



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Gerard Winn, Director of Education

Date: September 23, 2024

Subject: **Accessibility Update**

Origin: Accessibility Committee – Chair Scott Grieve – Superintendent, Finance, Business and Facilities Services

Purpose

To provide the Board of Trustees an update on the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the renewed Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), together with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, is intended 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.

The goal is for Ontario to be barrier-free and accessible by 2025. The Act requires that school boards:

- Create a written multi-year accessibility plan, which must be updated at least once every five years and posted to the website
- Consult with people with disabilities in the review and revision of Multi-Year Accessibility Plan; and
- Make any revisions to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan public.

Information

The Act recommends that school boards establish an accessibility committee to support the creation and implementation of the multi-year accessibility plan, and to identify and remove barriers for people with disabilities. The DCDSB Accessibility Advisory Committee has representatives from many departments and staff across the system, and membership also includes external community partners that identify as having a

disability. The committee meets several times during the school year to review accessibility requests; policies and procedures; review best practices; and make recommendations for improving accessibility for everyone that work, use or attend school board facilities.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the previous Multi-Year Accessibility Plan came to an end. Over the course of the year, a revised plan was developed by the DCDSB's Accessibility Advisory Committee, who worked to establish a framework that ensures compliance with legislation and related regulations to identify and dismantle barriers to people with disabilities in all facilities, policies, procedures, programs, practices, and services offered by the board. DCDSB has an established partnership with LEAD (Leading Accessible and Equitable Delivery) Canada; LEAD has contributed to the updated plan by measuring and monitoring our accessibility work and guiding our efforts to enhance our organizational systems and processes toward improved accessibility and inclusion. The revised plan was developed in consultation with the DCDSB's Special Education Advisory Committee, and from feedback received through public consultation with students, families, staff, and the broader community.

The 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan highlights accomplishments and future goals, demonstrating how legislative requirements have informed our policies, procedures, and capacity-building initiatives. The plan outlines our accomplishments and work completed to date and identifies measurable goals that align with the AODA, which, together with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, supports the rights of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access.

The plan describes:

- Measures that the board has taken in the past; and
- Measures that the board will implement during the period of 2023-2028 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines our accomplishments and work completed to date and identifies measurable goals that align with the Accessibility Act. The plan focuses on:

- Customer Service;
- Information and Communication;
- Employment;
- Built Environment; and
- Transportation.

The full plan is attached for information.

Next Steps

- Through the implementation of goals outlined in the 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, we will provide an environment that supports all students and staff within our Durham Catholic learning community.
- To provide further updates to the Board of Trustees as needed.

GW/SG/ll/tc

Attachment(s): 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan



Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2023-2028

Durham Catholic District School Board

The Durham Catholic District School Board shares a sense of community among families, educators and parishes and is committed to integrating the teachings of the Gospel with quality educational programs that guide students in their journeys to meeting the Catholic Graduate Expectations. The board currently serves approximately 22,500 students in Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax, Pickering, and the townships of Uxbridge, Scugog and Brock.

Mission:

We are an inclusive Catholic learning community that inspires every student to achieve their full potential through faith and education.

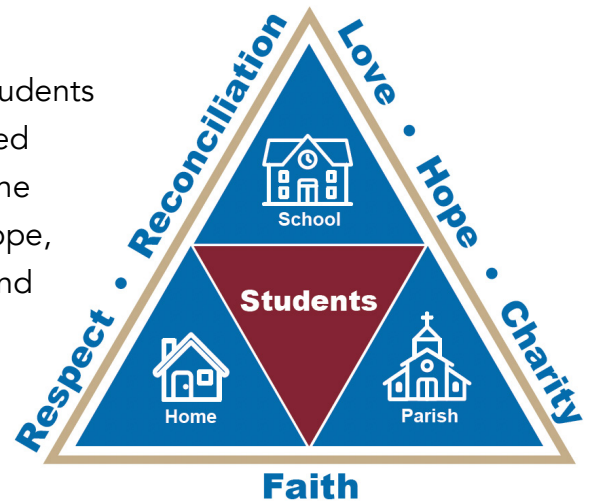
Vision:

By fostering positive relationships with home, school, parish and community, students and staff will learn and work in a Catholic environment where every person is:

- Safe and welcomed
- Accepted and valued
- Heard and engaged
- Supported and prepared

Values:

