

# Accessibility Plan

## 2025 -2028



*With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on  
the ancestral and unceded lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam),  
Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).*

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## About Our School District

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The Vancouver School Board (VSB) is proud to provide exceptional learning experiences for students. As a large, urban school district, VSB is one of Canada's most diverse school systems.

Equity and inclusivity are at the forefront of our approach to education. VSB creates learning environments where every student can thrive by prioritizing students' needs, applying evidence informed practices and building relationships.

VSB's culture reflects the diversity of our city. Students enrolled in VSB come from varied backgrounds and lived experiences and are encouraged to explore and share their unique selves and gifts. Our commitment to students goes beyond academics. Students' overall well-being and sense of belonging are equally important. We strive to build a school system where every student can be their authentic self and succeed throughout their learning journey.

In addition to the approximately 52,000 students VSB serves, the District employs more than 7,700 staff who work across 124 locations. This includes employees from 14 different union groups as well as exempt staff. Accessibility is about everyone in our community, including our employees, students and their families and the broader community.

As a learning organization, we seek to continually improve outcomes in service. For more information about our school district, visit our website at

<https://www.vsb.bc.ca>

# Executive Summary

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## **Vancouver School Board's Journey to Accessibility**

We're on a mission to make our schools and worksites places where everyone feels that they belong. We're talking about a world where diversity is celebrated and accessibility is the norm.

### **Our Commitment:**

**Inclusivity:** We're dedicated to creating spaces that welcome all students, families, staff and community members.

**Equity:** Our actions are meant to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

### **Our Strategy:**

**Equity Statement:** This is our pledge to challenge and eliminate any form of inequity or oppression.

**Accessibility Committee:** This group brings together individuals with various experiences, including of those with disabilities, to guide us in removing barriers and setting up best practices for a barrier-free future.

### **Our Priorities:**

- Universal awareness and understanding of accessibility issues
- Physically accessible spaces
- Clear, transparent and accessible communication
- Policy and procedures that ensure an environment that is accessible to students, families, staff and broader school communities.

### **Looking Ahead:**

**Three-Year Plan:** We've crafted a living plan for 2025-2028, shaped by the accessibility committee and enriched by community feedback through surveys, an accessibility advisory panel and a staff focus group.

Together, we're building a future where every member of our VSB community can participate fully and meaningfully.

## Guiding Framework

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In June 2021, the provincial government passed the *Accessible B.C. Act*. It establishes a legal framework for identifying, removing and preventing barriers to full and equal participation of people with disabilities in British Columbia.

The goal of the *Act* is to support the identification, prevention and removal of barriers that people with disabilities face in their daily lives. It mandates that public sector organizations, including school districts, establish an accessibility committee, create an accessibility plan and implement a mechanism to receive feedback about both the plan and the overall accessibility of the institution.

Central to our strategic plan – known as the Education Plan – is an equity statement that also guides the work of the accessibility committee.

See the full [Education Plan](#) on our website.

“The Vancouver School Board – a large, urban school district located on the unceded, traditional lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) – respects and supports Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. VSB will create an equitable learning environment where every child can experience a deep sense of belonging and is free to pursue pathways of learning in ways that are authentic to themselves. VSB will achieve this by:

- Having students see themselves and their communities in the curriculum and in the staff throughout the District;
- Prioritizing student needs by making informed decisions and engaging in open communication with rightsholders and stakeholders; and
- Actively fighting systems of oppression through relationship building, ongoing communication and transparency. The VSB commitment to equity will be informed by humility and accountability.”

## Anti-Ableism

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Ableism is the systemic discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities and undermines the principles of equity, inclusion and belonging that VSB upholds. Recognizing ableism as a root cause of attitudinal, systemic and communication barriers, VSB is committed to identifying, preventing and removing these barriers through intentional, informed action. This includes centering the voices of those with lived experience, fostering a culture of respect and understanding and embedding accessibility into every facet of school district operations. The district's work is grounded in the belief that dismantling ableism is essential to creating environments where all students, staff, families and community members can thrive.

