



WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

Accessibility Plan

September 2022

Prepared by: WSD Accessibility for Manitobans (AMA) Steering Committee



The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)

Provincial legislation was introduced to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. Under the AMA, each organization is required to develop and publish a plan to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility.

A barrier to accessibility is anything that limits or prevents a person from being able to receive information, services and goods, and access space or activities. Barriers may prevent access to housing, transportation, community participation, employment or education.

Attitudes can be the biggest barrier.

The plan will cover accessibility standards as they are released including: Customer Service, Employment Accessibility, Accessible Information and Communications, Accessible Transportation and Built Environment. The standards outline specific measures to be taken by public and private organizations. Changes will result in improved accessibility for all Manitobans regardless of (dis) abilities.

As per the AMA legislation, WSD is required to produce its first plan by December 31, 2016 and to update it every second year.

Winnipeg School Division

Message from Chief Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer Pauline Clarke

Winnipeg School Division is committed to providing inclusive education in all of our schools and programming. Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows all individuals, regardless of gender, abilities, ethnicity or socio-economic status, to feel accepted, valued and safe.

Inclusion means accessibility – not to a place, but to a process and a plan that requires an understanding of what a student needs to succeed academically, socially and emotionally. In WSD, parents/guardians, the school support team, division staff and community agencies, as required, are involved in this planning process.

I fully support the WSD Accessibility Plan and the efforts to ensure all students may attend and are welcomed by their community schools in a classroom setting where they are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school life.

Message from Accessibility Coordinator Fatima Mota

I am very pleased to present Winnipeg School Division's first Accessibility Plan. WSD is a leader in providing inclusive education to students in Manitoba and we view Accessibility Legislation as a natural next step in advancing our province in a positive and inclusive way.

I would like to recognize the members of the WSD Accessibility for Manitobans Steering Committee for dedicating their time and effort to accessing WSD's accessibility achievements as well as our challenges. This work could not have been completed without the input of our many school communities who responded to our accessibility survey through school administrators and parent councils. Thank you for your responses and vision for the future of WSD inclusiveness.

While the work to compile this initial report has been a large-scale task, it is just the beginning. I look forward to the many successes WSD will celebrate as we continue to implement Accessibility for Manitobans Act standards in our services, buildings and attitudes.

PART 1

BASELINE REPORT

A. Overview of Programs and Services

Winnipeg School Division (WSD) was established in 1871 and currently has 79 schools, over 29,000 students and more than 6,000 full and part time employees. Its purpose is to provide a learning environment that fosters the growth of each student's potential and provide equitable opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and diverse society. WSD is the most diverse school division in Manitoba and has the highest population of students with exceptional needs.

In addition to daily access by staff, students and parents, WSD schools are community hubs for a variety of publicly accessed events such as community sports and fitness programs, polling stations, and concerts.

WSD has a lengthy history of developing and implementing innovative ways to ensure students are comfortable and ready to learn. In addition to long term capital planning for building accessibility upgrades, WSD has implemented numerous policies over the past few decades that address accessibility, equity, human rights and inclusion.

The division recognizes that accessibility to preschool education has a long term and positive impact on children's learning and development. Over fifty years ago, the division established a nursery program in the lowest socio economic areas of Winnipeg. Since then, the nursery program has expanded and WSD is the only division in the province to have nursery at all 65 of its elementary schools.

WSD established the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre (WAEC). WAEC provides an opportunity for adults to continue their high school education in an adult atmosphere. Achieving graduation removes many barriers for WAEC students, opening doors to post-secondary education and improved career opportunities.

Programming throughout Winnipeg School Division responds to the unique needs of our communities. Children of the Earth High School is an excellent example of WSD working in consultation and cooperation with various community groups to establish a high school in the city's north end to provide access to Indigenous culture, language and academics. Children of the Earth has evolved into a centre for heritage language instruction, cultural activities and incorporation of Indigenous Perspectives into the provincial curriculum.

In developing this plan, Winnipeg School Division has invited all schools and parent councils to provide input on the barriers to accessibility. The feedback on achievements and barriers to accessibility as well as goals have been summarized in Part II and III.

INCLUSION SUPPORT SERVICES

Winnipeg School Division provides appropriate educational programming for all students through a continuum of supports and services and a philosophy of inclusion. All of our schools are committed to providing inclusive, safe and caring places for learning.

To support this commitment, our divisional Inclusive, Safe and Caring School Framework is intended to:

- Ensure all students have equal access to education;
- Facilitate continuous improvement and high achievement for all students in inclusive settings;
- Apply proactive and responsive strength-based practices that contribute to the learning, mental health and social/emotional well-being and safety of students;
- Build capacity of all school staff by providing professional development and additional learning opportunities in the areas of safe schools and inclusion;
- Engage parents, education partners, and communities in decisions around education.

