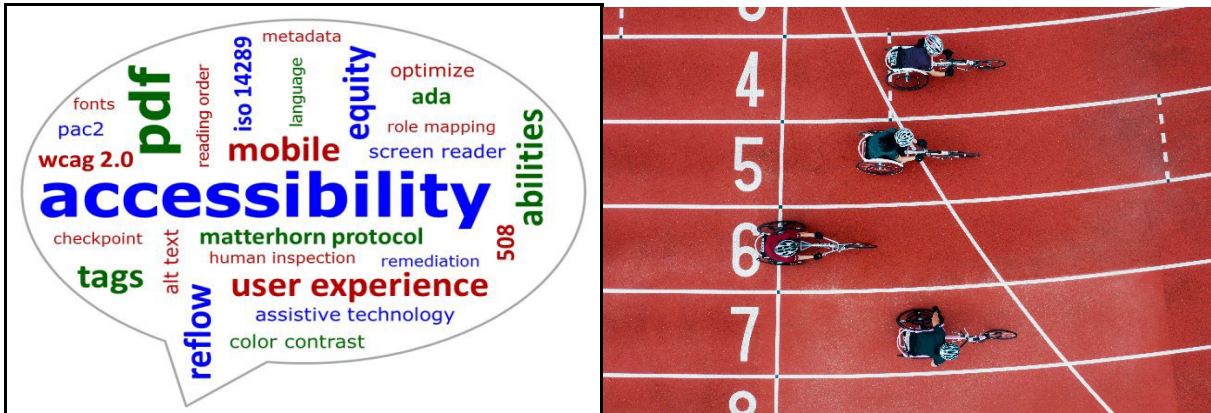




School District 43 (Coquitlam)

Accessibility Plan



Introduction

About Our School District Community

School District No.43 (Coquitlam) is the third largest school district in BC with approximately 4,300 employees (including 2500 teachers) and 32,000 students in 70 schools featuring forty-seven elementary schools (kindergarten to grade 5), fourteen middle schools (grades 6-8) and nine secondary schools (grades 9-12). In addition, students are also served by distributed learning programs and alternate programs.

We serve the communities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, and the villages of Anmore and Belcarra. Our six-year completion rates are well above the provincial average and some of the highest in BC. We are proud to run the largest **International Education** program in Canada for the K-12 sector.

Programs in School District No.43 (Coquitlam) include K-12, online, international, adult and continuing education and a wide range of specialized educational programs and services:

- Gifted education programs
- International Baccalaureate
- Language programs: French Immersion, Mandarin Bilingual and ESL
- Indigenous Education
- Montessori and Reggio-influenced programs
- Community Hubs and Community Schools
- Career and Trades programs

The ongoing work of the Safe Schools Task Force, Provincial Expect Respect & A Safe Education training and the explicit teaching of Digital Citizenship continue to enhance learning and support the development of social responsibility in students.

Coquitlam Continuing Education is the community education school for School District No.43 (Coquitlam) offering diverse and comprehensive learning opportunities for all. We also have Open Learning, Apex & Encompass (distributed learning programs) offering K-9, 10-12 and adult students unique educational options.

Board Of Education Members include:

- Michael Thomas (Chair)
- Carol Brodie (Vice Chair)
- Craig Woods
- Jennifer Blatherwick
- Chuck Denison
- Zoe Royer
- Lisa Park
- Kerri Palmer Isaak
- Christine Pollock

District Leadership Team Members include:

- Superintendent of Schools & CEO Patricia Gartland
- Secretary-Treasurer and CFO Randy Manhas

- Assistant Superintendents Carey Chute, Nadine Tambellini, Gerald Shong, Robert Zambrano, Paul McNaughton and Stephen Whiffin
- Executive Director Facilities & Planning Services Ivano Cecchini
- Executive Director Human Resources Michelle Daycock
- Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Corporate & Financial Services Nita Mikl
- Assistant Director, Communications & Community Relations Ken Hoff

Partner Groups include:

- Coquitlam Principals’ & Vice Principals’ Association
- Coquitlam Teachers’ Association
- Canadian Union of Public Employees - Local 561
- District Parent Advisory Council
- Student Leadership Council

A Message from the Superintendent

School District 43 (Coquitlam) is committed to increasing success for all learners through the development of inclusive learning environments as stated in the district strategic document, Directions 2025. This commitment extends to all learning and Working environments across the district as we provide equitable opportunities to all students and staff. Our community is incredibly diverse, and this is reflected in School District No.43 (Coquitlam). The district will be developing this Three-Year Accessibility Plan to further support disability and inclusion initiatives across the district. The plan will identify system needs, priorities, and action plans, through the collection of feedback from our learning community by the newly formed Accessibility Advisory Committee. The information collected by the committee, in addition to identified measurable actions in the Three- Year Accessibility Plan from the Accessibility Act, will enhance the equity of access to programming and our facilities. Supporting equal opportunities for persons with diverse abilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access is a priority for School District No.43 (Coquitlam) as our mission to ensure quality learning opportunities for all students of all ages continues.

We acknowledge that accessibility is crucial for those with disabilities within the community. We are dedicated to promoting the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to increase accessibility to our facilities, equity in access to services, and ease of use. We pledge to make continual progress toward creating an environment that supports all students, faculty, and the greater school community through the initiatives in this Three-Year Accessibility Plan.

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the Coquitlam School District operates on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the kwikwəłəm (Kwkwetlem First Nation). We thank the kwikwəłəm who continue to live on these lands and care for them, along with the waters and all that is above and below.

Definitions

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

- **Accessibility Advisory Committee:** An official group formed by one or more organizations in collaboration with people with disabilities, to create an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism.
- **Accessibility Plan:** A plan developed by the Accessibility Committees that identifies barriers and describes actions for their removal.
- **Barrier:** Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society. This includes physical/environmental, attitudinal, information, communications, policy or practice, and technological barriers.

Types of Barriers:

- Physical/Environmental Barrier:** A barrier resulting from architectural design, outdoor spaces, which can include, certain smells or sounds, internal lighting, configuration of class and meeting rooms, the size and width of halls and doorways.
 - Attitudinal Barrier:** A barrier that arises from the attitudes of staff, students, and the school community, including discriminatory behaviours and a lack of disability awareness.
 - Communication Barrier:** A barrier that arises when communicating or delivering information in person, by telephone or online, interacting with teachers, 9 peers, receptionists, or other staff, and receiving training.
 - Information Barrier:** A barrier that arises when using inaccessible signage, fonts brochures, forms, manuals, websites, fax transmissions, equipment labels, computer screens.
 - Policy or Practice Barrier:** Rules, regulations and protocols that prevent a person from performing the essential requirements of their job, class work or participating in society. Policy, practice, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.
 - Technological Barrier:** Barriers that result from the use of inaccessible devices, platforms, software, programs, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones, and switches, including the lack of assistive technologies.
- **Disability:** The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities describes persons with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
 - **Impairment:** A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.

- **Accessibility Working Committee:** An official group formed within our School District No.43 (Coquitlam) organization to assist in gathering information for the Advisory committee and acting on direction from the Superintendent of Schools.

Framework Guiding our Work

Our work builds on global, national, provincial and school district specific actions to promote and support accessibility for those with disabilities. Our vision is to provide inclusive and responsive learning environments that recognize the value of diversity and provide equity of access, opportunity and outcome for students with disabilities.

Global Context

United Nations In recent years, there has been an emphasis on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion within the workplace and within the larger community. In 2006, the United Nations led efforts to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2010, Canada ratified the CRPD 10 and described the CPRD as follows:

“The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human right treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the Convention of the rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law.”

Canadian Context and Legislation

In 1985, disability was included in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms” and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities were included in the federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) became enforced in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities.

The Accessible Canada Act has seven focus areas, and was developed based on the following guiding principles:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must consider the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting 11 forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities.
6. People with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures.

