

## 10.6 Columbia Academy Accessibility Plan

Columbia Academy's Accessibility Plan aligns with the **10.0 Inclusive Education Policy**, which includes policies such as **10.1 Anti-Racism** and **10.6 Diverse Abilities/Disabilities - Special Needs Education**. This Accessibility Policy outlines our commitment to promoting equal access, preventing and removing educational, physical, social and emotional barriers, and complying with the accessibility requirements established by [Accessible British Columbia Act](#).

### 10.6.1 Policy:

Columbia Academy is committed to providing an accessible, inclusive and equitable environment for all students, staff, parents, visitors, and other members of the community, where all can enjoy educational programs, facilities, and services.

Columbia Academy is committed to the following:

- Create and support the Accessibility Committee to oversee barrier identification and removal efforts. The Accessibility Committee will work with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to improve accessibility.
- Identify and remove barriers that impede the full participation of individuals with disabilities. This includes both physical and non-physical barriers.
- Ensure that individuals with different abilities/disabilities are treated with respect, dignity, and equality and will strive to meet their accessibility needs in a timely and effective manner.
  
- Provide accessible facilities for students, staff, and visitors with disabilities. We will work with the building management company, Reliance, to ensure that our physical infrastructure complies with local accessibility standards and codes.
- Ensure that all students and staff can have equal and equitable access and navigate our facilities, including classrooms, restrooms, and common areas.
- Provide information and communications in accessible formats to individuals with disabilities upon request.
- Educate and raise awareness in our school community and beyond on the importance of accessibility and the procedures for reporting accessibility concerns.
- Review and update this Accessibility Policy regularly to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant legislation.
- Feedback from the school community will be actively sought and considered for making necessary improvements.

In line with the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#), Columbia Academy applies the policies listed above to raise accountability for accessibility in our community to create a better culture and climate for the school's community members. We believe that by role modeling and showcasing positive changes in our community, we raise students to become compassionate, empathetic, and kind citizens who are to continue developing high living standards for their generations and the generations to come.

#### **10.6.1.1 Columbia Academy Accessibility Committee**

The Columbia Academy Accessibility Committee is the body tasked with overseeing the development and implementation of the accessibility plan. The Chair and Co-Chair of the committee will always be the sitting principal and COO. In addition, the committee will be made up of at least one member of faculty and one member of office staff. An open invitation will also be extended via our annual survey to other stakeholders for them to join.

#### *2024/2025 Columbia Academy Accessibility Committee*

- Benjamin Lane - Principal
- Vivien Wen - COO
- Alexandra Ojeda - K-7 Secretary
- Jenny Guiotto - K-1 teacher

#### **10.6.2 Columbia Academy Accessibility Plan Application**

The Columbia Academy Accessibility Plan Application is an all-encompassing initiative that extends its embrace to every cherished member of our community, including our students, teachers, staff, parents, and visitors. In our commitment to meet accessibility requirements and cultivate a community built on trust, we warmly extend an invitation to each member to actively participate in open and constructive communication. Feedback, thoughts, and insights are not only welcomed but highly encouraged as we seek to continuously evolve and improve.

We firmly believe that it is the collective effort of our community that will pave the way towards a more accessible future for Columbia Academy. We encourage everyone to apply the accessibility principles taken from the [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) to ourselves as guiding stars on our journey towards accessibility. These principles are: inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination, and universal design. These principles serve as our compass, guiding us in every step we take as we strive to create a more inclusive, welcoming, and accessible educational environment.

#### **10.6.3 Columbia Academy Accessibility Plan Timeline**

Creating a timeline for the Columbia Academy Accessibility Plan is a crucial step in the implementation process. Below is a sample timeline that outlines key milestones and activities

over a one-year period, but we keep in mind that the actual timeline may vary based on your specific needs and circumstances.

#### September - December 2023: Plan Development Tasks

- Establish an Accessibility Planning Team, including an Accessibility Coordinator.
- Review relevant legislation, regulations, and guidelines (e.g., Accessible British Columbia Act).
- Identify and engage external accessibility experts or consultants if necessary.
- Define the scope, goals, and objectives of the Accessibility Plan.

