



Avon Maitland District School Board Annual Accessibility Plan Working Group

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

4:00 p.m.

Avon Maitland District School Board
Education Centre, Seaforth, ON
Festival Room

MINUTES

Attendance: Janet Baird-Jackson (co-chair), David Frier (co-chair), Tim Bilcke, Hugh Cox, Diana Doctor, Jamie Gibbings, Ralf Mesenbrink, Nancy Rothwell, Adrienne Jacques, Terry Marklevitz, Jodi Reiger, Julia Opie, Rob Simmons, Wendy Case, Jason Hillier, Judy Hoffmeyer, Lisa Bruce

Regrets: Vince Trocchi, Doug Pratley, Randy Wagler, Michelle Murphy-Bukala, Anne Copeland, Martin Ritsma, Laurel Mitchell, Luise Hoffman

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Janet Baird-Jackson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2.0 Approval of Agenda

Moved by Jason Hillier, and seconded by Julia Opie that the agenda be approved.
CARRIED.

3.0 Review of Minutes from February 8, 2017

Moved by Rob Simmons, and seconded by Ralph Mesenbrink that the minutes from the April 26th meeting be approved. CARRIED.

4.0 Business Arising

4.1 Inclusive Language – use of

There is summer work for the Communications Department to create a video and/or a series of posters to communicate the inclusive language to the students and staff. The Communications Department should have something to present for the October 11th meeting.

The Customer Service sub-committee shared a draft poster that they created using current posters as a template. The topic of the poster is gender neutral language with the title of the poster being “WORDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE”. The committee was impressed with the draft poster the Customer Service sub-committee presented. The poster has provided a lot of inspiration for the following posters. Tim is going to work on the series of posters with hope to have the first series completed for September.

Julia Opie suggested creating the poster series into bookmarks so the kids can have it with them all the times.

4.2 Creation of web-based Board resource

Tim is going to work on updating the AODA information on the Board website. Janet suggested Tim get started on the website and that the committee works with him in terms of resources.

4.3 **2017 Accessibility Compliance Report**

Last meeting there were questions assigned to the sub-committees regarding the Accessibility Compliance Report. The committee went through the answers that they had come up with to make sure everyone agreed before the report is submitted.

1. Does your organization notify its employees and the public about the availability of accommodations during the recruitment process?

The availability of accommodations is included on all job postings, as well as on the website. Wendy mentioned that all of the employees are made aware of the administrative procedures regarding accommodations in their hire package.

2. Does your organization provide employees with updated information about its policies to support employees with disabilities?

All of the administrative procedures are posted on the Board website for all employees to access. There is a link posted on the Core that directs users to the Board website. Julia Opie suggested providing more information about whether or not it is part of the orientation packages.

Wendy confirmed that the information regarding policies to support employees with disabilities is provided to all of the employees. Wendy mentioned that Kathy and herself, believe that they are compliant with the interview, recruitment and orientation components.

3. When requested, does your organization provide employees with disabilities information in an accessible format or with communication supports?

Yes, we provide public information in an accessible format when requested. In the schools we have Google Read & Write that will allow people to access the material.

4. Does your organization prepare individualized workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities?

Yes, this is school site specific according to individual requirements.

5. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing recreational trails that you intend to maintain?

We went to the definition in the legislation of recreation trails that means public, pedestrian trails that are intended for recreation and leisure purposes. No, our board does not have or maintain any public recreation trails that are intended for recreation and leisure purposes.

When you choose "No", you cannot provide a comment to explain the reasons why. Julia Opie mentioned that this has been an issue and that they may follow up to receive an explanation. By choosing no, it does not allow you to answer 5.a or 5.b.

6. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing beach access routes that you intend to maintain?

No, this is not applicable because we are not a municipality.