7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for people with disabilities.

BC Context and Legislation - Accessible BC Act

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 2021, and initially the accessibility planning requirements only applied to provincial government organizations.

The Accessible British Columbia Regulation, under the Accessible British Columbia Act, came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations, and 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.

Principles of the Accessible BC Act

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an accessibility plan. The Definitions are adapted from the foundational document BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation.

- a. Adaptability:** Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.
- b. Collaboration:** Promoting accessible communities for those with disabilities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play.
- c. 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.
- d. Inclusion:** All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
- e. Self-Determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
- f. 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 with disabilities who interact with the Organization.

Our Commitment to Accessibility

At School District No.43 (Coquitlam) we are committed to providing an environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our very diverse community. We recognize the importance of conscientious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are removed, and accessibility is increased. Our school district is committed to Working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity.

To achieve this goal, we have outlined the following commitments:

- Preview successes and barriers already discussed within our Accessibility Working Committee.
- Engage with staff, community members and people with disabilities in the development and review of its accessibility plan.
- Ensure that our school board policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility for people with disabilities and that they won't impinge the directives of our committees.
- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and community members with disabilities.
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities in our school communities.

Our Approach

School District No.43 (Coquitlam) believes that all members of our communities have the right to be treated with respect and dignity, given the opportunity to participate and have access to learning. We believe in the provincial principles of accessibility, adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination, and universal design.

In April 2023, we began the process of establishing an Accessibility Advisory Committee and formed an Accessibility Working Committee from within the School District No.43 (Coquitlam) departments to conduct the following:

- Appointing members for our Accessibility Working Committee
- Working with our partner groups for applications for members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Discussing the creation and distribution of simple surveys to review current strengths and barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities
- Holding discussions to assist with priorities for education or direction
- Developing a district-wide feedback tool
- Prioritization of actions to be taken
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation process

Our focus is to work from our current strengths and to identify areas for improvement in accessibility for people with disabilities in our community. Our approach is to collaborate, to meaningfully communicate, to train for sustained improvements. We want to be the **best** at getting better in all accessibility needs.

About our Committees

Purpose of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee to assist with identifying and preventing barriers for individuals with disabilities in interacting with the organization. The purpose of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to work collaboratively to assess and to improve community accessibility, focusing on the experiences of individuals with disabilities. The Accessibility Advisory Committee also advises the district Administrator/Board on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory and other barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

Recruitment of the Accessibility Advisory Committee Members and Membership

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will function alongside the Accessibility Working Group to identify, to reduce, and to remove barriers, and to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

The Committee shall review feedback received through the District and shall be consulted in the Working Group's development and updating of the District's Accessibility Plan.

Our Consultation Process

Barrier Identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Committees are using the following methods to identify barriers:

Audit of policies and practices:

A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities conducted by members of the Accessibility Working Committee.

Completion date: Fall 2024

General Accessibility Surveys:

Departments were asked to give overall accomplishments and barriers for people with disabilities. Formal assessments for each site's accessibility in a variety of areas will be developed by the Accessibility Working Committee.

Completion Date: Winter 2024

District Accessibility Feedback Tool:

A feedback tool was developed and posted to the district website. Information about the tool was shared with district and school stakeholders (i.e., students, staff, outside professionals and parents/guardians).

Completion date: Fall 2024

Accessibility Working Committee:

The Accessible Working Committee reviews the input and feedback from the survey, assessment, and feedback tool. The Committee collaborated to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan and possible next steps to be shared within our other committee structures for people with disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Committee:

The Accessible Advisory Committee reviews the input and feedback from the survey, assessment, and feedback tool. The Committee will suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan for people with disabilities. This was shared with our superintendent of schools.