#### January - February 2024: Barrier Assessment

- Inform the public of CA Accessibility plan through CA website: Update the school's website and online platforms to meet accessibility standards for the 2024-2025 Academic Year if needed.

#### March - April 2024: Barrier Removal and Accommodation

- Hold Accessibility Committee meeting to speak of the plans, engagements, communication mechanism, revisit/revise accessibility goals
- Conduct an accessibility audit and identify physical, digital, and communication barriers if needed.

#### May 2024: Barrier Removal and Accommodation

- Develop a detailed plan to remove identified barriers and make reasonable accommodations.
- Consider implementing a budget to better support changes in our community, if required.
- Implement the barrier removal plan and accommodations.

#### June 2024: Communication and Information

- Develop accessible formats for information and communications.
- Update the school's website and online platforms to meet accessibility standards for the 2024-2025 Academic Year if needed.
- Conduct a survey on Physical and Mental barriers awareness and its status at Columbia Academy

#### September 2024: Review and Ongoing Improvement

- Review the Accessibility Plan's effectiveness and gather feedback from stakeholders.

- Make necessary revisions and improvements to the plan.
- Continue ongoing monitoring and implementation of accessibility initiatives.

January 2025: Analysis of feedback and plan of action

- Eleven responses were received from stakeholders to our accessibility survey
- Wheelchair accessibility and classroom layouts were cited as main concerns
- Begin developing barrier removal plan and associated accommodations

February 2025: Implementation

- Inquired into fob for building side door to allow for stair-free entry into the school.

March - April 2025: Further engagement

- Further engage with stakeholders, parents/caregivers and the owners of the building to gauge appropriate next steps.

Please note that this is a generalized timeline, and the actual timeline may require adjustments to meet the specific needs and circumstances of Columbia Academy. Additionally, accessibility planning is an ongoing process, and it's essential to continuously monitor progress, gather feedback, and make improvements as needed. Considering the current circumstances that our school is located in a rental facility, we may experience delays in communication with building management company, *Reliance*, as they meet once a month to discuss any operational issues, decisions, and property occupants proposals

#### **10.6.4 Columbia Academy Accessibility Feedback Mechanism**

[The annual stakeholder engagement survey can be found here](#)

In accordance with the [\*Accessible British Columbia Act\*](#), particularly "Part 3 - Accessible Organizations, point 12," Columbia Academy is committed to fostering an inclusive environment by ensuring accessibility for all individuals, regardless of their abilities or challenges.

To adhere to the requirements outlined in the Act, we have implemented a comprehensive feedback mechanism aimed at gathering input from our diverse community. We encourage all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, staff, and visitors, to provide their valuable feedback on our Accessibility plan and any barriers encountered by individuals within or interacting with our institution.

For feedback requiring immediate attention, we kindly request to be reached out via email at [info@columbiaacademy.ca](mailto:info@columbiaacademy.ca). Additionally, as part of our ongoing commitment to improvement,

Columbia Academy will distribute annual survey forms to solicit feedback from community members regarding the accessibility of our school.

It's important to note that disabilities come in various forms, including visible and invisible ones. Invisible disabilities, such as internal health issues, neurological disabilities, and mental health conditions, are equally significant and may impact individuals' daily lives in profound ways. At Columbia Academy, we recognize the importance of raising awareness and understanding of these diverse challenges.

As part of our efforts, we will include questionnaires on disability awareness in our surveys to gauge our community's knowledge and ensure that our educational programs address the importance of accessibility and inclusivity. Furthermore, we are committed to conducting annual surveys to assess the level of accessibility at Columbia Academy, identifying areas for growth and improvement.

For more information on Accessibility Plan in the province, we offer everyone visiting the following link:  
*AccessibleBC: B.C.'s Accessibility Plan for 2022/23 to 2024/25*  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/accessibility/legislation/accessiblebc>

In essence, our goal is to create an environment where every individual feels valued, supported, and empowered to thrive. We appreciate your participation and collaboration in this ongoing endeavor towards greater accessibility and inclusivity.