



DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

# ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE 2019



# See the **ABILITY** in **DISABILITY**

—Rick Hansen

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## CONTENTS

Purpose and Use of Guide.....	3	Understanding Guide Dogs and Service Animals.....	9
Contact Information.....	3	Considering the Environment.....	9
Accessibility Terminology.....	4	Universal Design for Learning.....	9
Disruption of Service.....	5	Accessibility Tips.....	10
Ensuring Events are Accessible.....	5	References.....	10
People First Language.....	6	Organizations & Associations for Support.....	11
Interactions and Communications.....	7		



## PURPOSE

The Durham District School Board is committed to ensuring an environment that supports independence, dignity and respect. To achieve this goal, the Durham District School Board undertakes to continually improve accessibility in order to provide greater equity for all in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005). [aoda.ca](http://aoda.ca)

The Durham District School Board is committed to the principles and practices of inclusion to foster full community participation and integration. When accommodation is required, it will involve a collaborative process. Not all requests will be met in the manner proposed but option(s) will be provided to meet accessibility needs.

## USE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide has been created as a resource to be consulted when working and interacting with individuals with disabilities including our students, staff, volunteers and members of our school communities. This guide is designed to be used as a proactive support tool to increase awareness and sensitivity towards reducing and removing barriers to individuals with disabilities in our schools and other Board facilities.

In this guide you will find suggestions for creating accessible environments, interacting and communicating with people with disabilities, and links to online resources. It is intended to promote respect and inclusion. A culture of inclusion is imperative.

Remember that although many disabilities are not visible, it does not mean they are less real. Individuals with non-visible disabilities such as epilepsy, diabetes, hemophilia and mental health, learning or developmental disabilities also encounter negative attitudes and barriers to full participation.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

To give feedback or request information about accessibility within the Durham District School Board, please contact

**[General.Inquiries@ddsb.ca](mailto:General.Inquiries@ddsb.ca)**

(905) 666-5500 • 1-800-265-3968

## ACCESSIBILITY TERMINOLOGY

It is important to remember that each word in today's terminology has a precise meaning. The language and images used to portray people with disabilities are vitally important in changing perceptions. The Ontario definition of a disability from both the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and Ontario Human Rights Code (1990) is inclusive of visible and non-visible disabilities.

### DISABILITY

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code. ([ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19](http://ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19))

#### **"Disability" is:**

- a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c. a learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d. a mental disorder
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

### BARRIER

A **"barrier"** is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, and environmental barrier, policy or practice.

Types of barriers may include: architectural or structural, information and communications, technology, systemic (eg. practices or routines), and attitudinal.

## DISRUPTION OF SERVICE

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service in Ontario includes a requirement to provide notification to the community if there is a disruption to services or facilities. This may include an accessibility entrance door button being temporarily out of function, an elevator shut for repairs or temporary unavailability of a barrier free washroom.

Notification must include information about the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and description of alternative facilities or service accommodation if any are available.

Notification must be posted in a visible area on site, posted on school website or by any other means reasonable (e.g., social media post).

## ENSURING EVENTS ARE ACCESSIBLE

Ensuring events are accessible involves both proactive and responsive planning. Proactive planning through a lens of inclusion and accessibility for individuals with disabilities may include:

- Ensuring size of space is sufficient to provide ample space for participants to move around.
- Consideration for use of multi-modal forms of communication (e.g., using visual supports during a spoken presentation)

Depending on an individual's needs, accommodations may be required such as:

- A sign language interpreter
- Provision of an FM system or hearing-assist system
- Clear doorways and pathways
- Additional open space for an individual with a physical disability using mobility aids
- Accommodation for service/guide dogs
- Accommodation for an Aide accompanying an individual with a disability.

It is correct to inquire as to the accommodations the individual will need for full participation.

### When advertising an event, meeting or in-service include the phrase...

Should you require accessibility accommodations for participation,  
please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at  
\_\_\_\_\_ (name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
(email) (phone)


## PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

The language and images used to portray individuals with disabilities is important in changing perceptions. **“People first”** is a language that emphasizes the person rather than the disability. The appropriate terminology always refers to the person first, the disability second. For example – a student with a learning disability, a person who is deaf. Similarly, references which cause discomfort, guilt, pity or insult are to be avoided. Similarly, words like, “suffers from”, “stricken with”, “afflicted by”, “patient”, “disease”, or “sick” suggest constant pain and sense of hopelessness.

Choose words that are non-judgmental, non-emotional and are accurate.

