



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 73  
(Kamloops-Thompson)

# **SD73 Accessibility Plan – Draft V.1 – July 10, 2023**

Edited – August 22, 2023



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## Land Acknowledgement

We are grateful to be guests on the territory of seven Secwépemc First Nations:  
Sexqeltqin (Adams Lake Band), Simpcw, Skemtsin (Neskonlith Band), Skítsesten (Skeetchestn Band),  
Skwlāx te Secwepemcúfecw, Stifqw / Pelltíq̓t (Whispering Pines / Clinton Band), Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc.

## Introduction

The [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) came into effect September 1, 2022 and applies to school districts as of September 1, 2023. The act aims to increase all persons' ability to meaningfully participate in their communities by attempting to remove barriers through the development of accessibility standards. As part of this mandate, School District No.73 was required to establish:

- an accessibility committee;
- an accessibility plan; and
- a tool to receive feedback on accessibility.

To make our district more accessible, we will adopt the following three key objectives in the development of our accessibility plan:

- Increase meaningful participation in school communities
- Develop standards for improved service delivery in areas such as education including critical infrastructure like entranceways, playgrounds, sidewalks, accessible transportation, and employment opportunities
- Harmonize with other jurisdictions, including federal requirements.

The SD73 Accessibility Plan will outline how we will identify, remove, and prevent barriers within the district. Six specific principles were considered in the development of the accessibility plan: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.

The SD73 Accessibility Plan was developed in consultation with the District Accessibility Committee.

Source: Accessible BC Act: Guidance for the K-12 Sector (Harris & Company LLP)

# Message from the District

Accessibility, equity, and inclusion are incredibly important! School District No. 73 is committed to removing barriers and creating environments that provide accessible and empowering opportunities for all students and staff to thrive. As part of this commitment, SD73 has formed an Accessibility Committee and would appreciate your feedback based on your experiences within the school district. We want to identify barriers to accessibility that people who have disabilities face when interacting within the Kamloops-Thompson School District.

Please complete the SD73 Accessibility Survey to inform the Committee about what is working well or has worked well for you and to detail any barriers that you have encountered within the school district. We would appreciate hearing any recommendations to make our schools and facilities more accessible in the areas of built environments, attitudes, policies and practices, information and communication and technology.

Your feedback will help identify the barriers that exist and help the Accessibility Committee with possible solutions to issues. If you want to provide feedback verbally, you can also call the school board office at (250) 374-0679, where you will be connected to someone who will record your feedback. The Accessibility plan will be updated regularly and housed on the SD73 website under the Community/Parents and Students tab.

## District Strategic Plan

The 2022-2027 District Strategic Plan, is centered around the four value commitments of equity, connection/relationships, well-being and sustainability. Equity refers to removing barriers and creating environments that provide accessible and empowering opportunities for all students and staff to thrive. The value commitments are achieved by enacting the Seven Grandfather Teachings: Courage, Love, Wisdom, Respect, Truth, Honesty, and Humility.



## Definitions

The following definitions are provided in the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) and the [Developing Your First Accessibility Plan](#) guide which was created as part of the Accessible Organization Project led by Disability Alliance BC.

Accessibility Plan	A plan to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization through the considerations of inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.
Adaptability	Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.
Barriers	Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.
Collaboration	Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play.
Disability	An inability to participate fully and equally in society due to the interaction of an impairment or a barrier.
Diversity	Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation religion, and lived experience inform the experiences of individuals.
Impairment	A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment, which is permanent, temporary, or episodic.
Inclusion	All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
Self- Determination	Empowering people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
Universal Design	The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.”

