ACCESSIBILITY PLAN
2023-2026

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1. Introduction

About Our School Community

Pacific Academy is a faith-based independent school in the Pentecostal tradition located in Surrey, British Columbia that serves approximately 1400 students from Kindergarten through to Grade 12, and approximately 100 three and four-year-olds in our Junior Kindergarten program.

Vision

Our Vision is to be global servants through Christian education.

Mission

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Pacific Academy seeks to create an inspiring community of Christ-centred learners equipped to lead and serve.

Providing a top-rate education for children of all ages is at the core of everything we do. But to truly deliver the finest academic experience, we believe it's essential to also interweave a spiritual component into children's daily lives.

Values

- An adventurous, Christ-centered, personal relationship with God.
- Personal growth, innovation, and the pursuit of excellence.
- A community reflecting Christ working in our lives.
- Service and leadership empowered by the Holy Spirit within and beyond our school community.

Core Goals

- Introducing students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Presenting a Christian view of the world.
- Providing for every student the resources and skills necessary to live a life of service to God and their neighbours.
- Providing every student with the opportunity to experience and live out a Christian worldview.

While Pacific Academy is one school with a unified mission, purpose, and vision, we've found that it better serves our students to divide the campus into four different divisions so children can spend the majority of their day surrounded by fellow students close to their age. The four divisions are: Primary (JK-2), Intermediate (3-5), Middle (6-8) and High School (9-12).

All divisions have a strong emphasis on spiritual development through daily devotions, weekly chapels and Bible lessons, and numerous opportunities to engage in service and outreach projects. Additionally, a Christian worldview is interwoven into every subject area. Students in high school are encouraged to participate on a global outreach team during spring break or locally throughout the year.

Athletics are also important. There is a strong emphasis on skill development in the younger grades, and many students participate in intramurals and/or play on a Pacific Academy Breakers sports team. Each division has a PE specialist.

Students are exposed to various branches of the fine arts: drama, dance, music, visual arts, media production, and graphics. Each division has specialist music teachers and students have opportunities to share their talents through concerts, music festivals, participation in school chapels, and drama productions.

French language instruction begins in grade three and continues through to High School. Additionally, in grades 9-12, students may opt to study Spanish.

Pacific Academy offers an outdoor education program beginning in Middle School. All students participate in various outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, caving, canoeing, and kayaking. Grade 8-11 students can also choose to join the Summit program where a series of real and challenging obstacles naturally found in the outdoors become the background by which students learn about themselves and the world around them.

Pacific Academy High School offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme for students in grades 11 and 12.

Special education programs are also provided by Pacific Academy for students with special needs whether they be physical, social/emotional, academic, or cognitive. Each division has a Learning Support Coordinator and a School Counselor to work with students, teachers, and a team of Educational Assistants to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn in a way that allows them to reach their full potential.

Our leadership team includes a Head of School, 4 principals (one in each of the four divisions), and vice principals in the Middle and High Schools, about 100 teaching staff, and approximately 100 support staff.

Pacific Academy has a self-perpetuating Board of 8-11 trustees who establish policies and direction of the school. Board meetings occur quarterly. Parent Liaison meetings are held three times/year in each division.

A Message from the Head of School

At Pacific Academy, we are committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides equitable opportunities to support our diverse community. A key element to supporting our community is the development of a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan identifies system needs, priorities, and action plans, and draws on feedback from our school community and the work of the Accessibility Committee to enhance equity of access to programming and facilities.

Our Accessibility Committee is a diverse and multi-disciplinary team that meets regularly to affirm our commitment to identify priorities and develop and monitor action plans highlighted in the Three-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan identifies measurable actions across the pillars of the Accessibility Act, supporting equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access.

We recognize the importance of accessibility not only for those with disabilities, but also for the benefit of the entire community. We are committed to advancing the efforts of the Accessibility Committee to improve equity and ease of access to services, as well as access to our facilities. Through the actions in this Three-Year Accessibility Plan, we commit to continuous improvements in developing an environment that supports all students, staff and the larger school community.

