Prairie South School Division

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2026-2029

Table of Contents

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A Message from the Director of Education and the Board Chair

A Commitment to Accessibility and Inclusion
On behalf of the Board of Education and Prairie South Schools, we are pleased to support the development of our Accessibility Plan. This plan represents our commitment to creating an inclusive and barrier-free environment for all students, staff, families, and community members who interact with Prairie South.

Our commitment is formally mandated by the Government of Saskatchewan's new legislation, *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act*, which came into effect on December 3, 2023. This Act provides the crucial framework for ensuring that accessibility is systematically addressed throughout the province. Prairie South Schools proudly aligns with the spirit of this legislation, recognizing that the removal of barriers is a moral, legal, and educational imperative.

At Prairie South Schools, we believe in the principle of **Accessibility for All**. We recognize that enhancing accessibility is not merely about compliance; it is about enriching the educational experience, supporting our employees, and ensuring that every individual has equitable access to our facilities, programs, and services. Our Accessibility Plan is a concrete action-oriented roadmap designed to address challenges across four key areas: physical environment, digital technology, communication systems, and cultural inclusion.

Over the next three years, we will work collaboratively to execute the strategic goals outlined in this document. We extend our sincere gratitude to the staff, students, and community members who shared their insights and feedback during the consultation process. Your voice was, and remains, vital to this work.

We invite you to review this plan and continue partnering with us on this important journey. Together, we will realize a more accessible and inclusive future for Prairie South Schools.
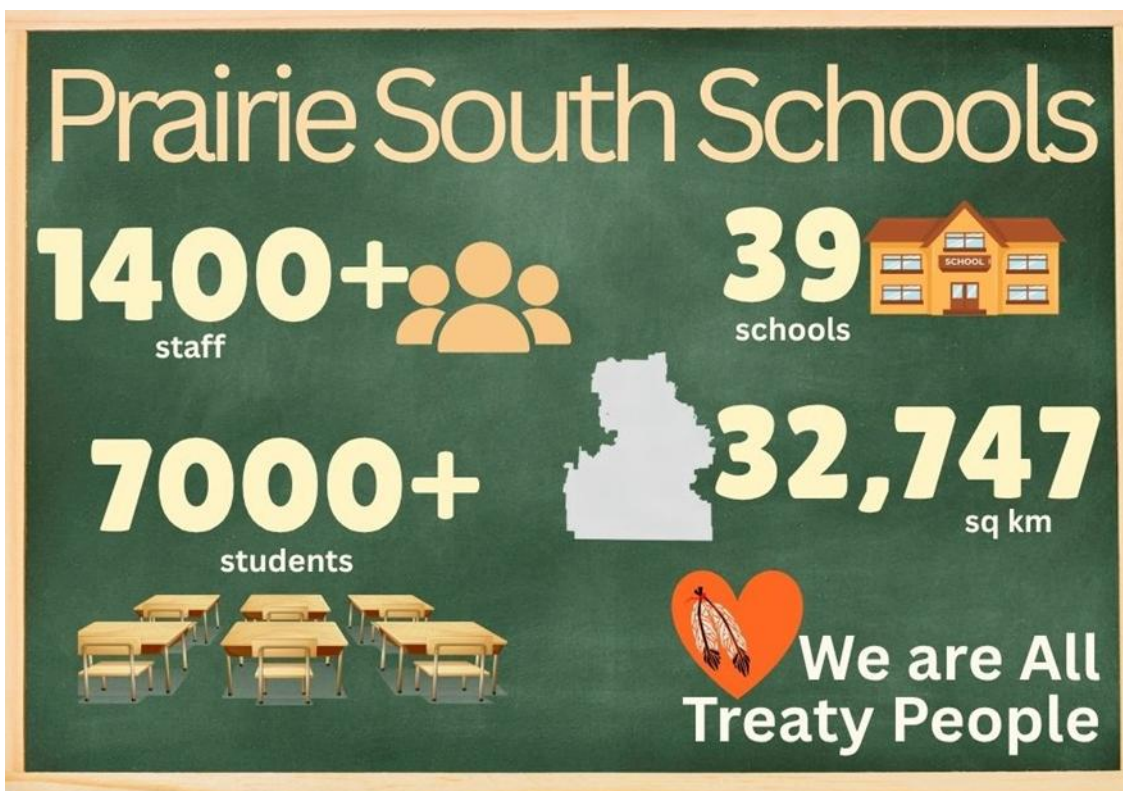
Giselle Wilson, Board Chair   Ryan Boughen, Director of Education.