- 7. Do your new or redeveloped recreational trail and/or beach access routes include boardwalks?**
No, this is not applicable.
- 8. Do your new or redeveloped recreational trails and/or beach access routes include ramps?**
No, this is not applicable.
- 9. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing outdoor public use eating areas that you intend to maintain?**
No, but we wanted to add in the comment that we have outdoor classrooms in which can be used as eating areas for the students but is not intended for the public.
- 10. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing outdoor play spaces that you intend to maintain?**
Yes.
- A) When constructing new or redeveloping existing outdoor play spaces, did your organization consult with the public and persons with disabilities on the needs of children and caregivers, and if you represent a municipality did your organization consult with the accessibility advisory committee where one was established as outlined in s.80(19) of the IASR?**
Yes, the outdoor space at North Perth Westfield that was a relocation of existing to the new elementary site including the provision for accessible safety servicing. The discussion was held with the Transition Committee that was involved in the closure of the two schools.
- B) Did your organization incorporate accessibility features when constructing a new or redeveloping an existing play space as outlined in s.80(20a) of the IASR?**
The playground vendors are an excellent resource to our schools when considering updates of playground equipment.
- C) Does your organization's new or redeveloped play spaces have a firm ground surface as outlines in s.80(20b) of the IASR?**
Yes, in all of our updates we are using engineered wood fibers for a firm surface for accessibility.
- 11. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing exterior paths of travel that you intend to maintain?**
Yes, we share the legislation with the civil consultants for any redevelopment required.
- 12. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing off-street parking facilities that you intend to maintain?**
Yes, we share the applicable legislation with civil consultants.
- 13. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed a new or replaced an existing service counter?**
Yes, the architect consultant understands and applies accessibility accommodations. We have lower checkout counters in the new library at

North Perth Westfield. In terms of school offices, we have either a lower counter or gaps where people coming to the counter are able to access someone at the desk.

14. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new fixed queuing guides?

No, we just have open spaces in the school offices.

15. Since January 1, 2016, has your organization constructed new or redeveloped existing waiting areas?

No, we do not do fixed seating in our waiting areas, it is just an open space that has some chairs in it from time to time.

16. Does your organization's public spaces have accessible elements in place as required under the Design of Public Spaces Standard of the IASR?

Yes.

A) Does your organization's multi-year accessibility plan include procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces, and for dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order as outlined in s.80(44) of the IASR?

We have a procedure for work orders in eBASE. We are addressing it in terms of amenities such as drinking fountains, off-street parking facilities, in-line ramps and we also have procedures in community use of schools for communication purposes.

17. Does your organization provide conventional transportation services?

No, we do not fall within the terminology of conventional transportation services. However, if we were able to provide a response, we do purchase a service by supplying public transit passes to qualifying students in the city of Stratford. The city transit is required to meet all obligations under the acts.

18. Does your organization provide specialized transportation services?

We do not subcontract out any specialized transportation services through our consortium.

19. In the jurisdiction where you provide specialized transportation services, does another organization provide conventional transportation services?

Saying no to question 18, blocks this question.

20. Other than the requirements cited in the above questions, is your organization complying with all other requirements in effect under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation?

Yes we endeavor to comply with all of the education sector requirements.

The committee agreed on the answers provided and the survey is going to be filed.

5.0 New Business

5.1 OPSBA: Response to Ministry Engagement on Development of an Education Accessibility Standard – Consultation

The AODA Committee received notice from the Trustee Association of the Ministry Engagement Process and the Trustee Association is looking for a response from school Boards by the end of the month (June).

The students were not at the meeting so the committee will have to figure out a way to receive their input. This has also been shared with all of Senior Staff to provide feedback.

Accessibility Awareness and Training

Julia Opie thought there was a curriculum for accessibility in the schools. She asked if there is anything being done in the classroom regarding accessibility. The committee members are not aware of a specific curriculum that addresses accessibility. Awareness of others around you and inclusiveness are enforced within the classroom. Rather than being a direct curriculum topic it is more so an approach and philosophy that is embedded in the classroom. Learning Services has brought in speakers and researchers for both administration and teacher learning, as well as set up evening events for parents to attend. There has been positive feedback from the community about the events where Carolyn Muscleweight and Dr. Jean Clinton spoke. Janet asked if Learning Services has set up something on mental health and well-being. Adrienne Jacques requested that the question be deferred to Luise Hoffman. Julia Opie suggested including the accessibility awareness posters series that the committee is working on in the answer. Rob Simmons recommended including the Safe School Portal that includes government training documents that can be tracked to ensure all employees have completed the required training modules.

