

Interlake School Division Accessibility Plan

Prepared by

Interlake School Division's Accessibility Steering Committee

in accordance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) 2013

This publication is available through the Interlake School Division website

www.interlakesd.ca

Baseline Report

Introduction

The Interlake School Division (ISD) is committed to providing services to our students, parents/guardians, staff, and community at large that are free from barriers and biases. This Accessibility Plan is developed in accordance with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) 2013. The legislation requires accessibility standards to be developed over the next several years. The standards will address barriers and set out requirements in five key areas of daily living.

1. Customer service standard
2. Employment
3. Information and communication
4. Transportation
5. Built environment

Overview of Programs and Services

The ISD is a rural public school division with 21 schools serving approximately 3000 students and 500 employees. ISD school communities include Balmoral, Brant-Argyle, Grosse Isle, Rosser, Stonewall, Stony Mountain, Teulon, Warren, and Woodlands. We also serve students in eight colony communities including Clearwater, Interlake, Keystone, Meadow Lane, New Haven, Prairie Blossom, Rock Lake, and Sturgeon Creek. The ISD is committed to providing quality educational programs and opportunities for its community of learners, and to creating a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment to support and enable learners to develop the knowledge, skills and values to reach their full potential and become contributing members in a democratic society.

Public access to schools is essential to be inclusive for all people and to promote community engagement. Parent teacher conferences, progress conversations, drama productions, athletics, Christmas concerts, Open Houses, and community workshops are a few events that schools organize for their communities. ISD schools are an integral part of the community with many public groups accessing school facilities in the mornings and evenings.

Accessibility Achievements

ISD foundational beliefs include:

- Fostering independent, lifelong learners who are critical and creative thinkers
- Nurturing responsible global citizens who have respect and empathy for others in a diverse society
- Communicating in a way that facilitates the open-minded sharing of ideas
- Creating a challenging, caring, inviting and respectful learning community
- Addressing the needs of all learners in a safe and engaging learning environment
- Providing appropriate resources to meet a range of learning needs

The ISD places a strong emphasis on the safety and well-being for all students, employees, families, and community members. Some of our accessibility achievements over the past two years include:

- Accessibility button installed on division and school websites
- Introduced SchoolMessenger SMS text notification for ISD staff and families
- Provide assistive technology and communication devices to students
- Adjustable height desks and lower lockers for wheelchair access
- Front door sidewalk installed for wheelchair access
- Accessible play structure
- Accessible grooming, laundry, Home Economics, and music rooms
- Accessible water fountains
- Entrance ramps
- Automatic entry door openers
- Handrails
- Lifts/elevators
- Visible strobe lights
- Barrier-free washroom faucets
- A bathroom was renovated, and a change table was purchased to support student's accessibility and toileting needs.
- Evacuation slide was purchased and installed. Both staff and a student were trained on how to use it should an emergency evacuation occur.
- Specialized equipment such as a wheeled commode and change table were purchased to ensure accessibility for students with various needs.

- A student was in an accident and returned to school at wheelchair level. The ISD Occupational Therapist and Physiotherapist, along with the school team members worked together with the student and family to create an accessibility plan. The plan was in place to ensure student accessibility to classrooms, bathrooms, etc. An Emergency Response Plan was also created to ensure safe evacuation for the student should an emergency occur.

A few ISD administrative procedures that promote accessibility include:

- [Student Supervision](#)
- [Use of a Certified Service Animal in School](#)
- [Respect for Human Diversity](#)

Barriers to Accessibility

The cost associated with meeting accessibility standards continues to be the biggest barrier for the ISD. The ISD has schools and buildings that need to be upgraded. In particular, the ISD has a school which is a Manitoba Heritage Site. The cost to meet accessibility standards for this school could be extensive. Other barriers include space and time to ensure the ISD plan is carried out.

Accessibility Plan

Statement of Commitment

The ISD is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in ways that allow them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion. We are committed to meeting the needs of people who face accessibility barriers. We will do this by identifying, removing and preventing barriers and by meeting the requirements of the AMA.

Policies

The ISD will review all programs, services and new initiatives to work toward accessibility. The ISD will also make information available in an accessible format or provide communication supports to people with disabilities in a way that considers their disability.

Identify, Remove and Prevent Barriers

The ISD strives to ensure that all students are able to participate and function in daily activities at school that are meaningful to them. Barriers to accessibility in areas of self-care, productivity and leisure are considered and accounted for when supporting students with individual needs and abilities.

