will be presented to Administrative Council and to the Board of Trustees.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board is committed to:

* 1. Maintaining an Accessibility Planning Committee;
  2. Continuing the process of consulting with the Special Education Advisory Committee and with persons with disabilities;
  3. Ensuring, wherever practicable, that Board policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of accessibility and inclusive/universal design. The Accessibility Planning Committee will provide input re: accessibility issues, where appropriate, with regard to new policies and procedures and to those under review;
  4. 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 Accessibility Planning Committee and will, wherever practicable, be incorporated in the multi-year plan.

The Director of Education has authorized the Accessibility Planning Committee to review and update the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that will enable the Niagara Catholic District School Board to meet these commitments.

1. **Description of the Niagara Catholic District School Board**

Following government legislation entitled the “Fewer School Boards Act,” the total number of school boards in Ontario was reduced to 72. The aforementioned legislation also impacted the Niagara Catholic District School Board. The Niagara Catholic District School Board was established on January 1, 1998, as a result of the amalgamation of the former Lincoln County Roman Catholic Separate School Board and Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, in compliance with government legislation.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board, consisting of eight secondary schools and forty-nine elementary schools, currently serves 22,213 students and 3,133 employees. The philosophy of the Niagara Catholic District School Board is that learners are called by God to fulfill their potential; all learners are gifted by God and can learn; learning is an interactive process; learning is an enriching experience; and learning is for eternity. Furthermore, students, regardless of special talents or challenging needs can grow and they can grow best by attending schools, which offer accessible programs, in accessible settings, through accessible services.

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| The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, nurtures an enriching Catholic learning community for all to reach their full potential and become living witnesses of Christ. |

1. **Members of Accessibility Planning Committee**

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| Planning Committee Members | |
| Yolanda Baldasaro | Senior Administration; Superintendent of Education |
| Cathy McMullin | Applied Behaviour Analysis Supervisor; Special Education |
| Shonna K Daly | Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee |
| Jennifer McArthur | First Vice President OECTA Elementary |
| Jennifer Pellegrini | Communications Officer |
| Frances Brockenshire | Vice-Principal; Saint Michael Catholic High School |
| Theo Dagenais | Principal; St. John Bosco Catholic School |
| Amy Dowd | Coordinator; Special Education |
| Jayne Evans | Consultant; Arts/FSL/ESL |
| Mark Ferri | Manager; Purchasing Services |
| Tara Formisano | Teacher; Deaf and Hard of Hearing |
| Bill Helmeczi | Member; Special Education Advisory Committee |
| Sheila Lohnes | Supervisor; Library Information Centres |
| Sabina Bernardi | Human Resources Administrator |
| Grant Frost | Education Technology Officer |
| Lori Powell | Executive Director; Niagara Student Transportation Services |
| Janice Barretto-Mendonca | Consultant; Equity and Student Leadership |
| Scott Whitwell | Controller of Facilities Services |

1. **Strategy for prevention and removal of barriers**

The principles of inclusionary practice, freedom from barriers and accessible environments informs all Niagara Catholic District School Board policies, programs, procedures and services. Through the Annual Accessibility Plan implemented under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, the Niagara Catholic District School Board’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 customer service, information and communications, employment, school transportation and the design of public spaces.

1. **Barrier Identification Methodologies**

The Accessibility Planning Committee uses the following barrier-identification methods:

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| **Methodology** | **Description** | **Status** |
| Feedback process | Information received through Feedback – Accessibility link on Board website. | Ongoing |
| Accessibility Planning Committee regular meetings | Potential actions re: identified accessibility issues discussed within multi-year strategy | Ongoing |
| Accessibility Planning Committee also considers Facilities report re: physical environment | Surveys of buildings considered and identification of criteria for action within multi-year strategy | Ongoing |
| Communication steps: Board, SEAC, Employee Groups, Public | Opportunity for input or feedback prior to approval and posting on website | To be scheduled, annual expectation |

1. **Recent Barrier Removal Achievements**

The most recent Annual Accessibility Plan developed in accordance with the Ontarians with Disability Act (ODA) identified a range of barriers and appropriate strategies for their removal. The detailed achievements are set out in the following chart:

