

Alexander Academy Accessibility Plan

* Created August 24, 2023

1. Introduction

1A. About the Organization:

Alexander Academy is a co-educational day high school for students in grades 10-12, located on the 4th and 2nd floor of 570 Dunsmuir Street in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Established under the British Columbia Ministry of Education as a Group 4 Independent School in 2013, Alexander Academy is dedicated to providing educational programs that inspire students to follow independent paths to success. We recognize that each student has their own academic goals, learning style, passion, and talent. Our teachers are committed to ensuring that students have opportunities to challenge themselves academically, enabling them to reach their personal level of academic excellence. We provide a personalized learning experience for each student through the academically rigorous curriculum. Students complete our high school graduation program and receive the BC ‘Dogwood’ Diploma, a globally recognized certificate of graduation, issued by the province of British Columbia.

Alexander Academy provides a curriculum that encompasses action, service, academics, arts, and healthy living. We expect excellence and foster attitudes of creativity, engagement, empathy, respect, and integrity. Alexander Academy is dedicated to educational excellence that is both student-centred and community-oriented. We exemplify a safe and caring school, characterized by our deliberate focus on fostering internationally-minded learners who have inclusive and diverse outlooks. We emphasize collaboration, inquiry, health, and holistic life-long learning. We promote empathetic understanding amongst our students toward the ongoing process of reconciliation with Canada’s Indigenous peoples.

Alexander Academy’s Accessibility Plan was created to not only understand and comply with the requirements and legal obligations of the British Columbia provincial government’s Accessible BC Act, but also to develop our own accessibility plan, committee, and feedback mechanism. Alexander Academy aims to support all members of its educational community, including students, teachers, staff, family members, and guests to the school, by providing full

accessibility in our direct services on campus, through our community partnerships, and through our advocacy. Alexander Academy’s Accessibility Plan will follow the principles of inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design. Our hope is that Alexander Academy’s Accessibility Plan will continue to evolve over time to be more responsive to the accessibility needs of everyone, making Alexander Academy a more accessible and inclusive school.

1B. Message from Leadership

Alexander Academy’s Board of Directors, the Head of School, administrative team, support staff, and teachers, all recognize that accessibility is a school priority which is supported at every level of our organization.

1C. Accessibility Committee

Alexander Academy is a member of the Associate Member Society (AMS), which is part of the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) BC. Alexander Academy will use the guidance, support, and recommendations of the AMS Accessibility Committee during the 2023-2024 school year. Over the next school year, it is our goal to create and develop our own Alexander Academy Accessibility Committee at the school level as we audit and address our accessibility needs as we move into our new campus on September 1st, 2023.

1D. Territorial Acknowledgement

Alexander Academy is located on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

2. Executive Summary

Alexander Academy has been evolving as a high school over its first 10 years of operation, and our understanding and capacity of accessibility is growing. New strategies and policies continue to be developed to create a connected and inclusive community. Alexander Academy is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across its services, programs, and

infrastructure, to benefit the educational community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We recognize the essential knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of disability and commit to making sure those voices are part of community planning. Almost every Canadian has or will experience a disability, or cares about someone with accessibility challenges. Many of us will require supports at times throughout our lives. By focusing on accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being, and personal outcomes for the people in our educational community.

Different disability groupings are used to help provide a broad understanding of experiences that may be shared or related to a disability, in terms of underlying health conditions, activity limitations, participation restrictions, and environmental factors. Disabilities can be encountered at any age and can be temporary or long term. While there is no universally adopted set of disability groupings, it is important to recognize several common types and causes of disability. Some disabilities are visible while others are not immediately visible to others, such as asthma, brain injuries or concussions, allergies or environmental sensitivities, extreme fatigue, or chronic pain.

The following definitions are adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO) to help build awareness, but should not be interpreted as a complete list:

- **Pain**: Pain-related disabilities often refer to long term or complex pain that may be caused by injury and may commonly occur with other disabilities.
- **Flexibility, Mobility, and Dexterity**: Disabilities related to mobility, flexibility, and dexterity include limb disabilities, manual dexterity, coordination, brain injuries and spinal-cord function.
- **Mental Health**: Mental health-related disabilities refer to conditions that affect the mind and brain and the way a person thinks, feels, and acts.
- **Learning and Memory**: Learning and memory disabilities include challenges related to skills such as reading, writing, and problem solving. They can also interfere with more

complex and abstract skills related to the ability to organize, to reason, long and short-term memory, and attention span.

- **Visual Disabilities**: Visual disabilities can range from partial sight loss to complete blindness.
- **Hearing**: Hearing disabilities can range from partial hearing loss to complete deafness.

Types of Accessibility Barriers:

- **Attitudinal Barriers**: Behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against people with disabilities. These barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, judge, or misunderstand those with disabilities.
- **Informational or Communication Barriers**: When a person with a disability cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is available to others.
- **Technological Barriers**: When technology does not meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- **Physical or Architectural Barriers**: Elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers.
- **Organizational or Systemic Barriers**: Policies, procedures, or practices that may result in people with disabilities being mistreated or excluded from participating.