- Dr. Colleen Drisner

Territorial Acknowledgement

It is with honour, dignity, and respect that Pacific Academy acknowledges the traditional lands of the Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo Peoples and we appreciate the opportunity to work and learn on these lands.

Definitions

Accessibility

The state of having programs, services and environments that allow all individuals to participate fully in society without encountering barriers.

Accessibility Committee

An official group formed by one or more organizations in collaboration with people with disabilities, to create an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism.

Accessibility Plan

A plan developed by an Accessibility Committee that identifies challenges and solutions for addressing accessibility barriers.

Barrier

Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person navigating needs or disabilities. Types of barriers in the educational setting may include the following:

1. **Learning Barrier:** Any barrier that limits or prevents learning, whether it is through inadequate engagement, representation of the content, or expression of ideas and communication.

2. **Architectural and Physical Barrier:** A barrier resulting from building design, the area adjacent to the building, shape of rooms, the size of doorways, lack of accessibility features, blocked paths of travel, and so on.

3. **Attitudinal Barrier:** A barrier that arises from the attitudes of staff, students and the school community, including discriminatory behaviours and a lack of disability awareness.

4. **Policy or Practice Barrier:** Rules, regulations and protocols that prevent a person from performing their job satisfactorily or participating in society. Policy, practice, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.

5. **Resource Barrier:** Barriers resulting from inadequate technology, funding, staff, or tools.

6. **Temporal Barrier:** Barriers that occur during a specific time, such as busy times of day or during special events.

Disability

The state of being unable to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. (For more information about disability and types of disability and support, refer to Appendix A: Disabilities.)

Impairment

A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

2. The Framework Guiding Our Work

The Pacific Academy accessibility plan builds on global, national, provincial and school-specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

Global Context - United Nations

The United Nations has been instrumental in leading the importance of disability as a global health issue. There has been an emphasis on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion within the workplace and within the larger community. In 2006, the United Nations led efforts to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2010, Canada ratified the CRPD and described the CPRD as follows:

> "The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human rights treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law."

Canadian Context and Legislation - Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canada-wide, around one in five people had some form of disability in 2017. Nationally, Canadian accessibility legislation started in 1985 where disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were included in the new federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities. The ACA has seven focus areas and was developed based on the following guiding principles.

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.
6. PWDs must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures.
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for PWDs.

B.C. Context and Legislation - Accessible B.C. Act

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 2021, and initially the accessibility planning requirements only applied to provincial government organizations.

The Accessible British Columbia Regulation, under the Accessible British Columbia Act, came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations, and school districts and independent schools will be required to have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a tool to receive feedback on accessibility by September 1, 2023.

The goal of the act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and involve them in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

Principles in the Accessible B.C. Act:

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an accessibility plan. The definitions are adapted from the foundational document BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation.

Adaptability

Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

Collaboration

Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.

Diversity

Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.

Inclusion

All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.

Self-Determination

Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

Universal Design

The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who interact with the Organization.

Our Commitment to Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the degree of ease with which people with disabilities can use and enjoy something such as a device, service, or place. At Pacific Academy, we are committed to providing an environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our diverse community. We recognize the importance of conscious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are removed and accessibility is increased.

Our school is committed to working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity. To achieve this goal, we have outlined the following commitments:

- Engage with staff, community members and people with disabilities in the development and review of its accessibility plan.
- Ensure that our school and board policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility.
- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and community members.
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities in our school community.

Our Approach

At Pacific Academy, we believe that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination and universal design.

In May 2023, we began the process of establishing an accessibility committee and identifying barriers to accessibility in our school community. This process involved the following:

- Calling for applications for members of the Accessibility Committee.
- Assessing the current physical and architectural accessibility of our school.
- Conducting surveys and interviews to understand the issues, challenges, and priorities of stakeholders within our school community.
- Holding key discussions to identify barriers to accessibility.
- Developing a school feedback tool.
- Prioritizing actions to be taken.
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation process.

Our approach is designed to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our school community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community.