Challenges

Rob Simmons does not know if there is anything specific regarding challenges students face when accessing supports, programs or services in the schools. They take everyone's needs into account according to with resources, SERC departments, and student services. Part of the inclusion process is making sure that everyone's needs are met regardless of their disabilities. This is normal practice Rob is not sure if it is outlined to them in training specifically. When prepping students for the transition out of high school, communication within schools and the Board defining what accessibilities may exist for the students can be challenging. Rob believes that the schools need to work with the community to transition students outside of education sector. Janet asked if parents are thinking about what they want for their children after secondary school. This should be done through the IPP process which is still transition; every school is at a different phase with this process. The students use MyBlueprint, Student Services and the SERC Department to map each student's pathway that is supposed to be documented as part of their legislation in the IPP Process. Parents have the opportunity to access their child's MyBlueprint and create their own account. The IPP Process was presented at School Councils and they found that the parents were impressed. Nancy feels that it should be promoted better and suggested that it could be ran through the Parent Involvement Committee.

The communication to the parents about the resources available for their students can be improved by broadcasting the process to the public. A suggestion of posters in the schools, information on the school and Board

websites, the community partners' website, the mental health assist website and/or sending a newsletter home with the students for the parents to see. Tim Bilcke confirmed that the information is already on the Board website under Parents and Community. There are links on the Board website for mental health, anxiety, support for families, bullying, Community Living, Children's Aid Society, abuse hotlines, Huron Perth Centre and other educational links. Nancy suggested posting links on the Board and school Facebook pages to promote the resources available. Lisa Bruce mentioned that there is a Parent Portal coming in the fall but she is not sure what it is going to have access to. Lisa said that there is a possibility to enhance the communication using the Parent Portal when it is up and running in the fall.

Information, Communication and Decision Making

Jamie Gibbings suggested that Learning Services view the survey to provide feedback because a lot of the questions pertain the Learning Services Department.

Janet believes that the Transition Meetings with parents when the students are moving from elementary to secondary are important. The Transition Meetings are inclusive, thorough and engaging for both the students and parents. From Janet's perspective, the barrier is having enough funding to make the buildings accessible.

Transition Planning

Transition Planning is an area for improvement. Most students have a clear pathway and are involved with Student Services to assist them with planning what direction they are going. On the other hand, students with disabilities may not have a clear direction as to what they are preparing for after graduation. There is a variety of different challenges when getting the students with disabilities prepared for life after high school because each student has different needs. This could depend on partnerships and who comes into the school to assist with determining the students' needs. Julia Opie mentioned that there are statistics that show more students with disabilities are going further in their education and graduating from post-secondary but are still unemployed. Julia feels that comments need to be made to the provincial government about employing people with disabilities. Employers also need to be better educated on employing people with disabilities. Some communities do a better job working with Employment Centre and Community Living to try and get students into the workforce. There is concern about support programs being dropped as soon as the student graduates from secondary.

Effective ways that assist the students with disabilities in their transition out of secondary school have been through partnerships and being able to take the students out into the community before graduation. There are often co-op placements that turn into full-time employment for the students. There are a few industries that depend on students with various disabilities and the sooner we get the students involved with them the more successful it has been. It was discussed that having a basic life skills course offered to students in high school that will teach them simple banking, cooking, filling out job application and more would be effective. This can be very helpful to the students that are not planning on going any further in their education after high school. With the move to inclusion and incorporating the students into a regular class, there are a lot of cases where the students are doing more than their parents ever expected. The life skills program should be inclusive to all students that may benefit from this course.

Built Environment

Resources are needed because capital funding fluctuates and is targeted at maintaining building integrity such as keeping the heat in and the rain out and addressing safety issues such as building and fire codes. If there is money left after addressing these issues, then we can start looking at accessibility and eventually get to programs.