About our School Division

Prairie South School Division has 39 schools located within 24 rural and urban communities. The division encompasses 32,747 square kilometers (12,643 square miles) of southern Saskatchewan. It spans a geographic area from Coronach in the south, Mankota in the west, Rouleau in the east, and Craik in the north.

The division is divided into six subdivisions for purposes of board representation. Prairie South is a very diverse school division and encompasses rural and urban communities surrounding the City of Moose Jaw, where the school division office, learning department, John Chisholm Partnership Centre, facilities, and transportation offices are located. Six Hutterian colonies and two associate schools are supported in partnership with Prairie South Schools.

Introduction: Commitment to Accessibility

The Accessible Saskatchewan Act defines a barrier as anything that hinders or challenges the full and equal participation in society of people with disabilities.

There are many types of barriers that people with disabilities may experience, including physical barriers, information and communications barriers, and attitudinal barriers. Definitions and examples of each barrier type are outlined below to help people understand the experiences of people with disabilities.

Physical barriers exist when spaces are designed in ways that prevent or limit mobility or access.

Information and communications barriers exist when information or material is shared in a way that is not accessible to all people.

Attitudinal barriers exist when people act or think based on false assumptions.

Prairie South Schools (PSS) is dedicated to identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers for all individuals who work at, or access, the school division's facilities, programs, and services.

This commitment is reinforced by the Government of Saskatchewan's introduction of The Accessible Saskatchewan Act, which came into force on December 3, 2023. The Act mandates that the Prairie South Schools publicly post an **Accessibility Plan** to proactively remove and prevent accessibility barriers for persons with disabilities. The purpose of this plan is to identify existing barriers encountered by individuals within the organization and those who interact with it, and to delineate the specific actions the school division will undertake to address them.

Prairie South is committed to the principle of **Accessibility for All**, guided by the protections afforded to all persons under The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. PSS recognizes that improving accessibility benefits the entire community. Furthermore, Prairie South Schools is committed to incorporating the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), ensuring that culturally responsive and appropriate solutions are integrated throughout all aspects of this Accessibility Plan.

Development of the Plan

An internal school division committee, comprised of representatives from Human Resources, the Learning Department, School Operations, Information Technology, Facilities, Transportation, and an elected School Board Trustee, collaboratively developed this plan. This committee considered feedback received and has identified the strategic actions that Prairie South Schools will implement over the next three years to enhance the accessibility of its facilities, programs, and services.

In the development process, PSS conducted a comprehensive review of existing programs and services. Prairie South Schools wishes to acknowledge the diligent efforts of all staff in promoting an inclusive and welcoming workplace, valuing the contributions of every member of the PSS team.

Existing Initiatives:
Prairie South Schools has established a comprehensive framework of administrative procedures, including those pertaining to the **Duty to Accommodate** (AP 403), **Services for Students with Intensive Needs** (AP 340), and **Facilities Planning** (AP 540), that already promote inclusion and underpin the efforts outlined in this plan. See Appendix B for further details and relevant Administrative Procedures.

Consultation and Engagement

Prairie South Schools engaged in meaningful consultation with community stakeholders, including students, families, staff, community members and agencies to inform the strategic actions outlined within this Accessibility Plan. The internal committee initiated this engagement through a comprehensive survey and began proactive outreach gather diverse perspectives and insights.

