Alcuin College Accessibility Plan
July 2023
(Updated March 2024)

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Section 1: Introduction

About Our School Community

Alcuin College is founded upon diversity, multi-culturalism, friendship, humility, empathy, commitment and inclusion. The school offers a learning environment that is positive, caring and vibrant, with a wide range of community-based partnerships. Through our unique hands-on approach, Alcuin College strives to develop ethical and responsible citizens who are able to thrive intellectually, emotionally, physically and economically.

Situated in North Vancouver, Alcuin College is an independent school that serves families within the local community, as well as within the surrounding municipalities and internationally, offering education from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

At Alcuin, we are committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides equitable opportunities to cater to our diverse community. A key element to supporting our community is the development of a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan identifies needs, priorities, and possible actions, to enhance equity of access to the learning programme and to our facilities, drawing on feedback from our school community.

We recognize the importance of accessibility not only for those with disabilities, but also for the benefit of the entire community. Through the actions in this Three-Year Accessibility Plan, we commit to continuous improvements in developing an environment that supports all students, staff and the larger school community.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Alcuin College is grateful to be situated on the shared, traditional territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam People. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship, and voice.

Definitions

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

Accessibility Plan: A plan developed by the school that identifies challenges and solutions for addressing accessibility barriers.

Barrier: Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person navigating needs or disabilities. Types of barriers in the educational setting:

Learning Barrier: any barrier that limits or prevents learning, whether it is through inadequate engagement, representation of the content, or expression of ideas and communication.

Architectural and Physical Barrier: A barrier resulting from building design, the area adjacent to the building, shape of rooms, the size of doorways, lack of accessibility features, blocked paths of travel, and so on.

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.

Policy or Practice Barrier: Rules, regulations and protocols that prevent a person from performing their job satisfactorily or participating in society. Policy, practice, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.

Resource Barrier: Barriers resulting from inadequate technology, funding, staff, or tools.

Temporal Barrier: Barriers that occur during a specific time, such as busy times of day or during special events.

Disability: The state of being unable to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. (For more information about disability and types of disability and support, refer to Appendix A: Disabilities.)

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

Section 2: Framework

The Alcuin College accessibility plan builds on global, national, provincial and the school's specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

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. The United Nations has been instrumental in leading the importance of disability as a global health issue. 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 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 – Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canada-wide, around one in five people had some form of disability in 2017. Nationally, Canadian accessibility legislation started in 1985 where disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were included in the new federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities. The ACA 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 take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.
6. PWDs 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 PWDs.

B.C. Context and Legislation - Accessible B.C. 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 in the Accessible B.C. 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.

1. **Adaptability:** Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

2. **Collaboration:** Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for Organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.

3. **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.

4. **Inclusion:** All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.

5. **Self-Determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

6. **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 who interact with the Organization.

Our Commitment to Accessibility:

At Alcuin, we believe that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination and universal design.

Accessibility refers to the degree of ease with which people with disabilities can use and enjoy something such as a device, service, or place.

Our school is committed to working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity. We aim to recognize and identify the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our school community.

Alcuin College is represented on the AMS Accessibility Committee.

Section 3: Accessibility Feedback Tool

Alcuin has developed an online feedback tool that included a series of questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff and members of the school community can complete. The tool will be posted to the school website and an information announcement about the tool will be provided to students, staff and parents/guardians. Feedback can be anonymous, or people can add their name and contact information if they wish to be contacted.

The following outlines the contents of the online Accessibility Feedback Tool.

Reporting an Accessibility Barrier or Support

We would like to learn about specific barriers that people face when they are trying to:
- access a school programme, building or school information;
- receive a school service or support.

The school will review your responses to the questions below. This information can be submitted anonymously, or you can provide your contact details at the bottom of this form if you wish to be contacted.

1. Please provide the date the barrier or support was experienced.
2. Please select the location where the barrier or support was experienced.
3. What were you or someone you know trying to access?
4. Accessibility barrier or support details (be as specific as possible).
5. Do you have any recommendations?
6. Please provide your name and email or phone number if you would like to be contacted. (optional)

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback! You will be contacted shortly if you provide your contact details.

Section 4: Our Three-Year Plan (2023-2026)

Year 1 (2023-2024)

Consultation and discussion: identify accessibility accomplishments and barriers through the following:
- Audit of policies and practices that relate to accessibility.
- Online Accessibility Feedback Tool.
- School Physical accessibility Audit.
- Scan of supports in the classroom (environmental, SEL – behavioural, instructional)

Methodology	Description	Status
Audit of policies and practices	Review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion.	July 2023
Accessibility Feedback Tool	Develop an accessibility feedback tool and post on the school website. Information about the tool to be shared with school stakeholders (i.e., students, staff, parents/guardians).	Sept 2023
School Physical Accessibility Audit	Identify an audit team to conduct the School Physical Accessibility Audit. (T. Jolley, L. McPhail, A. Korajian, H. de Beer)	Sept 2023
Scan of supports in the classroom	Audit Team and staff to scan supports in the classroom	March 2024
Team Review of Feedback	The Audit Team to review all feedback and suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan.	March 2024

Years 2 and 3 (2024-2026)

Identify areas of priority for improving accessibility in the following areas, based on feedback from the school community and the accessibility audit.

- Learning Accomplishments/Barriers

- Physical and Architectural Accomplishments/Barriers

- School Policy and Practice Accomplishments/Barriers

- Resource Accomplishments/Barriers

Develop an action plan that the school will take to improve accessibility in the above areas.