Terry Marklevitz believes that some of the issues are the building size and the traveling distance within the school. There needs to be some ideas on how to organize schools to minimize the traveling distance for the students and staff with physical challenges. One of the viable solutions is consolidation of spaces by closing two story buildings to build new ones that are more accessible. The main thing is to listen to the needs of the accessibility students which creates new ideas and a better understanding.

Other elements that should be considered are:

- The types of disabilities within the building – so many different needs can work against each other
- Keep the buildings straight forward and make sure there is enough space to accommodate everybody
- Every year or two there are renovations based on the needs for specific students
- When we have specific needs, whether it is accessibility or not, we consult the people with those needs
- Architects try not to design everything to the square inch. It is important to leave empty space to allow for accessibility accommodations.
- When a student with accessibility needs is transitioning out of one school to another, there is a chance we are going to know about it one or two years in advance. This is when we can make the changes needed.
- We need to be more forward thinking – it is important to not just think about what one student's needs are

Accessibility Barriers

The biggest barrier is not knowing what is available. If the accessibility information is not available, that is a major failure. With the inclusive environment, there are circumstances where the students are included in the classroom for the entire time and others that are in the classroom for a short period of time and then may go to a resource room with an EA. There are additional resources in the classroom for students to use to meet the student's accessibility needs.

Communication can create a barrier; it is important to not listen to groups but to listen to individuals. This can work to solve issues for others coming into the building. Hugh asked if we should be communicating the accessibility needs and flagging where everything is in the building. The issue with this is, are we sharing too much information and creating security issues for people. We do not create accessible public washrooms anymore, we create a separate washroom in an effort to respect dignity for the people with accessibility needs. With more and more inclusion we require more accessible washrooms which can be difficult when trying to find enough space in the building.

5.2 OPSBA: Feedback for the Ontario Human Rights Commission review of Guidelines on Accessibility Education (attached)

Learning services is going to be working on these questions because it falls under their category.

What to do when there is a fire and need to get the accessibility people out of the building?

The fire prevention officer said that the focus will be saving the person's life, so they will pick them up and carry them out of the building. Is this a conflict between Fire Code and dignity as the Human Rights Commission might see it? Janet said that we have not had the Human Rights challenges, but transportation is getting more questions regarding accessibility.

Municipalities are seeing more Human Rights cases. People are speaking up more which allows others to become more knowledgeable with the Human Rights.

Has your Board ever undertaken the duty to inquire the student's disability accommodation needs even if there has not been a formal request?

There are some parents that would say there is nothing wrong with their child but after doing tests the school notices that the student does need some help whether it is physical or mental. It their Right of Privacy if they do not want to disclose something. There are parents that submit a generic doctor's notes that outlines what we should be doing and does not describe functional abilities. In this case we ask for waivers to follow up with the doctor and find out what the student can do so we are focusing on their ability.

We are structuring transportation to find out what the accessibility students can do, their limitations and how far they can walk. Transportation is not focusing on what they can't do, this way they can try and make the accommodations for the students.

Julia Opie recommended that we suggest in the feedback that the province should provide more templates. Municipalities are creating their own templates and unless they share them with other municipalities, they are all going to be different. The province should legislate this information and share it with us.

The feedback questions have been shared with Peggy and Luise.

5.3 Julia Opie: Education Standards Development Committee

The Ontario Government is accepting applications until the end of July for people who want to sit on the Education Standards Development Committee. It is a significant time commitment as you would have to meet in Toronto for one or two days for approximately every six to eight weeks for a period of eighteen to twenty-four months. They do compensate you with \$150 a day and they pay for your hotel and travel expenses.

6.0 Subcommittee/Working Group Structure

The working groups each provided their updates as follows:

Built Environment

Facilities has been doing a review on all of the washrooms in the secondary level to provide separate accessible washrooms. They have been working on a model to replicate it across the system. They are also working on creating private change areas in both the boys and girls changes rooms.

7.0 Future meetings

Dates of next meetings:

- Wednesday October 11, 2017 4:00 pm

8.0 Adjournment at 6:01 p.m.

Moved by Nancy Rothwell, and seconded by Jason Hillier that the meeting be adjourned.