How to Give Feedback

Feedback Mechanism Development

School District No.43 (Coquitlam) has developed an online feedback tool regarding the identification of barriers for those with disabilities that includes a series of questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff, and members of the school district community can complete. The tool is posted to the main page of the district website and an information announcement about the tool has been provided to students, staff, and parents/guardians. There is also an option for people to upload a video, voice recording or photo(s). The following is the content of the online Accessibility Feedback Tool that will continue to be available to identify current or future accessibility issues.

Report an Accessibility Barrier

School District No.43 (Coquitlam) wants to learn about specific barriers that people with disabilities face when they are trying to:

- Access a school program, building or school information
- Receive a service or support

The responses to the questions below will be reviewed by our Accessibility Advisory Committee for their consideration.

Please fill in the appropriate sections on our survey which includes:

- the date the barrier was experienced.
- the location the barrier was experienced
- any information on what you were trying to access with specific details
- the barriers you experienced- be specific
- any recommendations for what would make it better
- any files to provide additional information (e.g., video, voice recording, photos)

We ask that you provide your contact information should we require more details regarding your feedback.

Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

Key Discussion Themes - Accessibility Accomplishments

Information & Communication Accomplishments

1. Supporting 1 to 1 technology programs and Augmentative Communication Systems in schools for those students with disabilities.
2. Providing technology to families of students with disabilities who can't afford it.
3. Hosting transition meetings for families of students with disabilities.
4. Collaborating with multiple outside support agencies who support students with disabilities.
5. Implementing the New CB-IEP – parent and student profile.
6. Creating tools for meaning collaboration for students with disabilities: School Base Team and Classroom Reviews.
7. Creating key supports for students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders via the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder project.
8. Hosting a rich district site that provides many resources to support students with disabilities and employees who support them.

Attitudinal Accomplishments

1. Promoting the access and universal supports for students with disabilities with workshops.
2. Assisting with access points in the curriculum for students with disabilities.
3. Creating work experience and paid employment opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities.
4. Supporting a district wide 3 on 3 basketball program hosted at Heritage Woods Secondary for students with disabilities.
5. Non-Violent Crisis Intervention support with understanding behaviours.

Collaborative Accomplishments

1. Educating new hires on Administrative Procedures on Race Relations and Workplace Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment; the Standards of Conduct; as well as training in Harassment Awareness and Anti-Racism supporting those with disabilities.
2. Training all administrator and management staff on the duty to accommodate process for those employees with disabilities.
3. Providing supports to employees with disabilities through the Employee Family Assistance Program.
4. Providing supports to teachers with disabilities through the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Health and Wellness Program.
5. Providing supports to support staff with disabilities through a Joint Early Intervention Program.
6. Devoting a District Health and Wellness team to assist employees with disabilities putting supports via the accommodation process as well as providing ergonomic assessments to ensure workstations and work environment, i.e., lighting, meet employee needs.

Physical and Architectural Accomplishments

1. Painting access points for students with visual impairments.
2. Involving Learning Services staff on Design teams for planning for students with disabilities.
3. Providing sound fields for students with hearing impairments.
4. Assisting with self-regulation classrooms and pathways for students with disabilities.

5. Maintaining at least one accessible entrance / exit to school buildings. Inclusivity is important to School District No.43 (Coquitlam) and measures are taken based on students' and staff needs.
6. Recognizing that some of the challenges are related to School District No.43 (Coquitlam) older buildings which were built to different older buildings codes. Current codes have expanded and detailed measures to meet accessibility requirements. In most cases, it's not physically feasible to upgrade an older building to accommodate current codes requirements for accessible. designs. Staff will always explore alternative measures to meet the need.
7. Working with multiple stakeholders to accommodate students and/or staff needs.
8. Working to have new buildings meet / or exceed the current building codes requirements for accessibility at the time they were built. School District No.43 (Coquitlam) understanding of inclusion extends beyond physical accessibility.
9. Continuing to improve on schools' design to incorporate best practice inclusive features in new schools such as enhanced acoustical performance, universal washrooms, and features to help with sensory disabilities.
10. Including accessible features in all new PEP (Playground Equipment Program) projects. School District No.43 (Coquitlam) is Working to update the facilities handbook and related administrative process to promote adding accessible features in PAC (Parent Advisory council) initiated playgrounds' projects.

Technology Accomplishments

1. Equitable access to hardware and software tools to aid in tasks such as reading and writing of documents and web pages for students with disabilities:
 - a. District support of Bring your Own Device (BYOD) programs at Middle and Secondary.
 - b. District support of subsidized pricing for devices at Elementary.
2. Access for all staff and students to the Microsoft Office 365 suite with fully integrated accessibility tools (speech to text, language translation, keyboard/mouse accessibility, vision assistance, etc.) and applications (e.g. Edge browser and Immersive Reader).
3. District technology and STEAM support teachers providing pedagogical support for all educators including focused goals on UDL and specific assistive technology tools (noted above).
4. District Technology Coordinator focused on Digital Literacy and Assistive Technologies to constantly increase awareness of tools and coordinate access to resources for students with disabilities.
5. Live Streaming Board meetings for equitable access for those with disabilities
6. Effective advocacy for assistive technology tools to be accessible to students with disabilities during Ministry Numeracy and Literacy assessments.
7. SET BC Partnership to support educators and students with disabilities throughout the district with access to tools and support structures.
8. District focused teams (Speech Language Pathologist, Inclusion Support Team, etc.) with a focus on accessibility for students with disabilities.

District Policy and Procedures Accomplishments

1. Having Learning Services Coordinators who provide programs and training to support teachers Working with students with disabilities in the areas of:
 - Mental Health and well being

- Social and Emotional Learning
 - Trauma informed practices
 - Restorative practices
 - Mobility training for the visually impaired
2. Providing work experience training for students with intellectual disabilities.
 3. Accessing 35-hour Education Assistant's for middle and secondary students with disabilities requiring assistance to participate in extra opportunities outside the school day.
 4. Creation of field trip and other permission forms which highlight the need to provide considerations for students with disabilities.
 5. Eliminating segregated behaviour programs.
 6. Expanding the Inclusion Support Team to assist sites on their inclusion of complex learners.

Key Discussion Themes - Accessibility Barriers

Information & Communication Barriers

Continued issues with WIFI and cell phone dead spots which limits opportunities for people with disabilities.

Attitudinal Barriers

Continued need to expand the knowledge base for and workshops for classroom teacher role with support students with diverse abilities.

Physical and Architectural Barriers

Continued challenges for those people with disabilities:

- Category A students and emergency evacuation plans
- Multi-level schools and limited elevators and/or lifts
- Lack of evac-u-track systems in all schools

Technological Barriers and Procedures Barriers

1. District and school webpages content is limited regarding accessibility for those with disabilities:
 - Multimedia without captions or transcript
 - Low contrast (inability to distinguish text from background)
 - Use of overly complex/advanced language
 - Unstructured content (no visible headings, sections, topics, etc.)
 - Images of text (not readable with a text reader)
 - Inability to navigate within a page of content
2. There is a need to support those people with disabilities who require:
 - more Augmentative Communication Systems for students with communication challenges
 - more training and support for Education Assistant's in the use of Office 365 assistive learning tools
 - more information and data on how assistive tools are supporting School District No.43 (Coquiltam) employees and students with disabilities

3. More employee exposure and awareness is needed in:
 - the concept of Universal Design for Learning and assistive technology tools available to support students with disabilities
4. More parent and caretaker exposure and awareness are needed around:
 - the purpose and value of technology-based assistive learning tools for all students with disabilities

Our Three-Year Plan- *INPROGRESS SEPTEMBER 2023*

Overview

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures that School District No.43 (Coquitlam) will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school district community. The plan is based on the Accessibility Principles of Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Inclusion, Self-Determination, and Universal Design, as set out in the Accessible B.C. Act.

Accessibility Priorities (determine and describe priority areas that have been identified as action items. These could be identified by barrier types.)