Beyond providing appropriate educational programming within the regular classroom setting, WSD has a range of low enrolment programs for students who require a more specialized setting:

SUPPORTED EDUCATION CLASSROOMS (SEC)

Supported Education Classrooms provide students who have been diagnosed with an Intellectual Developmental Disorder (IDD) with appropriate educational programming to meet their academic needs. Students will be exposed to grade appropriate curriculum and attend classes with peers in the best interest of the student. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan. All students will have a curriculum modification plan (CMP) as well as an IEP to address areas outside of the curriculum.

SKILLS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL)

Skills for Independent Living Classrooms provide students who have been diagnosed with an Intellectual Developmental Disorder (IDD) with appropriate educational programming to meet their individual needs. Students will be exposed to age/grade appropriate curriculum with a focus on the development of functional life skills. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan. All students will be on individualized programming (IP) will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); all students who meet criteria for modification will have an IEP and a CMP.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE CENTRE (ECLC) AND PRIMARY LANGUAGE CENTRE (PLC)

The ECLC and PLC programs are one-year classroom-based speech and language programs for students registered with a Winnipeg School Division school. These programs provide the highest level of support to children with the most severe communication delays. The ECLC program is available to students registered in Kindergarten. The PLC program is available to students in Grades 1 to 3.

Students in these programs will be immersed in a language rich classroom focusing on speech development across all academic subject areas. Students will participate in Early Literacy skills including reading, narrative skills and phonological awareness activities. Students in the PLC program have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with specific learning goals.

ADAPTIVE SKILLS PROGRAM (ASP)

Adaptive Skills Programs provide a setting for students who have been diagnosed with an Intellectual Developmental Disorder (IDD) with appropriate educational programming tailored to their individual needs. Additional support is available to address their medical and/or physical/mobility needs in addition to curricular outcomes. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan. All students will be on individualized programming (IP) will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); all students who meet criteria for modification will have an IEP and a CMP.

PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM (ASD)

Programs for students with Autism provide intensive and specialized supports in an environment specifically developed to support the needs of students who are significantly affected by ASD. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan. All students on individualized programming (IP) will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); all students who meet criteria for modification will have an IEP and a CMP.

LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTRES (LAC)

Learning Assistance Centres provide a setting for students to develop skills and strategies in the areas of pro-social behaviours, self-regulation, mental health and wellness, social emotional learning with a strong focus on curricular outcomes. Curriculum is an integral part of the classroom and delivered to the appropriate learning needs of the individual student. Each student has a Student Specific Plan which includes integration and/or return to the home school community at the earliest opportunity.

THERAPEUTIC ACADEMIC PROGRAMS (TAP)

Therapeutic Academic Programs provide a trauma informed classroom where students access clinical interventions and academic programming until such time as they can successfully rejoin their inclusive home school community. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER PROGRAMS (FASD)

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Programs support students whose brain-based behaviour needs are very significant and require support in the areas of communication, emotional and self-regulation, sensory, adaptive and problem-solving skills above and beyond what can be offered at their home school. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan. All students will have an IEP to address domains outside of the curriculum; those students who meet eligibility and suitability for modification will have an IEP and a CMP.

ANXIETY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS (AMP)

Anxiety Management Programs support students whose needs are significant and require support in the areas of communication, emotional and self-regulation, sensory, adaptive and problem-solving skills specific to anxiety above and beyond what can be offered at their home school. Daily participation in academic programming is embedded into programming with opportunities for integration. All students will have at least one Student Specific Plan.



The following list of programs and services are further examples of WSD's commitment to ensuring its schools are inclusive and accessible for all students

SAFE SCHOOLS

Winnipeg School Division is committed to providing safe and caring places for learning. We are guided by Manitoba's Safe and Inclusive legislation to be proactive in creating and sustaining safe schools.

Creating a sense of belonging and safety for our school communities helps address priority areas of public education, which include:

- Supporting students in meeting high levels of achievement.
- Applying principles of equity and inclusion throughout the education system.
- Developing global citizens actively involved in economic, social-cultural and environmental sustainability.
- Supporting well-being (cognitive, emotional, social, physical).
- Engaging parents, education partners, and communities in decisions around education.

In a safe and caring school, the whole school community develops awareness, skills and knowledge for well-being, positive relationships and solution focused problem solving. Students affected by bullying behaviours and other forms of harm receive support to address and restore their sense of safety and belonging. Students exhibiting bullying behaviours also receive support and necessary intervention. Schools recognize the complex nature and impact of bullying behaviours and the importance of whole-school planning for safety and response.



INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Access to Indigenous Education has been a priority in Winnipeg School Division since 1993. The purpose is to strengthen and enhance Indigenous Education through curriculum integration program development and learning opportunities for teachers and administrators.

Indigenous students acquire a positive self-identity through learning their own histories, cultures and contemporary lifestyles. Non-Indigenous students develop an understanding and respect for the histories, cultures, and contemporary lifestyles of Indigenous peoples. All students develop informed opinions on matters relating to Indigenous People and the integration of Indigenous values, languages, histories and cultures occurs throughout all curricula from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

NEWCOMER SERVICES

WSD has responded to the needs of newcomers and refugees for the past five decades by establishing English as an Additional Language (formerly ESL) classes and creating Community Liason Officer positions.

