



**North Vancouver School District**  
**Accessibility Plan**  
September 2023 - 2026

# Acknowledgement

The North Vancouver School District is situated upon the unceded traditional territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. We would like to thank the Coast Salish people and value the opportunity to learn, share and grow on this traditional territory.

The North Vancouver School district champions truth, healing and reconciliation, and embed Indigenous ways of knowing.



*According to the Skwxwú7mesh, the Twin Sisters look over the North Shore at all times, providing protection to the people.*



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# Introduction

## A Message from the Superintendent

Dear North Vancouver School District Community,

In June 2021, the Government of British Columbia introduced the Accessible British Columbia Act; comprehensive accessibility legislation which provides a framework to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility within public organizations such as the North Vancouver School District (NVSD). The Accessible British Columbia Act's key themes of breaking down barriers, advancing human rights, and promoting fairness and equity align well with the vision of the NVSD. As part of the Act's mandate, a three-year Accessibility Plan specific to the school district has been developed.

NVSD's three-year Accessibility Plan will guide future work to ensure inclusivity, empathy and increased visibility of those with disabilities across all school district programs, events, and initiatives. The Accessibility Plan draws on direct feedback from school communities, the lived experiences of those within these communities, and the work of the NVSD Accessibility Advisory Committee. As the North Vancouver community continues to grow and change, we will collectively strive to create accessible learning environments for all.

Thank you for your continued support, and we welcome your feedback.

Dr. Pius Ryan  
Superintendent of Schools



## About the North Vancouver School District

The North Vancouver School District (“school district” or “NVSD”) provides world-class instruction and a rich diversity of engaging programs to inspire success for every student and bring communities together to learn, share and grow.

Shared values of trust, respect, responsibility and collaboration set the tone for how the school district pursues common goals, demonstrates consistent and fair leadership, and works productively to realize its vision.

Through 25 elementary schools, 7 secondary schools and one online school, the North Vancouver School District offers over 16,000 students, their parents and caregivers, and more than 2,600 staff, a welcoming, safe and inclusive teaching and learning environment, and a strong sense of community and belonging.

With an annual budget of over \$235 million (2023-24 fiscal), the North Vancouver School District manages public schools in the City of North Vancouver and District of North Vancouver and is governed by the North Vancouver Board of Education, which is comprised of seven elected trustees.

The North Vancouver School District, situated upon the unceded traditional territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation, thanks the Coast Salish people and values the opportunity to learn, share and grow on this traditional territory.



## Definitions

The terminology used in the development of the North Vancouver School District Accessibility Plan is aligned most closely with the terminology used in the Accessible British Columbia Act and is inclusive of students, staff and members of the community who may be interacting with the North Vancouver School District.

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

**Barrier:** Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with a disability (a) caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies; and (b) affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

- **Physical/Environmental Barrier:** A barrier resulting from building design or outdoor spaces, which can include certain smells or sounds, lighting, configuration of rooms, the size of doorways, etc.
- **Attitudinal Barrier:** A barrier that arises from the attitudes of people including discriminatory behaviours, language and/or a lack of disability awareness.
- **Communication Barrier:** A barrier that arises when communicating, locating or accessing information, including in person, in print, by telephone, or online.
- **Policy or Practice Barrier:** A barrier resulting from rules, regulations and protocols, which could include processes, policies and standard operating practices.
- **Technological Barrier:** Barriers that result from the lack of access to technology or the use of inaccessible devices, platforms, software and equipment.

**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.

**Impairment:** Includes, but not limited to, a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

**Ableism:** An ideology and system of oppression in society that holds that some bodies are more valuable than others, which limits the potential of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are assumed to be less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and take part and of less value than other people. Ableism can be conscious or unconscious and is embedded in institutions, systems and the broader culture of a society. (BC Human Rights Commission)



## Guiding Frameworks

The North Vancouver school district is committed to the ongoing work of identifying, removing and preventing barriers for persons with visible and invisible disabilities. The following global, national and provincial legislation informed the development of the Accessible British Columbia Act:

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian Human Rights Act
- Accessible Canada Act
- BC Human Rights Code

**Accessible British Columbia Act.** The Accessible British Columbia (B.C.) Act received royal assent on June 17, 2021, and on April 14, 2022, the government filed the Accessible British Columbia Regulation (B.C. Regulation) providing clarity to the types of organizations that will be subject to accessibility requirements under the act. It provides a framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. The new law is an important step to make B.C. a more accessible province.