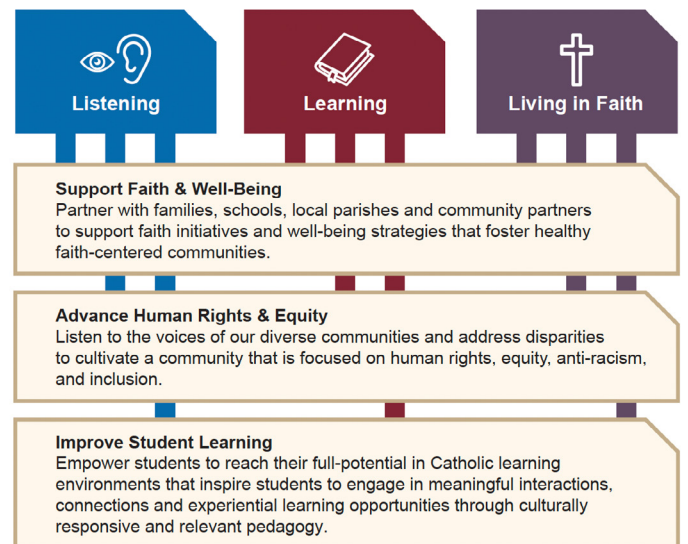
We support all students through our shared commitment to the values of love, hope, charity, respect and reconciliation.



Inspire 2026

Listening, Learning and Living in Faith are foundational processes that form the core of our Multi-Year Plan, *Inspire 2026*. Through the intentional implementation of these processes, annual goals will be developed and implemented under the strategic priorities of:

- Supporting Faith and Well-Being;
- Advancing Human Rights and Equity; and
- Improving Student Learning.



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Message from the Chair of the Board and Director of Education

The Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) has made it our mission to be an inclusive Catholic learning community that inspires every student to achieve their full potential through faith and education. As such, we are committed to providing learning and working environments that support all members of our community so that students are empowered to reach their full potential. We will do this through the pillars of our multi-year plan, *Inspire 2026*, in which we aim to support faith & well-being, advance human rights & equity, and improve student learning.

We are pleased to present the 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan which highlights our accomplishments and future goals, demonstrating how legislative requirements have informed our policies, procedures, and capacity-building initiatives. This plan has been developed by the DCDSB's Accessibility Advisory Committee, which works to establish a framework that ensures compliance with legislation and related regulations to identify and dismantle barriers to people with disabilities in all facilities, policies, procedures, programs, practices, and services offered by the board. DCDSB celebrates our partnership with LEAD (Leading Accessible and Equitable Delivery) Canada; LEAD has contributed to our plan by measuring and monitoring our accessibility work and guiding our efforts to enhance our organizational systems and processes toward improved accessibility and inclusion. This plan was developed in consultation with the DCDSB's Special Education Advisory Committee, and from feedback received through public consultation with students, families, staff, and the broader community.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines our accomplishments and work completed to date and identifies measurable goals that align with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), which, together with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, supports the rights of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access.

We recognize that as our collective knowledge and understanding grows and evolves, that we will continue to adapt to meet the needs of our communities. We are committed to advancing accessibility efforts within the DCDSB to ensure equal access and participation in our programs, services and facilities for each and every student and staff member. Through the goals outlined in this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, we will provide an environment that supports all students and staff within our Durham Catholic learning community.

Sincerely,

Monique Forster
Chair of the Board

Gerard Winn
Director of Education

Introduction

The intent of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 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. The goal is for Ontario to be barrier-free and accessible by 2025.

The Act requires that school boards:

- Review and revise the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan annually;
- Consult with people with disabilities in the review and revision of Multi-Year Accessibility Plan; and
- Make the revision of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan public.

The Act allows organizations to determine their own priorities and implement them within existing planning processes and using existing resources. The 2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan has been prepared by the Accessibility Committee at Durham Catholic District School Board.

The plan describes:

- Measures that the board has taken in the past; and
- Measures that the board will implement during the period of 2023-2028 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.



2023-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan identifies measurable goals across the pillars of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

This plan focuses on:

- Customer Service;
- Information and Communication;
- Employment;
- Built Environment; and
- Transportation.

This plan will evolve as we learn and adapt. What remains unchanged is our deep respect for the human rights, dignity and respect for the human person.

We are committed to advancing the efforts of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to improve equity and access to services and facilities.

Through the commitments in this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, we can provide an environment that supports all students, staff and our broader community.

We invite you to review our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2023-2028 and welcome any questions or feedback. Please see the final page of this plan for contact details.

Guiding Principles

The Durham Catholic District School Board is committed to the continual improvement of accessibility and the ongoing removal of barriers to board facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, families, volunteers and members of the community with disabilities.



DCDSB Accessibility Advisory Committee

Mandate:

The Accessibility Advisory Committee works to identify and remove barriers to access for people with disabilities in all facilities, procedures, policies, programs, practices and services offered by the board. The committee works to establish a framework that ensures compliance with the AODA legislative Acts and related regulations within a Catholic learning community.