Key Priority Areas of Learning

The data collected during the consultation process was structured into four priority areas, reflecting a comprehensive approach to identifying all forms of accessibility challenges.

Priority Area	Focus of Review
Physical Accessibility Barriers	Examining infrastructure, grounds, and transportation systems.
Digital Accessibility Challenges	Evaluating software, hardware, and online platforms used for learning and communication.
Communication Systems and Processes	Assessing the clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of information sharing within the Division.
Cultural and Social Inclusion	Exploring the sense of belonging, equity, and support for diverse needs within the school community.

Prairie South Schools' actions in this plan encompass both community-proposed solutions and overarching recommendations derived from a comprehensive analysis of the stakeholder feedback.

Accessibility Goals and Strategic Actions (2026–2029)

Prairie South has already taken proactive steps to improve the accessibility of its facilities, programs, and services. However, we acknowledge that the journey toward a truly inclusive environment is ongoing. This plan outlines the strategic actions that PSS will prioritize over the next three years to systematically remove accessibility barriers experienced by persons with disabilities. Prairie South staff will collaboratively complete these actions and promote increased awareness about accessibility.

Goal 1: Enhance Physical Accessibility and Navigation

Feedback consistently indicates that physical barriers are a primary concern, significantly hindering equitable access to school facilities and grounds for students, staff, and community members with mobility issues. Stakeholders advised on common systemic architectural barriers, such as access from parking areas to entry points, and the need for safe and proper access for wheelchairs and mobility aids during major events (e.g., sporting events, graduation). Particular challenges were noted in older facilities, affecting daily navigation, access to educational programming, and participation in school life.

Strategic Actions for 2026–2029 (Physical Environment)
- **Review and Upgrade Vertical Access**: Systematically review and update elevator and/or lift access in all schools to ensure reliable, safe, and modern operation.
- **Improve Parking and Entrances:** Review and update accessible parking zones and access pathways from parking areas to school entrances, ensuring clear signage and compliance.
- **Modernize Washroom Facilities:** Review washroom facilities to ensure proper maintenance of automated door access and sufficient space accommodations for mobility aids.
- **Maintain Safe Exterior Paths:** Ensure pathways, sidewalks, and parking areas are consistently accessible and safe, particularly during inclement weather.
- **Plan Inclusive Play Areas:** Integrate accessibility considerations into the planning and design phases of all new school playground and athletic field additions or upgrades to maximize inclusion.

Goal 2: Resolve Digital Accessibility and Technology Challenges

In modern education, digital tools are integral to learning, communication, and administration. Ensuring that these technologies are fully accessible to all users is paramount to equitable education. Stakeholder feedback provided valuable insight into the division's digital ecosystem, encompassing everything from educational software and communication platforms to student hardware.

We recognize that beyond software, the physical technology and the means to connect can be a source of concern. This includes ensuring that division-provided devices are in good working order and addressing the "digital divide," where some families lack reliable internet or computer access, making it difficult for students to complete online work and for parents to engage with digital communications.

Strategic Actions for 2026–2029 (Digital Environment)
- **Prioritize Accessibility in Procurement:** Software evaluations explicitly include digital accessibility criteria in the procurement stage, verifying compatibility with essential assistive technologies.
- **Enhance Digital Design Awareness:** Prioritize division-wide education and awareness campaigns regarding the effective use of colour contrast, font size, and clear layout when designing digital communications.
- **Optimize for Mobile Access:** Prioritize education and awareness throughout the school division to ensure communication content and platforms are optimally accessible via mobile devices, recognizing the primary mode of access for many families.
- **Audit and Review Internet Connections:** Information Technology Department will review to ensure appropriate Wi-fi and network connections exists in all Prairie South Schools.