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| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action Taken** |
| Physical/Architectural | Identified schools as needed | * Equipment recommended through certified professionals * Mobility training for blind and low vision * Specialized transportation * Accessible parking * Sensory rooms * Communication devices for fire alarms |
| Physical/Architectural | See Appendix A  Accessibility Projects Completed 2013-2014 | |
| Information and Communication | All School Board Sites | * The front doors at all elementary schools are complete – both doors open with a single card reader.  Secondary schools and the Catholic Education Centre are on a schedule where front doors are unlocked during the day. |
| Information and communication | Niagara Catholic Board Website | * Update of JavaScript file that supports keyboard accessible menu dropdowns (navigation). * The Board website's menu was successfully tested using the following Internet Browsers: Google Chrome and Internet Explorer, as well a Screen Reader: 64-bit Demo of JAWS 15. |
| Information and Communication | Identified schools/students as needed | * Installation of electrical receptacles for the use of identified communication devices * Provision of interpreter service upon request * FM systems |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | * Emergency Workplace Response Plan * All Emergency Procedures Plans for Public Safety Information * Alternative formats available upon request * Accessibility link on Board website |
| Attitudinal | Board-wide | * Ongoing training in Accessible Customer Service * Creating caring and safe school environments through professional development, School Improvement Plan Process, Safe Schools Surveys * Ongoing Accessibility Awareness Training for Educators. * Ongoing Accessibility Awareness Training as it Pertains to the Human Rights Code. * Targeting ways to improve parent engagement and student voice (BIPSA) * Bi-Annual School Climate Survey * Ongoing Cultural Competency Training |
| Technology | Identified schools/students as needed | * Technology to support individual needs. (hardware, software) |
| Systemic | Board-wide | * Board policies, guidelines, protocols and procedures that reflect accessibility needs (e.g. Accessibility Customer Service; revised Feb. 2015, Guidelines for Certified Service Animals) * Regular Special Education Advisory Committee meetings * Compliance with Integrated Accessibility   Standards Regulation timelines to date (Employment, Transportation, Information & Communication and Design of Public Spaces Standards) |

New school construction has adhered to the current building code and includes level access to schools, automatic door openers, elevators in schools of more than one floor, accessible washrooms.

1. **Barriers to be addressed under the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 filed in June, 2011, and Ontario Regulation 413/12 (amendment to 191/11) to reflect changes to 191/11 and inclusion of The Design of Public Spaces Standard, pursuant to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 identified specific requirements to achieve accessibility in the areas of:

* Information and Communications
* Employment
* Transportation
* Design of Public Spaces

These requirements build on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service which came into force in 2007.

Niagara Catholic District School Board endeavors, through this Multi-year Accessibility Plan for the period 2012-2017, to take action to address barriers to accessibility related to the Standards areas of current Regulations. This is in addition to ongoing work the Board is undertaking with regard to identification and removal of barriers in the Board’s physical environment.

**2012-2013**

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| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action** | **Effective Date** |
| Systemic | Board-wide | Develop Accessibility Policy Statement | January 1, 2013  Completed |
| Attitudinal – Information and Communications | Board-wide | Develop Administrative Guidelines re: Accessible Information and Communications | January 1, 2013  Completed |
| Attitudinal – Employment | Board-wide | Develop Administrative Guidelines re: Accessible Employment | January 1, 2013  Completed |
| Systemic | Board-wide | Review procurement practices to incorporate accessibility criteria for goods, services, facilities | January 1, 2013  Ongoing |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Provide accessibility awareness training for all  educators/ classroom-based staff on accessible instruction and program delivery | Ongoing 2012-2013 |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Review practices to ensure readiness to provide educational resources or materials, student records and information on program requirements in accessible formats upon request | January 1, 2013  Completed |
| Physical | See Appendix B  Accessibility Projects Completed 2013-2014 (as of February 11, 2014) | | Ongoing 2013-2014 |
| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | | **Action** |
| Information and Communication | Identified schools/students as needed | | * Installation of electrical receptacles for the use of identified communication devices |
| Information and Communication | All School Board Sites | | * The front doors at all elementary schools are complete – both doors open with a single card reader.  Secondary schools and the CEC are on a schedule where front doors are unlocked during the day. |
| Information and communication | All School Board Sites | | * Update of JavaScript file that supports keyboard accessible menu dropdowns (navigation). * The Boards website’s menu was successfully tested using the following Internet Browsers: Google Chrome and Internet Explorer, as well a Screen Reader: 64- bit Demo of Jaws 15. |