- Promote Educational Awareness around Accessibility
- Process for Collecting, Analyzing and Responding to Feedback on Accessibility Issues
- Analyse of Site Accessibility and Accessibility Policy

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Advisory Committee meets three times a year to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation for increased accessibility for those with disabilities. The committee will ensure the following steps are taken regarding the Three-Year Accessibility Plan:

1. Prepare minutes on meeting discussions to be sent to the Superintendent of Schools.
2. Review and update the Three-Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

How to Give Us Feedback

In addition to the public availability of the plan, School District No.43 (Coquitlam) will continue to post revisions/updates on the progress of the Three-Year Accessibility Plan on the district website. Accessible formats of the plan available upon request. Questions, comments or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to:

Paul McNaughton
Assistant Superintendent
[Accessibility Feedback](#)

Appendices

Appendix A: About Disability

Types of Disability and Functional Limitations

A person's disability may make it physically or cognitively challenging to perform everyday tasks such as operating a keyboard, reading a sign, differentiating colours, distinguishing sounds, climbing stairs, grasping small items, remembering words, or doing arithmetic. There are many kinds of disabilities, including physical, sensory, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning. Disabilities can be visible or invisible.

Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Some have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a visual disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with visual disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Unless it is an emergency, only touch the person if you have been given permission.
- If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Service animals are Working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so. Don't just assume the individual can't see you.
- When entering a room, show the individual to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
- Ensure you say good-bye prior to leaving the individual.
- Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

Hard of Hearing and Deafness

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating. While some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating, others may also use email, pagers, TTY telephone service or Bell Canada Relay Service. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Address the person, not their interpreter.

- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example a pen and paper.
- Keep your face clearly visible when speaking.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Service animals are Working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- Any personal (e.g., financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing
- Be patient. Communication for people who are deaf is different because their first language may not be English. It may be American Sign Language (ASL).
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.
- Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where the person can see your face.

Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing, or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to the person rather than someone who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.
- Unless it is an emergency, refrain from touching any assistive devices, including wheelchairs.
- Provide the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc).

Intellectual Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one’s ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with intellectual disabilities:

- As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect. Don’t assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Make sure the person understands what you’ve said.
- If you can’t understand what’s being said, ask again.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Be polite and patient.
- Speak directly to the person, not to someone who is with the person.

Learning or Cognitive Disabilities

Learning or cognitive disabilities can result in a host of different communications difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with the person's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with learning disabilities or disabilities:

- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Recognize that some people with communication difficulties use augmentative communication systems such as Signed English and Picture Exchange System.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- Speak normally and clearly, and directly to the person.
- Take some time — people with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- If you're dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Be courteous and patient and the person will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.

Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You won't know that the person has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with mental health disabilities:

- Treat people with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring and listen to persons with a mental health disability and their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.
- Take the person with a mental health disability seriously, and work with them to meet their needs.

Speech and Language Disabilities

Some people have communication challenges. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards, sign language or other assistive devices. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with speech and language disabilities:

- Just because a person has one disability doesn't mean they have another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking; make no assumption they have an intellectual disability as well. If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'.
- Take some time. Be patient and polite and give the person whatever time they need to get their point across.

- Allow the individual to finish their sentences themselves without interruption.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Deaf-Blind Disabilities

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deafblind:

- Make no assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Some deaf-blind people have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- A deaf-blind person is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Speak directly to the person, as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach the person who is deaf-blind.
- Don’t touch service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Unless it’s an emergency, refrain from touching a deaf-blind person without permission.