WSD has established Newcomer Services to address barriers to immigrant and refugee students and their families new to the division. In addition to the Newcomer Services Coordinator, there are Intercultural Support Workers (ISW) who provide assistance to students and families in a variety of ways such as assisting with assessments, parent-teacher conferences and orientation, providing referrals to in-school supports (e.g. counselling, resource, tutoring, etc.), facilitating group discussions with students on common concerns, advocating on student's behalf with the school and providing support on academic, attendance or family concerns.

The Intercultural Support Workers visit and communicate with parents in their own language, help parents understand the school system, expectations, and their child's progress, as well as advocate on parents' behalf with the school. Intercultural Support Workers and WSD Interpretation/Translation services are able to provide assistance in most languages spoken by our families.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Winnipeg School Division believes in developing responsible decision-makers and global citizens, who contribute to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being to ensure a sustainable future for all. All WSD high schools provide opportunities for students to be involved in clubs, groups, committees and programs supporting the three pillars of sustainability. The majority of WSD schools have Gay Straight Alliance Clubs, Environmental Action Groups, Indigenous Youth Leadership, and Social and Justice Clubs focusing on local and global concerns requiring critical thinking and active citizenship.

ADOLESCENT PARENT CENTRE

The Adolescent Parent Centre is a program of the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre. This school provides access to academic courses for parenting and pregnant women through junior and senior high years.

Individualized instruction and continuous intake allow students to continue their schooling while they are pregnant. Students can remain at the centre until their child reaches two years of age or the student reaches age 21. Senior high students obtain graduate standing or credits toward graduation following Manitoba Education curricula.

In addition, parenting and nutrition courses complement a supportive environment for both mother and child. Social work through Child Guidance Clinic and liaison with Child and Family Services assist students on a daily basis, while counselling through the City of Winnipeg assist students on matters of social assistance and budgeting, on occasion, throughout the year. An outreach clinic from Women's Hospital operates weekly for obstetric care.

Infant labs, which are maintained collaboratively between professional staff and students, provide access to a supervised and educative environment for mother and child.

INFANT DEVELOPMENT

Winnipeg School Division, through several innovative, imaginative projects demonstrated that it is possible for the adolescent and the infant to attend school together, allowing the parent to gain high school credits and to learn to parent the child.

The Infant Development Program allows adolescent parents to bring their infants (ages of 2 months to 2 years) to school. It is expected that the adolescent parent will provide most of the one-to-one care with her child while the infant is in attendance. The adolescent parent must always be "on site" and easily accessible to be involved in the care of her infant at school.

The long range program objective is to provide adolescent parents with an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills to enable them to become productive, contributing members of the work force and society.

Infant Development Labs are at the following locations in WSD: Adolescent Parent Centre, Children of the Earth, Elmwood, Gordon Bell and Tec Voc.

OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS

Off-campus programs provide opportunities for students to continue their learning, an innovative alternative for students who may not be able to regularly attend and achieve success in the mainstream classroom setting.

Today, WSD runs 10 off-campus programs:

1. **Hugh John Macdonald's Eagle's Circle** program for Grade 7 to 9 students is located at Rossbrook House, 658 Ross Avenue, and serves a maximum of 25 Indigenous and Metis students who are academically able, but who have lower skills due to non-attendance. The program offers individual programming in reading, writing and small classes in geography, science, Indigenous studies, crafts and health.
2. The **Elmwood Off-Campus** program serves students from Grade 9 to 12 that are seeking credits but having difficulty attaining success at the main campus. They work closely with the Student Success Centre at Elmwood and the main campus to extend learning opportunities for students.
3. **Gordon Bell's Fresh Start** program provides a low enrolment setting for students 19 to 21 years of age who are working towards a mature diploma. Students may have had some previous high school exposure.
4. **Gordon Bell's Senior Years Off-Campus** program is for Grade 9 to 12 students who have had challenges in a main campus setting and would benefit from a low enrolment program with individualized programming for students.



5. **Gordon Bell's Rising Sun** program is for Indigenous and Metis students in Grade 9 to 12 who are academically able, independent learners who have had difficulty in a larger school setting. The program is a partnership between Winnipeg School Division and Rossbrook House.
6. The **Songide'ewin** program serves Grades 9 to 12 Indigenous students who have attendance difficulties and whose educational needs are not being met in a regular program. The program provides individualized programming and instruction for students based on their educational/social need and abilities. Cultural and linguistic opportunities are made available for students.
7. The **South District Off-Campus** program serves Grant Park, Kelvin and Churchill schools for students with issues such as non-attendance, anxiety and social emotional issues. Students receive individualized programming.
8. The first of WSD's current off-campus programs began in 1981, when the St. Ignatius Association started the **WiWabiggoni Alternative Program** for students who were having attendance difficulties and not having their needs met in a mainstream program. The program is for students in Grades 2 to 6 and is administered by Ecole Victoria-Albert School. The program is a partnership between Winnipeg School Division and Rossbrook House.
9. The **St. John's Off-Campus** program is a low enrolment setting for students with issues such as non-attendance, anxiety and social emotional issues. Students receive individualized programming.
10. The **Resources for Adolescent Parents (RAP)** program, is a program that offers classes to pregnant or parenting young women at Gordon Bell High School in partnership with New Directions.

