



# St. James-Assiniboia School Division

*Great Schools for Growing and Learning*

## **Accessibility Plan Update 2021-2022**

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division continues to affirm its commitment to provide all staff, students, and visitors to its facilities an inclusive environment. To that end the division strives to eliminate or reduce barriers that inhibit the participation of people who may be affected by a disability, aging, an injury or other life event resulting in compromised:

- Mobility
- Dexterity (use of hands)
- Vision
- Communication
- Understanding
- Mental health

School division priorities are consistent with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. An important priority of the school division is to ensure each learner actively demonstrates academic, emotional, and social growth resulting from:

- Responsive, meaningful, and engaging instruction
- Appropriate, current, and relevant programming
- Strong focus on numeracy and literacy
- Student self-assessment
- Celebrations of learning

Other priorities include ensuring each learner benefits from strong learning partnerships resulting from:

- Community involvement in school-based activities
- The promotion of active and healthy lifestyles
- Nurturing positive relationships with families and the local and global community

The division strives to ensure each learner is an active local and global citizen:

- Who understands and respects diverse values and world views
- Whose learning is connected to real world applications and actions
- Inclusion of student voice

The school division believes each learner benefits from exceptional staff, a balanced financial position and appropriate physical infrastructure and therefore strives to:

- Provide safe and inclusive physical learning environments
- Recruit and train exceptional and effective teaching and support staff
- Grow, protect and utilize revenues to achieve positive student outcomes

### **Mobility**

Mobility barriers affect people with amputations, paralysis, cerebral palsy, stroke, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, and spinal cord injury, and other disabilities or health

conditions. The school division continues to identify and remove barriers to mobility by installing and maintaining wheelchair ramps, stair-lifts, and elevators.

### Dexterity

People with dexterity disabilities may have decreased range of motion in their arms, fingers, wrists, back or neck, and decreased muscle control, spasms, paralysis, tingling or numbness. A simple doorknob could be a barrier. Dexterity disabilities may result from Multiple Sclerosis, Cerebral Palsy, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Tendonitis, arthritis, sciatica, amputations, or degenerative disc disease. The school division continues to replace doorknobs with levers, installs automatic door openers and provides ergonomic workstations for staff and students. The division provides support persons such as scribes and note takers and invests in assistive technology to reduce or remove barriers faced by people with compromised dexterity.

### Vision

Communication barriers affecting persons who are blind or have a visual impairment result when customers are expected to read signs, forms, and general information, understand physical gestures, locate landmarks or see hazards. The use of service animals is permitted by policy. Accommodations are provided by the division once identified by staff or students. This could include documents with increased font, iPad etc.

See website for more information <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/index.html>

### Communication

Communication barriers affecting people who are hard of hearing, deafened or Deaf result when there are no alternatives to spoken communication. Hard of hearing or deafened people are people who may have difficulty in hearing, but who can still talk. Deaf people may communicate through (ASL) American Sign Language. A person who is deaf and blind may have some degree of both hearing and vision. Others do not. Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing may receive the support of a variety of professionals including, but not limited to consultants for the deaf and hard of hearing, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, interpreters, speech and language pathologists, auditory/verbal therapists, and audiologists. Computerized note takers or educational assistants may also be available to assist in meeting a student's academic and programming goals

See website for more information: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/dhh/index.html>

### Understanding

Barriers to understanding may result when people have intellectual, developmental and learning disabilities, including autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, Down syndrome and ADHD. Knowing about the disability is not necessary in order to offer respectful service and clear communication. Appropriate Educational Programming provides the regulation to guide policy and programming for all students, particularly those with special learning needs, in receiving the appropriate educational programming they require. The regulations confirm in legislation that all students in Manitoba are entitled to receive appropriate educational programming that fosters student participation in both the academic and social life of the school. The legislation supports Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion.

See website for more information: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/index.html>

### Mental Health

Barriers created by mental health issues include a lack of patience and stereotyping. Mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate, or remember things. People with brain injuries may face similar barriers. Mental Health Promotion is about creating environments that promote and sustain positive mental health for everyone. Various activities and interventions are used to enhance protective factors and minimize risk factors (individual, family related, environmental and economic in nature).

See website for more information <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/smh/>

## **Accessible Customer Service**

### Barrier-free Access to Goods and Services

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division believes it is important for all stakeholders in their educational community to work together to provide an environment that will enable students to be achievers and successful learners. As such, student success will require the combined efforts and cooperation of students, parents, employees and community members. To that end the school division will strive to identify and remove any existing barriers to ensure an environment where all stakeholders are able to participate. If an existing barrier cannot reasonably be removed, the division will seek to ensure that persons who are disabled by the barrier are provided access by alternate means, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. The school division will seek to prevent new barriers from being created.

