

# **Anchor Academy Society's Accessibility Plan**

January 2024



Updated March 2025

### About Our School Community:

Anchor Academy Society is an online independent school that serves approximately 1100 students from all over B.C. The school offers education from K-12.

Anchor Academy's K – 12 (and Adult) online program follows the Learning Standards as prescribed by the B.C. Ministry of Education. The purpose of the school is to provide parents an option to educate their children through a Biblical worldview while using Christian curriculum and the Ministry of Education curriculum. The school has numerous options to help students succeed. Special education programs are also provided by the school for students with varied abilities.

Anchor Academy Society has a Board of five directors who establish policies and direction of Anchor Academy Society. Directors hold meetings throughout the year. An Annual General meeting is held at the Anchor Academy office in November.

Our school team includes a Principal, and two Vice Principals, Special Education Director, Indigenous Support Worker, thirty-six teaching staff, and seventeen support/non-teaching staff.

### A Message from the Administrator:

At Anchor Academy Society, we are committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides the same opportunities to support our varied 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 access to programming and our facilities.

Our Accessibility Committee is a multi-disciplinary team that meets regularly to affirm our commitment to identify priorities and 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 the same 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 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.

### **B.C. Context and Legislation - Accessible B.C. Act:**

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 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.

### **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 Anchor Academy Society, we are committed to providing an environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our 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 the same treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity.

### **Our Approach:**

At Anchor Academy Society, 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 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.

### **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 advises the school Administrator/Board on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory, and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

**Accessibility Committee Membership:**

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Position/Representation</b>
Matt Hunt	Board of Directors, Chair
Stephen Anderson	Principal
Darla Anderson	Special Education Director/Trauma-Based Approach/Parent of children with Varied Learning Abilities
DeeDee Koscielny	Member of Board of Directors

**Barrier-identification Methodologies:**

The Accessibility Committee used the following barrier-identification methods:

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Status</b>
Audit of policies and practices	A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility was conducted by key staff members.	November 2023
Survey to Parents/Guardians	A survey was developed and distributed to parents/guardians.	April 2024
School Physical Accessibility Audit	An Assessment of the School's Physical Accessibility is conducted.	Monthly
Accessibility Committee	The Accessible Committee reviewed the input and feedback. The Committee collaborated to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan	November 2024

### **Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Accomplishments Identified:**

There are a number of initiatives at Anchor Academy Society to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The following is a synopsis of some of the major achievements noted in the feedback:

#### **Learning:**

1. We have better assessment tools to help identify potential learning needs and disabilities
2. Teachers regularly use some key universal supports, including access to audiobooks, computers with voice to text technology, use of visual schedules in all classes
3. We have added more subscriptions to enhance learning for all students.

#### **School Policies and Practices:**

1. Mental Health and Well-being Supports
  - The school recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being of its students and staff, especially as the world has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. Initiatives have taken place to assess and improve the mental health and well-being of students and staff to ensure support and positive outcomes.
  - Training programs are offered to staff to promote student mental health and improve personal mental health and well-being and reduce stigma associated with mental illness.
2. Accessibility Awareness Training
  - Ongoing training continues to be provided to staff and students that supports accessibility awareness, obligations, and encompassing environments.

#### **Physical and Architectural Environment:**

1. The school conducted a Physical and Architectural Environment Audit.
2. The school has invested in several upgrades to existing facilities to

new standards that support accessible school communities. Investments have been targeted to upgrade washroom accessibility, ramps and doors, upgraded fire alarms, and parking lot enhancements to support main entrance access improvements.

### **Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Barriers Identified:**

#### Learning Barriers

1. We currently have many ELL families/students with no additional funding.
2. Making sure the school website is easily navigated to find the relevant information.
3. Additional resources for Indigenous students.

### **Physical and Architecture Environment Barriers:**

Anchor Academy Society is an online school, so students are not learning on site, however there are times when students will access the building ie: Provincial Assessments.

1. We have a small building which cannot accommodate a large number of students.

### **Resource Barriers:**

1. Families/ students are not familiar with the accessibility of school resources such as subscriptions, homework rooms (online), and the school library.
2. Limited resources in some communities (remote communities).

## **Our Three-Year Plan (2023-2026)**

## Overview:

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures Anchor Academy Society will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities in our school community.

## Accessibility Priorities:

Based on the feedback gathered from staff, parents/guardians, and students, and the Physical and Architectural Environment Audit, the Accessibility Committee has identified the following areas as the top priority for improving accessibility in the school community.

### Priority #1: Learning

Anchor Academy Society will enhance the accessibility of access to learning for all individuals, including those with disabilities, through the following actions:

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Train one to two teachers to access ELL students and create a plan and program to equip all teachers who work with ELL students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific assessment tools and programs for ELL students - AIMS Web Plus</li></ul>	Beginning Nov Ongoing
Update the school website to ensure ease of use and make it aesthetically pleasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hire a website designer to revamp the website</li></ul>	To be completed by December 2024
Provide additional supports and resources for Indigenous students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An Indigenous support worker has been hired to collaborate with Indigenous families and their local bands.</li><li>• Completed Indigenous training through UBC and continues to</li></ul>	Hired support worker July 2024, ongoing

	look for professional development in that area.	
Special Education director will receive training to increase knowledge on different accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed Special Education Specialists certification through Queens University</li> </ul>	To be completed July 2024

**Priority #2: Resources**

Anchor Academy Society will increase awareness and training on assistive technology for all students.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Increase awareness of using the school's online resources, such as library, subscriptions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold online open houses to meet with parents to demonstrate how to navigate the systems.</li> </ul>	To be completed every September
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure staff sends out the parent student handbook to their families</li> </ul>	To be completed every September
Identify the resources available to families/students in their local areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the Special Education department create a list of accessible resources in each BC community.</li> </ul>	To be completed by October 2025
Identify the ongoing resources available that pertain to barriers our students may be experiencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet once a month with the Special Education teachers for brainstorming and sharing resources</li> </ul>	Beginning April 2025 - ongoing

### **Priority #3: Physical and Architectural**

Anchor Academy School monitors the accessibility of the physical and architectural environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Identify alternative meeting venues when needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify 2-3 specific venues that can be used throughout the Province for socializing.</li></ul>	To be completed by June 2025

### **Priority #4: School Policy and Practice**

Anchor Academy Society will review and revise policies and practices to ensure they align with the principles of accessibility, and to address any identified gaps in staff training or knowledge on accessibility issues.

Anchor Academy Society will use annual parent and student surveys feedback to identify gaps.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

The Accessibility Planning Committee meets quarterly to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The committee will ensure the following steps are taken regarding the Three-Year Accessibility Plan:

1. Review and update the Three-Year Accessibility Plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

### Accessibility Feedback:

Anchor Academy Society would like to receive feedback about accessibility experiences that students, staff and members of the school community.

### Report an Accessibility Barrier or Support:

At Anchor Academy Society, we want to learn about specific barriers that people face when they are trying to:

- Access a school program, building or school information
- Receive a service or support

The Anchor Academy Society Accessibility Committee will review your responses to the questions below for their consideration. Please provide the date the barrier or support was experienced.

1. Please select the location where the barrier or support was experienced.
2. What were you or someone you know trying to access?
3. Accessibility barrier or support details (be as specific as possible).
4. Do you have any recommendations for what would make it better?
5. Attach files if you wish to provide additional information (e.g., video, voice recording, photos).
6. Please provide your name and email or phone number if you would like to be contacted. (optional)

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback! You will be contacted shortly if you provide your contact details.

Please send your responses to: Anchor Academy at [anchor@ark.net](mailto:anchor@ark.net)