B. ACCESSIBILITY ACHIEVEMENTS

The following are steps already taken by WSD to achieve accessibility

Attitudinal

MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

The overall goal of WSD's Mental Health Initiative is to achieve a culture in WSD where mental health and well-being are embedded into every student's school experience. Some elements within the initiative:

- **Mental Health Literacy (MHL)** an understanding of mental wellness and illness. It is knowing how to promote positive mental health and how to prevent mental illness. By increasing knowledge about mental wellness and illness, we reduce stigma and strengthen our own mental health and that of those around us. Focusing on MHL at the start of the initiative allowed all staff to share a common language. All schools within WSD will have completed the MHL workshop and continue to access a variety of professional development related to mental health.
- **Healthy Minds Week:** A variety of presentations, workshops and activities are offered to students, staff and families to promote mental health.

- **Trauma Informed Schools:** Winnipeg School Division knows that trauma informed schools create inclusive, safe, caring and supportive school communities in which all students and staff can learn and thrive. The WSD population is large and highly diverse. Many people in our school communities have been impacted by trauma in different ways; the pandemic, intergenerational trauma including residential schools, lived experiences of war and conflict, and child welfare issues.

Being a trauma informed school starts with an understanding of trauma, the impact trauma has on the brain and what these impacts have on learning and behaviour. Trauma informed schools acknowledge that children need to feel safe and regulated before they can learn. There is an awareness that traumatic behaviours can disrupt learning and that these behaviours can serve as a protective function for individuals experiencing trauma. Having educated, empathic, regulated and safe school communities provides an opportunity for people to learn healthy coping strategies which replaces the traumatic responses and leads to better overall functioning, relationships and ultimately better educational outcomes.

Professional development in Trauma Informed Schools is recommended for all WSD schools and buildings. Please refer to the Inclusion Support Services Healthy Minds Professional Development Guide.

- **Inclusion Across the Rainbow:** Winnipeg School Division staff, parents/guardians, students and community are committed to promoting the development of actions and attitudes that create a safe and caring learning environment. Inclusive policies and nurturing practices help to build a learning environment in which our most vulnerable students feel safe and valued, reducing the risk of self-harm and suicide. Studies show that creating a supportive environment for 2SLGBTQ+ students improves educational outcomes for all students, not just those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

Information and Communication

WSD Website uses captions for video uploaded to Vimeo. All printed documents created from May 2016 onward advertise the availability of alternate formats.

WSD Library Support Services provides a resource-rich lending library of materials for classrooms and teachers across the division in multiple formats, including digitally. The WSD Digital Library, powered by OverDrive, provides students and staff with immediate any-time anywhere access to a wide variety of e-books, audiobooks, and interactive story books. How-to guides have been translated to languages other than English and are available on the divisional website.

Technology

SchoolBundle 365 division and school websites have been evaluated using WCAG 2.0 (Level A) on various browsers and platforms. The division website has a good foundation in page navigation, labelling and structure. Website information can be translated using integrated tools in SchoolBundle 365.

Technology is utilized in schools to support students and teachers with accessibility support tools. Wifi is in all WSD buildings and provides access for use of personal devices. The WSD telephone system is Voice over internet Protocol (VoIP) with voicemail to email capability.

Interactive surfaces are available in all newly built school classrooms. Many interactive boards are utilized in existing schools to provide touch accessibility. In addition, parents/guardians have access to information on the public website.

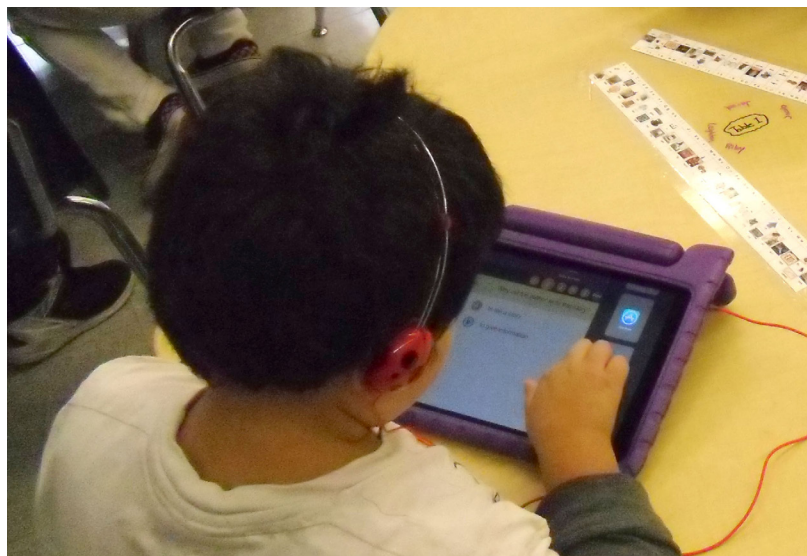
Office 365 and G-Suite

Winnipeg School Division offers a variety of technology tools designed to support the varying needs, including disabilities, of both staff and students. Office 365 and G-Suite for Education are two such tools that are available to all WSD staff and students. These tools give users access to web-based services that allow for the creating, sharing, and saving of documents to a cloud based system for easy, anytime access to files. The built-in sharing features to these two platforms allow users to share content directly with others via a link, eliminating the need to send file attachments. Direct management and editing of content in a web browser makes files more accessible for users.