*Additional information about each of legislative documents is provided in Appendix A.*

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an accessibility plan. The principles that follow 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 towards the goal of full 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 United Nations defines Universal Design as the: design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.





## **Our Commitment to Accessibility**

The North Vancouver School District is committed to maintaining an Accessibility Committee and improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/caregivers, volunteers and members of the community.

The North Vancouver School District is committed to ensuring the full and equal participation of people with visible and invisible disabilities within the school district. We recognize that the experiences of people with disabilities are varied, complex and intersectional. The Accessibility Plan objectives and actions are intended to create the widest scope of impact and meaningful change within the North Vancouver School District and its community. The Accessibility Plan will be flexible to respond to emergent needs and updates to accessibility-related legislation and standards.



# Our Approach

## About our Committee

### Purpose of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Accessible BC Act mandates an organization to establish a committee to:

- Assist the organization to identify barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.
- Advise the organization on how to remove and prevent 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 advises the district on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory, and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

### Recruitment of the Accessibility Committee Members

The Accessibility Committee must, to the extent possible, have members who are selected in accordance with the following goals:

- At least half of the members are i) persons with disabilities; or ii) individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities.
- The members reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia.
- At least one of the members is an Indigenous person.

Based on these requirements, a callout for members to join the Accessibility Committee was sent to partner groups and students through the Superintendent's office. The Accessibility Advisory Committee's role is to identify, reduce, and remove barriers, and improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The Committee shall review feedback received through the District feedback mechanism and shall collaborate on the development and review of the District's Accessibility Plan.



## **Accessibility Committee Membership**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee is co-chaired by Janis Mann, District Principal of Inclusive Education, and Michael Chapman, Assistant Director of Facilities. This committee was integral in the identification of barriers experienced by people with disabilities and recommendations on the removal of barriers to improve the experiences of people with disabilities within the North Vancouver School District. We would like to thank the following committee members for their time, commitment and leadership.

- Jennifer Branston, Chair, North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council
- Rita Vilensky, Parent representing North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council
- Kevin Pokasuwan, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 389
- Wendy Matsubuchi, North Vancouver Teachers' Association
- Azaan Javer, Student
- Rose Greene, District Principal of Indigenous Education
- Carly Roy, North Vancouver Administrators' Association

We would also like to thank students Jackson Roberts and Ayaysha Baker who shared their perspectives and experiences with the committee.



# Plan Development

## Identification of Barriers

The NVSD Accessibility Committee is at the beginning stages of identifying barriers experienced by people with disabilities. We have begun this process of identification of barriers through:

- Calling for membership on the Accessibility Committee that meets the membership requirements of the regulation.
- Sharing information and examples of barriers provided through Accessibility Committee members, and collaborating on ideas and strategies to remove identified barriers.

This committee will play an important and continued role in collaborating on the best approaches to barrier identification and removal as we work towards a more accessible and inclusive school district. The scope and impact of this committee will build and shift over time as we move forward with our Accessibility Plan.

## Feedback Mechanism Development

An organization must establish a process for receiving comments from the public on:

- The organization's accessibility plan.
- Barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

The NVSD has developed an online feedback tool (using Microsoft Forms) that includes a series of questions about accessibility experiences that is posted to the Accessibility page on the school district website.

The feedback tool will support respondents remaining anonymous unless people wish to provide their contact information. There will also be an option to upload a video, voice recording or photo in addition to, or in lieu of, completing the online feedback tool.

Information regarding the Accessibility web page, with links to the school district's Accessibility Plan and feedback mechanisms, will be communicated via email to all parents/caregivers through the Superintendent's Update.