<b>DO USE or SAY</b> words that are affirmative and reflect positive attitudes.	<b>DO NOT USE or SAY</b> words with strong negative connotations
Individual with a disability	Handicapped (the)
Accessible parking spot or barrier-free parking spot	Handicapped parking spot
Accessible washroom or barrier-free washroom	Handicapped washroom
Person who is blind, visually impaired or person with low vision	The Blind, Visually impaired
Person who uses a wheelchair, or a wheelchair user	Confined to a wheelchair, wheel-chair bound
Person who has diabetes	Diabetic
Person with epilepsy	Epileptic
Person with a visual disability	Visually Impaired
Person who is deaf or is hard of hearing A person with a hearing loss	The Deaf, Hearing impaired
Person with an intellectual disability or a developmental disability	Mentally challenged or retarded
Person with a physical disability	Physically challenged
Person who has cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis or person with a mobility impairment	Victim of cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis etc.
Person with a communication disorder	Stutterer
A little person, a person who has a form of dwarfism	Midget

*Reference: DDSB Guidelines for Inclusive Language*



Do not use images that isolate or call special attention to people with disabilities unless appropriate to the subject matter. Instead, use images that show individuals with disabilities participating in society.

A disability may mean that some things are done in a different manner; however that does not mean the words used to describe the activity must be different. Individuals with disabilities are comfortable with the terminology used to describe daily living activities. People who use wheelchairs go for “walks”, people with visual impairments “see” what you mean.

# See the **PERSON** not the **disability**

—T Grandin

## **INTERACTIONS & COMMUNICATIONS**

Respect the independence, dignity and personal space of all individuals. We are all complex human beings; a disability is just one aspect of a person. If you are ever unsure about what to do or say with a person who has a disability, just ask. As in any new situation, everyone will feel more comfortable if you relax, and act/speak with good intent aligned with a commitment to inclusivity. Do not make assumptions. Instead seek to support and understand.

### **MEETING SOMEONE**

- Remember to be respectful of personal space and begin by introducing yourself.
- Be courteous.
- Ensure that your face is not blocked when speaking (e.g., hands, shadow lighting)
- Offer assistance and listen for instructions.
- Do not interrupt the person’s communication. Wait for them to finish their thought.
- Respect the dignity, independence, and choices of the individual.

Individuals who use wheelchairs may have a variety of disabilities. Some have use of their arms and some do not. When you meet someone, extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know. When meeting an individual who is blind, identify yourself. If you have met before, remind them of the context; they won’t have the visual cues to assist with memory retrieval.

## HAVING CONVERSATIONS

Communicate directly with the individual, not with an aide, friend or interpreter. If the individual uses a wheelchair, sit and converse at their level. If the person has a speech impairment, listen carefully and patiently. Ask them to repeat themselves if you do not understand. If the individual does not understand you when you speak, try again. If the individual is deaf or hard of hearing, follow their lead. Remember it is not necessary to speak louder or raise your voice if the individual you are speaking with is deaf or hard of hearing; in fact, it is disrespectful to do so. Individuals who are non-verbal or non-vocal may write their communications down on paper, use sign-language or technology supports.

Avoid categorizing individuals with disabilities as either super-achievers or tragic figures. Choose words that are accurate reflections of the individual. Avoid using “brave”, “inspirational” or similar unless applicable to a particular individual for their achievements.

### Tips for Communicating with Individuals Using Communication Devices

- Be informed.
- Be welcoming.
- Closed captioning on media presentations need to be checked ahead.
- Be mindful of when a communication device is in use. For example, use an FM system only when directly communicating with whole group or small group involving the requesting individual. When speaking with another small group, turn off the FM system.
- If request is for use of a board provided device, ensure that the equipment is accessed ahead and is charged.
- Be aware that use of a braille creates an additional sound element/noise in the space.
- Proximity seating to a power source may be needed by the individual.
- If using an electronic presentation, offer an electronic or paper copy.
- Ensure that information included in the presentation that is in addition to that printed into the visual is referenced. For example – provision of described audio.

Ensure everyone present is given an opportunity to be included in the conversation or activity. Let it be an individual’s decision whether or not to participate.

## SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE

Everyone has a desire to be as independent as possible. Do not automatically give what you perceive is assistance. Ask first if the person would like help. Follow the person’s cues and ask if you are not sure. Be the assistant, not the director. For example, allow a person who is blind to hold your arm and follow you. Describe the goings-on and surroundings (especially obstacles) to an individual who is blind. Only assist with moving a person’s wheelchair if given permission to do so. A mobility device/aids is part of the user’s individual space and must be respected.

Do not be offended if someone declines your offer of assistance.



## UNDERSTANDING GUIDE DOGS & SERVICE ANIMALS

Ontario Regulation 429/07 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) states that “an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability, a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the persons for reasons relating to his or her disability; or b) if the person provided a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.”

Guide and service animals are working animals; they are not pets. Never pet a guide or service dog without being invited to do so. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises that are open to the public unless prohibited by another law.

If a school receives a request from parent/guardian or staff for use of a service animal in their school, the Principal should refer to procedure 5141.

## CONSIDERING THE ENVIRONMENT

Be sensitive about setting. A noisy or dark environment, or individuals speaking simultaneously, might make it difficult for individuals with a vision, speech or hearing disability to participate in a conversation. Be aware of clear paths of travel for individuals who use mobility aids or who are blind or have low vision. Be aware that an individual with a chemical sensitivity may have a reaction to elements such as perfume, cleaning products or other strong odours.