**2013-2014**

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| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action** | **Effective Date** |
| Systemic - attitudinal | Board-wide | Provide training to all staff, volunteers on accessibility standards requirements and on Human Rights Code provisions re: disabilities and ensure third-party providers have similar training. On-line training program completed Feb. 2015. | Ongoing 2013-2014  Ongoing |
| Information and Communication | Board Offices | Review process for receiving/responding to feedback to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities and readiness to provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request.  Notify the public re: above. | January 1, 2014  Completed |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Review Board and school websites to assess level of accessibility. Ensure that new sites and web content published after Jan 1, 2012 meet WCAG 2.0, Level A standards. | January 1, 2014  Completed |
| Systemic - Employment | Board-wide | Review and update Human Resources procedures and practices with regard to recruitment, job accommodations, alternative accessible formats and communication supports, individual accommodation plans, return to work, performance appraisal, career or professional development, redeployment | January 1, 2014  Ongoing |
| Information and Communication – Student Transportation | Board-wide  (Niagara Student Transportation Services and  Special Education Department and Elementary and Secondary Schools) | Consult with parents and develop individual school transportation plans for students with disabilities, clarifying roles and responsibilities. NSTS receives daily student updates from Maplewood. Changes are flagged by NSTS to inform the need for student update | January 1, 2014  Ongoing |
| Information and Communication | School Libraries | Review the readiness of school libraries to provide accessible or conversion-ready formats of print resources upon request | 2015  Completed |
| Physical | See Appendix C  Future Accessibility Projects for Consideration | | Ongoing 2015-2016 |

**2014-2015**

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| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action** | **Effective Date** |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Identify and have ready access to resources that enable the Board to provide information and communication supports upon request and in a timely manner to persons with disabilities. (Consider access to board meetings/school events) | January 1, 2015  Completed |
| Information and Communication | School Libraries | Ensure readiness of school libraries to provide accessible or conversion-ready formats of print resources upon request.  Catholic Resource Centre (CRC) purchase of large print materials, electronic books and digital books which are available to all students through classroom teacher.  Sourcing alternative formats throughout school board, public libraries and other community agencies to meet student need.  Access Learning Video Streaming - Ontario Curriculum content available to all staff and students. Further inquiry to determine if closed captioning and described video available. | January 1, 2015  Completed |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Review accessibility features of all updates and purchases related to board and school websites in anticipation of WCAG, 2.0, Level AA standards. Exploring increased methods of providing accessible ready formats, i.e. verbal descriptions of photos with captioning. All public facing websites are in compliance. Ongoing exploration of school board intranet as it relates to accessibility. | Ongoing preparation for 2021 deadline |
| Physical | See Appendix C  Future Accessibility Projects for Consideration | | Ongoing 2015-2016 |

**2015-2016**

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| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action** | **Effective Date** |
| Systemic | Board-wide | Accessibility Awareness Training for Educators will be converted to on-line training and will become part of Human Resources New Hire package.  Accessibility Awareness Training as it pertains to the Human Rights Code is now available as an on-line training program and is completed by all employees both new and existing. | Ongoing |
| Information and Communication | School Libraries | Review status of capacity of school libraries to provide accessible or conversion-ready formats of digital or multimedia resources upon request in anticipation of 2020 deadline | Ongoing preparation for 2020 deadline |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Review accessibility features of all updates and purchases related to board and school websites in anticipation of WCAG, 2.0, Level AA standards | Ongoing preparation for 2021 deadline |
| Physical | See Appendix C  Future Accessibility Projects for Consideration | | Ongoing 2016-2017 |