This commitment is reflected across the four priority areas of the accessibility plan:

- Universal awareness and understanding of accessibility issues
- Physically accessible spaces
- Clear and accessible communication
- Inclusive policy and procedures

Through professional learning, inclusive design, accessible communication platforms and policy review, VSB is actively working to challenge ableist assumptions and practices. The accessibility committee plays a central role in guiding this work, ensuring that accessibility is not an afterthought but a foundational principle. By embedding anti-ableist practices into objectives and actions, VSB is building a more just and inclusive educational community for all.

## Our Approach

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VSB is committed to providing an environment that is accessible to students, families, staff and broader school communities. When we say “an environment that is accessible” we include the removal of: attitudinal barriers, information

and communication barriers, physical barriers and constructed spaces, systemic barriers and technology barriers.

We are dedicated to continually improve accessibility and prevent and remove barriers to provide greater equity for everyone. Our understanding of how to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility is evolving and we value input and feedback from students, families, staff and the broader community.

VSB established an accessibility committee that represents students' families, staff and partner organizations that support individuals with disabilities. The committee was formed to ensure meaningful engagement with a broad and diverse group. It brings together a range of skills, backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences. Most importantly, it helps ensure that the voices of those most affected by accessibility issues are central to our work.

In addition to the accessibility committee, an internal accessibility working group brings together District staff to discuss, review and prioritize accessibility projects.

During National AccessAbility Week 2024, a survey was conducted to gather input and experiences from students, their families, staff and the broader Vancouver community about five types of barriers:

- Attitudinal barriers
- Information and communication barriers
- Physical barriers and constructed spaces
- Systemic barriers
- Technology barriers

More than 3,400 participants contributed to the online accessibility plan surveys, including 2,855 participants in the student/family/community survey and 585 participants in the staff survey. Results from both surveys indicate that people had the greatest awareness of physical barriers and constructed spaces.

Key themes that emerged from the engagement surveys included a need for increased physical accessibility, impacts on students and staff because of staffing and budget shortages, a need to improve understanding, acceptance



and support for people with disabilities – particularly intellectual, learning and invisible disabilities – as well as the removal of other systemic and technology barriers.

To gather more feedback from the community, VSB hosted a series of meetings with an accessibility advisory panel. This panel included parents and guardians, community members and staff. In October 2024, invitations were shared with all VSB staff, families and community organizations that support people with accessibility needs.

All individuals who expressed interest (26 people) took part in a series of 10 meetings, covering five key topics. These sessions provided space to share experiences, identify existing barriers and suggest ways to remove or prevent them.

## Our Priorities

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Using input collected from the accessibility advisory panel, the accessibility survey, feedback collected through the reporting tool and requests from school teams through VSB's accessibility working group, the following priority areas have been identified:

### Priority: Universal awareness and understanding of accessibility issues

**Barrier type:** Attitudinal

**Objective:** Ensure all staff understand disability and accessibility and how to respond when issues of accessibility are identified

**Actions:**

- Develop and implement staff training and professional learning opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of accessibility issues. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)
- Provide targeted professional development training of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to improve



instructional planning, classroom instruction and assessment practices to support accessibility. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)

- Create an Inclusive Education Handbook available to students, staff, families and the community. (Year 2)
- Ensure information about accessibility and inclusion are part of employee onboarding. (Year 1, ongoing)
- Develop a set of recommended accessible standards and ensure they are part of the planning process for meetings, workshops or events. (Year 2)

**Objective:** Foster community support and build connections to enhance awareness and prevent barriers

**Actions:**

- Provide opportunities for family information sessions. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)
- Explore various ways to engage with community and families. (Year 2, Year 3)

**Objective:**

Collaborate with students and staff who have lived or learned experience with accessibility to enhance organizational awareness. Their insights help staff better understand accessibility needs and drive inclusive improvements in schools and workplaces.

