

Zion Lutheran Christian School

Accessibility Plan

October 2023



Section 1: Introduction

About Our School Community

Zion Lutheran School was established in 1999 for all families desiring a quality, Christian education for their children. We are located in the Heritage area of Prince George, BC at 180 Tabor Blvd. South. We are an independent school that serves approximately 30 students from across the city of Prince George. The school operates 1 campus that offers education from Kindergarten through Grade Seven.

Zion Lutheran Christian School is member of Lutheran Church Canada (LCC), offering a Bible program from K through 7. Our French program begins in Grade 5. We are also able to provide special education services for students with special education needs.

Our leadership team includes a full-time teaching Principal, 2 full time Teachers, 1 part-time Teacher, and 2 Educational Assistants.

Zion Lutheran Christian School elects a Board of 6-7 trustees who establish policies and direction of the school. Our Board operates under the umbrella of Zion Lutheran Church and its members are made up of congregational members of the church with one parent representative meeting once per month.

A Message from the Principal

At Zion Lutheran Christian School, we are committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides equitable opportunities to support our diverse community. A key element to supporting our community is the development of a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan identifies system needs, priorities, and action plans, and draws on feedback from our school community and the work of the Accessibility Committee to enhance equity of access to programming and our facilities.

Our Accessibility Committee is our School Board with the support of members of our school and church community with diverse backgrounds that meets monthly to develop and monitor action plans highlighted in the Three-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan identifies measurable actions across the pillars of the Accessibility Act, supporting equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access.

We recognize the importance of accessibility not only for those with disabilities, but also for the benefit of the entire community. We are committed to advancing the efforts of the Accessibility Committee to improve equity and ease of access to services, as well as access to our facilities. Through the actions in this Three-Year Accessibility Plan, we commit to continuous improvements in developing an environment that supports all students, staff and the larger school community.

Definitions

Accessibility: The state of having programs, services and environments that allow all individuals to participate fully in society without encountering barriers.

Accessibility Committee: An official group formed by one or more organizations in collaboration with people with disabilities, to create an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism.

Accessibility Plan: A plan developed by an Accessibility Committee that identifies challenges and solutions for addressing accessibility barriers.

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, the size of doorways, lack of accessibility features, blocked paths of travel, and so on.
3. **Attitudinal Barrier:** 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 participating in society. Policy, practice, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.
5. **Resource Barrier:** Barriers resulting from inadequate technology, funding, staff, or tools.
6. **Temporal Barrier:** Barriers that occur during a specific time, such as busy times of day or during special events.

Disability: The state of being unable to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier.

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary, or episodic.

Section 2: Framework Guiding Our Work

The Zion Lutheran Christian School accessibility plan builds on global, national, provincial, and school specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

Global Context – United Nations

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion within the workplace and within the larger community. The United Nations has been instrumental in leading the importance of disability as a global health issue. In 2006, the United Nations led efforts to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2010, Canada ratified the CRPD and described the CRPD as follows:

“The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties of the Convention of the rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law.”

Canadian Context and Legislation – Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canada-wide, around one in five people had some form disability in 2017. Nationally, Canadian accessibility legislation started in 1985 where disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were included in the new federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities. The ACA has seven focus areas, and was developed based on the following guiding principles:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.
6. PWDs must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures.

7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for PWDs.

B.C. Context and Legislation – Accessible B.C. Act

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June of 2021, and initially the accessibility planning requirements only applied to provincial government organizations.

The Accessible British Columbia Regulation, under the Accessible British Columbia Act, came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations, and school districts and independent schools will be required to have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a tool to receive feedback on accessibility by September 1, 2023.

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 in the life of the province.

Principles in the Accessible B.C. Act

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an accessibility plan. The definitions are adapted from the foundational document *BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation*.

1. **Adaptability:** Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.
2. **Collaboration:** Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.
3. **Diversity:** Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics and lived experience greatly inform experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity with the disability community.
4. **Inclusion:** All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
5. **Self-Determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
6. **Universal Design:** The Centre of 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”. An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who interact with the organization.

Our Commitment to Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the degree of ease with which people with disabilities can use and enjoy something such as a device, service, or place. At Zion Lutheran Christian School, we are committed to providing an environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our diverse community. We recognize the importance of conscious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are removed and accessibility is increased.

Our school is committed to working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity. To achieve this goal, we have outlined the following commitments:

- Engage with staff, community members and people with disabilities in the development and review of our accessibility plan.
- Ensure that our school board policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility.
- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and community members.
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities in our school community.

Our Approach

At Zion Lutheran Christian School, we believe that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination and universal design.