Abilities can vary based on a student's physical, cognitive, and/or mental health needs. ISD strives to be mindful and intentional in supporting students through inclusive, collaborative, and accessible practices.

- Self-Care (being able to access the bathroom, wash hands, dress self, etc.)
- Productivity (being able to complete assigned tasks in the classroom using adaptations or assistive technology, or perhaps using a communication device)
- Leisure (being able to access playground equipment, like an accessible swing, or participate in gym class at their level, etc.)

The ISD consults with students disabled by barriers. Our objective is to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for students with visible and invisible disabilities. Consultations are designed to be accessible and inclusive and include the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

Consultation is focused on going through the various environments with the student to see how they can navigate the space functionally, and as independent as possible. It is important to consider various factors that may be barriers for the student:

- Are they able to enter a room independently?
- Are they able to get to their seat/desk?
- In the bathroom, are they able to reach the sink taps, the soap, and dry cloth?
- Can they access the toilet, or transfer on/off the change table?
- Are they able to enter/exit the building, and/or use the elevator to go up/down?
- In home economics, are they able to participate in the activities similar to peers?
- Do they have an accessible work surface, and are they able to access/reach for various items required?

These are all assessed and learned about through clinical observation while the student is going through the actions within the various environments. The student is also able to provide feedback, and input, based on their experience. All of these factors come into play with accessibility, and modifying the environment to ensure that the student is able to participate and function optimally and as independently as possible in those various spaces.

Actions

Action 1: Establish Accessibility Working Group

Initiatives/Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Appoint an accessibility coordinator▪ Establish an accessibility working group▪ Meet on a regular basis to review initiatives working towards accessibility
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To create a working group which represents the division▪ To establish detailed work plans and multi-year timelines▪ To develop, implement, and update the Accessibility Plan

Action 2: Offer and provide information in an accessible format on request

Initiatives/Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop a process for responding to requests for accessible supports and services▪ Communicate process to all staff▪ Improve communications
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To advertise the availability of alternate formats

Action 3: Staff Awareness and Training

Initiatives/Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Confirm ISD' s commitment to accessibility in writing and celebrate progress▪ Offer accessibility awareness presentations to divisional staff▪ Acknowledge accessibility achievements and share information with staff in newsletters and staff meetings
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To consider accessibility with future programs and services▪ To share Accessibility Plan with Admin Council who will share with their staffs▪ To have staff understand accessibility and support implementation of the plan▪ To ensure progress of Accessibility Plan is available to staff

Action 4: Monitor Progress

Initiatives/Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Track progress on challenges and requests for accommodations with budgetary implications▪ Report annually to Board of Trustees Integrate future plans and budgets into operational plans▪ Review Accessibility Plan annually
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To ensure Senior Admin and Board of Trustees are aware of progress on AMA compliance and consider future plans▪ To include progress on accessibility in annual reports▪ Post Accessibility Plan on website

Action 5: Future Priorities for 2025 and 2026

Initiatives/Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Continue consultations and transition planning for students with visible and invisible disabilities. Some future actions include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ New elevator➤ Shower remodel with seat and curtain bar➤ Portable lab station on wheels▪ Reach out to ISD employees for ideas on how to improve accessibility within our organization▪ Braille signage in schools▪ Bilingual wording in schools▪ Public wheelchair accessible bathrooms▪ Division and school websites to provide text alternatives for any non-text content, including images, video and audio.
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ensure the needs of our students with visible and invisible disabilities are met▪ Gather feedback and create action items for future accessibility initiatives to benefit ISD staff, students and community.▪ Schools are accessible and inclusive for public visitors▪ Increase accessibility of division and school websites

Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

We are committed to complying with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. If a barrier to accessing our services cannot be removed, we seek to provide alternate ways to access the service.