## Accessibility Accomplishments

The guiding principles of inclusive practice inform the North Vancouver School District's programs, policies, practices and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We continue to work towards improving accessibility to improve educational experiences for all students, staff and community members. The NVSD is committed to continuing and leading the work of removing barriers to accessibility and has identified the following accomplishments as we continue this work:

- The school district recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being of students and staff and has prioritized mental health supports and education for all learners.
- An internal accessibility audit of all NVSD buildings has been completed by the Rick Hansen Foundation.
- Investments in facilities upgrades have been prioritized to improve accessibility in current schools, while ensuring consultation with Occupational Therapists and external Accessibility Consultants on new buildings.
- All new school playgrounds are being built and designed to improve accessibility.
- The NVSD has continued to hire and recruit qualified school and district-based specialist teaching staff including Speech and Language Pathologists, Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Vision Resource Teachers, School Counselors, School Psychologists and Board Certified Behaviour Analysts.
- The NVSD Communications team has been taking steps towards making internal and external communications more accessible including: removing the use of white font in banners, using black font for headings, subheadings etc., and using a standard 12-point font for body text.
- The school district has focused on improving access to curriculum, instruction and assessment through a district-wide focus on Universal Design for Learning through targeted professional development for administrators and teachers.



## **Accessibility Barriers**

The Accessibility Committee was the primary means of collaboration during the creation of the Accessibility Plan. The committee, through various means of information gathering, identified barriers that could be or have been experienced by people with disabilities when interacting with the school district. Some of these barriers are included below.

### **Information and Communication Barriers**

- District and school communications may not be in an accessible format (e.g., websites, newsletters, Superintendent's Reports). Systems should allow the user to attach, install or use assistive technology.
- Signage within schools could be more accessible by including braille and picture images.
- Information may not be provided through multiple means of communication, including but not limited to, verbally, in print, online, and through closed captioning.

### **Physical and Environmental Barriers**

- Access to common spaces in schools can be impacted by a lack of accessible door buttons, obstructions in front of automatic door openers and ramps, congestion in hallways or high-traffic areas.
- Playground and building accessibility can be impacted by using materials that are not firm or stable, accessible parking that is not in proximity to accessible access to the building, or snow removal that blocks access and parking.
- Washroom facilities that do not have access to hands-free paper/soap/water, accessible sink heights and handrails.

### **Attitudinal Barriers**

- Not all staff understand disabilities, both visible and invisible, and accommodations that are necessary to create equitable access to learning and participation for all students.
- Expectations of students and staff that may not consider a person's disability. Example: losing marks for not making eye contact during a presentation.
- Lack of representation of persons with disabilities in curriculum, staffing, and resources.

### **Technology Barriers**

- The Microsoft 365 platform provides access to accessibility features, but additional training is required to support implementation and use of these tools by students and staff.
- Use of software or hardware without accessibility features, or lack of access to devices, texts and learning material that can improve access.



## **School Policy and Practice Barriers**

- Access to consistent and system wide staff training on disabilities, mental health, emergency safety processes, accessibility awareness and ableism.
- Hiring and recruitment practices that provide equitable access to employment opportunities.
- Access to easily accessible information on supports and services.



# Three-Year Plan

## Overview

The Accessibility Plan outlines the measures that North Vancouver School District will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals within and interacting with the school district 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 BC Act.

The school district is committed to ensuring the voices of persons with disabilities are at the forefront of this work in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility. As the North Vancouver School District begins to move forward with the actions listed below, continued collaboration with, and involvement of, the Accessibility Committee will be prioritized.





## Priorities, Objectives and Actions

Priority: Disability Awareness

**Barrier Type:** Attitudinal

**Objective:** Increase a sense of belonging for all members of the NVSD community through building understanding of neurodivergence, disability awareness, ableism, and representation.

### Actions:

- Deliver Understanding Neurodivergence and Disability Awareness presentation for all staff. (Year 1 – Fall 2023)
- NVSD will promote/acknowledge significant dates within the disability community e.g., National Accessibility Week (Year 1 – 2023-2024)
  - In collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, resources will be provided to all schools and district departments to support promotion of these dates
- Review current resources, district and school publications through the lens of representation of people with disabilities (beginning Spring 2024)
  - Create guidelines for reviewing resources to be provided to all staff including Teacher Librarians
- In collaboration with the Accessibility Committee, select and/or create required modules led by people with invisible and visible disabilities that promotes a common understanding of disability, accessibility, barriers, inclusion and ableism.
  - Participation and progress will be measured through completion rates, self-assessment and checking for understanding (Year 2 - 2024-2025)



## Priority: Accessible Schools and District Facilities

**Barrier Type:** Physical/Environmental

**Objective:** Continue to improve universal access to all North Vancouver School District facilities, inclusive of the site and connectivity to surrounding lands and infrastructure.

