

**Annual Accessibility Plan
for the
Superior-Greenstone District School Board
September 2003 - August 2004**

Prepared by
Superior-Greenstone District School Board
Accessibility Working Group

*This publication is available on the Superior-Greenstone District School Board's website
(www.sgdsb.on.ca)*

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Preamble.....	3
Aim.....	4
Objectives	4
Recommitment to Accessibility Planning.....	4
Description of the Superior-Greenstone District School Board.....	5
The Accessibility Working Group Members.....	6
Recent Barrier-Removal Initiatives.....	6
Preventing New Barriers	6
Barrier-Identification Methodologies.....	7
Barriers Identified.....	7
Type of Barrier	7
Description of Barrier	7
Barriers to be Addressed in 2003 - 2004.....	8
Review and Monitoring Process.....	8
Communication of the Plan	9

Preamble

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the ODA requires each school board to prepare an annual accessibility plan; to consult with people with disabilities in the preparation of this plan; and to make the plan public.

This is the first annual plan (2003 - 2004) prepared by the Accessibility Working Group of the Superior-Greenstone District School Board. The plan describes: (1) the measures that the Superior-Greenstone District School Board has taken in the past, and (2) the measures that the Superior-Greenstone District School Board will take during the year (2003 - 2004) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

This year, the Superior-Greenstone District School Board committed to the continual improvement of access to school board facilities. We will review policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community with disabilities. The plan also reports on the participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans.

The Accessibility Working Group identified over of seven barriers for people with disabilities. The most significant findings were that although much work has been done on improving accessibility to all of our buildings, one elementary school continues to pose a significant challenge. Another area identified that the majority of the school board's materials were only available in print. Over the next several years, the Accessibility Working Group recommends focusing on two different barriers. This year, the Working Group recommends removing and preventing physical barriers.

Aim

This plan describes the measures that the Superior-Greenstone District School Board has taken in the past and measures that will be taken during the next year (2003 - 2004) to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities who work in, use or attend school board facilities and services.

Objectives

This plan:

1. Describes the *process* by which the Superior-Greenstone District School Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.
2. Reviews efforts at the Superior-Greenstone District School Board to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities during the *past year(s)*.
3. Lists the policies, procedures, programs, practices and services that the Superior-Greenstone District School Board will review in the *coming year* to identify barriers for people with disabilities.
4. Describes the *measures* the Superior-Greenstone District School Board will take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.
5. Describes how the Superior-Greenstone District School Board will make this accessibility plan *available to the public*.

Recommitment to Accessibility Planning

The senior administrative officials of the Superior-Greenstone District School Board, subject to Board Approval are the Director of Education, and the Superintendent of Business. The Director is the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Education Officer of the Board and is secretary to the Board. The Superintendent of Business is the Chief Financial Officer of the Board and is the treasurer of the Board. Other Supervisory Officers (i.e. Superintendent of Education) may be appointed by the board with duties and responsibilities to be as outlined by the board.

The Superior-Greenstone District School Board is committed to:

- Establishing an Accessibility Working Group
- Consulting with people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans
- Ensuring school board policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility
- Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community

The Director of Education has authorized the Special Education Advisory Committee to form the core of the Accessibility Working Group to prepare an accessibility plan that will enable the Superior-Greenstone District School Board to meet these commitments.

Description of the Superior-Greenstone District School Board

The former Lake Superior Board of Education, the Nipigon-Red Rock Board of Education, and the Beardmore Geraldton and Longlac Area Board of Education, amalgamated to form the Superior-Greenstone District School Board on January 1, 1998.

The boundaries for the Superior-Greenstone District School Board encompass approximately 16,897 square kilometers. The boundary follows along the north shores of Lake Superior down the Highway 17 Corridor, and north on Highway 11 to the Greenstone Region, so named for the green colour found in the rock around Geraldton, Longlac and Beardmore. It is important to note that as of the amalgamation, we also take in the communities of Dorion, Red Rock, Nipigon, Rosspoint, Schreiber, Terrace Bay, Marathon and Manitouwadge and the Highway 11 communities of Beardmore, Geraldton and Longlac.

Presently, the Superior-Greenstone District School Board serves 2,824.25 (1,447 elementary / 1,337.25 secondary) students through five secondary and ten elementary schools.

The mission of the Superior-Greenstone District School Board will ensure that Kids Come First, and will communicate and work collaboratively with its employees, its schools, its advisory councils, community agencies and organizations, parents and the general public to achieve its stated Vision and Mission.

All students, regardless of special talents or challenging needs can grow and they can grow best by attending schools, which offer accessible programs in accessible settings through accessible services.

The Superior-Greenstone District School Board identifies the following goals to achieve its VISION and MISSION:

Quality Education

The Superior-Greenstone DSB shall utilize its human and non-human resources fostering excellence in education. The focus shall be educating children; "Kids Come First".

Welcoming Schools

The Superior-Greenstone DSB staff shall conduct themselves in a positive professional manner to ensure an open door policy.