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

As described in *Learning for All, 2013* ([edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/specced/learningforall2013.pdf](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/specced/learningforall2013.pdf)),

**“the aim of UDL, then, is to provide access to the curriculum for all students, and to assist educators in designing products and environments to make them accessible to everyone, regardless of age, skills, or situation.”**

**“UDL encourages teachers to develop a class profile and then plan, from the beginning, to provide means and pedagogical materials that are tailored to draw on the strength and meet the needs of all students and not only those with special education needs”**

Key areas for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Plan learning opportunities that allow all students to engage (eg. open and parallel tasks)
- Provide relevant and engaging materials that are responsive to the learning needs of the students
- Use a variety of assessment strategies (eg. conversations, observations and products)
- Use innovative design to provide alternative spaces and furniture
- Collaborate with students to co-construct learning goals and success criteria
- Provide individualized descriptive feedback

## ACCESSIBILITY TIPS

The following are some general suggestions for accessibility needs:

- Ensure elevator is available to accommodate accessibility needs. Work with Facilities Services to ensure that a barrier-free washroom is available on site.
- Ensure that snow and/or ice is removed to form a wide enough path to accommodate mobility aids from the accessible parking spaces to nearest entry doors.
- Monitor automatic door openers. Ensure that they are in good working condition and are switched to the “on” position working in tandem with entrance protocols.
- Check ramps for winter damage that may leave impediments to accessibility
- Review school safety procedures and ensure inclusion of any needed accessibility accommodations. (eg. Evacuation chair)
- Provide clear pathways to classrooms and/or workroom areas as well as clear access to doorways/entranceways.
- Furniture in classrooms should be arranged to accommodate movement for anyone using mobility aids. Electrical outlets and wall-mounted light switches may need to be relocated to accommodate access.
- Considerations for desk space and/or lower whiteboards may be needed.
- A portable microphone for voice projection may be needed.

**Create inclusion** – with simple mindfulness that others might have a different reality from your own.

—P. Digh

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### REFERENCES:

Accessibility Ontario [accessontario.com](http://accessontario.com)

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) [aoda.ca](http://aoda.ca)

Durham District School Board. *Guidelines for Inclusive Language*  
[ddsb.ca/AboutUs/EquityInclusiveEducation](http://ddsb.ca/AboutUs/EquityInclusiveEducation)

Ontario Human Rights Commission – *Duty to Accommodate*  
[ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability](http://ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability)

Ontario Human Rights Commission *Policy: Accessible Education for student with disabilities (2018)*  
[ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-accessible-education-students-disabilities](http://ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-accessible-education-students-disabilities)

TeachAble Project [theteachableproject.org](http://theteachableproject.org)

## ORGANIZATIONS & ASSOCIATIONS FOR SUPPORT

Please note that the following list is a starting point for understanding that there is vast support available to individuals engaging in learning and supports about accessibility. Many other organizations and associations are active in this work.

Abilities Centre – Durham Region	<a href="http://abilitiescentre.org">abilitiescentre.org</a>
Autism Ontario	<a href="http://autismontario.com/durham">autismontario.com/durham</a>
Canadian Hearing Society	<a href="http://chs.ca">chs.ca</a>
Canadian Down Syndrome Society	<a href="http://cdss.ca">cdss.ca</a>
Canadian Mental Health Association	<a href="http://ontario.cmha.ca">ontario.cmha.ca</a>
Canadian National Institute for the Blind	<a href="http://cnib.ca">cnib.ca</a>
Community Living – Ajax/Pickering/Whitby	<a href="http://cl-apw.org">cl-apw.org</a>
Community Living – Durham North	<a href="http://cldn.ca">cldn.ca</a>
Durham Down Syndrome Association	<a href="http://ddsa.ca">ddsa.ca</a>
Epilepsy Durham	<a href="http://epilepsyontario.org">epilepsyontario.org</a>
Little People of Ontario	<a href="http://lpo.on.ca">lpo.on.ca</a>
Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region	<a href="http://ldadr.on.ca">ldadr.on.ca</a>
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada	<a href="http://mssociety.ca">mssociety.ca</a>
Ontario March of Dimes	<a href="http://marchofdimes.ca">marchofdimes.ca</a>
Ontario Brain Injury Association	<a href="http://obia.on.ca">obia.on.ca</a>
Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth	<a href="http://rfecydurham.com">rfecydurham.com</a>
Spinal Cord Injury Ontario	<a href="http://sciontario.org">sciontario.org</a>
Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Ontario	<a href="http://tourette.ca">tourette.ca</a>
VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children	<a href="http://voicefordeafkids.com">voicefordeafkids.com</a>

The Accessibility Committee is comprised of representation from all stakeholders in the board including but not limited to Inclusive Student Services, Equity, Business, Human Resource Services, Facilities Services, Health and Safety, Union Representation, Special Education Advisory Committee, Trustee.

The follow documents are available on the Accessibility page on ddsb.ca.

- DDSB Accessibility Multi-Year Plan – Ignite Accessibility
- DDSB Annual Ignite Accessibility Annual Status Report
- DDSB Accessibility Guide 2019



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