Objectives:

- Identify, and recommend prevention strategies to remove barriers for people with disabilities who work in, use, or attend school board facilities;
- Review policies, procedures, programs, practices and services that are in place or being developed to identify barriers for people with disabilities;
- Coordinate and maintain the Durham Catholic District School Board Multi-Year Accessibility Plan;
- Assist the Durham Catholic District School Board in ensuring the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is available to the public; and
- Coordinate and respond to all communications received relating to accessibility concerns, suggestions and recommendations.



Committee Commitment to Accessibility:

- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community;
- Meet as an Accessibility Advisory Committee on a regular basis (minimum three times a year);
- Partner with persons with disabilities and service organizations in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans; and
- Monitor school board policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the legislative requirements as outlined in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, 2011.

The membership will consist of the following:

- Superintendent (Chair)
- Business Services Representative
- Communications Representative
- Community Representative
- Disability Management Officer
- Durham Student Transportation Services Representative
- Facilities Services Representative
- Information Communication Technology Representative
- Principal Representative
- Program Support Teacher
- Resource Teacher for Hearing Services
- Resource Teacher for Vision Services



DCDSB Goals by AODA Standard

Customer Service

The customer service standard under the AODA outlines requirements for service providers to make their goods, services, and facilities accessible for customers or patrons with disabilities.

Customer Service Standards

DCDSB is committed to customer service excellence. This includes service provision that is both accessible to and inclusive of, employees, students, and visitors with disabilities. The Accessible Customer Service Standard requires organizations to provide accessible services for people with disabilities and to have policies and procedures in place to support accessible customer service.



Accomplishments:

- Accessibility statement included in all meetings – both internal and external.
- Training on best practices for meetings and events provided to all staff, so they are aware of the various accessibility needs and accommodations that can be provided.
- Microphones and technology have been introduced in meeting spaces so that various accessibility requirements can be met.
- Through community consultation, we have provided multiple communication feedback channels/ loops, including via phone, website, email, survey, in-person, video, etc.
- Customer service channels, such as website, phone, printed materials, are provided in accessible formats, and multiple formats are also made available.

- Translation features to enable translation to over 130+ languages have been embedded on websites, surveys, SchoolMessenger emails.
- New and recently updated Board policies and procedures are AODA compliant.
- Board materials (both print and digital) are accessible.
- DCDSB has a process for receiving and responding to feedback that ensures that the processes are accessible to persons with accessibility needs and/or disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports.

Goals:

Focus	Implementation	Intended Impact
Create resource document for staff with comprehensive list of various accessibility and accommodation considerations for meetings, events, etc.	Through creation of a board Administrative Procedure and training to staff on accommodation and accessibility requirements available for meetings, events, etc. Initial resource document to be completed in 2025, with annual revision thereafter.	Board staff have access to tools, resources, policies and procedures to support accessible customer service.
Improve response time to accessibility requests.	The Accessibility Committee will review via electronic circulation upon receipt of request.	Resolution to accessibility barriers achieved in a timely manner.



Information and Communication

The Information and Communications Standards of the AODA list rules for organizations to create, provide, and receive information and communications that people with disabilities can access. The standards give all people an equal chance to learn and be active in their communities.

Information and Communication Standards

Accomplishments:

- Through a website re-design and update, our websites are now compliant with, and exceed, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA.
- We have provided training on creating accessible materials in Word, PDF and PowerPoint to staff. These resources, including tip sheets, videos, and presentations, are available on the DCDSB intranet for all staff to access.
- We have created accessible templates and resources to staff and update these materials on an ongoing basis. We have also provided ongoing professional development to staff so that they are aware of the accessibility features in the programs and software available in the board.
- Our branding guidelines and communications policies and administrative procedures have been updated to incorporate AODA best practices.



Goals:

