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A Dufferin-Peel ACCESS

Newsletter Fall 2012

Accessibility Standards

Since its inception in 2003, the ACCESS Dufferin-Peel committee has worked diligently to identify and remove barriers to make our schools and board facilities more accessible.

Ontario has laws that set standards for accessibility, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The first of these, which became law in 2008, is the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07). These important standards are designed to create a barrier-free and accessible Ontario by 2025.

The Board has worked hard to meet the requirements of this law. In fact, the Board was already meeting several of the requirements of this law even before it was regulated. Examples include:

- appropriate transportation for students with disabilities.
- Special Education plans and programs.
- assistive devices for students and staff.
- individualized return to work programs for staff returning from long term disability.
- individualized Emergency Preparedness plans for individuals with disabilities.
- Accessibility Training for all employees, new employees and those making policy on behalf of the Board. This will be ongoing as we continue to hire new staff.

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The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is committed to:

- the continual improvement of access to school premises, facilities and services for students, employees and members of the community with disabilities;
- the participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of the processes;
- the provision of quality services to all students, parents and members of the community to meet the needs of a wide range of people including people with disabilities.

CHECK it OUT! **Disability Awareness and We Share the Air Posters**

Last spring, the ACCESS Dufferin-Peel committee distributed "We Share the Air" posters to all schools and board sites. "We Share the Air" is the board's scent sensitivity awareness campaign. The Human Resources Department also distributed a Disability Awareness poster which highlights the types of disabilities and the T.A.L.K. Principle.

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The next step for the AODA was to amalgamate three standards into one – the Integrated Accessibility Standard. This standard incorporates the following: Transportation, Employment, and Information and Communication. To date, the board has completed the following requirements:

- Transportation Department ensures appropriate services and alternative services are provided for all our special needs students.
- Workplace Emergency Response information is available to the public in accessible formats upon request.
- Accommodation Plans for employees with disabilities are ongoing.
- Return to Work process for employees returning from a lengthy medical absence who need accommodation are ongoing.
- Performance Appraisal Plans that take into consideration the individuals accessibility needs are ongoing.

What's New?

- Hiring practices take accessibility needs into consideration. HR ensures that advertising, interview practices, forms and information for new hires are all meeting the requirements of the new act. New hires are advised that their disabilities (if identified to the Board) will be accommodated. Health and Safety, Health Promotion and Wellness and Human Resources all work together in these efforts.
- Human Resources registered with W. Ross MacDonald School to convert documents into accessible formats when requested.
- Emergency Evacuation Chairs have been purchased to provide assistance to anyone who requires assistance exiting a board facility during emergency situations. Ongoing training is occurring at each of these sites.
- Our Communications and Community Relations Department monitors our Customer Service Feedback Process, which can be located on the Board's website www.dpccsb.org under ACCESS Dufferin-Peel.



A Look Ahead

- All Board intranet and external internet sites will conform to the new standards.
- Continued Accessibility Awareness Training for new hires.
- Resources and information materials will be provided in accessible formats for our students, staff and parents upon request.
- School libraries will acquire a conversion ready format of print, digital or multimedia resources/ materials upon request. The deadline for compliance with this regulation is January 2015 for printed material and January 2020 for multimedia material.

Customer Service Feedback Process

Michelle Coutinho is the new Principal of Equity, Diversity and Inclusive Education. She is an active member of the ACCESS Dufferin-Peel Committee and is responsible for the *Customer Service Feedback Process*. Michelle responds to accessibility questions, concerns and comments submitted to the board via the *Customer Service Form* on the board website www.dpccsb.org.