Over the past number of years Interlake School Division has made progress to meet these requirements under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

- **Meet Communication Needs** - When appropriate we offer to communicate in different ways, such as writing things down, reading things aloud, taking extra time to explain things, and utilizing multiple forms of messaging through our school messaging system.
- **Accommodate the Use of Assistive Devices** - We accommodate the use of assistive devices when accessing our services or facilities. On an as-needed basis we have been upgrading our facilities to ensure continued accessibility.
- **Welcome Support Persons** - We welcome support persons and make space for support persons on-site to assist with individuals who require aid.
- **Allow Service Animals** - Under the guidelines of our Divisional administrative procedures, service animals are allowed on our premises.
- **Maintain Accessibility Features** - To ensure barrier-free access to our facilities, we maintain our accessibility features so they can be used as intended.
- **Inform public when accessibility features are unavailable** - If one of our accessibility features becomes temporarily unavailable, we post a notice indicating details regarding the service interruption.
- **Welcome and Respond Promptly to Feedback** - Feedback from parents, community members and students is welcome and if the feedback requires us to follow-up a response will be provided.
- **Provide the Required Training to Staff** - Accessible Customer Service training has been provided to all staff and ongoing training is conducted with all new staff. Records of training materials and when the training was provided is kept on file.

Accessible Employment Standard

We are committed to complying with the Accessibility Standard for Employment under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. We aim to remove barriers in our workplace. If a barrier cannot be removed, we seek to provide reasonable accommodations to affected employees.

Over the past number of years Interlake School Division has made progress to meet these requirements under the Accessible Employment Standard.

- **Remove Barriers to Recruitment and Selection** - During recruitment and hiring, applicants are informed that reasonable accommodations are available and we respond to requests for accommodations.

- Inform Employees about Accommodation Policies and Practices - Our Accessible Employment Process is made available to all employees and is posted on our website.
- Communicate in Ways to Meet Employees' Needs - Workplace information is provided in ways that are easy to access for all.
- Provide Individualized Accommodation Plans - Individualized accommodation plans are developed and documented as per request.
- Manage Performance - We ensure that our performance management process takes into account that an employee may be temporarily or permanently disabled by one or more barriers in the workplace, an employee's individualized accommodation plan, and that the accommodations provided may not fully address a workplace barrier.
- Return to Work Process - Our return to work process ensures that reasonable accommodations necessary to facilitate a return to work for employees who have been absent due to a disability or health condition are in place.
- Provide Workplace Emergency Response Information - Employees are made aware of steps to be taken in the event of an emergency and we inquire with all employees as to whether they need assistance during an emergency.
- Maintain Privacy - Proper protocol is followed to ensure that we protect the privacy and confidentiality of employee's personal information and personal health information.
- Provide Training - All staff responsible for recruiting, selecting or training employees are provided training on the Accessible Standard for Employment and our Accessible Employment Process. Records of this training are maintained.

Information and Communications Accessibility Standard

ISD is dedicated to complying with the requirements of the Information and Communications Accessibility Standard Regulation under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

Over the past number of years ISD has made progress to meet these requirements under the Accessibility Standard for Information and Communication.

- We inform our employees, students, parents/guardians of students, applicants and potential applicants that information and educational materials are available through a communication support or accessible format on request. We consult with the person requesting accessible information or educational materials to identify the support or format that would remove the barrier.
- We provide information, including educational materials, requested in alternate formats or through communication supports in a timely manner and do not impose a cost or fee that would not be imposed on a person who did not make a request. Comparable educational materials will be provided when a specific material cannot be provided, using the identified accessible format or support.
- We are working towards ensuring ISD website content that is required to access our goods and services, and all newly published web content, meets or exceeds WCAG 2.1 Level AA guidelines.

- We are working towards ensuring ISD web applications meet or exceed WCAG 2.1 Level AA guidelines.
- We welcome and respond promptly to feedback we receive on the accessibility of our information, communication and educational materials. We document the actions we take to respond to the feedback we receive, and we make that information available on request.
- We provide the required training on accessible information and communication to employees, agents, volunteers, educators and any person who develops or maintains our web content, purchases or procures information technology or communication tools, develops or implements our accessible information and communication policies and practices, or provides information to the public or to other organizations in Manitoba.
- We keep a written record of accessibility and training policies, including a summary of our training materials and when our training is offered. We let the public know that our accessibility and training policies are available on request.

The Interlake School Division's goal is to ensure everyone can access and understand information. If you require services and resources in an alternate format, or assistance with communication, follow the steps below:

Email: Send an email to ISD@isd21.mb.ca with your name, contact information, and describe the accessible format or support you need.

Phone: Call 204-467-3017 to make a request. There is no extra charge for requesting different formats or help with communication.

Feedback: If you have any questions or complaints about the level of accessible or inaccessible information and communication within the Interlake School Division, please contact us [HERE](#).

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Contact person: Chantel Richter (Accessibility Coordinator)

Phone: 204-467-3017

Email: crichter@isd21.mb.ca