Team Concept

The Superior-Greenstone DSB shall be administered by a team consisting of the Board Members, senior administration and school administrators.

School Councils

The Superior-Greenstone DSB School Councils shall be an integral part of the system.

Policies and Procedures

The Superior-Greenstone DSB shall operate through a consistent system of policies and procedures.

Communications

The Superior-Greenstone DSB shall facilitate the flow of information to our education partners.

Accountability

The Superior-Greenstone DSB shall have a system of checks and balances to ensure accountability to the education community.

The Accessibility Working Group Members

The accessibility working group was formally constituted in October 2002 and consists of the following members:

Senior Management
Plant Services
Special Education Advisory Committee
One (1) Representative with a Disability

Recent Barrier-Removal Initiatives

During the last several years, there have been a number of initiatives at Superior-Greenstone District School Board to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. Of particular note is the installation of two lifts in our secondary schools, paving to improve access at an elementary school, instillation/reconfiguring washrooms for ease of accessibility. Some accommodations have been established for a student with visual impairment.

Preventing New Barriers

We will strive to create an environment that is accessible to all people, regardless of age or ability. Through the annual accessibility planning process, Superior-Greenstone District School Board's programming, policies and practices will be assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

Barrier-Identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Working Group used the following barrier-identification methodologies:

<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status</i>
Presentation to Senior Administration	Opportunity for input and feedback	Ongoing
Maintenance Requisitions	Electronic requisitions	Ongoing
Presentations to Employee Groups	For information at Board Staff Liaison Meetings	Two times per year
Health and Safety Inspections	Identify health and safety issues and also barriers that may be present for staff, students and community.	The focus groups were held in July and August 2003
Community Consultations	School Tours held annually	Ongoing
Presentation to Trustees	For information and approval	Fall Board Meeting
Student Records	Needs identified through IPRC process and review of OSR	Spring/Fall
Annual Facilities/Budget Review	Manger Of Plant and School Principals prepare submissions	Ongoing

Barriers Identified

In its review, the Accessibility Working Group identified many barriers. Over the next several years, the Accessibility Working Group has decided to focus on the following:

<i>Type of Barrier</i>	<i>Description of Barrier</i>	<i>Strategy for its Removal/Prevention</i>
Physical	Improve accessibility at George O' Neill Public School.	Potential for robotic lift
Physical	Examine foyers/hallways of several buildings of obstructions tot paths of travel for people who are blind and visually impaired.	Re-organize
Physical	Investigate appropriate amplification strategies and environmental noise control for Hearing impaired.	Assistance from provincial schools
Communication	People who are deaf and hard of hearing cannot detect audio fire alarms currently being used in all schools.	Investigate visual emergency notification system.
Information	Many forms and records are only available in print.	Make all forms available on the web, on disk or in other electronic formats.

Type of Barrier	Description of Barrier	Strategy for its Removal/Prevention
Attitudinal	Staff members are often unaware/lack knowledge of non-physical disabilities (i.e. students with mental health disabilities).	Education sessions for staff and preparation of material for the staff orientation binder.
Technological	Board website is not accessible to people who are blind and visually	Investigate other communications strategies.

Barriers to be Addressed in 2003 - 2004

The Accessibility Working Group will address two barriers during the coming year. This plan will address the areas in of programs, attitudinal and facilities.

Barrier	Objective	Means to Remove/ Prevent	Performance Criteria	Resources	Timing	Responsibility
<u>Attitude</u> Staff lack knowledge about disabilities	Staff will better understand how to accommodate students and staff with various types of disabilities	Disability awareness workshops and material prepared for staff	All staff will be aware of ways to accommodate students and staff with physical & non-physical disabilities	Earmarked \$xxx for training	Sessions to be offered on SERT and EA training days	Special Education
Environmental Noise	Classrooms are acoustically correct	Dampening/ acoustic tiles	Students with auditory difficulties can participate in the regular classroom environment	Unknown	Facility Renewal Report	Facilities Department Special Education System Principals
<u>Physical</u> Access to Multilevel schools	Students can travel to all areas of the school	Consult with architect	Students in wheelchairs will be able to participate in all areas	Facilities plan	January 2004	Facilities Department
<u>Policies</u> Some school board policies may result in barriers to people with disabilities	Ensure all board policies are inclusive and address accessibility issues	Central office staff to review relevant policies and procedures	No individual is left out	Time for central office staff	Begin in December 2003 and complete by June 2004	All central office departments

Review and Monitoring Process

The Accessibility Working Group meets 10 times during the year to review the progress. Throughout the year, evaluation of the effectiveness in implementing the barrier-removal and prevention strategies will be ongoing in preparation for the second year of accessibility planning. Recommendations will be forwarded to Senior Administration for action.

Communication of the Plan

The Superior-Greenstone District School Board's accessibility plan will be posted on the board website at www.sgdsb.on.ca and hard copies will be available. The plan may be included within the school board orientation package to new staff.

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