G-Suite for Education provides users with a cloud based platform that allows for the easy creation and sharing of files from any web-browser. Existing online only, G-Suite apps give users the ability via their Google Drive to create, share, and access their files from any device anywhere they have an internet connection. G-Suite apps include Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, Classroom just to name a few. As a management tool, Google Classroom allows teachers to digitally hand out and receive assignments from students as well as the ability to view, comment, and support student work in progress. G-Suite for Education is currently a tool available to all staff and students in Winnipeg School Division.

Office 365 is a cloud based Microsoft Office platform that allows users to share and store all of their files in OneDrive cloud storage. With a complement of programs (Microsoft Teams, Word, PowerPoint, Excel, OneNote, Sway etc) that allow users to create, collaborate and share their work, Office 365 gives users the flexibility to access their work from any device, anywhere they have a connection. Office 365 is also accessible from a device running Microsoft Office 2013 or higher. This is currently a service that is available to all staff and students in Winnipeg School Division.

Both of these tools can be accessed by staff via the staff portal and students can access these technology services from the Winnipeg School Division website.



Systemic

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY EDUCATION POLICY & RECRUITMENT POLICY

WSD has put in place a Diversity and Equity Education Policy (IGAB) and a Recruitment Policy (GCC) in which the division is committed to an educational philosophy and hiring practices that recognize the fundamental equality of people of all origins, abilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, ancestry, culture, socio-economic background or status, religion or spirituality, family status, mental and physical abilities, physical features including body size and shape, intelligence or ability, learning references, ancestry or place of birth, first language or mother tongue. It supports and accommodates the acceptance, respect and appreciation for all people, their languages and cultures, for their commonalities as well as their differences.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Winnipeg School Division has implemented a wide variety of initiatives to support Indigenous education, Indigenous students and Indigenous staff, beginning with the establishment of a Native education consulting teacher position in 1979. WSD implemented the Indigenous Education Policy (IGABA) in 11/20.

SAFE AND CARING POLICY: TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE STUDENTS AND STAFF

WSD has implemented a Safe and Caring Policy for Trans and Gender Diverse students and staff (IGABB) as the division is committed to providing safe, accessible learning opportunities, dignity, respect and equity for all including trans and gender diverse students and staff.

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY POLICY

WSD has an Employment Equity Policy (GBA) that recognizes that the division is committed to the removal of employment barriers, the identification and removal of discriminatory practices and striving toward a fair representation of women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and minorities at all levels within the division. The division also recognizes the importance of not only teaching students about equality, but demonstrating to students and staff the division's commitment to equality.

CERTIFIED SERVICE ANIMALS POLICY

WSD has adopted the Certified Service Animals Policy (JI) in which the division is committed to supporting the use of certified service animals in schools requested by a parent/guardian or employee as long as the appropriate planning and preparation have taken place.

Physical and Architectural BUILDINGS

Winnipeg School Division was established in 1871. Through long term capital planning, the division has addressed multiple accessibility issues for newly built schools and many of the older facilities. WSD currently has 46 locations with either elevator(s) and/or lifts/ramps to provide full or partial access within the facility. The majority of WSD facilities have one or more direct access to buildings either by ramps, elevators or paths. One or more auto door operators are located at accessible entrances at 78 facilities. There are 50 WSD locations with accessible washrooms and 37 locations.

TRANSPORTATION

WSD currently operates 23 Wheelchair Lift equipped Type C (Conventional) School Buses with a total wheelchair capacity of 94 wheelchair passengers. Divisional demands for wheelchair accessible buses are greater than the ability to fulfill the need within current provincial bus replacement funding. The division has supplemented the provincial funding to purchase more buses than the formula would provide, both wheelchair accessible and standard units.

All drivers operating buses transporting wheelchair passengers undergo an internal training program on the unit's operation, wheelchair securement and safety best practices, in addition to the Provincially established School Bus Operator's Certificate Training. Furthermore, all WSD school bus drivers are first aid certified as well as trained in the URIS program yearly.

C. Barriers to Accessibility

The following are barriers Manitobans may face accessing WSD programs, facilities or services

Attitudinal

Attitudinal barriers are behaviours, perceptions and assumptions that discriminate against or exclude persons because of their abilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, ancestry, culture, socio-economic background or status, religion or spirituality, family status, mental and physical abilities, physical features including body size and shape, intelligence or ability, learning references, ancestry or place of birth, first language or mother tongue.

These barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding or education and can lead to judgment or misconceptions about another person.

Examples of attitudinal barriers include:

- Assuming a person with a disability or mental illness is inferior.
- Assuming that someone with a communication disability cannot understand you.
- Forming ideas about a person because of stereotypes or a lack of knowledge.
- Making a person feel as though they are receiving a “special favour” by providing their accommodations.

Winnipeg School Division staff, volunteers and students can help remove attitudinal barriers in the following ways:

- Avoid making assumptions about a person’s disability or capabilities; many persons with disabilities talk about being frustrated with people assuming what they can or cannot do.
- Teachers can encourage students to come forward and speak to you about the way they learn and what may be causing barriers in your course, classroom, or teaching.
- Remember that students with disabilities do not have to disclose their disability to their teachers or to anyone else in the academic environment in order to receive accommodations.
- Respect the privacy of persons who face barriers.
- Insist on professional, civil conduct between and among students to respect people’s differences and create an inclusive environment.
- Engage in the accommodation process in good faith and implement appropriate accommodations.

Information and Communication

Oral instruction is a barrier in some classrooms for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, however, sound field systems installed in classrooms will ensure that these students can hear classroom instruction and direction.

Other information and communication barriers within WSD include a lack of access to FM signal or hearing aids for students who are hard of hearing and a lack of technology and software for level 1 and 2 students. Again, while many resources are available online, that is in itself a barrier for low-income families.

Winnipeg School Division has met the linguistic needs of its communities in a variety of ways over the years. Interpreter services continues to grow and provide assistance to newcomers in WSD schools, and prior to online translation options, WSD translated a large quantity of materials into multiple languages for students and parents. Despite these efforts, the largest barrier to information and communication continues to be language. Nearly one-quarter of WSD students living with their parents are immigrants and in 37 percent of WSD homes, English is spoken along with another language. Providing information in multiple languages to help keep parents informed and engaged in their children’s education is challenging and costly. While technology permits instant translation for many documents, not all families have the resources to readily access online information, or know where to look for it due to the language barrier.

Technology

While WSD has taken a proactive approach to technology in our schools and classrooms.

WSD is currently exploring the cost of purchasing and implementing assistive technology on its multiple web-based platforms for people who are blind or vision impaired. The division is working toward WCAG 2.1 AA compliance on the Connect Product.

Systemic

Winnipeg School Division offers many programs to assist all families, especially those living in poverty. The division values are to ensure equitable opportunities are available and often support is provided beyond education.

Poverty, is one of the systemic barriers in Winnipeg School Division which makes a difference for the learning of children. Poverty is not simply low income, but a complex, extreme and diverse set of compounding layers, often generational including:

- Economic pressures
- Impoverished spirit
- Food insecurity
- Lack of adequate housing
- Mental distress/illness/addictions
- Physical ill health
- Social marginalization, isolation, lack of social network
- Little resiliency, lack of alternatives
- Impact of colonization
- Access to education, family history with the education system
- Safe communities

In addition to these layers of poverty, students or staff with disabilities living in poverty may experience:

- Inadequate Funding which may lead to delayed education services
- Physical Inaccessibility to School/Facilities
- Accommodation Process can be delayed
- Transportation barriers
- Lack of Individualization – need for individualized plans
- Lack of relevant assistive technologies (assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices)
- Negative Attitudes and Stereotypes which may result in bullying, harassment and/or violence

Physical and Architectural

Many of the schools in WSD were built during the early part of the last century in areas that are now highly developed. This limits the space for expansion to accommodate additions such as parking, elevators and ramps. All capital construction upgrades in WSD must be approved by Manitoba Education. Due to the extensive cost and scope of work of making all of the 89 existing facilities universally accessible, implementation is prioritized on a need to need basis or coordinated with major renovations and new projects.

PART 2

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

A. Statement of Commitment

Winnipeg School Division is committed to moving toward equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with visible and invisible disabilities in ways that allow them to maintain dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion. We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face accessibility barriers. We will do this by identifying, removing and preventing barriers and by adhering to the requirements of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA).

The Winnipeg School Division is committed to:

- Maintaining an Accessibility for Manitobans (AMA) Steering Committee
- Continuing the process of consulting with persons with disabilities
- Ensuring, whenever practical, that Board policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of accessibility and inclusive/universal design. The WSD Accessibility for Manitobans (AMA) Steering Committee will provide input regarding accessibility issues, where appropriate, with regard to new policies and procedures and to those under review;
- Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, and practices, services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community. Consideration of ongoing identification of barriers will be the responsibility of the WSD Accessibility for Manitobans (AMA) Steering Committee and will, whenever possible, be incorporated in the WSD Accessibility Plan.

GOVERNANCE

Winnipeg School Division has responded to the Accessibility for Manitobans Act with a series of committees. The first WSD AMA Steering Committee meeting occurred May 2016 with several meetings thereafter.

The WSD AMA Steering Committee is chaired by Superintendent of Education Services, Equity, Diversity, Inclusive Education. Members of the AMA Steering Committee reflect a variety of senior administration from various departments within the division.