**2016-2017**

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| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action** | **Effective Date** |
| Systemic | Board-wide | Continue to ensure all new staff; teaching and non-teaching, complete Customer Service Training, Accessibility Awareness Training For Educators (where appropriate) and Accessibility Awareness Training as it pertains to the Human Rights Code Training. | Ongoing 2016-2017 |
| Systemic | Board-wide | Review status of Board accessibility policies and procedures and update as required | Ongoing 2016-2017 |
| **Type of Barrier** | **Location** | **Action** | **Effective Date** |
| Information and Communication | School Libraries | Review status of capacity of school libraries to provide accessible or conversion-ready formats of all resources upon request | Ongoing preparation for 2020 deadline |
| Information and Communication | Board-wide | Review accessibility features of all updates and purchases related to board and school websites in anticipation of WCAG, 2.0, Level AA standards | Ongoing preparation for 2021 deadline |
| Physical | See Appendix C  Future Accessibility Projects for Consideration | | Ongoing |

**10.0 Review and Monitoring Process**

The Accessibility Planning Committee meets regularly during the year to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of barrier-removal and prevention strategies and to plan for increased accessibility throughout the Board.

The Accessibility Planning Committee will ensure that in respect of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan the following steps take place:

1. An annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan is prepared.
2. At least once every 5 years the plan is reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities, with the Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee and other relevant committees.
3. **Communication of the Plan**

This publication is available through the Niagara Catholic District School

Board’s

* website [www.niagaracatholic.ca](http://www.niagaracatholic.ca) →Accessibility
* Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, Ontario

Accessible formats available upon request. Contact the Communications Department.

Niagara Catholic District School Board will post an annual status report on the progress of the Multi-year Accessibility Plan on the Board’s website.

We welcome your comments and feedback about accessibility issues at Niagara Catholic. If you have comments or suggestions, please write to us at [**accessibility.compliance@ncdsb.com**](mailto:accessibility.compliance@ncdsb.com?subject=Accessibility%20Compliance) or by contacting: the Communications Department at the Catholic Education Centre.

Appendix A

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| **Accessibility Projects Completed 2013 - 2014** | | |
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| SN# | **Facility** | **Description** |
| 148 | St. Kevin | sensory room/main entrance automatic door operator |
| 120 | Mary Ward | side entrance accessibility |
| 127 | St. Mary (NF) | automatic door operators - main & playground entrance |
| 133 | St. John Bosco | automatic door operators - main & playground entrance |
| 132 | St. Ann (F) | ramp to portables |
| 127 | St. Mary (NF) | renovated accessible washroom |
| 195 | St. John (B) | ramp & operator to main entrance |
| 145 | St. Andrew | automatic door operators - main & playground entrance |
| 280 | Saint Francis | sensory room/accessible washroom/spec. ed. renovation |
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Appendix B

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| **Accessibility Projects Completed 2014 - 2015** | | |
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| SN# | **Facility** | **Description** |
| 115 | St. Philomena | accessible washroom renovation |
| 115 | St. Philomena | ramp and operator to main entrance |
| 116 | St. Joseph | sensory room |
| 118 | Our Lady of Mount Carmel | ramp to gym |
| 145 | St. Augustine | sensory room |
| 180 | St. James | automatic door operator to side entrances |
| 180 | St. James | build accessible washroom |
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Appendix C

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| **Future Accessibility Projects For Consideration** | | |
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| SN# | **Facility** | **Description** |
| 116 | St. Joseph (Stevensville) | provide lift to stage |
| 116 | St. Joseph (Stevensville) | revise interior ramp for minimum 1:12 slope |
| 128 | St. Patrick (NF) | provide elevator |
| 129 | Loretto Catholic | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 139 | Monsignor Clancy | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 148 | St. Kevin | provide barrier free access to second floor |
| 171 | Assumption | provide barrier-free lift for stage |
| 175 | St. Alfred | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 176 | St. Ann (SC) | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 179 | St. Denis | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 181 | St. Nicholas | provide barrier free access to second floor |
| 182 | St. Peter | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 183 | St. Theresa | provide lift to stage |
| 184 | Mother Teresa | provide sensory room |
| 197 | St. Mark | install 2 sets of magnetic hold-open devices |
| 197 | St. Mark | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 220 | Saint Michael | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 230 | Saint Paul | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 250 | Notre Dame College | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 250 | Notre Dame College | provide barrier free access to second floor |
| 260 | Denis Morris | install automatic door openers at main office and attendance office |
| 260 | Denis Morris | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 270 | Holy Cross | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |
| 280 | Saint Francis | retrofit to allow barrier free emergency evacuation from second floor |