Appendix B: Suggested References/Resources

Global, Canadian and Local Accessibility Context and Legislation

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>
- Canada Ratifies UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/rights_disabilities-droits_handicapees.aspx?lang=eng
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/rights_disabilities-droits_handicapees.aspx?lang=eng
- British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc-government/accessible-bc/disability-consultation/2019-consultation/framework-for-accessibility-legislation.pdf>
- Accessible British Columbia Act
<https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019>

- BC Accessibility Legislation Plan Language Summary
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/accessibility/legislation/summary#01>

Accessibility Planning Resources for Schools and School Boards

- BC Accessibility Hub
<https://bcaccessibilityhub.ca/>
- Universal Design
<https://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>
- Special Education Technology BC (SET BC)
<https://www.setbc.org/>
- Accessible Resource Centre – BC
<https://www.arc-bc.org/>
- Standards Council of Canada
<https://www.scc.ca/en>
- B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design
<https://www.scc.ca/en/standardsdb/standards/20064>
- A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces (Rick Hansen Foundation)
<https://www.rickhansen.com/sites/default/files/2020-03/sch-35913-guide-creating-accessible-play-spacesen2020web.pdf>
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
<https://www.cnib.ca/en?region=bc>
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
<https://www.chha.ca/>
- Canadian Hearing Services
<https://www.chs.ca/accessibility>
- Auditory Outreach Provincial Resource Program
<https://www.sd47.bc.ca/auditoryoutreach/Pages/default.aspx#/=>
- Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program (Complex Needs)
<https://www.inclusionoutreach.ca/>
- Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada
<https://mssociety.ca/>

- Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
<https://www.ldac-acta.ca/>
- Brain Injury Canada
<https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/>
- Spinal Cord Injury Canada
<https://sci-can.ca/>
- Tourette Canada
<https://tourette.ca/>
- Kelty Mental Health (BC Children's Hospital)
<https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>
- Gifted Children's Association of BC
<https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>

Appendix C: Terms of Reference

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Vision

School District No.43 (Coquitlam) is dedicated to inclusion, accessibility and equity for staff, students and all those who interact with the District. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will assist the District by ensuring the spirit of “true inclusion” is at the heart of its work to improve the experiences of people with disabilities.

Mandate

The Committee shall function alongside the Accessibility Working Group to identify, reduce, and remove barriers, and improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The Committee shall review feedback received through the District and shall be consulted in the Working Group's development and updating of the District's Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will function alongside the Accessibility Working Group to identify, to reduce, and to remove barriers, and to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

The Committee shall review feedback received through the District and shall be consulted in the Working Group's development and updating of the District's Accessibility Plan.

Membership

The Committee has a maximum of 10 members selected via the group's selection processes and using the terms of reference provided:

- Assistant Superintendent (1)*
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Representative (1)
- Coquitlam Teachers' Association (CTA) Representative (1)
- Student Leadership Council (SLC) Representative (1)
- Parent/guardian/caregiver of a School District 43 student (1)
- Coquitlam Principals and Vice-Principal's Association (CPVPA) Member (1)
- Community Partner Representatives (3)
- Indigenous Community Representative (1)

*An Assistant Superintendent will be the liaison and chair of both the Accessibility Advisory Group and the Accessibility Working Committee.

Background

To the extent possible, the members of the Committee should be selected in accordance with the following goals as detailed in Section 9 of the *Accessible British Columbia Act*:

- (a) At least half of the members are
 - i. Persons with disabilities, or
 - ii. Individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities
- (b) The members described in paragraph (a) reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia
- (c) At least one of the members is an Indigenous person
- (d) The Committee reflects the diversity of persons in British Columbia

Members are expected to:

- attend the Committee meetings, act with integrity and honesty, be tolerant of others' opinions, and interact with others in a respectful and inclusive manner.
- excuse themselves from any Committee discussions or activities which may be viewed as a conflict of interest.

Scope of Work

As detailed in Section 9 of the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, the Committee shall report to the Superintendent:

- (a) to identify barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization, and
- (b) to advise the organization on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

Note: The responsibilities of the Accessibility Advisory Group are not to supersede or duplicate the work of the collective agreements, existing committees in the district or partner groups.

Meetings

The Committee shall meet 3 times during each school year (September – June). Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed.

Reporting

The Accessibility Advisory Committee reports to the Superintendent of Schools and provides feedback to the Accessibility Working Committee. Minutes from each of the Committee's meetings shall be presented to the Accessibility Working Committee through the Chair.

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the Committee and advice will be provided to the Accessibility Working Committee.