# Accessibility (A11Y[[1]](#footnote-1)) Update August 2024

This report highlights the key activities of the Accessibility Office at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) from September 2023 to August 2024.

## Accessibility Policies and Plans

During this period, the Accessibility Office worked on the following policies:

1. The Student Use of Service Animals in Schools policy review report, Phase 1 (work plan), was submitted to the GPC on May 29, 2024, and was approved by the Board on June 19, 2024.
2. The new Digital Accessible Documents Procedure is currently in development. This PR (Procedure) will ensure inclusion and compliance of digital communications for public facing content.

Preparation work has started on the following items which are scheduled for future review:

1. The next review of P069: Accessibility Policy is scheduled for 2027/2028 per our Board approved policy review schedule. The policy was recently updated to include provisions for training and emergency response for people with disabilities.
2. TDSB's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2025 will undergo a mandatory 5 Year Review starting in January 2025.

## Information and Communication

In consultation with the Web Team, the Accessibility Office regularly conducts accessibility audits of content on the TDSB website. Where content is not accessible, we contact, invite, train, and provide direction in making public facing communications accessible. The Office provides digital remediation on a continuous basis.

## Employment Standards

The Employee Services Department is currently undergoing a significant organizational transformation and as part of its new People and Culture strategy, has created a new Talent Management unit. The office will work with the new Senior Manager of Talent Management to find ways to improve employment accessibility for staff and applicants. The office will also start conducting soft audits of employment practices to gauge compliance with TDSB’s accessible employment procedures.

## Count Yourself in Every Voice Matters Report

TDSB released a report in Fall 2023 on the results of the 2021 staff census. The report identified 2019 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, which accounts for 6.4% of all TDSB staff. Results of the staff census will support the development of an employment equity plan for 2024/2025.

## Transportation

The Request for Tender (RFT) process for transportation is managed on a rotational basis between the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The most recent RFT, completed by TCDSB in 2023, will be effective from September 2024. This RFT covers various types of transportation vehicles, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles, minivans, 18-passenger, and 72-passenger school buses, to meet the diverse needs of all students. Additionally, taxis are used for unique accommodation requirements, with input from parents and school staff.

The consortium adheres to existing equipment guidelines based on current student requirements and reviews added needs as they arise. Requests for specific vehicle types are made as part of the RFT or separately, such as for taxi use. Annual audits are conducted to ensure compliance with RFT criteria and internal standards, with spontaneous audits based on feedback from school staff, parents, and internal teams to address any carrier concerns.

## Built Environment

The excerpt below is taken from the report [Making TDSB School Buildings and Sites More Accessible](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/aboutus/docs/Report-Making_Schools_More_Accessible.pdf), starting on p. 1:

*“While all new TDSB schools are designed to meet or exceed current accessibility standards, most of our older schools were not built with accessibility in mind. These sites include significant barriers to students, educators, parents, and visitors with disabilities, including those who use mobility assistance devices and who have low vision or hearing.”*

The physical barriers present at 5050 Yonge create significant accessibility challenges for people with disabilities from accessing TDSB services. These barriers encompass a range of challenges, from inadequate parking, signage, lack of ramps and elevators, to narrow doorways and inaccessible washrooms.

There is an urgent need for adequate funding to enable TDSB to make its buildings physically accessible. The Accessibility Office continues to work with Facility Services and other TDSB departments to advocate to improve physical accessibility at 5050 Yonge. Accessibility promotes inclusion, fosters diversity, and allows all members of our community to participate fully in the educational opportunities and services offered by the TDSB.

Automatic door operators have been installed at 78 schools as part of the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS) funding program to facilitate contactless operation and provide barrier-free upgrades, enhancing accessibility.

The two Site Improvement Projects involved replacing cracked and uneven concrete patio stones and removing stairs to create a smooth, accessible entrance with a small ramp and regraded area. At another school, a raised boardwalk was constructed in a schoolyard to provide accessible access above the understory and within the tree canopy, addressing issues of slope failure and erosion.

New barrier‑free washroom with automatic door openers and washroom conversion, a stair lift, exterior ramp, and automatic door openers were also implemented at several schools to improve accessibility.

## Information and Awareness Campaigns

An awareness campaign will focus on accessibility in addressing the barriers TDSB staff and students face. Activities and resources will be posted on the Accessibility Portal.

## Conclusion

TDSB remains committed to promoting accessibility and dismantling barriers to access. Our goal is to better serve all members of the TDSB community through inclusive, diverse, and equitable access to educational opportunities. Collaboration with other departments and organizations continue towards sharing best practices and strategies.

1. “ a11y ” stands for “accessibility.” It is a numeronym, with 11 representing the count of letters between the letter a and the letter y. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)