Focus	Implementation	Intended Impact
AODA Compliancy for Board web content.	Use cloud-based service tools to conduct a monthly AODA audit of all Board content (i.e. external sites, programs/tools, online documents, embedded links, etc.).	All board web content will be more accessible to the staff and the public with various degrees of disabilities, for example, visual, hearing, learning, mobility, speech, photosensitivity, etc.
AODA compliancy for school alerts to students and staff.	Investigate vendor Public Address (PA) solutions that will show a visual alert that will accompany announcements; for example, fire, weather events, lock downs, hold and secure) in classrooms at future new schools.	PA alerts will be more accessible in each classroom to student and staff with various degrees of hearing impairment.
AODA compliancy for improved audio in classrooms.	Ensure the educator’s voice is more accessible in each classroom by providing a microphone and speaker/s for teachers to ensure they can be heard more clearly by all students.	<p>Educator will be better heard without having to speak loudly and straining their voices.</p> <p>Students will be more engaged if they can better hear the teacher clearly.</p>
AODA compliancy for all safety plans, inspections and logs with external providers.	<p>Work with external providers to ensure all safety plans, logs and inspections are AODA compliant.</p> <p>Ensure all printable material from external providers is AODA compliant.</p>	AODA compliant emergency plans, monthly inspections and safety logs, on both the online platform for users who consistently access it (e.g. administrators and custodians) and on health and safety bulletin boards for all staff will be created.
AODA compliancy for all Compliance and Online Learning Training.	Work with external provider to ensure all training slides and material AODA compliant.	All staff who require it (e.g. staff who have various accessibility needs and/or disabilities, including visual, hearing, learning, mobility, speech, photosensitivity, etc.), can complete the training.

Employment

The Employment Standard of the AODA requires employers to make their workplace practices accessible to potential or current workers with disabilities. The standard applies to paid workers but not to volunteers. Under the standard, an “employer” refers to the organization that employs a person.

Employment Standards

Accomplishments:

- Accessibility and accommodation practices are included throughout recruitment, including accessibility language in job postings, and at every point throughout the hiring and onboarding process.
- Applicants are informed about the availability of accommodations throughout the recruitment process. Human Resources Services staff, managers, supervisors, and other staff who are involved in recruitment/selection process have received ongoing training related to accessibility and accommodations in employment.
- All staff are required to complete AODA training through our online training platform.
- Amended Emergency Preparedness Policy (PO414) and related administrative procedures to include reference to staff and other persons requiring specialized assistance, instead of just students.
- Individual Emergency Response Plans have been created and implemented for all staff with accessibility requirements, and site-based managers have received training on individual emergency response plan requirements.



Goals:

Focus	Implementation	Intended Impact
Enhance equitable recruitment practices.	<p>Emphasize in postings that the board welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Specify who the applicant should contact if they wish to request and accommodation and update the DCDSB Reasonable accommodation Statement as required.</p> <p>Review consultation process for requested accommodations with the HR Team.</p>	<p>To advocate, promote and protect the advancement of human rights through employment by adhering to the mandates under both AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code.</p> <p>Promote accessibility and reduce workplace discrimination.</p>
Revise interview, assessment and selection process.	<p>Increase and improve awareness and education.</p> <p>Implementation of work samples as part of the hiring process.</p>	<p>Counter and minimize hiring bias.</p> <p>Objectively evaluate candidates skill.</p> <p>Hiring and assessment based on candidate’s skills, qualifications and experience.</p>
Ensure maintenance of Emergency Response Plans.	Distribute memorandums at the start of the year regarding individual emergency response plans. Ensure site-based managers upload individual emergency response plans onto external provider platform.	To continue to ensure all individual emergency response plans are created, updated and uploaded to the appropriate locations.
Provide capacity-building training on the Return-to-Work Process.	Provide professional development to build capacity of employees and managers on the disability management and return-to-work process, including related policies and procedures.	To ensure continued education and transparency for all employees.

Design of Public Spaces

The Accessibility Standard for Built Environment will help remove barriers in buildings and outdoor spaces for people with disabilities. The standard will only apply to new construction and extensive renovations.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

Accomplishments:

- DCDSB maintains an annual facilities renewal program to upgrade board facilities to support access to all sites and building.
- Ongoing compliance to maintain existing accessibility structures and equipment (i.e. doors, ramps, rails, curb-cuts, accessible parking, signage, etc.).
- Contingency funds implemented to address student/staff accessibility projects during current year.
- Accessibility audit completed by architect firm to identify areas of need.
- Ensured pre-qualified vendors of record for architect firms and consulting services adhere to accessibility standards for all future design projects.
- Sought out vendors that are offering products that can provide accessible options or resources to meet the needs of our students and staff.



Goals:

Focus	Implementation	Intended Impact
Provide tools and resources to assist staff and students in meeting accessibility obligations in procurement.	Work with the procurement platform (Bids & Tenders) to ensure all materials are in an accessible public format.	Working with vendors and service providers to provide accessible procurement documents will ensure an equitable vendor procurement process.
Continue to work with vendors and community partners to meet or exceed accessibility requirements.	Annual review of rosters of vendors of record.	All goods and services meet or exceed accessibility requirements.
Remove accessibility barriers in existing facilities to meet the needs of all students and staff.	Review of current facilities and community feedback regularly.	Barriers to access are removed in a timely manner.
Accessibility improvements to new and renewal construction projects.	Using qualified consultants and architects to create designs to meet legislative and regulatory accessibility requirements for construction.	All new buildings are compliant, and older building are brought up to current standards.