Goal 3: Strengthen Communication Systems and Processes

Clear, consistent, and accessible communication is essential for fostering strong partnerships between schools and families. Effective communication ensures all community members are informed, engaged, and able to participate fully in the educational process. Stakeholder feedback highlighted the need for greater consistency, clarity, and support for Prairie South's diverse families.

Strategic Actions for 2026–2029 (Communication Systems)
- **Streamline Transportation Communication:** Review the existing transportation communication process to improve clarity, accessibility, and timeliness of information shared with families.
- **Expand Language Support:** Review support provided to families with language barriers, including educating school staff on access to professional interpretation services and improving the availability of languages for regular school communication (e.g., utilizing translation features within platforms like Edsby).
- **Standardize Communication Channels:** Ensure primary sources of communication are clearly defined, well-known, and consistently utilized by school staff, preventing fragmentation caused by reliance on multiple, uncoordinated platforms.

Goal 4: Nurture Cultural and Social Inclusion

A truly accessible school division actively ensures that all students and families feel respected, valued, and included in the school community. This requires a culture that actively supports students with diverse needs, acknowledges a wide range of cultural backgrounds, and promotes equity across all schools. This goal addresses nuanced feedback related to cultural representation, student support systems, and perceived disparities within the division.

Strategic Actions for 2026–2029 (Culture and Inclusion)
- **Deepen Indigenous Education:** Continue to share and integrate First Nations history, culture, and teachings across all programs and schools.
- **Expand Cultural Curriculum:** Review additional cultural teachings and representation that may be further incorporated into the curriculum and school environment.
- **Advance Professional Learning:** Promote targeted professional learning opportunities for school staff on effective strategies for supporting students with disabilities and implementing neurodiversity-affirming practices that respect modern, research-based approaches.
- **Refine Accommodation Support:** Review the communication and support provided to families navigating the formal student accommodation process to ensure it is clear, timely, and supportive.
- **Improve Rural Support Access:** Review access to support services for schools outside of the city of Moose Jaw and effectively communicate the opportunities and available resources.

Conclusion and Invitation for Feedback

Prairie South Schools is resolute in its commitment to significantly enhancing accessibility across all areas: our schools, facilities, communications, and administrative processes. This comprehensive plan serves as our strategic roadmap for the next three years. Prairie South will ensure continuous improvement by reviewing and formally updating this document every three years.

The prioritized actions within this plan are designed to proactively improve the accessibility of all school division services and to systematically dismantle barriers experienced by persons with disabilities.

As we move forward, we deeply value and encourage continued dialogue with our community. Your feedback is essential to our ongoing success. We welcome input from members of the public regarding accessibility barriers that impact the lives of persons with disabilities and the effectiveness of this plan.

Share Your Feedback

We welcome your comments on this Accessibility Plan. Please submit your feedback using the contact information or the form provided below:
Contact Us:
- **Phone:** 306.694.1200
- **Email:** info@prairiesouth.ca
- **Address:** 1075 9th Avenue NW, Moose Jaw, SK, S6H 1V7
[Form Link Here]

Appendix A: Glossary of Common Definitions

Ableism and Disability Oppression: Ableism or disability oppression is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Ableism views typical abilities as the norm and devalues people who have physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, or other disabilities.

Accommodation: Any technical aid or device, personal support or disability-related support that a person may require. This can include, but is not limited to, accessible document formats; mobility supports attending a meeting, interpretation or captioning services, or ensuring space has sensory sensitive features.

Adaptability: The ability to be modified for a new use or purpose. Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology and attitudes change.

Alternate formats: Alternate ways of providing information beyond traditional printed material. Examples include large prints, text-only documents, and Braille.

Alternative text: Also referred to as alt tags or alt attributes. Alternative text provides a verbal description of a visual or graph for individuals with visual impairments who use screen readers.

Barrier: Anything that hinders or challenges the full and equal participation in society of persons with disabilities.