3. The Accessibility Committee

Purpose of the Accessibility Committee

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Committee to assist with identifying and preventing barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization. The purpose of the accessibility committee is to work collaboratively to assess and improve community accessibility, focusing on the experiences of individuals with disabilities while encompassing the whole community. The Accessibility Committee also may advise on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

Recruitment to the Accessibility Committee

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, the selection of accessibility committee members must, to the extent possible, align with the following goals:

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

A callout for applications to the Accessibility Committee was conducted in June 2023 to recruit a diverse representation as outlined above. Others joined the committee in August 2023. The Accessibility Committee was formally constituted in September 2023. Current members of the Accessibility Coordinating Committee are listed below.

Accessibility Committee Membership

Committee Member	Position/Representation
Tim Barks	Chair, Primary School Principal
Sue Halabourda	Education Assistant (Primary School)
Ruth Blois	Learning Support Coordinator (High School)
Carol Skolsky	Learning Support Coordinator (Intermediate School)
Evelyn Hunter	Teacher (Intermediate School)

4. Consultation Conducted

Barrier-identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Committee used (or is planning to use) the following barrier-identification methods:

Methodology	Description	Status
Audit of policies and practices	A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion was conducted by members of the Student Support and Well-Being Team	May/June 2023
Accessibility Committee	The Accessibility Committee reviewed data from ISM survey, Flourishing Schools Survey, and data from the Educational Excellence Committee (with input from staff members) to identify barriers. The Committee collaborated to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan. Priority for 2023 - 2024 was given to mental health and well-being barriers.	June 2023 and on-going
Accessibility Feedback Tool	A feedback tool was developed and posted to the school website.	Jan/Feb 2024
Survey to Staff	A survey was developed and distributed to identify the most prevalent barriers in the area of mental health, and support needed to ensure accessibility for all learners.	February 2024
Survey to Parents/Guardians	An accessibility and inclusion survey is being developed by the Accessibility Committee to be distributed to parents/guardians.	2024
School Physical Accessibility Audit	An Assessment of School Physical Accessibility will be developed.	2024

5. Accessibility Feedback Tool

Pacific Academy developed an online feedback tool that included a series of questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff, and members of the school community can complete. Feedback can be anonymous, or people can add their name and contact information if they wish to be contacted. We plan to provide an option for people to upload a video, voice recording, or photo(s).

The following are the contents of the online Accessibility Feedback Tool:

Report an Accessibility Barrier or Support

At Pacific Academy, we want to learn about specific barriers that people face when they are trying to:
- Access a school program, building, or school information.
- Receive a service or support.

The Pacific Academy Accessibility Committee will review your responses to the questions below for their consideration.

- Provide the date the barrier was experienced.
- Select the location where the barrier was experienced.
- What were you or someone you know trying to access?
- Accessibility barrier or support details (be as specific as possible).
- Do you have any recommendations for what would make it better?
- Attach files if you wish to provide additional information (e.g., video, voice recording, photos).
- Please provide your name and email or phone number if you would like to be contacted (optional).

Share your thoughts on accessibility at Pacific Academy:

- **By Phone:** 604.581.5353 (Monday to Friday, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm)
- **By email:** contact@mypacificacademy.net. Please put ACCESSIBILITY FEEDBACK in the subject line to ensure that feedback is directed to the Accessibility Committee.

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback! You will be contacted shortly if you provide your contact details.

6. Accessibility Accomplishments & Barriers

Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Accomplishments Identified

The guiding principles of inclusion inform Pacific Academy's programs, policies, practices, and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We strive to create an environment that is accessible and to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

There are a number of initiatives at Pacific Academy to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The following is a synopsis of some of the major achievements:

Learning
- Students with diverse needs and disabilities are included in regular classes.
- Teachers regularly use key universal supports, including soundfields, access to audiobooks, and use of visual schedules in classes.

Equity
- Shared information on the accessibility act with school staff, students and parents/guardians.
- Updated Anti-discrimination Policy, and staff are trained and equipped to deal with discrimination and equity issues that arise.

