



Burnaby School District
Accessibility Plan
2023-2026

DRAFT

Acknowledgement

The Burnaby School District is honoured to be doing this work on the unceded and ancestral lands of the hə́ŋqəmiḥə́n and skw̓xwú7mesh speaking people. We acknowledge the stewardship of these lands by the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skw̓xwú7mesh, and sə́lilwətaʔt Nations.

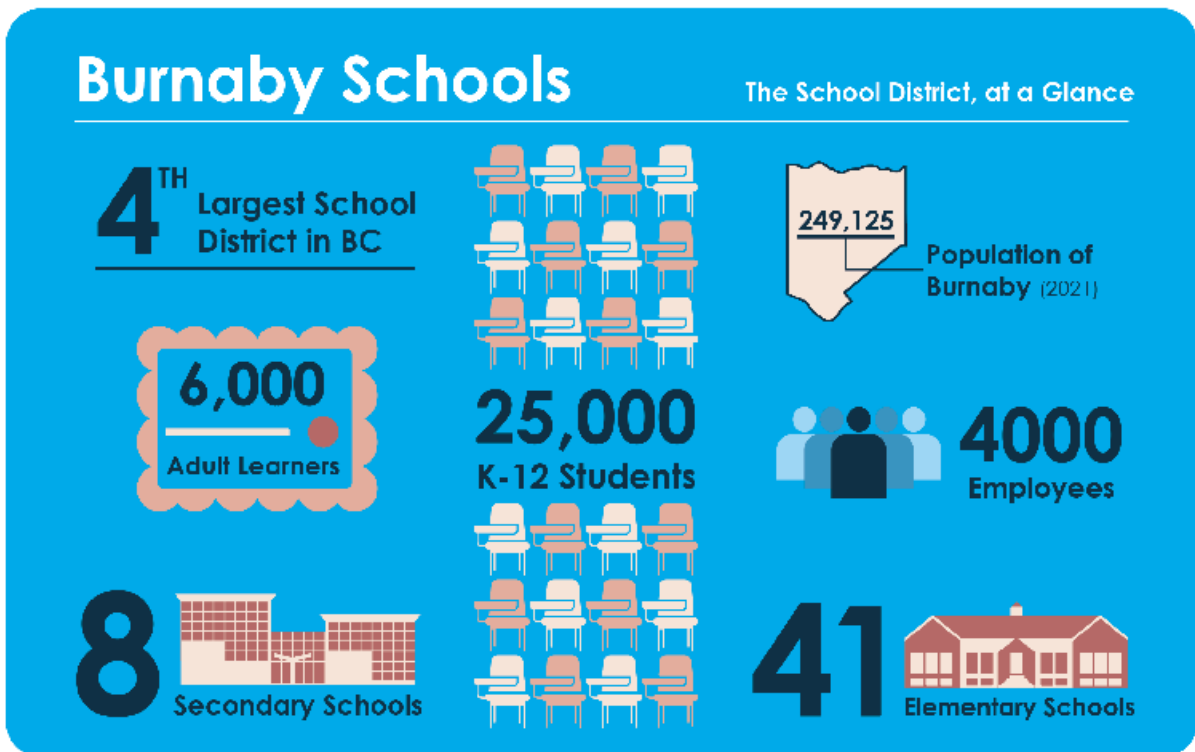


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About our Organization

The Burnaby School District is honoured to be doing this work on the unceded and ancestral lands of the hə́nqəmiḥə́n and skw̓xwú7mesh speaking people. We acknowledge the stewardship of these lands by the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm*, *Skw̓xwú7mesh*, and *sáilwataʔt Nations*. The District is the fourth largest district in BC, with more than 25,000 students (K-12) and more than 4,000 dedicated employees. The District operates 41 elementary schools and 8 secondary schools, including a range of district programs and Provincial Resource Programs. Also provided are lifelong learning opportunities with more than 6,000 Adult Learners through the established Burnaby Community & Continuing Education Program. The District works in partnership with 18 childcare providers across 34 schools to deliver 87 licensed programs. The District's work is governed by seven elected Trustees, whose four-year term began in 2022.