**Actions:**

- Utilize the existing Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) facility reports and their audit criteria to create a consolidated matrix of recommended improvements by school site and provide the findings to the Accessibility Committee for review. (Year 1 - Fall 2023)
- In collaboration with the Accessibility Committee, develop a survey tool to gather additional facility and site data on physical and environmental barriers. The survey tool, RHF facility reports and the improvement matrix will be shared with key stakeholders at each school for feedback (Year 1 – 2023-2024)
- In collaboration with the Accessibility Committee, utilize the survey feedback, RHF findings and the improvement matrix to develop a three year plan identifying specific, achievable actions that can be undertaken by the NVSD. (Year 1 - 2023-2024)
- Annually report out to the Accessibility Committee progress on actions identified in the three year plan.



## Priority: Accessible Communication of Information

**Barrier Type:** Information and Communication

**Objective:** Improve accessibility of district and school-based websites, web content, district and school-based communications and the internal staff portal.

**Actions:**

- Create and inform content creators of resources, guides, templates and training links that meet WCAG standards (Year 1 – 2023-2024)
- Use accessibility monitoring tools to ensure compliance with WCAG standards.
  - Wave Evaluation Tool and Headings Map Tool – training for all content creators on the use of these tools to improve accessibility of communications (implemented by Year 2)
- Implement staff education program to build awareness and understanding of how to use accessibility features of existing and future school district platforms and applications. (Year 1 and ongoing)
- Update branded document templates (example - Report templates, PowerPoint, Posters etc.) to meet WCAG standards. (Year 1 – 2023-2024)
- Publish a copy of district communications (e.g., Superintendent’s Updates, Superintendent’s Reports, newsletters, etc.) and school-based communications to the website in HTML. This will also support users’ translation needs.(Year 1 – 2023-2024)
- When the school district moves to a new content management system, ensure the future content management system meets WCAG standards. (Year 3 - 2025-26)



## Priority: Accessible Technology

**Barrier Type:** Technology

**Objective:** Increase the use of technology accessibility features to improve access to curriculum, instruction and assessment.

### **Actions:**

- Continue projects that align with school technology plans and improve the student learning experience
- Classroom projector renewal initiative will improve display of instructional materials to support vision and auditory access in the classroom. The allocation and installation will be done in collaboration with the school principal and vice-principal(s), and is based on the following criteria and priorities:
  - Priority 1: classrooms with no projector and no TV screen OR broken projectors – completed in school year 2022-23
  - Priority 2: classrooms with small TV screen (to be replaced with a projector) – underway in school year 2023-24
  - Priority 3: replacement of VGA with HDMI cables or mounting existing projectors that are on a cart with cables running on the floor – scheduled for 2023-24
  - Priority 4: classrooms with old projectors that are close to the end of life and are no longer supported – scheduled for 2024-25
- Continue to provide devices, including laptops and tablets (e.g., iPads with apps to accommodate diverse needs, smaller-size devices to accommodate different mobility needs, etc.).
  - Investigate (audit) accessibility barriers for individual students in relation to technology and incorporate this in the school technology planning meetings. (Updated yearly beginning Year 1 - 2023-2024)
  - Create a plan to remove those barriers through targeted technology deployment. (Year 2 - 2024-2025)
- Develop a training plan for staff to increase confidence in using and accessing tools in Microsoft 365, including training with “Text to speech” and “Speech to text” tools.
  - Incorporate accessibility topics, technology and resources during professional development days and highlight information in Technology Newsletters – (Year 1 - 2023-24)
  - Ensure training and access for all teachers through Accessible Resource Centre BC (ARC-BC) - (Yearly beginning Year 1 - 2023-2024)



## Priority: Access to Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

**Barrier Type:** Practice

**Objective:** Provide targeted professional development training of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework in order to improve instructional planning, classroom instruction and assessment practices to support accessibility.