School Policies & Practices
- Mental Health and Well-being Supports
  - The school recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being of its students and staff, especially as the world has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. Initiatives have taken place to assess and improve the mental health and well-being of students and staff to ensure support and positive outcomes.
  - Training programs are offered to staff to promote student mental health and improve personal mental health and well-being and reduce stigma associated with mental illness.
- Accessibility Awareness Training
  - Ongoing training continues to be provided to staff and students that supports accessibility awareness, obligations, and inclusive environments.

Physical & Architectural Environment
- The Accessibility Committee is planning to conduct a Physical/Architectural Environment Audit.

Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Barriers Identified

Learning Barriers

- Social/emotional challenges create barriers to learning in the classroom and on the school campus (playground, sports courts, etc).

Physical and Architecture Environment Barriers

- Some classrooms have noise issues that make it difficult for some students due to auditory sensitivities.
- Limited building space creates a barrier to providing students and staff with alternate learning environments.

Resource Barriers

- Many teachers and students are unfamiliar with the accessibility features on school laptops/computers such as voice-to-text, text-to-voice, web readers and other features.

School Policy and Practice Barriers

- Education Assistants often lack the necessary training to support diverse (neurodiverse, physically diverse, culturally diverse) students.
- Systematic transition planning processes are not evident for all students with disabilities.
- Emergency evacuation protocols, individual plans, and evacuation equipment are not in place for students with physical disabilities (this is also being addressed by the Emergency Response Committee).

7. Our Three-Year Plan (2023-2026)

Overview

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures Pacific Academy will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school community. The plan is based on the Accessibility Principles of Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Inclusion, Self-Determination, and Universal Design, as set out in the Accessible B.C. Act.

Accessibility Priorities

Based on the feedback gathered from staff, parents/guardians, and students, the Accessibility Committee has identified the following areas as the top priority for improving accessibility in the school community:

Priority #1 – Learning

Pacific Academy will enhance the accessibility of access to learning for all individuals, including those with disabilities, through the following actions:

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Equip teachers to design lessons using UDL principles	- Provide professional development for educators on UDL - Provide collaboration time and coaching to increase teacher capacity to use UDL lesson planning	By Sep 2024
Provide strategies for incorporating universal and essential supports to learning and make them available to all teaching/support staff	Subject area teachers and inclusive educators develop unit study menus of simplified alternate resources for students with disabilities	Ongoing
Increase training in the use of accessible format materials as needed.	Provide staff training on the various types of accessible materials available and how to use them	Ongoing

Priority #2 – Physical and Architectural

Pacific Academy will improve the accessibility of the physical and architectural environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities through the following actions:

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Develop a standard for both vision and hearing impairment-related accessibility issues (including sound and light sensitivities)	• Provide soundfields in all classrooms to support students with hearing impairments and attention issues.	By Sep 2024
	• Assess noise issues and determine solutions in classrooms and other areas of the school	By Sep 2024
Provide alternative learning spaces for students with diverse needs and disabilities	• Determine the current needs of students who may require alternate learning spaces from time to time	By Sep 2024
	• Conduct an audit of current alternate learning spaces that can meet the identified needs	Jun 2024
	• Create a plan for the provision of additional alternative learning spaces or accommodations to address the needs identified	Jun 2025

Priority #3 – School Policy and Practices

Pacific Academy will review and revise policies and practices to ensure they align with the principles of accessibility, and to address any identified gaps in staff training or knowledge on accessibility issues.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Summarize and celebrate current accessibility practices within the school.	• Conduct an audit of school accessibility practices and summarize the results	By Dec 2024
	• Provide information to staff about current accessibility practices within the school and examples	By Jun 2025
Identify areas needed for further staff training on accessibility issues	• Develop priorities for staff accessibility training and develop or identify training modules for staff	Jun 2025
	• Develop an implementation plan to provide the accessibility training needed for current staff and new staff induction	Jun 2025
Develop Emergency Plans for people with disabilities	• Develop evacuation procedures for students with mobility considerations, acquire EVAC chairs, provide staff training and practice the plans in emergency drills	Ongoing

Improve transition planning for students with diverse needs and disabilities	• Develop a transition planning process for all students in grades 9-12 • Develop a transition planning process for all students transitioning to a new school division	Dec 2024

Priority #4 – Resources

Pacific Academy will increase awareness and training on assistive technology for students with disabilities.