The mandate of the WSD AMA Steering Committee is to oversee and promote the division's compliance with the act and with each standard as released until the plan is completed (projected 2023). In addition, the committee will help implement parts of the Strategic Plan in particular providing accessibility and reasonable accommodations for students and staff with visible and invisible disabilities.

The committee must have regard for principles in carrying out its mandate including:

- **Access:** person's should have barrier free access to places, events and other functions available to the community.
- **Equality:** persons should have barrier-free access equal opportunity and outcomes.
- **Universal Design:** assess should be provided that does not establish or perpetuate a person's disability.
- **Systemic Responsibility:** prevent and remove barriers.

In addition, Winnipeg School Division has several committees that respond to various needs including accessibility:

- Arts Education Committee
- Career Education Committee
- Curriculum and Implementation Committee
- EAL/Newcomer Committee
- Human Rights Committee
- Inclusion Support Committee
- Inclusion Across the Rainbow Subcommittee
- Indigenous Education Committee
- Literacy Committee
- Mathematics Committee
- Mental Health Committee
- Physical Education and Healthy Lifestyles Committee
- Safe Schools Committee
- Strength Based Learning Committee
- Student Support Services Committee

B. Policies

- WSD will review all programs, services and new initiatives to ensure accessibility.
- WSD will make information available in an accessible format or provide supports to people with disabilities in a way that considers their disability.

RESPONSE TO STANDARDS

In response to the Customer Service Standard requirements, the WSD AMA Steering Committee initiated a consultation phase with schools and parent councils to assist in removing barriers to improve customer service.

A template has been filled out by all schools and parent councils. The template will assist in the further development of the Customer Service Training Modules as well as Winnipeg School Division's Accessibility Plan.

WSD will adapt training modules created by various organizations such as: The Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Training modules that University of Manitoba and other participating Manitoban Post-Secondary Institutions have adapted from the AODA with content specific to Winnipeg School Division.

Training modules will be released online with a print version available. Tracking of the training will be done through Employee Connect.

WSD and AMA Steering Committee was established to respond to the following:

- Accessible Information and Communications Standard.
- Built Environment Standard.
- Transportation Standard.

C. Actions

The action/initiatives on the following pages indicate one or more of the following timeframes:

Complete

Ongoing

Short term (completion expected within 12 months)

Mid term (completion expected in 1 to 3 years)

Long term (completion expected in 3 to 5 years)

General Accessibility		
Action/Initiatives	Status	Timeframe
Establish accessibility working group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Superintendent, Education Services, Equity and Diversity, Inclusive Education was appointed as Accessibility Coordinator in May 2016. 	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A working group called the WSD AMA Steering Committee was established in May 2016 and provides representation across the division. The Steering Committee meets regularly to review feedback from departments and schools in the division, to develop and implement the action plan and to address immediate accessibility issues. 	Ongoing
Establish and maintain an Accessibility Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD has developed and will maintain a plan that will be updated at least every two years. 	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan will be posted online and shared with all staff. 	Ongoing
Consultation with students and parents of students with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In developing the WSD Accessibility Plan, all schools and parent councils were invited to provide input on the barriers to accessibility. The feedback on achievements and barriers to accessibility have been incorporated into our Accessibility Plan. 	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further consultation with staff, students and parents of students with disabilities has occurred and will continue to occur. The WSD Accessibility plan is an ongoing – document. Feedback is continually welcomed to improve accessibility and inclusiveness within the division. 	Ongoing
Develop and implement a WSD Accessibility Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will develop an Accessibility Policy to achieve accessibility through AMA regulations. 	Mid term
Ensure accessible transportation to attend school for students with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will provide integrated, accessible school transportation, or appropriate alternative accessible transportation services for students with disabilities where integrated services are not possible or not the best option due to the nature of the disability or safety concerns. 	Completed /ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with parents and develop individual school transportation plans for students with disabilities. 	Ongoing

Systemic

Action/Initiatives	Status	Timeframe
All policies, programs, services and new initiatives will be reviewed to work toward accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with schools and parent councils. • Consultation with students with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities. • Consultation with Board of Trustees Policy and Program Committee. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Review WSD programs and policies through a disability lens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSD will ensure barriers for people with disabilities are taken into account when developing new programs and policies. • WSD will ensure all division policies follow existing legislation. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Long term</p>
Ensure school events/assemblies are accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSD will develop a process to notify school communities that arrangements to accessibility are available. • WSD will ensure that when schools are organizing events, preparation includes gathering information on removing barriers for people with disabilities. 	<p>Short term</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Welcome people with service animals to enter a place where the public, customers or guests are generally allowed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSD policy supports the use of a certified service animal in schools requested by a parent/guardian or employee as long as the appropriate planning and preparation have taken place. • WSD and the Human Rights Commission recognize the definition of Service Animal is evolving and WSD will continue to review its Certified Animal Policy to ensure it remains current. 	Ongoing

