



# ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2023–2026

**PROGRESS TO DATE**  
JULY 2025





## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that Surrey Schools resides on the traditional, unceded and shared territories of Coast Salish peoples: The ḡic̓əḡ — Katzie, the q'w̓a:ḡł'əḡ — Kwantlen and the SEMYOME — Semiahmoo First Nations: the stewards of this land since time immemorial.

We highlight this history knowing that relationships and partnerships based on respect with the Indigenous peoples of this land are important for truth and reconciliation.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the launch of the first Surrey Schools Accessibility Plan in August 2023, measurable steps have been taken on all key priorities of the Surrey Schools Accessibility Plan toward fostering inclusion and accessibility for all students, staff, and community members. Guided by the Accessibility Working Group and in collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Surrey Schools has embraced “Nothing About Us, Without Us” philosophy as we identify and address barriers and promote equity district-wide.

During this time, public input collected through two online surveys, was reviewed by the Accessibility Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee and has guided the group’s work since August 2023. This feedback will shape the next iteration of the Surrey Schools accessibility plan.

### Key Progress Highlights:

- **Priority 1: Accessible Recruitment and Hiring Practices**

The Accessibility Working Group and Accessibility Advisory Committee identified the need for foundational learning about inclusive hiring to advance this priority. A new e-learning module was developed to support inclusive hiring, addressing six key barriers and providing actionable strategies for hiring managers. As this priority was expanded from a review and update of recruiting/hiring practices to the creation of a detailed training resource, it was extended into Year 2 of the plan.

- **Priority 2: Accessible Schools and District Facilities**

Surrey Schools adopted the BC CAISE School Site Accessibility Assessment Tool to evaluate school and district sites. A site leader training and implementation plan will be created in fall 2025 with implementation planned for spring 2026.

- **Priority 3: A Common Understanding of Accessibility**

A four-part animated video series was created and widely shared to build a common understanding of the terms accessibility, disability, barriers, and inclusion. These videos have received positive feedback and are being used across the province. National AccessAbility Week was celebrated through student-designed posters and district-wide engagement. The Accessibility Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee will continue their ongoing work to promote these resources.

## Looking Ahead:

Focus during Year 3 will be to implement the site accessibility assessments and developing the next multi-year Accessibility Plan. Additionally, efforts will begin on a plan to measure the employment of persons with disabilities within the district.



Colin Reid, Accessibility Working Group Co-Chair



Sheri Hoegler, Accessibility Working Group Co-Chair



## THE WORKING GROUP AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In August 2023, the first Surrey Schools Accessibility Plan – a collaborative effort of the Accessibility Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee – was shared through a new Accessibility page on the Surrey Schools website. Along with the plan, two online feedback surveys were added to the Accessibility page to collect feedback on barriers that may be present within the district and feedback on the Accessibility Plan itself.

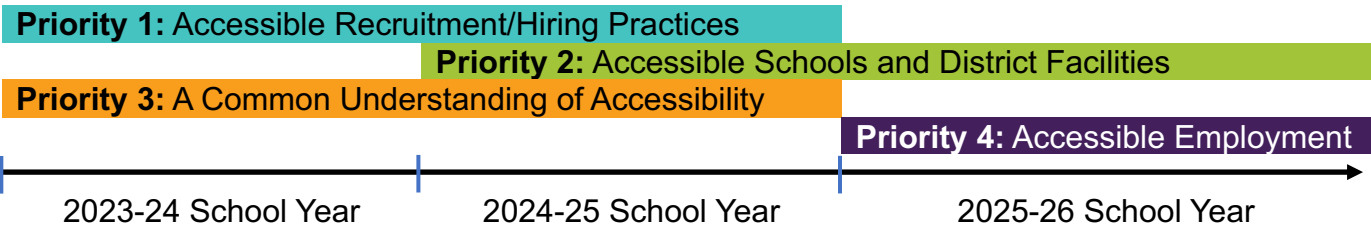
Both the Accessibility Working Group and the Accessibility Advisory Committee began holding regular monthly meetings in November 2023. Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, members of the Working Group attended Advisory Committee meetings to share progress updates, seek feedback on projects underway, review incoming feedback and to collaborate on how to action priorities. The Working Group created several sub-groups to focus their attention on one specific priority or action of the plan to ensure progress on the plan's various initiatives continued simultaneously.

The Advisory Committee and Working Group progressed on several initiatives in the 2024-25 school year. In addition, a co-chair model was introduced to include representation of both educational and operational school district leadership on the Working Group and Advisory Committee. This helped incorporate a broad range of school district perspectives in relation to the plan's Priorities and Actions.

There has been minimal turnover on the Advisory Committee and Working Group, with membership of the two groups remaining largely consistent. Participants are deeply committed to fulfilling Surrey Schools' commitment to fostering inclusivity and accessibility for all students, staff and community members.



# PRIORITY TIMELINE



## HIGHLIGHTS AND PROGRESS

### Priority 1: Accessible Recruitment/Hiring Practices

In spring 2024, as sub-groups of the Working Group continued to focus on each of the Priorities and Actions for Year 1 of the plan, the timeline for Priority 1 was extended to support a more in-depth review of recruitment and hiring practices. The Advisory Committee supported the extension into Year 2 ensuring appropriate consultation and collaboration prior to making any change to the timelines set out in the Accessibility Plan.

The groups recognized the need for training to secure broad-based understanding and support for the actions related to this priority. With a specific focus on ensuring support for accessible recruitment and hiring practices, a Working Group sub-group created an e-learning module called Accessible Recruitment and Hiring Practices. Hiring managers will be able to utilize this module as an interactive resource to ensure these practices are carried out in an inclusive and accessible manner. This module covers six key barriers to accessibility in recruitment whereby participants learn about each barrier and key strategies to address them.