**Actions:**

- Gather with groups of VSB students with lived experience to hear their perspectives and learn together to identify, prevent and remove barriers. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)
- Gather with staff with lived experience to hear their perspectives and learn together to identify, prevent and remove barriers. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)

**Objective:** Celebrate and highlight the contributions and achievements of people with disabilities or diverse abilities

**Actions:**

- Biannual meeting with learning services staff and communications department to identify opportunities to highlight events and campaigns that celebrate achievements and raise awareness about the importance of advancing accessibility. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)

**Priority: Physically accessible spaces**

**Barrier type:** Physical barriers and constructed spaces

**Objective:** Increase the number of schools and work sites that are physically accessible

**Actions:**

- Develop a more in depth understanding of physical and sensory barriers in facilities through an updated accessibility audit. (Year 2, Year 3)
- Use information collected from the accessibility audit as well as identified needs by staff/students' and their families, to inform capital funding requests to the provincial government. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)

**Objective:** Ensure that students have access to accessible playgrounds

**Actions:**

- Develop a process to prioritize playground revitalization in schools to address accessibility needs (both sensory and physical). (Year 1)
- Continue to consult with school communities during the planning stages of playground designs. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)

**Priority: Clear, transparent and accessible communication**

**Barrier type:** Information and communication barriers

**Objective:** Enhance and improve accessibility of information and communication sources for students, staff, families and community

**Actions:**

- Promote the accessibility reporting tool in district and school communications. (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3)
- Evaluate current information and resources available online with respect to inclusion and accessibility and ensure accuracy. (Year 1)
- Revamp the accessibility reporting tool to improve user-experience and remove barriers to reporting. (Year 1)
- Develop a centralized online resource, featuring comprehensive, accessible resources for families (including information about Individual Education Plans and roles and responsibilities of school team members). (Year 2, Year 3)
- Work to ensure communication materials are screen-reader compatible. (Year 2)
- Implement a staff education program to build awareness and understanding of how to use accessibility features of existing school district platforms and applications. (Year 3)

**Priority:** Policy and procedures that ensure an environment that is accessible to students, families, staff, inherent rights holders, interest holders and broader school communities.

**Barrier type:** Systemic barriers

**Objective:** Improve policies and procedures so that they are supportive of accessibility standards

**Actions:**

- Ensure an accessibility lens is included in policy review as outlined in the Board Policy review schedule. (Year 2, Year 3)
- Review administrative procedures to ensure, where possible, they do not create or maintain barriers. (Year 2, Year 3)

## Monitoring and Evaluation

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The accessibility plan will be continuously monitored and evaluated by the accessibility committee. It will prepare an annual review, to be published during **AccessAbility week** (end of May), that will include:

- A summary of the barriers identified through the reporting tool, what barrier category they relate to and how those barriers were addressed (include timelines where possible)
- Updates about the action items identified in the accessibility plan, providing metrics where applicable (e.g. number of playground upgrades, number of gatherings with students and staff about accessibility issues, professional learning opportunities, etc.)

## About our Committees, Working Group and Advisory Panel

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### Accessibility committee

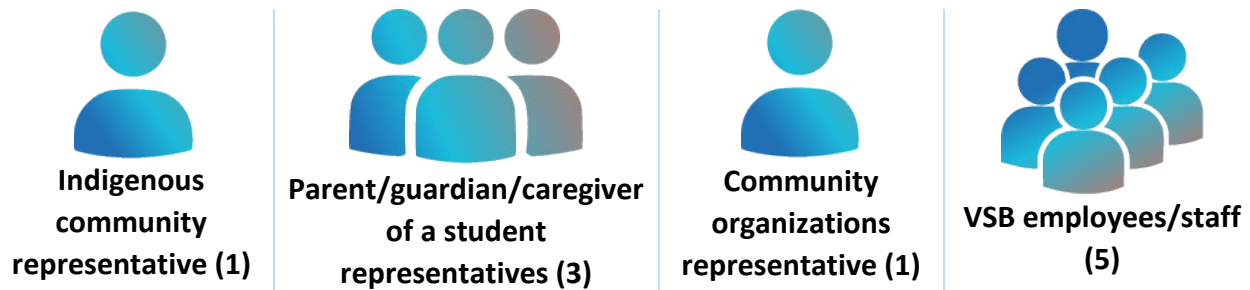
The Accessible B.C. Act states that the accessibility advisory committee:

- Assist the organization to identify barriers to individual in or interacting with the organization, and
- Advise the organization on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

The accessibility committee, must, to the extent possible, include members who are selected in accordance with the following goals:

At least half of the members are:

- Persons with disabilities, or
- Individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities;
- The members described in paragraph (a) reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia;
- At least one of the members is an Indigenous person
- The committee reflects the diversity of persons in British Columbia



This group provided input and guidance in establishing a process to gather input to build a larger accessibility committee, as well as how to gather input to inform a three-year accessibility plan. *The Accessible B.C. Act* is clear: accessibility work must center those most impacted by accessibility issues. VSB’s accessibility committee is committed to ensuring that people with lived experiences guide our work.

### Internal accessibility working group

An internal accessibility working group was established in August 2021. The group meets monthly to discuss, review and prioritize accessibility projects across the District. Requests are received from schools, the Director of Instruction for Learning Services, the [accessibility@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:accessibility@vsb.bc.ca) email, families, as well as plans supporting incoming students who have accessibility needs.

### Accessibility advisory panel

To gather more information directly from people with lived and learned experiences with disabilities, we invited families, community members and staff to share input about existing barriers as well as how to remove or prevent barriers. The panel gathered in a series of five meetings and generated more than 200 ideas about how to prevent or remove barriers to accessibility.

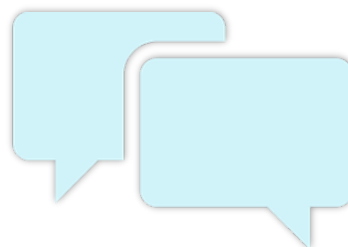
## Your Voice Matters – Sharing your accessibility feedback

VSB welcomes and seeks ongoing feedback about accessibility. Input will help ensure our schools, offices, programs and services are accessible to students, families, staff and the broader Vancouver community. We are dedicated to continually improving accessibility and removing barriers to build greater equity for our community.

To identify specific barriers members of the community may face when accessing VSB services, please email [accessibility@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:accessibility@vsb.bc.ca) with the following information:

- What you were trying to access
- Where the barrier happened/exists and what the barrier is
- Any recommendations you might have

Thank you in advance for sharing your feedback. It will be reviewed and considered by the Accessibility Committee.



## Conclusion

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VSB remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all members of our community. Through collaborative efforts, thoughtful engagement and prioritization of accessibility initiatives, we aim to address barriers and create spaces where everyone can participate fully and equally. The establishment of the accessibility committee, working group and an

accessibility advisory panel reflects the District's dedication to listening to diverse voices and integrating feedback into meaningful action.

Key priorities include universal awareness and understanding of accessibility issues, physically accessible spaces, clear and accessible communication, inclusive policy and procedures and ensuring accessibility plans evolve alongside technological advancements and societal changes. This ongoing work reinforces our vision of equity, adaptability and inclusion, recognizing the intersectionality and diversity that enriches our VSB community.

We extend our deepest gratitude to students, families, staff, and community organizations who have contributed their experiences, ideas and time to this shared vision. Your insights drive us forward and together, we can build a District where accessibility is not just an aspiration but a reality. Thank you for your continued support and collaboration in creating a barrier-free future.

## Glossary

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Glossary (these definitions are adapted from the foundational document: BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation)

**Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC):** An official group established with people with disabilities to develop an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism.

**Accessibility Plan:** A plan, developed by an AAC, that identifies accessibility challenges and solutions for addressing those challenges.

**Barriers:** 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.

**Disability:** An inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.

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



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

**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.

**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.

**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 wish to interact with the organization.

## Resources

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[Accessible BC Act](#)

[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)

[Accessible Canada Act](#) [BC Human Rights Code](#)

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)