# Terms of Reference

## ESTABLISHMENT

- May 10, 2023
- Established as a non-statutory body
- To assist and support the Board of Education

## PARTICIPANTS

- School district staff and representatives from community and stakeholder agencies
- At least half the members identifying as persons with disabilities or representing organizations that provide services or programs to them
- Required to have Indigenous representation within the Committee
- An Elder representative will be invited to participate on the Committee
- The Committee will include student representation

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Accessibility Committee will:
  - Provide input and feedback for the Board of Education
  - Identify opportunities to remove barriers to accessibility at School District No.73
  - Provide input into the School District's new Accessibility Plan
- The Committee will provide assistance and report to the Board of Education on any matter falling within its mandate, as and when requested
- The Committee does not have any delegated authority of the Board of Education, authority to speak on behalf of the Board, or power to authorize any actions on behalf of the Board
- Being a non-statutory body without delegated authority, no action of the Committee will be binding on the Board of Education, unless the Board specifically approves the action
- The Committee, in carrying out its roles and responsibilities, must do so in accordance with all applicable federal and provincial laws and legislation as well as School District administrative procedures and Board policies
- The Committee will work collaboratively with other organizations and agencies, including rural partners, within the District's region

## MEETINGS

- Minimum, four (4) times per calendar year or as-needed
- Accessibility Committee members as liaisons and may attend meetings
- Staff persons will record a summary of discussion points raised. Meeting summaries will be forwarded to Superintendent Rhonda Nixon
- The Assistant Superintendent – Inclusive Education will be the Chairperson in charge of the scheduled meetings
- The Committee Chair will provide the Board with an update through Board Reports

## About Our Committee

The District Accessibility Committee was formed in May 2023 and is comprised of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Kamloops-Thompson Teachers Association (KTTA), excluded employees and senior staff, the Board Chairperson, a DPAC representative, a provincial teacher, and community service providers. Our members either identify as having, or support those with, varying physical, sensory and neurodivergent abilities, and also include Indigenous representation. A student and an Elder will also be participating in the Accessibility Committee come September 2023.

On May 10, 2023, the Accessibility Committee met for the first time to review the legislative requirements of the Accessibility Act, determine the composition of the committee, develop Terms of Reference, and to begin identifying barriers that our school community members face.

The committee engaged in an activity that started with an individual reflection on barriers that people who have disabilities encounter. Then, committee members were put into small groups to share their reflections with each other and identify themes these barriers belong to. Committee members discussed barriers with colleagues and people they support.

Each committee member communicated with their respective colleagues to consider the best way to receive feedback from folks in identifying barriers people with disabilities face. The Accessibility Committee then met on July 10, 2023, to consolidate the identified barriers into five focus areas:

1. Built Environments
2. Attitudes
3. Policies and Practices
4. Information and Communication
5. Technology

The Committee has begun brainstorming action items that would reduce or eliminate barriers to accessibility and to discuss the best way to get feedback from students, staff members and families who have experienced accessibility issues when interacting within the school district. The Committee also worked on messaging that would be used to communicate the Accessibility plan and the ways in which people can provide feedback. Students, staff, and families will be able to provide feedback by:

- Emailing [accessibilityplan@sd73.bc.ca](mailto:accessibilityplan@sd73.bc.ca),
- Calling (250) 374-0679, and the receptionist will connect you to a committee member,
- Mailing written feedback to the School Board Office at 1383 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Kamloops, BC, V2C 3X7, or
- Completing a paper copy of the accessibility survey and deliver/mail it to the School Board Office.

This communication will be placed on the District website home page under the Community/Parents and Students tab and communicated through school newsletters, social media, and the assistance of the DPAC and Indigenous Family Voices for Education (IFVE) group.

The Accessibility Committee is meeting on September 6 to review strategies for each of the five areas and to finalize the messaging that will be sent out to families, community service providers and displayed on the District website. The Committee will also finalize the Accessibility survey that will be available to students, staff and families.



# Overview of the Plan

The plan includes identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to accessibility that students, staff, and family members who have disabilities face within the school district. The Accessibility Committee and District are working hard to create accessible, inclusive environments and your feedback is important. The plan is targeting improvements in:

1. Built (Physical) Environments
2. Attitudes
3. Policies and Practices
4. Information and Communication
5. Technology

## Focus Areas

Please note that the plan is fluid. A list of suggested action items is listed in each of the focus areas. More action items will be added to each section as the Committee continues its work and feedback is received. The Accessibility Plan will be updated regularly. The current version of the Accessibility Plan will always be posted on the SD73 home page under the Community/Parents and Students tab.