Transportation

The Transportation Standard of the AODA requires transportation service providers to make the features and equipment on routes and vehicles accessible to passengers with disabilities.

Transportation Standards

Accomplishments:

- Individual transportation plans created for students with accessibility needs.
- Alternative accessible transportation services may be provided for students with accessibility needs. Where possible, students with accessibility needs are identified before the commencement of each school year or during the school year, based on the needs of the students with the disability.

Goals:

Focus	Implementation	Intended Impact
<p>Transportation accessibility is continuously improved to meet the needs of our stakeholders.</p>	<p>Continue the Traffic Study Group to provide ongoing recommendations to improve accessibility.</p> <p>Review Durham Student Transportation Services procedures to enhance accessibility and inclusion.</p> <p>Review the individual transportation plan process.</p>	<p>Compile and analyze data on actions from Traffic Study Group to ensure compliance and any implementation required eg. accessible exteriors – walkways, building entry points, parking, etc in consultation with Facility Services.</p> <p>Updated DSTS procedures to align with DCDSB policies and administrative procedures to ensure the best supports are in place for students.</p> <p>Updated individual transportation plans/process created for students with accessibility needs and/or disabilities.</p>

Communications and Feedback Form

The Accessibility Advisory Committee would like to provide an on-going opportunity for all staff, parents, and community partners of the Durham Catholic District School Board to communicate accessibility concerns to the Accessibility Committee.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee has established a webpage found at dcdsb.ca. Please refer to this website for information relating to the Durham Catholic District School Board's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and to communicate with the committee, through the online form, any concerns, suggestions, and recommendations for review.



Communication of Plan

The DCDSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is posted on the board website and is available in printed and alternate accessible formats upon request.

The plan will also be shared with members of the Durham Catholic learning community through multiple communication channels, including in board newsletters, school websites, and Edsby.

Questions, comments, or feedback regarding the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan may be directed to Scott Grieve, Superintendent of Business, Finance and Facilities Services via email: Scott.Grieve@dcdsb.ca or phone: (905)576-6150 ext. 22353.

Review & Monitoring of Plan

The DCDSB Accessibility Advisory Committee meets quarterly during the year to review progress and the implementation plan in order to increase accessibility throughout the board.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will ensure the effective review and monitoring of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan by completing:

1. An annual status report on the progress of the steps taken to implement the plan is prepared.
2. A review and update of the Multi-Year plan at least once every five (5) years, in consultation with persons with disabilities, the DCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee, and other relevant committees and communities.

DCDSB Policies and Administrative Procedures Relating to Accessibility

Accessibility Policy (PO434) and the following Administrative Procedures that are attached to PO434:

- [Customer Service Accessibility Standards Administrative Procedure \(AP434-1\)](#)
- [Notice of Disruption of Service Administrative Procedure \(AP434-2\)](#)
- [Use of Assistive Devices by the General Public Administrative Procedure \(AP434-3\)](#)
- [Use of Support Person by the General Public Administrative Procedure \(AP434-4\)](#)
- [Monitoring and Feedback on Accessible Customer Service Administrative Procedure \(AP434-5\)](#)
- [Use of Service Animals by General Public Administrative Procedure \(AP434-6\)](#)
- [Accessible Information and Communications Administrative Procedure \(AP434-8\)](#)
- [Accessible Employment Administrative Procedure \(AP434-9\)](#)
- [Accessible Student Transportation Administrative Procedure \(AP434-10\)](#)
- [Concern Complaint Resolution Process Administrative Procedure \(AP440-6\)](#)
- [DCDSB Branding Administrative Procedure \(AP440-4\)](#)
- [Social Media Administrative Procedure \(AP440-5\)](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation of Students Requiring Specialized Assistance \(AP414-10\)](#)
- [Extra-Curricular Activities – Elementary and Secondary Policy \(PO507\)](#)
- [Student Excursions and/or Exchanges for Educational Purposes Administrative Procedure \(AP512-1\)](#)
- [Student Excursions and/or Exchanges for Educational Purposes Policy \(PO512\)](#)
- [Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals Policy \(PO805\)](#)
- [Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals Administrative Procedure \(AP805-1\)](#)

Visit dcdsb.ca/Policies to view our policies and administrative procedures.



Visit dcdsb.ca/AccessibilityPlan for more details.

Listening, Learning, and Living in Faith

650 Rossland Road West, Oshawa, ON L1J 7C4 | 905.576.6150 | dcdsb.ca



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