### **Actions:**

- District Secondary and Elementary Teacher Leaders will participate in targeted UDL training to acquire greater understanding on how to utilize the UDL principles to increase equitable access to learning specifically for students with disabilities. (Year 1 – 2023-2024)
  - At the end of this year’s training, the participants will create a common training presentation for all staff on how educators can use the principles of UDL to identify barriers for students to optimally access their learning at a universal, targeted, and intensive level. (Year 2 - 2024-2025)
- Provide in-service and training on implementation of the K-12 Reporting Order with a focus on assessment support needs, accommodations and student-centred assessment. (Year 1/2 – 2023-2025)
- Update Annual Instruction Plan templates and Course Outlines to include access to learning considerations including accommodations and inclusive assessment practices. (Year 2 – 2024-2025)
- In collaboration with the Accessibility Committee, select and/or create required modules that promote a common understanding of Individual Education Plan implementation and implementation of adaptations and supports within the classroom (Year 2 – 2024-2025)
- Survey NVSD teaching staff to gather feedback and identify barriers to the implementation of supports and adaptations in the classroom. (Year 2 – 2024-2025)



## Priority: Accessible Recruitment/Hiring Practices

**Barrier Type:** Policy and Practice

**Objective:** Ensure school district hiring processes are fully accessible to all potential candidates.

**Actions:**

- Human Resources will undertake an audit of our current practices including reviewing current job posting templates, application processes, interview processes to identify barriers to accessibility
  - Identify potential barriers with NVSD application portal, Make a Future, and amending postings and district website to include the option of an alternate application process as well as any required accommodations for interviews (i.e. offer resumes to be dropped off at ESC) (Year 1, 2023-2024)
  - Attending and recruiting employees through targeted job fairs, such as “DiverseAbilities” (Yearly beginning Year 1, 2023-2024)
  - Consider alternate options for interviewing such as skills based interviews or work trials instead of traditional ‘board room’ interviews and training by hiring managers (Year 1, 2023-2024)
- Where barriers are identified, collaborate with accessibility experts to create new or updated processes to remove or, to the greatest extent possible, reduce those barriers; we will partner with Disability Support and Advocacy groups to assist with our recruitment and training for people with disabilities.(Year 1, 2023-2024)
- Provide training to hiring managers on accessibility principles in recruitment and awareness of unconscious biases and ableism.
  - Train employees involved in recruitment, training and at assigned work locations on how to best support people with disabilities - build understanding and empathy (Year 1, 2023-2024)

**Objective:** Review current employee onboarding program to ensure it is comprehensive and accessible.

**Actions:**

- Human Resources will undertake a review of our onboarding process including forms and all manner of communication with new hires to identify any barriers to accessibility
- Where barriers are identified, collaborate with accessibility experts to create new or updated processes to remove or, to the greatest extent possible, reduce those barriers
  - Partnering with accessibility experts, we will audit our onboarding process; (Year 1, 2023-2024)



- Identify new ways to support hiring processes. For example, additional time for training, communication, and feedback; training site based staff on how to work with neurodivergent employees and to create options for staff in large social settings/environments.



## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Accessibility Committee will meet three times per school year to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the Accessibility Plan. Feedback received through our feedback mechanisms will be considered as part of our monitoring and evaluation process.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will review the implementation and monitor progress that has been made towards the plan. The committee will review feedback about the plan and how it could be adjusted to offer more clarity. We will continue to gather this feedback as part of our monitoring process. The Committee will review and update the Accessibility Plan at least once every three years (or sooner should updates be required) in collaboration with persons with disabilities.





# Appendix A

## Global, Canadian and Local Accessibility Context and Legislation

### [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010.

The CRPD 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 CPRD are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law.

### [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

The [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) is a part of the Canadian Constitution, which is a set of laws containing the basic rules about how Canada operates. Section 15 of the Charter makes it clear that every individual in Canada – regardless of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, colour, sex, age or physical or mental disability – is to be considered equal. This means that governments must not discriminate on any of these grounds in its laws or programs.

### [Accessible Canada Act](#)

The purpose of this act is to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, through the realization, within the purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of Parliament, of a Canada without barriers, on or before January 1, 2040, particularly by the identification and removal of barriers, and the prevention of new barriers, in the following areas: employment; the built environment; information and communication technologies; communication, other than information and communication technologies; the procurement of goods, services and facilities; the design and delivery of programs and services; and transportation.

### [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)

The [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) of 1977 protects Canadians from discrimination when they are employed by or receive services from the federal government; First Nations governments; and private companies that are regulated by the federal government.