Physical and Architectural

Action/Initiatives	Status	Timeframe
Install elevators and or lifts to provide full or partial access as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD has 46 locations that have either Elevator(s), and/or lifts providing full or partial access within the facility. Projects are prioritized by PSFB based on student needs. There are 15 facilities requiring elevator(s)/lifts. Mulvey School Elevator project is under construction. Once completed it will provide access to the 1st and 2nd floors. 	Long term
Install ramps at exterior entrances to facilities that do not currently have access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of the WSD facilities have one or more direct access to buildings either by ramps, elevator or entrances at grade level. WSD will include exterior ramps to provide access to main entrances where required as part of WSD maintenance projects, or as part of Elevator projects funded by Province. Currently one facility requires a ramp to be funded by the division. Another three facilities require a ramp, these will be installed as part of the new elevator addition projects once approved and funded by Province. 	Mid term
Install door operators at entrances for accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One or more auto door operators are located at accessible entrances at 78 facilities. WSD will include automatic door operators (ADO) to exterior entrances as part of WSD maintenance projects. ADO's have been installed (as new installations or additional operators) at 10 facilities in the last year. Installation of ADO's at another two facilities is currently underway for 2022. 	Long term
Install accessible washrooms to all new construction or renovation projects, where required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will include accessible washrooms for all future builds and renovation projects. 79 locations have either a designated UTR and/or Accessible Washrooms available. New or additional accessible washrooms have been completed in the past year at Niji Mahkwa, RB Russell, Prince Charles, Renovation and/or construction of accessible washrooms are under way at Churchill, George V and Mulvey or planned for at Ralph Brown, Gordon Bell and Rockwood. 	Long term
Install visibility strips to all new stair installations. Add visibility strips to existing stairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will include visibility strips as part of our design standards going forward and as part of maintenance projects. 	Mid term
Provide access to play space and accessible route within the play space boundary. Provide adequate accessible ground and elevated play component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently 36 play structures are fully accessible. WSD will specify accessible play structure design for future builds & replacements. 	Long term

Information and Communication

Action/Initiatives	Status	Timeframe
Ensure communication with a person disabled by a barrier is done in a way that removes the barrier. For example, use easy-to-read fonts and plain language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The standard font for Winnipeg School Division is Arial 12. WSD Public Relations Services introduced subtitles on all on-line videos starting in 2014. In May, 2016, all publications produced by WSD include a notification stating <i>"This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. For more information contact: Public Relations Services etc"</i>. A reminder notice to all staff about the availability of alternative formats is included regularly in the weekly staff online bulletin. WSD Library Support Services provides a resource rich lending library of materials for classrooms and teachers across the division in multiple formats, including digitally. 	Ongoing
Welcome the use of assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers. Do not charge fees for use of on-site assistive devices, such as hearing technology, descriptive video, or wheelchairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD is currently exploring the cost of purchasing and implementing assistive technology on its multiple web-based platforms for people who are blind or vision impaired. The division is working toward WCAG 2.1 AA compliance on the Connect Product. WSD is working towards WCAG 2.1 AA compliance on all websites by May 2024. WSD is exploring improved access to FM signal or hearing aids for students who are hard of hearing and technology and software for level 1 and 2 students. Sound field systems have been installed in several classrooms to ensure that these students can hear classroom instruction and direction. These systems are installed as required 	<p>Long term</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Inform the public when there are temporary barriers to buildings, spaces or services. An example is if the elevator is out of order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD Buildings Department exhibits signs at locations where temporary barriers exist. Long term barriers will be communicated to school communities (ie. Parents/guardians) via letter and posted on the WSD and school websites. 	Ongoing
Introduce a process to receive and respond to feedback , including what action will be taken to respond to complaints. Make the information about the feedback process readily available to the public on-site, on the webpage and offer alternate format.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will implement an Accessibility Feedback link on the division's main website and all school sites. An accessibility feedback form will be developed and available to all staff, who will be trained to receive accessibility feedback in person, and submit the completed form to the Accessibility Coordinator. 	Short term

Attitudinal

Action/Initiatives	Status	Timeframe
Create barrier-free access to goods and services, so they benefit everyone as intended. For example remove boxes or other obstructions from hallways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will implement a regular reminder to all schools and building managers to ensure hallways, meeting rooms, classrooms and other access areas are cleared of all obstructions. 	Ongoing
Welcome support persons to enter and remain with your customer. Avoid charges for a support person when possible. If there is an admission fee for a support person, give advance notice to the customer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will provide information on the website. 	Ongoing
Achieve a culture where mental health and well-being are embedded into every student's school experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD has implemented Mental Health Literacy workshops for all staff. Healthy Minds week in May promotes positive mental health achievements within the school division over the past year. 	Short term Ongoing
Develop a recruiting and employment procedure for applicants with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSD will inform its employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applications with disabilities in its recruitment and selection processes. 	Ongoing

WSD's Accessibility Plan is an on-going document.

Feedback is continually welcomed to improve accessibility and inclusiveness within the division and will be added, as appropriate, to this document.

Any questions can be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator.

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WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION