

Discover Montessori Society Accessibility Plan

Table of Contents

Section 1:Introduction	1
Territorial Acknowledgement	2
Definitions	2
Section 2: Framework Guiding Our Work	3
Section 3 The Accessibility Committee	3
Section 4: Consultation Conducted	5
Section 5: Accessibility Feedback Tool	6
Section 6: Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers	6
Section 7: Monitoring and Evaluation	6
Section 9: Giving Feedback	7
Section 10: Appendices	7
For more information about the Accessible B.C. ACT, see the following links:	7
• Accessible B.C. Act (full Act)	7
• Accessible B.C. Act (in force)	7
• Plain Language summary of the Accessible B.C. Act	7
• Timeline for implementation (PDF)	7

Section 1:Introduction

Discover Montessori School is a non-profit independent school & licensed child care facility governed by Island Health child care licensing authority and the Ministry of Education. DMS serves approximately 150 students in the age range from 1 to 15 years old from the mid island region of Vancouver Island.

We follow the educational model and philosophy envisioned by Dr. Maria Montessori. We place a strong emphasis on personal and collective responsibility for each other and for the Earth. Within the Montessori academic framework, we teach the interconnectedness of all subjects, the importance of community, and work toward developing peace through mutual respect, compassion, responsibility, and understanding.

DMS leadership team is Cynthia Dyer, Principal, Kathleen Hancock, Vice Principal, and Karin Barker, Lead Administrator. We currently have 27 staff members in various teaching and support roles. DMS elects a Board of Directors for policy governance led by board president Eveline Stokkink.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Discover Montessori Society respectfully acknowledges the Snuneymuxw First Nation upon whose traditional and unceded territory we humbly live, teach, play, and learn.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided in the Accessible BC Act and the Developing Your First Accessibility Plan guide which was created as part of the Accessible Organization Project led by Disability Alliance BC.

Accessibility Plan: A plan to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization through the considerations of inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.

Adaptability: Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change. Barriers Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. This includes architectural, attitudinal, information, communications, policy or practice, and technological barriers. Types of barriers:

1. **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.
2. **Architectural and Physical Barrier:** A barrier resulting from building design, the area adjacent to the building, shape of rooms, size of doorways, lack of accessibility features and blocked paths of travel.
3. **Attitudinal Barriers:** A barrier that arises from the attitudes of staff, students and the school community, including discriminatory behaviours and a lack of disability awareness.
4. **Policy or Practice Barrier:** Rules, regulations and protocols that prevent a person from performing their job satisfactorily or participation in society or accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.
5. **Resource Barrier:** Barriers resulting from inadequate technology, funding, staff or tools.

Collaboration: Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play.

Disability: An inability to participate fully and equally in society due to the interaction of an impairment or a barrier.

Diversity: Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation religion, and lived experience inform the experiences of individuals.

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, or cognitive impairment, which is permanent, temporary, or episodic.

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

SelfDetermination: Empowering people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

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.”

Section 2: Framework Guiding Our Work

The Accessible BC Regulation, under the Accessible BC Act, came into force September, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations and are required to have an Accessibility Committee, and Accessibility Plan, and a tool to receive feedback.

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.

The Accessible BC Act outlines six principles that must be considered by the committee in the development, content, and form of the accessibility plan: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design.

In addition to these principles, the committee will adopt three key objectives in the development of the plan as outlined in the Accessible BC Act: Guidance for the K-12 Sector (Harris & Company LLP):

- Increase meaningful participation in school communities
- Develop standards for improved service delivery in areas such as education including critical infrastructure like entranceways, playgrounds, sidewalks, accessible transportation, and employment opportunities
- Harmonize with other jurisdictions

Section 3 The Accessibility Committee

An Accessibility Committee has been established to assist with identifying and preventing barriers to individuals in or interacting with DMS. The committee will work collaboratively with individuals with disabilities while encompassing the whole community. The committee will be composed of DMS administration, a staff member with disabilities, a parent of child with disabilities, a member of Snuneymuxw First Nation, and a facility manager.

Committee invitations have been sent to the DMS parent group and to Nanaimo Association for Community Living to recruit additional committee members to increase the diversity of the committee. The inaugural meeting date is set for Sept 28th 2023.

Committee Members as of August 1st, 2023

Kathleen Hancock

Cynthia Dyer

Karin Barker

Lori Thomas

Shanelle Holden

Joel Roszmann

Section 4: Consultation Conducted /To Be Conducted

In the fall of 2023, the accessibility team leads will commence consulting various methods of identifying barriers.

Methodology	Description	Date/Status
Audit of policies and practices	A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion was conducted by Cynthia and Kathleen.	August 2023
Survey to Staff	An accessibility and inclusion survey was developed by Cynthia and Kathleen and distributed to staff.	August/September 2023
Survey to Parents/Guardians	An accessibility and inclusion survey will be developed by the accessibility committee and distributed to parents/guardians.	October 2023
School Physical Accessibility Audit	The assessment tool will be developed and the School Physical Accessibility Audit was conducted by Tectonica	September 2023
Accessibility Feedback Tool	A feedback tool will be developed by the accessibility committee. It will be posted to the school website and information about the tool will be shared with the school community.	November 2023
Accessibility Team	The team will review the input and feedback from the survey, assessment and feedback tool. The team will collaborate to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan. This will be shared with administrators	January 2024

	and the DMS Board who give the final approval of priority areas for the plan.	
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Section 5: Accessibility Feedback Tool

The Accessibility Committee will develop a feedback tool that includes a series of questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff and members of the school community can complete. The tool was posted to the main page of the school website and an information announcement about the tool was provided to students, staff and parents.

Feedback could be anonymous, or people could add their name and contact information.

Section 6: Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

A review of the accessibility accomplishments to date will be conducted in the areas of:

- Learning
- Equity
- School Policies and Practices
- Physical and Architectural Environment

After reviewing all of the surveys, audits and feedback tool information, the committee will identify the barriers in the areas listed below and a two year plan will be developed in the listed area:.

- Learning
- Resources
- School Policies and Practices
- Physical and Architectural Environment
- Attitudinal

Section 7: Three Year Plan

The Accessibility Committee will develop a three year plan that will aim to prioritize barriers that need to be removed based on feedback gathered.

The three year plan will be posted on the school's website.

Section 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Committee will meet quarterly to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation. It will also plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The committee will prepare an annual status report on the progress.

Section 8: Giving Feedback

In addition to the public availability of the plan, DMS will continue to post an annual status report on the progress of the Three Year Plan on the schools website. Questions, comments and feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to Cynthia Dyer.

Section 10: Appendices

For more information about the Accessible B.C. ACT, see the following links:

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- [Timeline for implementation](#) (PDF)