

Common Goals **Un**common Outcomes



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

ISABC ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2026-2029

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Section 1: Context

The Independent Schools Association of BC (ISABC) Accessibility Plan builds on global, national, provincial and member school specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

Global Context – United Nations

In recent years, 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 it as 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, requiring parties to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights and full equality under the law.

While these core principles remain unchanged, Canada's framework for enforcing them has accelerated significantly. Following a formal, live implementation review in Geneva, the United Nations Committee on the CRPD issued stringent Concluding Observations in March 2025 demanding that Canada target gaps in inclusive education, independent living, and regional support inconsistencies. Simultaneously, the federal government moved from general emphasis to strict legal accountability by passing the *Regulations Amending the Accessible Canada Regulations* in December 2025. These historic amendments turn the ideals of the CRPD into enforceable law, mandating strict compliance schedules for digital technologies, rolling out mandatory corporate accessibility training by late 2027, and setting highly regulated accessibility standards for web content, apps, and procurement across federal and large private sectors through 2028.

Canadian Context and Legislation

In 1985, disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in 1986, persons with disabilities 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:

- **Dignity:** All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
- **Equal Opportunity:** 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.

- **Barrier-Free Access:** All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
- **Autonomy:** All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
- **Intersectionality:** 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.
- **Involvement in Design:** People with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures.
- **Highest Level of Accessibility:** 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 people with disabilities.

Recent Progress and Compliance Framework (2024–2026)

To systematically guide the country toward its 2040 goal, the federal government officially launched the *Accessible Canada Roadmap* as a national implementation framework geared toward driving systemic change and leveraging data to measure progress.

Concurrently, the ACA's regulatory requirements have transitioned from planning to enforcement deadlines. Following the initial requirements for government and large private corporations, small federally regulated organizations (10 to 99 employees) reached their legal milestone on June 1, 2024, by publishing their first formal accessibility plans. Large federally regulated entities (100 or more employees) have moved into their next legal compliance phase, hitting their June 2026 deadline to publish entirely updated three-year accessibility plans and progress reports detailing how they are actively dismantling identified barriers.

Advancing Reconciliation Through Education

Effective the 2023/24 school year, all students working toward a B.C. Certificate of Graduation (“Dogwood Diploma”), in English or French, must successfully complete at least 4 credits in Indigenous-focused coursework. This requirement applies to students in B.C. public, independent, First Nations, and offshore schools. To offer students greater flexibility, the province expanded eligible options on July 1, 2024, to include First Nations-developed language and culture external credentials alongside traditional provincial and locally authorized courses.

The promotional video, co-developed by the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), continues to celebrate the

significance of implementing this requirement in B.C.'s K-12 education system. Through it, students, teachers, First Nations leadership, education partners, and government leaders share their perspectives on this important framework and how deepening the understanding of Indigenous histories benefits all British Columbians.

You can watch [BC's Indigenous-focused Graduation Requirement Video](#) to see the original perspectives of the students, educators, and First Nations leaders who advocated for this structural change to the curriculum.

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

The *Accessible British Columbia Regulation*, under the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, came into force on September 1, 2022. This regulation identified public sector bodies, including school districts and independent schools, as prescribed organizations. Consequently, schools were legally required to establish an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a public feedback tool by September 1, 2023. Following an extensive provincial compliance audit, the vast majority of B.C. school districts successfully established these frameworks.

The ongoing goal of the Act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities by directly involving them in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to their full participation in the province. Building on this foundation, the province launched its second three-year *Accessible BC Plan (2025–2028)* and drafted its first formal provincial standards for Employment Accessibility and Accessible Service Delivery to firmly guide how prescribed organizations eliminate systemic barriers.

Principles in the Accessible B.C. Act

The *Accessible British Columbia Act* includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop, implement, and review their accessibility plans. These definitions are adapted from the foundational document *BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation* and are codified in the Act:

- **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.

Section 2: 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 prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society. This includes physical/environmental, attitudinal, information, communications, policy or practice, and technological barriers.

- **Physical/Environmental Barrier:** A barrier resulting from architectural design, outdoor spaces (which can include certain smells or sounds), internal lighting, the configuration of class and meeting rooms, and the size and width of doorways.
- **Attitudinal Barrier:** A barrier that arises from the attitudes of staff, students, and the school community, including discriminatory behaviors and a lack of disability awareness.
- **Communication Barrier:** A barrier that arises when communicating or delivering information in person, by telephone, or online; interacting with teachers, peers, receptionists, or other staff; and receiving training.

- **Information Barrier:** A barrier that arises from inaccessible signage, fonts, brochures, forms, manuals, websites, fax transmissions, equipment labels, and computer screens.
- **Policy or Practice Barrier:** Rules, regulations, and protocols that prevent a person from performing the essential requirements of their job or classwork, or participating in society. These include policies, practices, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.
- **Technological Barrier:** Barriers that result from the use of inaccessible devices, platforms, software programs, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones, and switches, including the lack of assistive technologies.

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, types of disability, and support, refer to Appendix A: Disabilities.)*

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

Systemic Barrier (New): Built-in institutional rules, hiring practices, or cultural habits that subtly and continuously disadvantage or exclude individuals with disabilities, regardless of physical space limitations.

Prescribed Organization (New): Any public body, school district, health authority, or municipality officially designated by the government to meet mandatory compliance deadlines under provincial accessibility law.

ICT Standard (New): Refers to standard CAN/ASC-EN 301 549, the official technical rule adopted across Canada to strictly evaluate the accessibility of websites, mobile applications, and digital documents.

Accessibility Statement (New): A mandatory public declaration published by an organization that reviews its digital compliance status, details alternative ways to access its information, and sets a transparent timeline for fixing digital errors.

Procurement Conformity Assessment (New): A required compliance review that organizations must complete before purchasing software or IT equipment to ensure the vendor's product does not introduce new barriers.

Section 3: Independent Education and The ISABC

Territorial Acknowledgement

The ISABC is grateful to be on the shared unceded Coast Salish territory of the sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), sel̓íl̓wítulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and x̓w̓məθk̓wəy̓əm (Musqueam) nations. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship, and voice.

Independent Education in British Columbia

Independent schools offer families choice and accountability, and provide wider and richer opportunities for students. Approximately 13.7% of all school-aged children in British Columbia attend independent schools, representing one of the highest proportional enrollments in the country. Independent schools receive partial Ministry operating funding and are accountable to the Ministry for the delivery of the standard B.C. Curriculum. To maintain their certified status and funding, independent schools are inspected regularly by the province to ensure they consistently meet all Ministry educational and administrative standards.

About the Independent Schools Association of BC (ISABC)

The ISABC is an association of 26 forward-looking schools distinguished by outstanding educational experiences and opportunities; leadership development; preparation for post-secondary placements and nurturing the development of international understanding.

An ISABC school will provide the best educational opportunities possible to meet children's individual needs. Through collaboration, commitment and an atmosphere of mutual respect, ISABC member schools are positioned to achieve the highest standards of education.

All ISABC schools are inspected and meet the BC Ministry expectations for independent schools. Most ISABC schools are also accredited by the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS) or the Council for International Schools (CIS).

Together, the ISABC family links teachers and leaders ensuring the sharing of the best educational and leadership practices, as well as resources and ideas.

Collectively our schools can accommodate the learning needs of almost every child with close attention paid to individual children's learning and development. Thoughtful academic programming, a supportive and inclusive school culture and the exceptional

opportunities provided make ISABC schools a wonderful choice for parents who want exceptional educational provisions for their children.

Purpose and Mandate

Vision: Schools building relationships for a better world

Mission: Schools leading through advocacy, community-building, and social action

Values: Independence; Collaboration; Social Responsibility; Integrity

The collaborative strength of the ISABC means that expertise, policies, ideas are shared amongst the schools. There is tremendous support and dialogue between our schools and staff that sharpens the excellence of our schools. As open-minded educators we learn from each other at every level – teaching staff, administrators, leaders, support staff – and of course, the students.

Strategic Priorities

Advocacy: Supporting and championing ISABC Schools: ‘We will support and champion ISABC schools’ positions and causes’

- The ISABC will be an influential voice with Government, the Ministry of Education and Federation of Independent Schools of BC (FISA)
- The ISABC will establish relationships with organizations and the broader community that will benefit our members

Community: Sharing, learning and engaging in action: ‘We will come together to strengthen our practices, share perspectives and challenges, learn from each other and engage in joint action.’

- The ISABC will provide distinct and relevant professional development and collaborative opportunities
- The ISABC will support Heads and their collaboration to strengthen the association and schools

Social Impact: Reaching out with others to build a better world: ‘We will reach out with others to build a better world’

- The ISABC will support environmental stewardship
- The ISABC will support inclusion and belonging
- The ISABC will support Indigenous Education

ISABC 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. The ISABC and our member schools are committed to providing an environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our community. We recognize the importance of conscious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are identified and removed. The ISABC is committed to working collaboratively with our schools and 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 ISABC policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility
- Improve access to policies, programs, practices, and services for ISABC students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and community members
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities in the ISABC community

ISABC Approach

At the ISABC, we believe that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an equal opportunity to participate, and provided with full 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.

Our journey began in April 2023 when we established a collective ISABC Accessibility Committee and began identifying barriers across our school communities. This foundational process involved:

- Reaching out to member schools to build our collective committee.
- Conducting community-wide surveys and interviews to understand stakeholder priorities.
- Holding targeted discussions to identify physical, digital, and systemic barriers.
- Developing and launching the centralized ISABC online feedback tool.
- Helping member schools prioritize local actions and establishing a long-term monitoring process.

Expanded Training and Association Collaboration (2023–2026)

Since the original plan went into effect in September 2023, the ISABC has added focus toward continuous education, provincial collaboration, and shaping future standards.

Over the last three years, we have expanded our approach through the following initiatives:

- **Comprehensive Professional Development:** Soon after the initial plan launch, the ISABC provided targeted accessibility training tailored for both administrative and teaching staff. Training topics focused heavily on human rights and digital accessibility information. Additionally, specialized training was provided on CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation) to improve live-event accessibility.
- **Provincial Partnerships & Knowledge Sharing:** The ISABC has worked closely with the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA). A member of our ISABC Accessibility Committee formally joined the FISA Accessibility Collaborative to share resources and learn alongside other educational associations.
- **Shaping B.C. Accessibility Standards:** The ISABC has taken an active role in provincial consultations regarding British Columbia's upcoming legislated accessibility standards. Representatives from our association attended the public consultation meetings and participated in specialized workshops, such as *"What BC's Draft Accessibility Standards Mean for You"* hosted by Untapped Accessibility, ensuring our schools are prepared for future legal requirements.

Our approach is designed to continuously recognize gaps and improve accessibility across our school communities. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful training, and collaborative advocacy, we aim to deliver lasting improvements for all members of our community. Additional resources for schools to draw on can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Section 4: The Accessibility Committee

Purpose of the Accessibility Committee

Under the Accessible BC Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Committee to assist with creating an ISABC Accessibility Plan, to evaluate the plan as it is implemented and to support member schools in its implementation.

Recruitment

Under the Accessible BC Act, the selection of accessibility committee members, 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 people with disabilities;

- At least one member is an Indigenous person; and
- Members reflect the diversity of persons in B.C.

A callout to ISABC schools for candidates interested in joining the ISABC Accessibility Committee was conducted in March 2023. The Accessibility Committee held its first meeting in April 2023. The ISABC Accessibility Committee is currently composed of staff members from ISABC member schools to allow for a full understanding of accessibility barriers within independent schools. The committee will look to expand to include other stakeholders in future years.

Current members of the ISABC Accessibility Committee are listed below:

- **Bonnie Fisher**, ISABC - Assistant Executive Director
- **Tracey Dixon**, Mulgrave School - Human Resource Director
- **Michelle Mah**, Talmud Torah - CFO/Business Manager & Director of HR
- **Ula Teicher**, Collingwood School - Human Resource Coordinator
- **Mandy Alves**, Southpointe Academy - Visual and Performing Arts Head of Department

A Message from the ISABC Accessibility Committee

At the ISABC, we are committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides equitable opportunities to support our 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 community and the work of the Accessibility Committee to enhance equity of access to programming and our facilities. 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.

Over the past three years (2023–2026), our committee’s structure has matured alongside our goals. After initially meeting twice a year during 2023 and 2024 to establish our framework, we transitioned to a centralized annual fall meeting starting in 2025 to streamline our tracking and planning. Throughout this time, the committee has taken a direct lead in identifying and sharing ideas for accessibility training across our schools, while compiling practical accessibility resources to support staff and administration.

Looking ahead to the next three years (2026–2029), the committee is focused on expanding our reach and formalizing our structures. We are currently working on a formal application process for onboarding new committee members to ensure diverse and sustainable representation. Furthermore, we are looking to launch a dedicated, centralized online resource page on the main ISABC website so our member schools can easily access accessibility tools and guidance at any time.

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 the accessibility of our services, and our facilities. Through the actions in this updated Three-Year Accessibility Plan, we commit to continuous improvements in developing an environment that supports all students, staff and the larger ISABC community.

A Thank You from the ISABC

The ISABC wishes to express its deepest gratitude to the members of the Accessibility Committee. This committee consists of passionate and dedicated individuals from across our member schools who volunteer their time, energy, and expertise to champion inclusion. Because of your hard work in gathering feedback, analyzing barriers, and driving professional training over the past three years, our association is moving forward with a clear, actionable roadmap for the future. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to removing accessibility barriers and for creating a more equitable, welcoming, and supportive community for all ISABC students, staff, and families.

Section 5: Collection & Consultation Process

The ISABC Accessibility Plan is built on a continuous cycle of data collection, stakeholder consultation, and auditing. To ensure a comprehensive overview across our member schools, the collection process has evolved through two distinct phases: our foundational 2023 assessment and our targeted 2025–2026 refresh data.

Phase 1: Foundational 2023 Assessment Methodologies

To establish our inaugural baseline, the ISABC Accessibility Committee distributed an initial survey to member schools requesting details on specific accessibility accomplishments and localized barriers. Schools utilized a variety of the following methods to collect this data:

- **Audit of Policies and Practices:** Key staff members conducted a comprehensive review of existing operational policies and cultural practices to evaluate how they promoted accessibility and inclusion.
- **Staff and Community Surveying:** Targeted accessibility and inclusion surveys were developed and distributed directly to school staff, as well as parents and guardians.
- **School Physical Accessibility Audits:** Localized assessment frameworks were developed to evaluate the built environment. Dedicated audit teams were identified at each campus to conduct physical walkthroughs.
- **Internal Working Groups:** Knowledgeable staff members connected to outline individual school achievements, identify immediate barriers, and prioritize areas

of focus over a three-year trajectory.

- **Committee Collation:** The ISABC Accessibility Committee reviewed all school-level data and community survey feedback, collating the results to form the collective 2023 ISABC Accessibility Plan.

Phase 2: Continuous Data Collection & The 2026 Plan Refresh

In preparation for the September 1, 2026 iteration of the plan, schools built upon their foundational data by implementing deeper, multi-layered tracking mechanisms and broader stakeholder consultations between 2024 and 2026.

To map progress and identify outstanding vulnerabilities, data was aggregated through the following expanded channels:

- **Targeted 2025 ISABC Progress Survey:** The ISABC Accessibility Committee distributed a secondary comprehensive survey to schools in 2025. This targeted tool captured updated information on evolving accessibility practices and directly informed this 2026 plan refresh.
- **Active Progress & Barrier Reviews:** School's working committees conducted formal reviews of the original 2023 accessibility plans to isolate outstanding work, cross-reference incident data reviews, and evaluate the efficacy of ongoing, day-to-day feedback mechanisms.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Feedback Loops:** Data collection continued via modernized surveys extended across a wider demographic, capturing the distinct lived experiences of parents, staff, and students.
- **Deepened Environmental Audits:** The majority of ISABC member schools successfully executed two structural audits during this cycle: a formal School Physical Accessibility Audit alongside an exhaustive, systemic Audit of Policies and Practices.
- **Experiential Consultations & User Groups:** Schools elevated their physical assessments by conducting live campus access tours. Furthermore, targeted accessibility meetings were coordinated directly with specific student and staff "user groups" to witness how individuals with varying abilities navigate spaces in real time.
- **Cross-Committee Integration:** The data collection process integrated the specialized expertise and distinct lenses of established internal school committees, pulling intersectional data from Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) committees and Diversity of Abilities working groups.

Summary of Intent: By combining broad institutional metrics (audits and surveys) with personal consultation (user groups and DEIB committees), the 2026 collection process looked to understand current and continuing barriers that ISABC schools will look to address.

Section 6: Accessibility Barrier Reporting Tool

Baseline & Tool Functionality

In accordance with the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, the ISABC developed and launched a centralized online barrier [reporting tool](#) in September 2023. This tool features a structured feedback form designed to capture the exact accessibility experiences of students, staff, and members of the broader ISABC community.

The reporting form is hosted publicly on the main ISABC website (www.isabc.ca) as well as across individual member school websites. To ensure psychological safety and encourage transparent communication, users can choose to submit their feedback anonymously, or they can opt to provide their name and contact details if they wish to receive a direct follow-up from school leadership. Additionally, the digital platform includes functionality allowing users to upload supporting visual or auditory evidence, such as photographs or videos of specific barriers.

Tracking & Status of Submissions (2023–2026)

Following the tool's integration, the ISABC Accessibility Committee conducted an audit across member schools to track intake, assess responsiveness, and categorize submissions. The data collected between 2023 and mid-2026 revealed the following operational metrics:

- **Overall Volume:** The vast majority of member schools reported a baseline status of zero submissions received via the formal "Report an Accessibility Barrier Form" to date, indicating low overall volume through the primary digital intake channel.
- **Resolved Architectural & Communication Submissions:** One member school successfully received and closed an inquiry regarding clear elevator access. In response, the school immediately optimized its localized communication protocols, implementing enhanced on-campus directional signage to ensure external visitors could seamlessly locate elevator entry points.
- **Active Remediation & Non-Structural Interventions:** Two member schools logged active submissions that are currently undergoing targeted remediation to eliminate identified physical or technological barriers:
 - *School A (Physical/Built Environment):* A submission identified a malfunctioning automatic door opener alongside structural concerns regarding facility handrails. Repairs and parts replacements are currently underway.
 - *School B (Acoustic/Technological):* Following community feedback regarding auditory barriers in the Junior School, leadership evaluated traditional architectural sound-baffling interventions. Due to prohibitive

capital costs, the school is actively researching and procuring self-contained, cost-effective soundproof pods as a functional alternative to optimize the learning environment.

Multi-Year Commitment (2026–2029)

Data gathered during this inaugural cycle demonstrates that while total submission volumes remain low, the tool serves as a safety valve for identifying and rapidly resolving localized barriers.

Consequently, the ISABC commits to maintaining, and monitoring this online reporting tool over the next three-year cycle (2026 through 2029). Future efforts will focus on continuing to ensure its digital layout continuously complies with modern Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to prevent the reporting mechanism itself from acting as a technological barrier.

Section 7: Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

Accessibility Accomplishments

ISABC schools operate under a continuous improvement model, maintaining policies, programs, and physical frameworks designed to prevent and eliminate barriers. To map our progress, this section outlines our Legacy Strengths (mechanisms established by 2023) alongside our Progress & Expanded Advancements (achieved during the 2023–2026 reporting cycle).

1. Architectural & Environmental Achievements

Legacy Strengths (Maintained since 2023)

- **Universal Campus Mobility:** Paved outdoor pathways connect detached buildings alongside widespread wheelchair access to standard facilities and portables.
- **Structural Wayfinding & Safety:** Integration of dual-sensory emergency systems (visual strobe lights synchronized with fire bells), hallway two-way intercoms, slip-resistant flooring, and tactile room numbering/Braille signage.
- **Flexible Interiors:** Varied classroom configurations featuring adjustable-height desks and active-seating tools (e.g., Hokki stools, core discs, kick bands, yoga balls).

- Accessible Amenities: Wide interior doorways, designated parking stalls, multi-floor elevators, and accessible washrooms outfitted with grab bars, proximity sinks, and roll-in change room showers.

Progress & Expanded Advancements (New since 2023)

- Comprehensive Mobility Engineering: Structural retrofits have ensured all stair-only spaces are backed by functional elevator or ramp alternatives. Specific upgrades include major entry ramp re-engineering for hallways.
- Targeted School Upgrades:
 - *One school* expanded structural access by installing wider doorways and automated push-button doors.
 - Other campuses successfully installed push-button systems inside dedicated disability washrooms and completed structural modifications to ensure main auditorium stages are fully wheelchair accessible.
- Proactive Hazard & Wayfinding Mitigation: Schools completed full campus floor-mat reviews and replacements to minimize trip risks, while smoothing uneven outdoor terrain. Wayfinding has been elevated through comprehensive signage audits, the addition of high-contrast visibility strips on staircases, and prominent external ramp signage.
- Sensory & Micro-Climate Zoning: Member schools executed formal noise and light assessments to systematically mitigate sensory triggers. Advancements include heavy capital investments in acoustic dampening, weather-protected outdoor seating, the establishment of quiet eating zones, and the installation of comprehensive sound-field amplification systems across all classrooms.
- Circulation Infrastructure: Main corridors have been audited to ensure they meet or exceed the 1.2-meter minimum unobstructed width threshold. Lever-style taps have been standardized in washrooms, doors have been calibrated to operate with reduced force, and unified design guidelines have been formalised for shared showers and change spaces.

2. Attitudinal Achievements

Legacy Strengths (Maintained since 2023)

- Equity Networks: Establishment of the centralized ISABC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee to guide cross-association professional development.
- Foundational Professional Development: Baseline staff training focusing on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, neurodiversity awareness, and brain-based learning strategies.

- Inclusive Workplace Frameworks: Inclusion of mandatory corporate accommodation statements on all employment postings and localized policy reviews to root out exclusionary practices.
- Community Feedback Loop: Implementation of regular, annual parent and stakeholder surveys to gauge inclusion sentiments.

Progress & Expanded Advancements (New since 2023)

- Formalization of Legal Principles: ISABC schools have formally adopted the core principles of the *Accessible B.C. Act* (including Self-Determination, Inclusion, and Intersectionality), successfully moving from an informal cultural emphasis to a principled compliance framework.
- Specialized Staff Resourcing: Signaling an institutional shift toward prioritizing neurodiversity, key campuses hired dedicated School Counselors and Learning Support Coordinators tasked specifically with managing diverse learning styles and advising faculty.
- Advanced Neurodiversity & Trauma Training: Professional development has deepened, rolling out targeted training cycles covering trauma-informed practices, anti-ableism, inter-cultural communication, and specific neurodivergent conditions (including ADHD, Autism, Anxiety, and Dyslexia).
- Intersectionality & Reconciliation Integration: School cultures have been reinforced by the active integration of specialized student and faculty groups, including working Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committees, Truth & Reconciliation working groups (forming Indigenous Action Plans), and specialized Diversity of Abilities Committees.
- Normalization of Support: Institutional culture has shifted toward the normalization of assistive tools; students are trained to use accessible resource formats, reducing stigma. Internal tracking shows overall positive perceptions of institutional inclusion, with zero negative behavioral incidents reported by a significant portion of staff.

3. Communication Achievements

Legacy Strengths (Maintained since 2023)

- Virtual Accessibility Options: Provision of virtual parent-teacher-student interviews and school presentations paired with automated closed-captioning or digital transcripts.
- Language Services: Multi-lingual translation options and live translators made available for family-school conferences.
- Augmentative Resources: Deployment of Special Education Technology British Columbia (SET-BC) platforms and localized soundfield frameworks to assist students with complex communicative needs.
- Cognitive Support Structures: Consistent application of visual schedules pairing text with imagery across classrooms to reduce cognitive load, support working memory, and aid visual learners.

Progress & Expanded Advancements (New since 2023)

- Digital Interface Optimization: School websites underwent a review using "diverse abilities lens" to simplify navigation pathways and integrate native text-to-voice modules for all digital communications.
- Plain-Language Standardization: Schools established formal written guidelines and templates to ensure all standard communications directed at staff, students, and parents are delivered in clear, simple, and accessible plain language.
- Global Translation Integration: Multilingual support has been automated and expanded, including specialized translation services for complex family tuition inquiries and the institutional integration of digital tools allowing weekly newsletters and school emails to be instantly converted into any language via Gmail or custom phone apps.
- Instructional & Systemic Consistency: To reduce executive functioning strain, schools standardized a method for teachers to display homework and lesson instructions in identical, predictable physical and digital locations daily.
- Communication Platform Clarification: Clear protocols were distributed to families to eliminate digital confusion, explicitly outlining when to interact with the Student Information System (SIS / Veracross) versus the Learning Management System (LMS / Toddle).
- Inclusive Events Management: Real-time event access has been standardized; all major school milestones, information panels, and athletic events are delivered simultaneously in-person and streamed online with accurate, live closed-captioning.

4. Information Achievements

Legacy Strengths (Maintained since 2023)

- Alternative Media Formats: Integration of alternative text (Alt-Text) descriptions for all social media imagery and online publications.
- Visual Display Standards: Design choices prioritizing high-contrast presentation decks, clear digital signage, and large-format (24" to 27") display monitors.
- Individualized Safety Planning: Active maintenance of personalized emergency egress and response plans for students with diverse needs during fire, earthquake, or lockdown drills.

Progress & Expanded Advancements (New since 2023)

- Web Accessibility: Operational redesign of core web portals—notably at *one school*—utilizing a "diverse abilities lens" to streamline ease of access to institutional records and curriculum parameters.
- Unified Digital Homework Tracking: Implementation of centralized digital dashboards that match physical boards, ensuring information regarding assignments is friction-free and accessible to both students and parents simultaneously.
- Typographical & Layout Simplification: Graphic standards across print and digital media were revised to mandate simplified document layouts, high-contrast brand colors, and clean, highly legible, accessible fonts.
- Empowered Student Training: Schools rolled out direct training modules for students, teaching them how to independently configure and navigate accessible digital book layouts and specialized website formats.

5. Policy & Practice Achievements

Legacy Strengths (Maintained since 2023)

- Structural Oversight: Deployment of localized school Accessibility Committees to oversee multi-year action items.
- Consultative Reviews: Ongoing partnerships with external diversity and accessibility consultants alongside provincial advocacy bodies (e.g., Inclusion BC, Untapped Accessibility).
- Health and Wellness Protocols: Availability of professional ergonomic assessments for staff and the codification of specialized operational safety policies (e.g., Safe-Scent/Fragrance-Free zones, SOGI protection policies, and inclusive education mandates).

- Tiered Instructional Models: Structural adherence to the UDL framework, offering universal differentiated instruction for the general student body, focused teaching for identified cohorts, and intensive support for small groups.

Progress & Expanded Advancements (New since 2023)

- Systemic HR Audits: Human Resources documentation, employment handbooks, and operational policies were audited through an accessibility lens. Organizations institutionalized annual review cycles for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and Inclusive Education policies to maintain alignment with provincial updates.
- Bias-Free Institutional Recruitment: *One school* pioneered and implemented entirely bias-free enrolment and staff recruitment frameworks. This includes updating interview procedures across organizations to communicate accommodation options to candidates before they enter the interview phase.
- Mandated Accountability Practices: Voluntary guidelines have been turned into mandatory professional obligations. This includes institutionalizing, recurring annual professional development cycles for all instructional staff focused on assistive technology proficiency and disability support in the classroom.
- Environmental Sensitivity Protections: Upgrading general recommendations into formal, enforceable workplace policies regarding the strict mitigation of scents and fragrances to protect staff and students with respiratory and chemical sensitivities.

6. Technological Achievements

Legacy Strengths (Maintained since 2023)

- Perceptual Hardware: Pervasive access to adaptive tools including text-to-speech/speech-to-text engines, noise-cancelling headphones, adaptive layout fonts, and touchscreen devices.
- Device Flexibility: General student access to mixed hardware ecosystems (Laptops, Chromebooks, Tablets) to support individual comfort and learning requirements.
- Advanced Alert Infrastructures: Integrated emergency warning platforms pairing auditory alerts with rolling visual light cues and synchronized text message systems.

Progress & Expanded Advancements (New since 2023)

- **Advanced Engine Deployments:** *One school* spearheaded the deployment of advanced speech-to-text software engines (such as *Wispr Flow*) paired with modern personal voice amplification hardware.
- **Core Ecosystem Integration:** Text-to-voice capabilities have been mapped across all primary administrative and classroom digital portals. This includes the institutional deployment of automated translation software within Gmail and internal staff apps, allowing instant, localized conversion of weekly corporate communications.
- **Curriculum Equity:** Schools established a practice where all homework packets, syllabi, and live classroom instructions must exist in a clean digital format, ensuring complete, error-free readability for students utilizing screen readers or refreshable Braille displays.
- **Strategic Technology Implementation Plans:** Moving away from a hardware-only procurement model, *a school* established a formalized *Technology Implementation Plan*. This program moves beyond simply handing out devices by embedding mandatory student training modules on accessible formats directly into the curriculum, alongside updating all 1:1 student device fleets with advanced, built-in adaptation capabilities.

The 2026 Perspective: In comparing our data, it is clear that while the foundational principles of 2023 remain our structural bedrock, the 2026 landscape is defined by systematization by building accessibility into school wide policies, automated technological translation, and physical audits.

Accessibility Barriers

Systematically identifying outstanding barriers is the core mechanism driving our three-year planning cycles. Below is a comparative overview of our **Identified Baseline Barriers** from 2023 contrasted against the specific, **Evolving & Targeted Challenges** reported by schools leading into our 2026 plan refresh.

1. Architectural & Environmental Barriers

Identified Baseline Barriers (2023)

- **Infrastructure Irregularities:** Pronounced disparities between modern, fully accessible facilities and older, legacy campus buildings heavily reliant on manual doors and lacking necessary elevator access.
- **Campus Topography & Transit:** Fragmented outdoor navigation marked by

slippery play surfaces, limited designated accessible parking stalls, and general mobility hurdles moving between detached structures.

- **Interior and Equipment Gaps:** Lack of alternative specialized learning spaces for students with diverse needs, restrictive square footage in legacy footprints, and un-optimized washrooms, drinking fountains, classroom layouts, and playground structures.
- **Transit Fleets:** Absence of dedicated, wheelchair-accessible school buses for student transport.

Evolving & Targeted Challenges (New since 2023)

- **Campus Dead Zones:** Specific high-traffic and secondary facilities remain isolated due to a lack of ramps or elevators. Key problem areas include the upper floors of administrative facilities, operational maintenance zones, residential leadership housing, and localized modular classrooms.
- **Entrance and Approach Deficiencies:** Many main campus entrances continue to operate with malfunctioning or missing automatic push-button door openers. Furthermore, multiple older doors measure under the 900mm width threshold required for modern mobility devices, and approaches to specialized fine arts hubs frequently feature uneven concrete terrain or ramps lacking edge guards.
- **Internal Safety and Vision Hazards:** Internal spaces frequently feature narrow hallways restricted by layout choices, glazed glass walls or doors that lack vital high-contrast safety visibility strips, and poor colour contrast markings on staircases and structural ramps. Worn floor grip strips and non-flush transition lips remain active tripping hazards.
- **Washroom and Water Non-Compliance:** Major operational zones—including secondary school wings, fine arts pavilions, maintenance sheds, and legacy administrative halls—lack accessible washroom facilities. Existing washrooms frequently present high-mounted sinks, unreachable soap dispensers, restricted maneuvering spaces, and an absence of emergency pull-string alarm networks or ceiling track lifts. Accessible drinking water hydration units and compliant lever-tap configurations also remain scarce across legacy spaces.
- **Wayfinding Gaps for the Visually Impaired:** A systemic shortage of Braille signage, restricted wayfinding maps, and an absence of directional signage pointing to accessible entrance routes or compliant washrooms limits independence. Contrast markings on steps, handrails, and ramps remain a critical gap.
- **Financial & Lease Constraints:** Capital budgets and the high cost of structural modifications present roadblocks. One member school noted that an upcoming, multi-year campus master rebuild effectively halts temporary structural spending, while another organization's legal status as a commercial tenant restricts them

from modifying physical pathway surfaces or exterior building facades.

2. Attitudinal Barriers

Identified Baseline Barriers (2023)

- **Core Training Gaps:** General deficiencies in structured staff education regarding provincial accessibility legislation, universal inclusion frameworks, corporate employee accommodation guidelines, and the use of identity-affirming, inclusive language.
- **Process Ambiguity:** Lack of clear, cross-association reporting mechanisms for staff or families to flag accessibility concerns as they arise.

Evolving & Targeted Challenges (New since 2023)

- **Linguistic & Terminology Gaps:** Audits identified an ongoing need for continuous staff education regarding evolving, respectful disability terminology and neurodiversity-affirming language.
- **Systemic Employment Hurdles:** Human Resources departments continue to experience difficulties finding, creating, and structuring equitable job placements and fully accessible recruitment/hiring pathways for candidates with diverse abilities.
- *Note on Progress:* Demonstrating uneven growth across the association, at least one reporting member school explicitly logged that they have successfully eliminated all visible attitudinal barriers within their local campus culture.

3. Communication & Information Barriers

Identified Baseline Barriers (2023)

- **Digital Layout Limitations:** Legacy school websites lacking accessible design protocols, and digital media/videos regularly published without closed-captioning or text transcripts.
- **Live Event Exclusion:** Absence of real-time communication options or assistive hardware for campus visitors experiencing hearing loss, alongside a lack of access to on-site sign language interpreters.

Evolving & Targeted Challenges (New since 2023)

- **Linguistic & Navigation Friction:** Public website interfaces and primary digital memos lack native translation features, creating an information barrier for families navigating English as an Additional Language (EAL).

- **Onboarding & HR Gaps:** Organizations lack an established, transparent Employee Experience accommodation policy framework, and employee onboarding documentation has not been uniformly formatted to meet modern digital accessibility standards.
- **Alternative Medium Deprivation:** Specialized alternative information formats, such as physical Braille documentation or standard sign-language resources, remain unavailable for regular intake or distribution.
- **Opaque Campus Mapping:** Standard school maps fail to isolate or clearly highlight wheelchair-accessible routes, leaving the creation of accessible digital navigation maps as a future priority.

4. Policy & Practice Barriers

Identified Baseline Barriers (2023)

- **Policy Deficits:** A historical absence of formalized, codified organizational rules, specifically missing dedicated inclusive education policies, corporate accessibility policies, and clear workplace accommodation frameworks.

Evolving & Targeted Challenges (New since 2023)

- **Delayed Support Identification:** Internal practices reveal that student support needs are occasionally missed during enrollment, requiring reactive adjustments and plan creation well after campus placement has occurred.
- **Complex Examination Accommodations:** Managing specialized assessment accommodations for senior students (Grades 11 and 12) remains procedurally complex. Securing special assessment arrangements for international curriculum programs requires compiling extensive, rigorous evidence from formal psycho-educational assessments and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to submit to external international assessment centers.
- **Documentation Thresholds:** Formal accommodations remain dependent on rigid administrative triggers, requiring formal doctors' letters, medical notes, or clinical counseling documentation before institutional adjustments are actioned.
- **Staff Capacity Deficits:** Dense staff job descriptions leave faculty with minimal operational capacity to dedicate the necessary time to learn, implement, and track evolving accessibility accommodations.
- **Readability & Policy Redundancies:** Institutional documentation suffers from a lack of clarity, poor readability, and structural inconsistencies, requiring an association-wide review of policy language.

5. Technological Barriers

Identified Baseline Barriers (2023)

- **System Incompatibility:** Urgent demands for fully accessible Student Information Systems (SIS) and primary administrative databases.
- **Strategic Gaps:** The absence of comprehensive, association-wide technology audits to catalog device vulnerabilities, paired with a general lack of assistive hardware and specialized staff software training.

Evolving & Targeted Challenges (New since 2023)

- **Prohibitive Cost and Lifecycle Cycles:** Procurement costs and budget constraints remain the single largest technological barrier. Assistive technologies and specialized software licenses evolve at a rapid pace that consistently outstrips standard school capital replacement funding models.
- **Rising Software Demands:** Driven by increasing diversity within our student bodies, schools are facing an escalating, unmet demand for cutting-edge assistive software suites.
- **Isolation and Assembly Challenges:** Students with complex profiles face technology-driven exclusion from community events. For example, one member school is looking to build specialized assistive tech workarounds simply to allow specific students to stream and experience school assemblies from alternate locations on campus due to a lack of integrated gym/auditorium tech.

The 2026 Perspective: Our mapping shows that while physical baseline barriers (like elevators) remain a financial challenge, the association is now dealing with more complex **operational and administrative barriers**. These include technology lifestyle funding, complex international exam protocols, language translation gaps, and systemic human resources capacity limits, which will be the priorities for most schools in their 2026-2029 Individual Accessibility Plans.

Section 8: Three-Year Strategic Framework (2026–2029)

The ISABC collective framework outlines the baseline accessibility priorities of 26 member schools, itemizing targeted multi-year plans to identify, remove, and prevent systemic barriers. Each local strategy is anchored to the legislated principles of *Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Inclusion, Self-Determination, and Universal Design*, as mandated by the *Accessible B.C. Act*.

A ledger of individual school action plans, including links to their specific three-year blueprints, is provided at the conclusion of this section.

Implementation Progress Report (2023–2026 Status Update)

Since the launch of their inaugural plans, ISABC member schools have actively transitioned from baseline planning to tangible action. Visually and physically, campuses have prioritized immediate structural and digital upgrades, successfully installing automated push-button entrances, improving outdoor terrain, and implementing high-visibility wayfinding signage. Digitally, schools have systematically updated public web portals to meet modern accessibility standards, standardized live-streamed events with real-time closed captioning, and integrated assistive technologies like advanced speech-to-text engines directly into the classroom. These physical and technological updates have been reinforced by a commitment to staff professional development, focusing on trauma-informed care, anti-ableism, and neurodiversity to foster an inclusive community culture.

While overall momentum is steady, schools continue to navigate operational realities as they enter the 2026–2029 cycle. Capital budget constraints remain the most significant hurdle, occasionally delaying high-cost structural renovations or the procurement of rapidly evolving assistive hardware. Additionally, temporary leadership transitions have slightly slowed the formalization of overarching physical access policies and localized committee coordination. Moving forward, the association remains focused on resolving these outstanding goals while maintaining the digital and physical frameworks already established.

Directory of Individual 3-Year Member School Accessibility Plans

The ISABC Accessibility Plan outlines the accessibility priorities of the 26 ISABC schools and how they plan to remove and prevent barriers to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in their school communities. Each plan is based on the Accessibility Principles of Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Inclusion, Self-Determination, and Universal Design, as set out in the Accessible BC Act. Follow the link associated with each school to view their individual 3 Year Accessibility Plan which can be viewed below.

1. [Aberdeen Hall](#)
2. [Aspengrove School](#)
3. [Brentwood College School](#)
4. [Brockton School](#)
5. [Collingwood School](#)
6. [Crofton House School](#)
7. [Fraser Academy](#)
8. [Glenlyon Norfolk School](#)
9. [Island Pacific School](#)
10. [Kenneth Gordon Maplewood School](#)
11. [King David High School](#)
12. [Meadowridge School](#)
13. [Mulgrave School](#)
14. [Pearson College](#)
15. [Queen Margaret's School](#)
16. [Shawnigan Lake School](#)
17. [Southpointe Academy](#)
18. [Southridge School](#)
19. [Stratford Hall](#)
20. [St. George's School](#)
21. [St. John's School](#)
22. [St. Michaels University School](#)
23. [Urban Academy](#)
24. [Vancouver Talmud Torah](#)
25. [West Point Grey Academy](#)
26. [York House School](#)

Section 9: Monitoring and Evaluation

The ISABC Accessibility Committee is committed to regularly checking our progress and evaluating the overall effectiveness of our accessibility goals. During our first three years, we adjusted our tracking strategy to better fit our organization. While we originally intended to produce annual status reports, we found that our member schools complete their priorities at different rates and stages. To accommodate these varying timelines, we shifted from annual reporting to a comprehensive three-year review, which is now built directly into this updated plan.

Moving into the 2026–2029 planning cycle, we will continue to use this triennial review process in alignment with the official timelines set by the B.C. government. Over the next three years, the committee will focus on the following core responsibilities:

- **Three-Year Plan Reviews:** We will review and refresh the collective accessibility plan every three years, ensuring updates are made in direct consultation with people with disabilities and relevant community stakeholders.
- **Reporting Tool Management:** We will continuously monitor and maintain our centralized online barrier reporting tool. During the first three years, this feedback loop was actively managed; the single formal submission received regarding a facility barrier was successfully tracked, followed up on.

Section 10: How to Give us Feedback

The ISABC Accessibility Plan is posted to the ISABC website, www.isabc.ca and will be posted to each ISABC member school's website. There is a [collection tool](#) available on the website to allow for public feedback. Questions, comments or feedback regarding the collective ISABC Accessibility Plan may be directed to: Bonnie Fisher, bonniefisher@isabc.ca.

Appendices

Appendix A: About Disability

The Disability Continuum

Although there is no universally accepted meaning for the word "disability," the British Columbia 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 "Ageing 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.

- If you offer assistance, wait until you 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 and 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.
- 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.
- Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.
- 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 of us 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.
- 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 disabilities or 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.
- 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 or 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Refrain from touching a deaf-blind person without permission.

Appendix B: Suggested References/Resources

Global, Canadian and Local Accessibility Context and 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 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: Citations

- Page 3: Global Context – United Nations
 - [Accessibility Plan CRTC](#)
 - [Canada's implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
 - [Arch Disability Law Centre](#)
 - [Amending the Accessible Canada Regulations](#)
 - [Level Access](#)
- Page 4: Canadian Context and Legislation and Recent Progress and Compliance Framework
 - [Accessible Canada Roadmap](#)
 - [Accessibility Deadlines](#)
- Page 5: Advancing Education through Reconciliation
 - [United Nations CRPD Review for Canada](#)
 - [Accessible Canada Act Digital Amendments & Exemptions](#)
 - [Accessible Canada Act Rolling Compliance Deadlines](#)
 - [B.C. First Nations Language and Culture External Credentials](#)
 - [B.C. Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement Information](#)
- Page 6: BC Context and Legislation - BC Accessibility Act
 - [BC Accessibility Hub](#)
 - [Disability Alliance BC](#)
- Page 7: Principals in the BC Accessibility Act
 - [BC Laws - Gov](#)
- **Independent Education in British Columbia**
 - [FISA BC Independent School Enrollment Statistics](#)
 - [B.C. Government Independent School Funding Guidelines](#)