Introduction

Our schools are for everyone. This is reflected in the core values and beliefs of Equity, Access, and Inclusion in the Burnaby Board of Education's Strategic Plan, which is part of the foundation of everything we do.

Equity, Access, Inclusion

Our schools are for everyone. We recognize that barriers exist and seek to identify and remove them. We encourage our learners to speak honestly, and we uphold the rights of individuals, families and organizations within our schools and our community. We value and respect everyone's contributions.

– One of the Core Values in the Board of Education's Strategic Plan

This has helped guide our District's work outlined in this document. Additional important context to have, as you review the District's Accessibility Plan, is the Accessible BC Act and its related provincial regulation. The goal of the Act is to support identification, prevention and removal of barriers that people with disabilities face in their day-to-day lives. The Act requires public sector organizations – including school districts – to establish an Accessibility Committee, create an Accessibility Plan, and have a mechanism to both receive feedback on the plan, itself, and on how accessible the institution is, generally.

The District has already established an Accessibility Advisory Committee, as well as an Accessibility Working Group. You'll see more about both of those groups, who sits on them, and their work as you progress through this plan. Of note is that more than half of the members on the Committee have lived or learned experience with disabilities and accessibility.

This Accessibility Plan incorporates feedback and barrier identification that we have already received. The three-year plan outlines the priorities and actions we will take to remove and prevent barriers, as well as to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school communities and workplaces.

It's important to note that this plan is a living document and will continue to evolve, as we further engage and learn from the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

We welcome your feedback, as we work toward our vision of an inclusive school environment where everyone is valued, there is no stigma related to disabilities, and everyone who interacts within the District can do so with dignity and independence.

Framework Guiding our Work

The following accessibility legislation has been considered in the development of the Burnaby School District Accessibility Plan:

- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)
- [Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [BC Human Rights Code](#)
- [Accessible British Columbia Act](#)

The **Accessible BC Regulation**, under the Accessible BC Act, came into effect on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations. School districts and independent schools will be required to have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan and a tool to receive feedback on accessibility by September 1, 2023. The goal of the act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and involve them in identifying, removing and preventing barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

The following principles of the Accessible BC Act are adapted from the foundational document BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation.

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

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

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

Inclusion: All British Columbians including people 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.

Definitions

The terminology used in the development of the Burnaby School District Accessibility Plan is aligned with the terminology used in the Accessible BC Act and it includes students, staff and community members who may be interacting with the Burnaby School District.

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

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including an architectural barrier, an attitudinal barrier, an informational or communications barrier, a physical barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice, or a technological barrier.

- **Architectural Barrier:** Examples include building designs, areas adjacent to the building, shape of room, and the size of doorways.
- **Attitudinal Barrier:** Examples include barriers that arises from the attitudes of staff, students and/or other people within the school community including discriminatory behaviors and a lack of disability awareness.
- **Communication Barrier:** Examples include barriers that arises from difficulties receiving information in person or by telephone, difficulties interacting with teachers, peers, receptionists or other staff, or difficulties receiving training.
- **Information Barrier:** Examples include barriers that arises from inadequate or incomprehensible signage, difficulties reading brochures, forms, manuals, websites, fax transmissions, equipment labels, and computer screens.
- **Physical Barrier:** Examples resulting from objects added to the environment including doors, windows, elevators, furniture, playgrounds, school yards, and portables.
- **Policy or Practice Barrier:** Rules, regulations, policies, practices, procedures and/or protocols that prevent a person performing their job satisfactorily, from serving the public, restricting participation, preventing a student from accessing the curriculum and/or fully participating in the school community.
- **Technological Barrier:** Barriers resulting from computers, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones and switches, including that 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.

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

Our Approach

The Burnaby School District is guided by our values as outlined in the Burnaby Board of Education's Strategic Plan. There it clearly states that:

“Our schools are for everyone. We recognize that barriers exist and seek to identify and remove them. We encourage our learners to speak honestly, and we uphold the rights of individuals, families and organizations within our schools and our community. We value and respect everyone's contributions.”