Alexander Academy is committed to removing existing barriers and preventing the creation of new barriers through:

- A) **Investing in Accessibility** - Thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action will help deliver accessibility improvements in our educational community.

- B) **Identifying, Preventing and Removing Barriers** – Improve services, programs, and infrastructure, in order to benefit the educational community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

- C) **Values Contributions from all People** – Diversity will strengthen our educational community, and recognizing essential knowledge and perspective comes from people with lived experience of disability, and so we must ensure those voices are part of the community planning and decisions.

- D) **Awareness** – Ensure that teachers, support staff, administration, students, parents, and visitors are aware of their roles in influencing accessibility for people with disabilities and share a responsibility to support positive community attitudes.

Alexander Academy has adapted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) core principles that underpin the rights of people with disabilities in combination with the emerging provincial principles on accessibility, as follows:

Inclusion: All people should be able to participate fully in our community with dignity and individual autonomy.

Diversity: All people will be respected for their differences and lived experiences, regardless of ability, age, gender identity and expression, race, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, place of origin, and religion. Our framework acknowledges that other aspects of identity interact with ability to determine how individuals experience barriers and inclusion.

Respect: All people should be treated with respect so that they can make their own choices, contribute to civil society, and thrive through independence.

Collaboration: While Alexander Academy does provide a leadership role, we cannot address accessibility alone. We must collaborate with other stakeholders, levels of government,

community partners, advocacy organizations, and service providers to eliminate barriers and support innovations towards an accessible society.

Adaptability: Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

3. Feedback Mechanism

The *Accessible BC Act* requires that an organization establish a process for receiving comments from its shareholders on the organization's accessibility plan and the barriers individuals experience within or when interacting with the organization. Alexander Academy will use this feedback in future versions of its accessibility plan. Feedback will be comprised of annual student, teacher, staff, and parent surveys that have specific questions regarding accessibility. Alexander Academy will also create an anonymous feedback box that school administration will monitor for feedback. Alexander Academy will also post the Accessibility Plan on the school website, as well as information on how to submit feedback via email, phone, or meetings directly with the administration team or Accessibility Committee.

4. Action Items

1. Create a school-level Accessibility Committee during the 2023-2024 school year.
2. Audit the new campus for accessibility challenges and create an action plan to remove accessibility barriers.
3. Post Accessibility Plan on school Website
4. Inform shareholders of feedback mechanisms on accessibility barriers
5. Establish priorities on barriers identified, which will consider expected cost, impact, facilities, policies, curriculum, guidance from AMS Accessibility Committee and new school-level Accessibility Committee, timeline, and project evaluation.

5. Conclusion

When the British Columbia government brought the Accessible BC Act into law in 2021, it demonstrated the government's commitment to accessibility. It marked the start of a much larger process and marks the next step in building an inclusive province that works for everyone. Accessibility, as a collective good that benefits all, should be considered a central component of all Alexander Academy's policies to achieve an inclusive, sustainable, and accessible school. Alexander Academy is committed to support the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in our educational community in order to build a barrier-free school.

6. Updating Accessibility Plan

There are no specifics in the Accessible BC Act about what needs to go into an organizations Accessibility Plan. However, it does stipulate that an organization must make it publicly available. Alexander Academy commits to publishing its Accessibility Plan on the school website. The Accessible BC Act also specifies that the plan must be updated at least once every three years. Alexander Academy commits to reviewing and updating, when necessary, its Accessibility Plan annually and whenever the situation warrants an amendment.

7. References

British Columbia Provincial Government. (2021). Accessible British Columbia Act. Retrieved on 2023-08-22 from <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019>

City of Victoria. (2020). Accessibility Framework. Retrieved on 2023-08-22 from <https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/about/accessibility.html>

Disability Alliance BC. (2023). Developing Your First Accessibility Plan: A Guide for BC Prescribed Organizations 2023. Retrieved on 2023-08-23 from <https://bcaccessibilityhub.ca/plans/developing-a-plan/>

Government of British Columbia. (1996). Human Rights Code. Retrieved on 2023-08-23 from https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96210_01

Government of British Columbia. (2021). Building a Better BC for People with Disabilities. Retrieved on 2023-08-23 from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/accessibility/legislation/accessiblebc>

Government of Canada. (1982). Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 7, Part 1 of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11. Retrieved on 2023-08-23 from <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccdl/>

Government of Canada. (2019). Accessible Canada Act. Retrieved on 2023-08-22 from <https://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/>

United Nations General Assembly. (2007). UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007. Retrieved on 2023-08-22 from <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

World Health Organization. (2011). World Report on Disability. Retrieved on 2023-08-22 from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564182>

* **Note:** Alexander Academy's Accessibility Plan will need to be updated prior to August 24, 2026.