8. Monitoring & Evaluation

The Accessibility Planning Committee meets regularly to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The committee will ensure the following steps are taken regarding the Three-Year Accessibility Plan:

- Prepare an annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan.
- Review and update the Three-Year Accessibility Plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – About Disability

The Disability Continuum

Although there is no universally accepted meaning for the word "disability", the Ontario Human Rights Code provides definitions of disability that form our guiding principles. Definitions of disability can be placed on a continuum. At one end, disability is explained in terms of medical conditions (medical model). At the opposite end, disability is explained in terms of the social and physical contexts in which it occurs (environmental model).

The medical model focuses on deficiencies, symptoms and treatments. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 1976 definition for disability, for example, is "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being." Medical model definitions promote the idea that disability is a deviation from the norm.

Many people with disabilities are troubled by definitions that regard disability as abnormal, preferring instead to portray disability as commonplace, natural, and in fact, inevitable. As people age, they experience gradual declines in visual acuity, auditory sensitivity, range of motion, bodily strength and mental powers. Significant functional limitations affect almost half of people between the ages of 55 and 79, and over 70% of people over 80 (World Health Organization (WHO) report titled "Aging and Health", 2015). Beyond middle age, disability is the norm.

The environmental model explains disability in relation to social and physical contexts. In this view, the environment, not an individual's medical condition, causes disability. For example, during an electrical blackout, a person who is completely blind can effortlessly navigate around the home, hammer nails, and, if a Braille user, read a novel. A sighted person would be unable to perform these tasks easily, if at all. In this example, the environment disables the sighted person.

The environmental model emphasizes that people with disabilities are capable individuals, and it is the barriers in the built and human environments, not their medical conditions, that create disability. Disability occurs when the world is designed only for a certain way of living, without considering the natural variation among human beings. Barriers are created by humans, and modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our understanding of the proper way to do things can eliminate or minimize design problems that cause barriers. Systematic barriers can be eliminated by modifying policies, plans, and processes. Attitudes that cause barriers can be addressed through disability awareness, respect, and positive interactions with people with disabilities.

Types of Disability and Functional Limitations

A person's disability may make it physically or cognitively challenging to perform everyday tasks such as operating a keyboard, reading a sign, differentiating colours, distinguishing sounds, climbing stairs, grasping small items, remembering words, or doing arithmetic.
There are many kinds of disabilities, including physical, sensory, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning. Disabilities can be visible or invisible.

Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Some have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a visual disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with visual disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Unless it is an emergency, only touch the person if you have been given permission.
- If you offer assistance, wait until your receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so. Don't just assume the individual can't see you.
- When entering a room, show the individual to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
- Ensure you say good-bye prior to leaving the individual.
- Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

Hard of Hearing & Deafness

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating. While some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating, others may also use email, pagers, TTY telephone service or Bell Canada Relay Service.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where the person can see your face.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Address the person, not their interpreter.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example a pen and paper.
- Keep your face clearly visible when speaking.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.

- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- Any personal (e.g., financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- Be patient. Communication for people who are deaf is different because their first language may not be English. It may be American Sign Language (ASL).
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.

Physical Disabilities

- There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

- Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to the person rather than someone who is with them.

- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.

- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".

- Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.

- Unless it is an emergency, refrain from touching any assistive devices, including wheelchairs.

- Provide the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

Intellectual Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most people take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with intellectual disabilities:

- As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.

- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".

- Use simple words and short sentences.

- Make sure the person understands what you've said.

- If you can't understand what's being said, ask again.

- Give one piece of information at a time.

- Be polite and patient.

- Speak directly to the person, not to someone who is with the person.

Learning or Cognitive Disabilities

Learning or cognitive disabilities can result in a host of different communications difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with the person's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with learning or cognitive disabilities:

- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Recognize that some people with communication difficulties use augmentative communication systems such as Signed English and Picture Exchange System.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- Speak normally and clearly, and directly to the person
- Take some time — people with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- If you're dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Be courteous and patient and the person will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.

Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You won't know that the person has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with mental health disabilities:

- Treat people with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring and listen to persons with a mental health disability and their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him/her to tell you the best way to help.
- Take the person with a mental health disability seriously, and work with them to meet their needs.

Speech and Language Disabilities

Some people have communication challenges. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards, sign language or other assistive devices.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with speech and language disabilities:

- Just because a person has one disability doesn't mean they have another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking; make no assumption they have an intellectual disability as well.
- If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'.
- Take some time. Be patient and polite and give the person whatever time they need to get their point across.
- Allow the individual to finish their sentences themselves without interruption.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Deaf-Blind Disabilities

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deafblind:

- Make no assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Some deaf-blind people have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- A deaf-blind person is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Speak directly to the person, as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach the person who is deaf-blind.
- Don't touch service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Unless it's an emergency, refrain from touching a deaf-blind person without permission.

Appendix B – Suggested References/Resources

Global, Canadian & Local Accessibility Context & Legislation

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Canada Ratifies the 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
- Developing Your First Accessibility Plan: A Guide for BC Prescribed Organizations
- Creating an Accessibility Committee
- 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)
- Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI)
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
- Canadian Hearing Services
- Provincial Outreach Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH)
- Auditory Outreach Provincial Resource Program
- Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness
- Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program (Complex Needs)
- Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders
- Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- 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)
- Gifted Children's Association of BC
- Specialist Association of Gifted Educators in BC

Appendix C – Supports for Access

Universal Classroom Supports

Univerals Classroom Supports are building-level supports and strategies that promote a positive effective learning environment. The Universal Supports foster greater inclusion in the classroom. While some students need these supports to be successful or to access the curriculum, they are available to all students.

Multiple Means of Engagement Why we are doing this: the self-regulation, the engagement, the persistence, and the grit.	Multiple Means of Representation How we present information: symbols, visuals, written, and videos.	Multiple Means of Expression and Action How students can express their learning. What goals they need to set and how will they approach a problem.
Assessment / Response		
• Partner/Group work • Regular student feedback • Self-assessment **Social-Emotional** • Calm space in the classroom • Check & Connect • Check-ins **Timing** • Additional time for tasks and assignments • Additional time to process oral information and directions • Front loading • Return to assignments at a later date • Use of a timer (visual, auditory) or countdown	• Alternatives to print (audiobooks, movies, videos, digital media etc.) • Graphic organizers/visual supports/outlines • High-contrast materials with minimal visual clutter • Large print • Lesson outlines • Oral instructions/reader • Sound field system in the classroom/gymnasium • Use of a calculator, table of math facts, number line, manipulatives, formulae • Use of a spelling dictionary, proofreading checklist, etc. • Use simplified language/directions • Visual presentations of verbal material (word webs, visual organizers)	• Alternate ways of responding (oral, dictation, scribe, written, drawing, word processor, media, etc.) • Alternatives to assessments/essays (demonstrations, conferences, projects, etc.) • Note-taking apps

Content/Process		
• Allow self-selected content/opportunities to pursue individual interests • Differentiated content process product and learning environment • Flexible pacing • Increase complexity/abstractness of content • Reduce complexity of content (more concrete, simplified vocabulary etc.) • Reduce workload (fewer questions, shorter assignments etc.)	• Alternatives to note-taking (scribe, audio recording, teacher notes provided, photo, PowerPoint, etc.) • Audio/video recordings • Differentiated content process product and learning environment	• Alternatives to note-taking (scribe, audio recording, teacher notes provided, photo, PowerPoint, etc.)