To be completed Year 2 and 3
Accessibility Priorities:
Based on feedback gathered by the Audit Team, which included a walk-through of the facility and making use of the Physical and Accessibility Audit Checklist; the Universal Supports Audit Checklist; and Potential Barriers and Solutions in K-12 Education Settings, the team identified the following priority areas for improving accessibility in the school community:

Action Plan

Priority #1: Learning

Alcuin College will enhance the accessibility of learning for all individuals, including those with disabilities (physical, cognitive emotional), through the following actions:

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Assigned to
To ensure that anxiety in children with ADD/ADHD anxiety disorder, cognitive, sensory and emotional issues, is not exacerbated through clutter and overwhelming visual distractions	● Remove all apparent and unnecessary clutter in learning spaces. Learning spaces are to remain clean, organised and clutter free. ● Organise classroom resources, games and learning materials for easy access and visual appeal (Hang guitars, cover over PE equipment) ● TV cables and extension cords are to be taped down or correctly stowed after each class. ● Ensure that learning spaces are clearly designated (label materials, working areas, quiet areas etc)	April 2024 - ongoing	Teaching staff
To ensure that learning spaces and hallways remain clear and are visually calming for students	● Ensure that lockers are functioning and able to be closed securely. Lockers are to be closed at all times, so that pathways are free, safe and easily accessible, and the visual clutter is avoided.	April 2024 - ongoing	All staff

Priority #2: Physical and Architectural

Alcuin College will improve the accessibility of the physical and architectural environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities, through the following actions:

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Assigned to
To ensure that exits and entrances are clearly marked and easily accessible	● Secure/tape down all mats/carpets, particularly at entrances and exits. ● Apply neon/reflective tape at the top of stairs, park doorway, kitchen entrance, room B1, entrance to front desk.	Sept 2024	Admin

	● Post a sign at the front entrance on St Georges, indicating that our wheelchair accessible entrance is on 11th street		
To ensure safe and convenient washroom access for wheelchairs/persons with physical disabilities	● Assign middle washroom (currently Girls' washroom) as a designated handicap accessible ● Move bin to under the sink ● Change the door to swing outward	Sept 2024	Admin

Priority #3: School Policy and Practice

Alcuin College will review and revise policies and practices to ensure they align with the principles of accessibility, and to address any identified gaps in staff training or knowledge on accessibility issues.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Assigned to
To ensure that policies and practices align with the principles of accessibility	● Review and revise policies and practices to ensure that they align with the principles of accessibility. ● Identify and address gaps in accessibility issues.	August - Sept 2024	Tish Jolley

Priority #4: Resources

Alcuin College will increase awareness and training on assistive technology for students with disabilities.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline	Assigned to
To ensure that there is adequate access to resources, staff, technology, and tools for all learners	● Provide alternative methods of communication when requested and/or indicated on Learning Support Plan or IEP ● As appropriate, provide self-regulation tools and training on how to use them effectively for each classroom	April 2024 - ongoing	Learning Support and Teaching Staff

Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

The Audit Team will meet once each term to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation, and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The Team will review and update the Three-Year Accessibility Plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

Section 10: Appendices

Appendix A: About Disability

The Disability Continuum

Although there is no universally accepted meaning for the word "disability". However, the Ontario Human Rights Code provides definitions of disability that form our guiding principles. Definitions of disability can be placed on a continuum. At one end, disability is explained in terms of medical conditions (medical model). At the opposite end, disability is explained in terms of the social and physical contexts in which it occurs (environmental model).

The medical model focuses on deficiencies, symptoms and treatments. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 1976 definition for disability, for example, is "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being." Medical model definitions promote the idea that disability is a deviation from the norm.

Many people with disabilities are troubled by definitions that regard disability as abnormal, preferring instead to portray disability as commonplace, natural, and in fact, inevitable. As people age, they experience gradual declines in visual acuity, auditory sensitivity, range of motion, bodily strength and mental powers. Significant functional limitations affect almost half of people between the ages of 55 and 79, and over 70% of people over 80 (World Health Organization (WHO) report titled "Ageing and health", 2015). Beyond middle age, disability is the norm.

The environmental model explains disability in relation to social and physical contexts. In this view, the environment, not an individual's medical condition, causes disability. For example, during an electrical blackout, a person who is completely blind can effortlessly navigate around the home, hammer nails, and, if a Braille user, read a novel.

A sighted person would be unable to perform these tasks easily, if at all. In this example, the environment disables the sighted person.

The environmental model emphasizes that people with disabilities are capable individuals, and it is the barriers in the built and human environments, not their medical conditions, that create disability. Disability occurs when the world is designed only for a certain way of living, without considering the natural variation among human beings. Barriers are created by humans, and modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our understanding of the proper way to do things can eliminate or minimize design problems that cause barriers. Systematic barriers can be eliminated by modifying policies, plans, and processes. Attitudes that cause barriers can be addressed through disability awareness, respect, and positive interactions with people with disabilities.

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 your 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.
- Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where the person can see your face.
- 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.

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

Canada Ratifies the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation

Accessible British Columbia Act

BC Accessibility Legislation Plan Language Summary

Accessibility Planning Resources for Schools and School Boards:

BC Accessibility Hub

Developing Your First Accessibility Plan: A Guide for BC Prescribed Organizations

Creating an Accessibility Committee

Universal Design

Special Education Technology BC (SET BC)

Accessible Resource Centre - BC

Standards Council of Canada

B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design

 A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces (Rick Hanson Foundation)

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)

Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

Canadian Hearing Services

Provincial Outreach Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH)

Auditory Outreach Provincial Resource Program

Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness

Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program (Complex Needs)

Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders

Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

[Learning Disabilities Association of Canada](#)

[Brain Injury Canada](#)

[Spinal Cord Injury Canada](#)

[Tourette Canada](#)

[Kelty Mental Health](#) (BC Children's Hospital)

[Gifted Children's Association of BC](#)

[Specialist Association of Gifted Educators in BC](#)