### Attitudinal Barriers

**Attitudinal Barriers are..**

When people think and act based upon false assumptions, such as:

- Making decisions about people with disabilities without including them
- Not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce

### STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THIS BARRIER:

- ✓ Use inclusive language in job postings and emphasize the value of diverse perspectives
- ✓ Use gender neutral pronouns
- ✓ Where possible, emphasize transferable skills over specific experience
- ✓ Highlight the organization's commitment to accessibility and accommodation in the interviews

A screenshot from the Surrey Schools Accessible Recruitment and Hiring Practices e-learning module – to be released in the Fall 2025.

## Priority 2: Accessible Schools and District Facilities

A key focus for Year 2 of the Accessibility Plan included assessing accessibility barriers at schools and district sites. Upon careful review, the Working Group accepted the Advisory Committee's recommendation to use and/or adapt the B.C. Council of Administrators of Inclusive Support in Education's (BC CAISE) School Site Accessibility Assessment Tool to accomplish this priority.

While the planning stage for these assessments occurred during spring 2025, the Working Group consulted with the Advisory Committee to extend the timeline for the implementation of the site accessibility assessments into Year 3. Extending the timeline for this priority will help ensure a smooth implementation of its associated actions.

Commencing in fall 2025, the Working Group is selecting sections of the tool for implementation and will develop a training plan for Principals, Vice Principals and site managers. The Working Group aims to obtain baseline information on school and district site accessibility during Year 3, with the goal of initiating these site assessments in early 2026. The information collected will assist the Working Group as they develop a plan to communicate the accessibility features of all sites to the public.

## Priority 3: A Common Understanding of Accessibility

Similar to Priority 1, the work on Priority 3 was also extended into Year 2 to ensure a successful implementation. Two sub-groups of the Working Group focused on separate actions of Priority 3: Creating a Common Understanding of Accessibility. One sub-group worked to create a four-part video series to help foster a common understanding of the terms "accessibility", "disability", "barriers" and "inclusion", while another sub-group worked on a plan to promote National AccessAbility Week throughout the Surrey Schools community.



## BUILDING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING: THE ANIMATED VIDEO SERIES

The Working Group chose to create new videos to ensure the content reflected Surrey Schools' vision and values, as well as the valuable recommendations of the Advisory Committee. Scripts, storyboards and animated videos were created in close collaboration with the Advisory Committee.



A screenshot from Understanding Accessibility, one of the four Surrey Schools animated videos.

Furthering Surrey Schools' commitment to "Nothing About Us, Without Us", voiceover artists with disabilities were sought out for all four videos. The voiceover artists and the Accessibility Advisory Committee are acknowledged at the end of each video for the important role they played in creating these videos.

In early 2025, the four animated videos were shared with all schools, all district departments and with the broader Surrey Schools community with resounding success and positive feedback. Since their release, these videos have been viewed thousands of times, have been shared across the province and are being utilized by many other school districts and organizations.

## NATIONAL ACCESSABILITY WEEK



One of the finalist's poster entry.

During Year 1, the Working Group coordinated a student-designed poster contest to recognize and celebrate National AccessAbility Week. Elementary and secondary students were invited to design posters highlighting inclusive and caring practices in our schools and our community related to accessibility. Participation from both elementary schools and secondary schools was high and members of the Advisory Committee and Working Group had a hard time selecting the finalists. The finalists' posters were featured in a Surrey Schools news article which was shared on the Surrey Schools website and through social media during National AccessAbility Week.

In addition to the student-designed poster contest, a handout and district-wide memo were created and sent across the district to provide suggestions and information about the many library resources and online resources that could be used to promote accessibility and celebrate the valuable contributions of people with disabilities during National AccessAbility Week. Given the success of the 2024 poster contest, posters were once again used to promote National AccessAbility Week in 2025. Through a suggestion from the Advisory Committee, the Working Group created posters which featuring content from the four animated accessibility videos and included links to additional resources related to National AccessAbility Week. These posters were sent out to all schools and all district departments to recognize and promote National AccessAbility Week.

## FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC

Through regular reviews of the feedback received from two online accessibility surveys, the Working Group and Advisory Committee identified several common themes. Attitudinal and environmental barriers emerged as a prevalent theme. This feedback will continue to be discussed and will be considered as the Working Group engages in the creation of the next Surrey Schools Accessibility Plan during the 2025-2026 school year.

While reviewing the public's feedback, the Working Group and Advisory Committee identified that the public may not be aware of the projects that are currently underway to remove barriers to accessibility in schools and district facilities. Both groups noted that an increased focus on communicating the district's accessibility work may be beneficial in the future.



The 2025 Surrey Schools National AccessAbility Week poster.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Moving into Year 3 of the Accessibility Plan, the Working Group will focus on the implementation of the site accessibility assessment tool. After training has been provided on specific sections of the tool, Principals, Vice-Principals and managers will lead small site-based teams through the assessments. These teams will be provided with clear instructions and support as needed to ensure accurate and consistent assessments of their sites. The assessment results will be provided to the Working Group for review.

Year 3 will also see the Accessibility Working Group partnering with the Advisory Committee to prepare the next multi-year iteration of the Surrey Schools Accessibility Plan. This will occur alongside the Working Group's focus on Priority 4: Measuring the number of persons with disabilities employed by Surrey Schools.

“We are proud of the progress we have made, and we feel it is important to acknowledge that it would not have been possible to do this work in a meaningful way without the help of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.”

– The Surrey Schools Accessibility Working Group