### Focus Area #1 – Built Environment

Physical and/or sensory barriers can make accessing facilities and resources difficult or unattainable.

#	Action
1	Signage – clear font, high contrast, Secwepemc, braille, gender neutral
2	Hall monitor – visual announcements In class – live caption of announcements over intercom
3	Physical Barriers – acoustic treatments (tiles, carpet, chair foot softeners/rubber caps)
4	Classroom – accessible student/teacher desks (e.g., teacher u-shape), signage for visually impaired, height appropriate chalkboards, light switches, peg boards, carpet/noise dampening features, areas for ASL/RSLI, and other supports (CEA, Notetakers, etc.), sound field systems in all rooms, wider aisles
5	Flashing fire/lock down alarm in all areas of school and outside entry doors
6	Wide halls/walkways, mirrors in blind spots
7	Offices that are accessible and welcoming - desk height, lighting, set-up where student/steno can make eye contact
8	All doors - adjust arm opener for easy access (children, wheelchair user, Elders, people with carts, etc.)
9	Washrooms – touchless faucets and paper towel dispenser
10	Playgrounds – accessible to all (visually impaired, various physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities)
11	Rick Hansen Accessibility Audit

## Focus Area #2 – Attitudes

Attitudinal barriers to accessibility occur when people think, and act based upon false assumptions.

#	Action
1	Review inclusive policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how it relates to identified barriers</li> <li>- language used to describe</li> </ul>
2	Accountability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify ways attitudes are evaluated/measured</li> <li>- mandatory good fit participation in training that addresses lived real barriers</li> </ul>
3	Accessibility plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- District - continuity throughout</li> <li>- School</li> <li>- Educators - pertains to specific growth/development</li> <li>- language used</li> <li>- stereotypes, labeling people/stigma</li> <li>- sense of belonging/community/culture</li> <li>- training/professional development</li> <li>- communication</li> </ul>
4	Inclusive Education Plans – clear accessibility plan for attitudes
5	Training - systemic stereotypes and stigmas. Inclusive lens to be embedded in curriculum (neuro-physical, cultural diversity)
6	Policies and procedures to be firm and clear and how it will be enforced?
7	Continuity throughout district
8	Ignorance - education
9	Evaluation - goal/next steps of staff (measurement)
10	Good fit: mandatory participation in training that reflects on real history (e.g., Blanket activity, qualified personnel, institutions/segregations, Jane Elliot - indecently exposed, racism)
11	Gain understanding of lived experience
12	Review inclusive policies
13	All behaviour is a form of communication
14	Unable vs unwilling
15	Mentorship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learn as a team</li> <li>- hold each other up and accountability</li> </ul>

16	Continuity with expectations (all educators vs. some)
17	Language used to describe difference/barriers (e.g., hearing difference vs. hearing impaired)

### Focus Area #3 – Policies & Practices

An organization’s policies, practices and procedures can result in exclusion.

<b>Action</b>
Review the inclusive procedures and policies through human rights, Truth and Reconciliation, and accessibility lens and offer revisions including language. Connect these changes to practices (what would be seen and heard) in training opportunities.
AP 120 Policy and Procedure Dissemination - offer to revise by listing partners including the Accessibility Committee
Communicate changes to APs and policies for all groups, including parents
EPAC - consider adding a parent for those changes to APs that will help if we have a parent perspective (This creates a formalized process and is good optics to have parents join on those policies/procedures where there are changes that matter with respect to inclusion).
DPAC - is another mechanism for feedback on the Accessibility Plan (i.e., we could add this into the AP for PACs and DPAC as a requirement). Also, for DPAC reports, include the Accessibility Committee as a standing item and report.

### Focus Area #4 – Information & Communication

People with disabilities are excluded because they use other ways to communicate.

Web accessibility updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- visual access</li> <li>- navigation simplicity</li> </ul>
Wayfinding and signage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- simple language</li> <li>- visual</li> </ul>
Barriers to communication of technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- need to be literate</li> <li>- economic - internet/phone (varied methods)</li> </ul>

## Focus Area #5 – Technology

When technology cannot be accessed by people with disabilities, it is a barrier.