Environmental	Instructional and Presentation/Representation	
• Ability to move around indoor and outdoor spaces easily to access materials • Classroom zones/alternate workspaces (i.e. quiet spaces, collaborative spaces) • Good sight lines and placement and illumination to facilitate communication for oral and visual language • Preferential/flexible seating • Sensory tools (fidget items, wiggle cushions, standing desks, etc.) • Separate settings • Sound field system • Special lighting (dark/light spaces) or acoustics (quiet/noisy spaces) • Vertical surfaces	• Alternatives to print (audiobooks, movies, videos, digital media etc.) • Calculator • Described video • Graphic organizers/visual supports • High-contrast materials with minimal visual clutter • Large print • Lesson outlines • Oral instructions/reader • Provide captioning (open and closed captioning) • Soundfield system in the classroom/gymnasium • Technology: *must specify (Text-to-speech, Speech-to-text, PDF to speech, BrailleNote Touch) • Text-to-speech and Speech-to-text • Use simplified language/directions	• Alternatives to note-taking (scribe, audio recording, teacher notes provided, take a photo etc.) • Alternatives to print (audiobooks, movies, videos, digital media etc.) • Assignment options • Calculator • Graphic organizers/Visual Supports • Technology: *must specify (Text-to-speech, Speech-to-text, PDF to speech, BrailleNote Touch)
Scheduling		
• Additional time • Calendars with special events		

• Choice zone • Front-load schedule changes • Personal visual schedule (e.g., First/Then; First/Next) • Provide breaks • Provide choice • Scheduled sensory/movement breaks • Visual classroom schedule • Weekly and daily schedules • Work/Break schedule	• Visual presentations of verbal material (word webs, visual organizers)	
Self-Management/Organization		
• Calendars/planners • Checklists • Classroom visual supports • Digital storage (folders) • Highlighters • Planner • Post-it notes • Study space • Work organization system (colour-coded files, binder etc.)		

Essential Supports for Access

Essential Supports are supports identified through hearing, vision, medical, or psycho-educational testing and are necessary in order for the student to access the curriculum.		
Multiple Means of Engagement Why we are doing this: the self-regulation, the engagement, the persistence, and the grit.	**Multiple Means of Representation** How we present information: symbols, visuals, written, and videos.	**Multiple Means of Expression and Action** How students can express their learning. What goals they need to set and how will they approach a problem.
Environmental		
• Alternative personal workspace • Specialized seating (Source of sound to stronger ear, individual wedges etc.)	• Alternative personal workspace • Specialized seating (Source of sound to stronger ear, individual wedges etc.) • Guide dog	• Orientation and Mobility Support (lift, walker, standing frame, cane, GPS etc.) • Specialized equipment (Slant board, switch interface, Powerlink, audio hub etc.) • Guide dog
Scheduling	**Instructional and Presentation/Representation**	
• Choice zone • Personal visual schedule (e.g., First/Then; First/Next) • Scheduled sensory/movement breaks • Work/Break schedule	• ASL Interpreter • Personal hearing aid(s) • Designated reader or scribe • Personal FM/RMT (Remote Microphone Technology) system • Closed Circuit Televison (CCTV) • Video magnifier • Alternative formats (Braille, large print, auditory, specialized assistive technology • Low vision tools (monoculars and magnifiers)	• Designated reader or scribe • Personal hearing aid(s) • Personal FM/RMT (Remote Microphone Technology) system • ASL Interpreter • Alternative formats (Braille, large print, auditory, specialized assistive technology) • Low vision tools (monoculars and magnifiers) • Technology: *must specify (Text-to-speech, Speech-to-text, PDF to speech, BrailleNote Touch)
Social-Emotional		
• Calm space • Scheduled Check-ins • Service Dog		
Timing		
• Personal countdown script/visual timer		

• Personal visual timer	• Technology: *must specify (Text-to-speech, Speech-to-text, .pdf to speech, BrailleNote Touch)
Content/Process	**Assessment/Response**
• Acceleration • Interactions with peers who have similar ability	• Alternate formats (Braille, specialized assistive technology) • Alternative and Augmentative Communication Device (Talking Board, PECS, Hip Talk, Big Mac, Step-by-Step, PODDS, Touch Chat, Proloquo2go, Lamp Words for Life, Let me Talk, Eye Gaze etc.) • ASL/Signing/Interpreter • Assessment over several timed sessions • Hand held microphone for RMT (Remote Microphone Technology)
Self-Management/Organization	
• Learning Contract • Personal communication intent dictionary • Personalized Visual or tactile supports • Work organization system (basket system)	