Captioning: Text at the bottom of the screen (television/video) allows people to follow spoken dialogue and distinct noises. Closed captioning is similar, but the text must be decoded to appear on the screen.

Disability: Any impairment that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and equal participation in society. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, and may or may not be evident. There are many types of disabilities that people experience, including physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, and sensory impairments.

Diversity: Recognizing that each person is unique and has different backgrounds. Diversity means including or involving people from a range of different social or ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, disabilities, etc.

Inclusion: Providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

Gender Diversity: Gender diversity encompasses the recognition of individuals whose gender identities and expressions fall outside of the traditional binary of male and female. It includes transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming individuals, among others.

Large print: Printed information provided in a large font size (18 pt or larger) for people who have low vision. For easier reading, select "sans serif" fonts.

Neurodiversity: Neurodiversity acknowledges that differences in how brains function are normal variations, not deficits, and embraces the diverse ways people think, learn, and interact with the world.

Plain language: Clear, conversational communication that makes sense to the intended audience. The goal of plain language is to communicate so clearly that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use the information.

Self-determination: People are empowered to make their own choices and control their own lives.

Service Animal: The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission defines a service animal as an animal with specialized training to assist a person with a recognized physical and/or mental disability.

Universal design: Universal design means making things safer, easier and more convenient for everyone. It involves a range of design concepts, including design of products, or spaces and environments, to provide access in a way that respects all abilities.

Appendix B

	AP Title	Relevance to Accessibility & Inclusion
AP 139	Use of Personal Electronic Devices	Relates to the accommodation and use of personal assistive technology (e.g., communication devices).
AP 140	Computer/Online Services Responsible Use	Directly relates to digital accessibility (website, software, and online services access).
AP 159	Health And Safety (OH&S)	Ensures a safe environment for all staff, addressing safety as a crucial aspect of physical accessibility.
AP 170	Harassment	Core procedure for maintaining an inclusive and respectful environment, upholding the protection of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.
AP 171	Violence	Supports a safe environment for all users, which is foundational to accessibility and inclusion.
AP 180	Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (LAFOIP)	Governs the protection and privacy of personal health and disability-related information.
AP 250	Instructional Resources Selection and Challenge	Relevant to ensure that learning materials (textbooks, digital resources) are selected for accessibility formats.
AP 260	Learning Activities Outside the School	Requires consideration of accessibility when planning off-site activities and excursions.
AP 312	Administering Medications and Medical Treatment to Students	Directly related to accommodating and supporting students with medical or health-related needs.
AP 313	Transferring, Lifting, Reposition Guidelines	Highly relevant to physical accessibility, ensuring safe mobility support for students with physical disabilities.
AP 316	Gender and Sexual Diversity	Directly supports the School Division's commitment to inclusion and equity for all students.
AP 340	Services For Students with Intensive Needs	Core Accessibility Procedure. Outlines comprehensive services and support for students with disabilities.
AP 342	Assistive Technology for Students with Special Needs	Core Accessibility Procedure. Focuses on removing technical/learning barriers through the provision of technology.
AP 343	Service Dogs in Schools	Directly addresses the accommodation of service animals as required under accessibility standards.
AP 403	Duty To Accommodate	Core Accessibility Procedure for Employees. Mandates the removal of employment barriers for

		staff based on protected grounds, including disability.
AP 491	Access To Schools (Visitors and Volunteers)	Ensures clear and inclusive protocols for public access to school facilities.
AP 540	Facilities Planning	Core Physical Accessibility Procedure. Governs the planning, design, and construction of accessible physical spaces.
AP 542	Community Use of School Facilities	Ensures that accessibility is maintained for public/external groups using school facilities.
AP 550	School Bus Safety	Essential for ensuring safe and accessible transportation for all students, including those with mobility devices.
AP 551	Bus Maintenance and Inspection	Relates to the maintenance of specialized equipment on buses (e.g., lifts, securement points) vital for transportation accessibility.