### Communications

The school division will make reasonable efforts to ensure that, when communicating with a person who is disabled by a barrier, the communication is done in a manner that takes into account the barrier.

### Assistive devices

A person who is disabled by a barrier may use assistive devices to remove or reduce the barrier. The school division will reasonably accommodate the use of those devices.

### Support persons

A person who is disabled by a barrier may benefit in reducing that barrier by being accompanied by a support person. The school division will permit that person to have access to a support worker.

### Service animals

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division supports the use of a certified service animal in schools as long as the appropriate planning and preparation has taken place in advance of the service animal's entry to the school. (Policy EAA)

### Built Environment

The school division will ensure existing equipment and measures designed to facilitate barrier-free access are maintained and are available for use. In the event such an aspect is not available the division will provide notice stating the reasons why the aspect is unavailable and an estimate of when the unavailability will cease and details of alternate means, if any, available to access the organization's goods or services. The notice will be prominently displayed on the premises and on the school division website or be given by other means that are reasonable in the circumstances.

### Feedback and Documentation

The school division will ensure a process is in place for receiving and responding to feedback about accessibility within the school and will document its resulting actions and ensure that documentation is available on request. The school division will post notification that the documentation is available on request.

### Training for staff

The school division will ensure that training about accessible customer service is provided to all staff, volunteers, and agents working for the school and people who participate in the development of school division policies and procedures. The training must include a review of the purposes and principles of the "The Accessibility for Manitobans Act" and instruction about how to interact and communicate with persons disabled by barriers and how to interact with persons disabled by barriers who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a support person or service animal. The training must also include instruction on how to use any equipment or assistive devices that may be available to assist persons disabled by barriers and what to do if a person disabled by a particular barrier is having difficulty accessing a good or service.

The school division will ensure training is provided as soon as reasonably practicable after a person is assigned the applicable duties and on-going training is provided.

#### Documentation of Training

The school division will document its training policy, including a summary of the content of the training and when training is provided.

#### Accessibility of Public Events

When the school division holds a public event it will take reasonable measures to ensure that

- (a) notice of the event is given in a manner that is accessible to persons disabled by barriers;
- (b) the event is held in a meeting space that is accessible;
- (c) the physical and communication needs of persons disabled by barriers are met on request;
- (d) notice is given that persons disabled by barriers may request that relevant supports be provided.
- (e) members of the public seeking support for such things as parent-teacher meetings may contact the school for assistance.

### **Accessible Employment**

Manitoba's Accessible Employment Standard, which came into force as a Regulation on April 5, 2019 assists in the identification, removal, and prevention of employment related barriers, such as recruitment procedures that are difficult to participate in and inaccessible work environments. The St. James-Assiniboia School Division will continue to strive to remove hurdles associated with recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees with disabilities.

#### Emergency Procedures

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division provides individual emergency response plans to keep employees with disabilities safe during emergencies. Staff or students who have a disability, whether permanent or temporary, visible, or invisible, and believe they may need help during an emergency are encouraged to let their building administrator know and give permission to share that information with anyone who is assigned to be a helper.

#### Recruiting Employees

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division provides reasonable accommodations when recruiting new employees. Reasonable accommodations include temporary or long-term adjustment to working conditions, duties, policies, rules, practices, programs, or the physical work environment to address work-related barriers up to the point of undue hardship.

#### Informing Employees about Accommodation

The school division provides information to employees about our accommodation policies by posting information on our intranet site, the school division website, in newsletters, virtual meetings, and through staff emails. Employees are also informed during staff meetings.

#### Individual Accommodation Plans

Barriers to employee performance, training, and advancement will be addressed by the development of individual accommodation plans. The plans will be developed on an individual basis in conjunction with the employee, their physician, and/or another practitioner. Individual accommodation plans meet the requirements of the Manitoba Accessible Employment Standard Regulation section 13 (2).

#### Keeping employees and the public informed

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division informs applicants that reasonable accommodations are available during the recruitment and employee selection process.

### Return to Work

Upon request the St. James-Assiniboia School Division offers reasonable accommodations to employees who have been off work due to a disability.

### Training

Human Resources is responsible for ensuring training for management regarding accessible employment and related legislation takes place.

### Beyond 2021

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division will continue to work toward achieving compliance with additional standards as they are developed by the Provincial government.