In June 2023, we began the process of establishing an accessibility committee and identifying barriers to accessibility in our school community. This process involved:

- Establishing our school board as the main Accessibility Committee and reaching out to our school and church community for volunteers to assist in the work of the committee;
- Assessing the current physical and architectural accessibility of our school.
- Conducting surveys to understand the issues, challenges, and priorities of stakeholders within our school community;
- Developing a school feedback tool;
- Prioritizing of actions to be taken;
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation process.

Our approach is designed to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our school community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community.

Section 3: The Accessibility Committee

Purpose of the Accessibility Committee

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Committee to assist with identifying and preventing barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization. The purpose of the accessibility committee is to work collaboratively to assess and improve community accessibility, focusing on the experiences of individuals with disabilities while encompassing the whole community. The Accessibility Committee also helps advise on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

Recruitment to the Accessibility Committee

After the Zion Lutheran Christian School board was established as the school’s Accessibility Committee, a callout via email to our church and school community was conducted in June 2023 in an attempt to recruit diverse representation. Current members of the Accessibility and their roles are listed below:

Committee Member	Position
Kevin Schretlen	School Board Member – Chairman
John Haeussler	Principal of ZLCS
Pastor Kyle Eddy	Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church
Gail Haeussler	School Board Member – Treasurer
Leslie Burke	School Board Member
Gerald Klassen	School Board Member
Kayla Redpath	School Board Member – Secretary
Jenn Tkachuk	Parent of Student – Advisory
Janis Smith	Church Member – Advisory
Caroline Mackenzie	Parent of Student - Advisory

Section 4: Consultation Conducted

Barrier-identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Committee used the following barrier-identification methods:

Methodology	Description	Status
Audit of Policies and practices	A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion will be conducted by board members.	Ongoing (full audit has not been completed at time of this draft, but will be added to board meetings throughout the 23/24 school year)
School Physical Accessibility Audit	An assessment of the school's physical accessibility was developed, and an audit team was developed. The audit team conducted the school physical accessibility audit.	Completed August 2023
Essential Supports Survey for Staff	An essential supports survey was developed and distributed to staff to complete.	Completed September 2023
Survey to Stakeholders (staff, parents, church members, service providers)	An accessibility and inclusion survey was developed and distributed to stakeholders.	Completed September 2023
Accessibility Feedback Tool	A feedback tool was developed and posted to the school website (www.zlcs.com). Information about the tool was shared with school stakeholders (i.e. staff, parents, church members, service providers).	Completed October 2023
Accessibility Committee	The Accessibility Committee reviewed the input and feedback from the survey, assessment, and feedback tool. The Committee collaborated to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan. The final approval of priority areas for the plan was given by the School Board.	Completed October 2023

Section 5: Accessibility Feedback Tool

Zion Lutheran Christian School developed an online feedback tool that members of the school and church community can use. The tool was posted to the main page of the school website (www.zlcs.com) and an information announcement about the tool was provided to the school and church community.

The following are the contents of the online Accessibility Feedback Tool:

Report an Accessibility Barrier or Support

At Zion Lutheran Christian School, we want to learn about specific barriers or helpful supports that people encounter when they are trying to access a school program, building or school information, or when they are receiving a service or support. The ZLCS Accessibility Committee will review your feedback monthly and will be used for the revision of future accessibility planning. If you need accommodation for your student or if this is an urgent matter, please contact the school directly. Please use the form below to submit your feedback. Please include the following information in the 'Message' portion of the form:

- 1. The date and location the barrier or support was experienced.*
- 2. What were you or someone you know trying to access?*
- 3. Details about the barrier or support (be as specific as possible).*
- 4. Any recommendations for what would make it better.*

Thanks in advance for your feedback!

Upon submission of the user's feedback, the following message appears: *Thank you for reaching out to us. We will get in touch with you shortly.*

Section 6: Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Accomplishments Identified

The guiding principles of inclusive practice help inform Zion Lutheran Christian School's programs, policies, practices, and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We strive to create an environment that is accessible to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

The following is a synopsis of the achievements noted in the feedback:

Learning:

- Students with diverse needs and disabilities are included in regular classes.
- Teachers regularly use key universal supports including access to computers, visual schedules, and other adaptations to support individualized student learning.
- Teachers strive to differentiate instruction and assessment to accommodate for different learning needs and styles.
- Staff are friendly and supportive.
- Professional development opportunities are provided for staff to grow in their skills and abilities as educators.
- The school has a considerable amount of technology (chromebooks, tablets, ipads, document cameras, projectors) to help accommodate different learning styles and needs.

Equity

- Information on the Accessibility Act and other policies has been shared with stakeholders (staff, parents, etc.).

Physical and Architectural Environment

- The school conducted a Physical and Architectural Environment audit.
- There are several accessible features already in place. These include disabled parking, ramps to access downstairs and the gym, an accessible bathroom, good lighting, and generally good access to most areas of the building.
- A decision was made in September of 2023 to make Zion Lutheran Church and Christian School a scent free building.

Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Barriers Identified

Learning Barriers

- More training for staff is needed on the use of various assistive technology available (augmentative communication devices, alternate formats such as braille or ASL, personal FM/RMT systems, etc.)
- Lack of good digital (online) communication tool other than email (online student portfolio) for students, parents, and teachers to use.

Physical and Architecture Environment Barriers

- The acoustics in the gym are poor and can be a barrier to those using the facility (students, service providers, parents, and visitors).
- The noise from the gym (when there is a class there for example) that occurs downstairs can be a barrier to optimal learning.
- At some times during the year, the classrooms can become hot (uncomfortable).
- The building is generally lacking good signage (where the ramp is to the gym, direction to classrooms, for example).
- There is only stair access to the upstairs classroom.
- Not all of the front doors are in good working condition.
- Alternate forms of lighting (other than florescent) could be explored.
- A wall-mounted, fold down change table would improve accessibility in the accessible washroom.
- A bike rack would be more welcoming for students who want to ride their bikes to school.
- Doors in school do not have glass – no visibility from one side of door to the other.

School Policy Barriers

- A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion should be conducted by board members and amendments made as needed.

Section 7: Our Three Year Plan (2023-2026)

Overview:

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures that Zion Lutheran Christian School will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school community. The plan is based on the Accessibility Principles of adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination, and universal design, as set out in the Accessible B.C. Act.

Accessibility Priorities:

Based on feedback gathered from stakeholders in our school and church community and the physical and architectural audit, the Accessibility Committee has identified the following areas as the top priority for improving accessibility in the school community.

Priority #1: Learning

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Implement an online learning platform that teachers, students, and parents can use to improve communication about and support, student learning in the classroom and at home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research online platforms that are available • in consultation with stakeholders, choose and implement an online learning platform • conduct necessary training on the use of the platform for students, parents, and staff 	Implementation (including training) by Fall of 2024;
Train staff on the use various assistive technology available (augmentative communication devices, alternate formats such as braille or ASL, personal FM/RMT systems, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide professional development opportunities in this area 	As needed over the next three years.

Priority #2: Physical and Architectural

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
<p>Improve the acoustics in the gym.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate ways to improve the acoustics through the use of sound absorbing acoustic panels • design, build, and install sound absorbing acoustic panels around the gym • assess the effectiveness of the panels once installed and adjust as necessary 	<p>Complete by Spring 2024</p>
<p>Improve signage around the building to help members of our church and school community navigate around the building more efficiently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make a list of all areas in the building that are need of a sign • research effective sign design • decide on a design for the signs • install signs as needed <p>Areas that are in need: location of doorbell outside, location of ramp to gym, location of washrooms, main office, learning areas.</p>	<p>Complete by Fall of 2024</p>
<p>Repair front doors so that they are all working freely.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate cost of repairing the front doors • make repairs as needed 	<p>Complete by Fall of 2024 (depending on cost)</p>
<p>Investigate alternative forms of lighting for the learning spaces in the school (other than fluorescent) and develop a plan for replacing them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate alternate forms of lighting and cost of replacement • develop a realistic timeline for replacement 	<p>Complete by Fall of 2024</p>

<p>Add a folding, wall mounted change table in the accessible washroom on the main floor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather quotes on the cost of installing a folding, wall mounted change table in the washroom develop a timeline on when it can be installed install the new change table 	<p>Information gathered by Spring of 2024; Installation by Fall of 2025</p>
<p>Add a bike rack for students to use at the school in the warmer months of the year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate the cost of various bike racks decide on a design and model that we like decide on where the bike rack will be located purchase and install the bike rack 	<p>Investigate and choose style of bike rack by Spring 2024; Installation by Fall of 2025</p>

Priority #3: Policy

Objective	Action	Timeline
<p>Review current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> set aside time in each board meeting to review polices that promote accessibility and inclusion make amendments as needed 	<p>Ongoing until complete.</p>

Section 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Planning Committee (School Board) meets monthly and will include the Accessibility Plan on the agenda to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. Any additional feedback given through the feedback tool (on the website) will be reviewed on a monthly basis. The committee will ensure that the following steps are taken regarding the three-year accessibility plan:

1. Communicate the plan to stakeholders in the school and church community.
2. Prepare an annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan. This report will be made public.
3. Review and update the three-year accessibility plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

Section 9: How to Give us Feedback

In addition to the public availability of the plan, Zion Lutheran Christian School will continue to post an annual status report on the progress of the three-year plan to the school's website. Accessible formats of the plan will be made available upon request. Questions, comments or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to the Principal by email at principal@zlcs.com, or by phone at 250-562-2777.

Appendices

More information about disabilities and a list of references and resources is available upon request.

This Accessibility Plan was approved and accepted on October 25, 2023 by the Zion Lutheran Christian School Board.