#	Action
1	*Inventory and discovering ought to pertain to the needs of students, staff, and community members (parents)
2	Review data – needs discovery
3	SD73 inventory of existing accessibility software
4	Inventory of existing accessibility hardware
5	Review data of above – determine gaps
6	Review of computing platforms for built in accessibility
7	Designing for inclusion training opportunity on creating accessible digital formats
8	Make SD73 website more visually accessible (e.g., large print option, colour contrast, alternative text, etc.)

## Feedback Mechanism

Students, staff and families will have a variety of ways to provide feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan and accessibility within the district.

As part of the District's commitment to the development of our Accessibility Plan, a survey has been created which will be open until September 30, 2023. The survey provides a means to identify positive experiences and negative experiences regarding accessibility, and suggestions for improvements in reducing or eliminating barriers.

The Accessibility Committee and District would appreciate hearing any recommendations to make our schools and facilities more accessible in the areas of built environments, attitudes, policies and practices, information and communication and technology.

Your feedback will help identify the barriers that exist and help the Accessibility Committee with possible solutions.

The survey link will be provided on September 7, 2023.

Students, staff, and families are encouraged to also provide their experiences, concerns, and suggestions as follows:

- Email: [accessibilityplan@sd73.bc.ca](mailto:accessibilityplan@sd73.bc.ca)
- Call the School District at 250-374-0679 to verbally complete the survey or provide other feedback directly to a committee member
- Mail or hand deliver written feedback or a paper copy of the survey to the School Board Office at 1383 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Kamloops, BC, V2C 3X7

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Committee's work will be ongoing to report on actions and timelines which will form a part of this evolving plan. Public feedback will be monitored and will form part of the priorities identified.

The SD73 Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every 3 years in consultation with the Accessibility Committee.

# Appendix A – Additional Information

## KEY THEMES OF THE ACT

- Breaking down barriers.
- Advancing human rights.
- Promoting fairness and equity.

## THEMES SPECIFIC TO EDUCATION

- Increased visibility of those with disabilities.
- Public education campaigns to include those with disabilities in the education system.
- Development of targeted education and training programs.
- Increased integration in schools.
- Focus on accessibility, empathy and sensitivity training.

## IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS FROM THE ACT

- Disability: An inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.
- Barrier: Essentially, anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.
- Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment, which is permanent, temporary, or episodic.

## EXAMPLES OF BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

- Attitudinal: when people think, and act based upon false assumptions.
- Physical: when obstacles in an environment make access difficult.
- Information or Communication: when people with disabilities are excluded because they use other ways to communicate.
- Systemic: when an organization's policies, practices and procedures result in exclusion.
- Technology: when technology can't be accessed by people with disabilities.
- Sensory: when sensory information such as lights, sounds, smells, etc. prevent participation in the environment.

## WHAT ARE OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACCESSIBLE BC ACT?

[Legislation – Accessible BC Act](#)  
[Regulation – Accessible BC Act](#)  
[BC Accessibility Hub](#)

## Appendix B – Additional Resources

### Global, Canadian and Local Accessibility Context and Legislation

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Canada Ratifies UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation](#)
- [Accessible British Columbia Act](#)
- [BC Accessibility Legislation Plan Language Summary](#)

### Accessibility Planning Resources for Schools and School Boards

- [BC Accessibility Hub](#)
- [Universal Design](#)
- [Special Education Technology BC \(SET BC\)](#)
- [Accessible Resource Centre - BC](#)
- [Standards Council of Canada](#)
- [B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design](#)
- [A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces](#) (Rick Hansen Foundation)
- [Canadian National Institute for the Blind \(CNIB\)](#)
- [Canadian Hard of Hearing Association](#)
- [Canadian Hearing Services](#)
- [Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program](#) (Complex Needs)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada](#)
- [Learning Disabilities Association of Canada](#)
- [Brain Injury Canada](#)
- [Spinal Cord Injury Canada](#)
- [Tourette Canada](#)
- [Kelty Mental Health](#) (BC Children's Hospital)