With this in mind, we began the work of establishing an Accessibility Advisory Committee, an Accessibility Working Group, an Accessibility Plan and associated feedback mechanisms.

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

About the Committees

The Accessible BC Act states that Accessibility Advisory Committees must have at least half of the members who have lived or learned experience with disabilities and accessibility. Members who directly support people with disabilities and Indigenous members were also sought.

The following organizations are represented:

Burnaby Principals' and Vice Principals' Association (BPVPA)
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
Burnaby Teachers' Association (BTA)
Children's Services Resource Team
BC Centre for Ability
District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)
Student Voice

In the spring of 2023, we began the process of establishing an Accessibility Committee to assist with the identification of barriers to accessibility in our District.

In addition, in May 2023, the District began the process of establishing a District Accessibility Working Committee. The committee is comprised of a cross-section of District managers and supervisors who have oversight of a variety of areas in the school district including:

- Human Resources
- Facilities
- Information Technology
- Business Services
- Learning Support Services/Inclusive Education
- Instructional Services
- Senior Management Team

There is a recognition that this meaningful work will take a significant amount of time and the Burnaby School District Accessibility Plan will be a dynamic document; updated on a regular basis to reflect the changing needs of the community.

Committee Members

We would like to recognize and thank the members of our Accessibility Committees for their time, commitment and expertise.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Carla Butterworth: Parent representative
Debra Pearson: Occupational Therapist, Children’s Services Resource Team
Joshua Mah: Student representative
Janice Nakatsu: Acting Assistant Superintendent
Kathryn Yamamoto: Director of Instruction
Laida Falsetto: Teacher, BTA representative
Norman Jansen: Teacher, BTA representative
Laura Ward: Parent, DPAC representative and Member of the Tla'amin Nation
Nadia Olynyk: Educational Assistant Brailist, CUPE representative
Mujeeb Khalvatgar: Settlement Worker (District staff), CUPE representative
Raman Kullar: Social Worker, Early Intervention, BC Centre for Ability
Sean Gaster: Principal, BPVPA representative

Accessibility Working Group

Chris McAuley: Director of Facility Services, Burnaby School District
Harpinder Hothi: Executive Director of Human Resources, Burnaby School District
Janice Nakatsu: Acting Assistant Superintendent, Burnaby School District
Kathryn Yamamoto: Director of Instruction, Burnaby School District
Nicole Macpherson: District Vice Principal of Learning Support Services, Burnaby School District
Patrick Vossen: Director of Information Technology Services, Burnaby School District
Rahim Hussein: Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Burnaby School District

Consultation Process

In May 2023, the following staff were presented with information about the Accessible BC Act, the requirements for the school district and next steps for the Accessibility Advisory Committee: Burnaby Teachers’ Association, Canadian Union for Public Employees, Burnaby Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association, District Exempt and Professional staff.

In May and June 2023, the Accessibility Advisory Committee met and discussed the necessity to identify and understand the following:

- A common understanding of work together as a committee
- A barrier-free vision for the school district
- Accessibility accomplishments in the district
- Accessibility barriers faced by people in the district
- Questions to ask for a barrier scan for each site

Accessibility Accomplishments

We continue to work to remove barriers and enhance the experiences of all students, staff and community members. The following accessibility accomplishments have been identified by the Accessibility Advisory Committee:

Emphasis on equity, diversity and inclusion: The District focus on diversity, equity and inclusion has created a greater awareness among students, staff and families. Creating a sense of belonging is foundational to our accessibility work.

Mental health supports: The committee noted the District's support for mental health and well-being is making a difference for students with disabilities. Some examples of these supports include access to District counsellors and mental health liaisons, resources and training that is available to teachers and counsellors in schools.

Accessibility considered in new buildings and playgrounds: As buildings are built or renovated, accessible features are included as per the building code. This includes an accessible main entrance, universal washrooms, elevators to upper floors and ramps. The committee noted a greater awareness for accessible features in new playgrounds.

Accessibility Barriers

We are at the beginning stage of our consultation and recognize that we need to know more, and hear from more people, including students, parents, staff and community members. With the early information gathered, the Accessibility Advisory Committee has raised the following concerns with these barriers:

Physical barriers: Schools have one entrance point with accessible features including ramps and push buttons. Having multiple accessible entrances will allow staff and students to move throughout the site with more independence. Access to elevators was challenging in some schools. Concerns about ease of access to accessible washrooms were raised for students, staff, parents or community members who require wheelchair accessible spaces.

Information barriers: Access to information can be challenging for some families and students. For some people, the school websites, notices and emails are difficult to understand as the language is complex. Materials can be too small, too cluttered or lack color contrast. Signage could be more accessible by using braille, large and clear fonts and picture images. Information could be provided through multiple means of communication including verbal, in print, online and through closed-captioning.

Attitudinal barriers: There is a strong desire to create a common language and understanding related to accessibility so that everyone can understand that barriers exist in schools, as well as the needs of people with disabilities. Sometimes, caregivers feel that they need to advocate and ask for accommodations. There is sometimes an assumption that the child with a disability is incapable or 'less than'.

How to Share Your Feedback

As noted above, we want and need to learn more. Feedback is welcomed and appreciated. An online feedback tool has been developed to gather information about accessibility and assist in the identification of barriers in the district. Information about how to provide feedback is posted [here](#).

Our Three-Year Plan

Based on initial feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the communities they represent, the following priorities have been identified.

It is important to note that the following priorities represent a “plan for a plan”. As the District receives feedback, adjustments may be made.

Priority 1: Accessibility Awareness and Training

Objective: To increase awareness of our collective and individual responsibilities to create and maintain inclusive environments.

Barrier: Attitudinal Barrier

Actions: To begin October 2023

- Present accessibility awareness information to all district leaders.
- District leaders will share information with school staff/teams through staff meeting presentations and Parent Advisory Council (PAC) presentations.
- District leaders will collect information from staff and PAC related to current barriers at their schools.
- Review all information and feedback and determine specific priorities.
- Launch accessibility webpage and collect feedback through online form.
- Host accessibility focus groups with parents and students.
- Recognize and celebrate specific days of importance to the disability community (i.e. National AccessAbility Week).
- Provide professional development related to Universal Design for Learning to increase awareness for all school leaders.

Priority 2: Accessible Information and Communication

Objective: To enhance the accessibility of information and communication for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

Barrier: Information and Communication Barriers

Actions: To begin January 2024

- Develop and share guidelines for accessible written and visual communication such as fonts, clear language, and the use of pictures.

- Develop and share considerations for accessibility in meetings (i.e., recommendations for preparing meeting materials, space, organization).
- Increase awareness of alternate formats for students and adults (i.e., magnifying devices, colour-coded labels or signs, symbol use to accompany text, braille, large print, tactile documents, signage and maps).
- Provide information and training for accessible format resources to be more inclusive of people with disabilities.

Priority 3: Physical Barrier Assessment

Objective: To identify common physical barriers by engaging all stakeholders in an assessment of our district.

Barrier: Physical

Actions: To begin April 2024

- Explore options and select appropriate physical site accessibility assessment in collaboration with the accessibility advisory committee and other school districts.
- Perform physical site accessibility assessments at each school district site.
- Review all data and information collected and determine the specific physical barrier priorities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Advisory Committee meets four times per year to review progress and adjust the plan as needed. The Accessibility Working Group will provide quarterly updates on the feedback received and the progress made for each priority area.

How to Provide Feedback on the Draft Accessibility Plan

Accessible formats of the plan will be made available upon request. You may share questions, comments, or feedback regarding the Draft Accessibility Plan in the following ways:

By Online Form:

Submit your feedback through our online form:

<https://forms.sd41.bc.ca/forms/AccessibilityPlanFeedback>

By Email:

Email your feedback to: accessibilityfeedback@burnabyschools.ca

By Phone:

Call us at 604-296-6900 Ext 661144

By Mail:

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