

Winchester City Public Schools - HB2278 Accessibility Report

In accordance with Virginia House Bill 2278 (2025), Winchester Public Schools (WPS) completed a comprehensive review of the physical accessibility of all school buildings and grounds for individuals with disabilities. In addition to this present-day review, WPS also consulted a facility condition assessment conducted by Gordian in 2024.

This report affirms that:

1. WPS facilities were constructed in compliance with the building codes in effect at the time of the original construction.
2. All subsequent new construction, renovations and additions meet current accessibility standards, including the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) and the corresponding required ADA Standards for Accessible Design during the renovation year.
3. WPS has annual processes that support our commitment to ongoing review and improvement.

Methodology of Review

WPS conducted a comprehensive, facility-by-facility review of all schools, including grounds and athletic facilities. Our review was guided by the methodology of the U.S. Government Accountability Office's June 2020 report (GAO-20-448), "K-12 EDUCATION: School Districts Need Better Information to Improve Physical Accessibility of School Facilities," as recommended by the legislation. We also consulted with key stakeholders, including our Special Education Department, central leadership, and facilities staff to ensure a thorough assessment and to determine compliance with two key sets of regulations:

1. **Current Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), including the Virginia Construction Code (VCC), the Virginia Existing Building Code (VEBC), and referenced ICC A117.1 – as well as the 2011 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.** We assessed all facilities against current accessibility requirements for any alterations or new construction undertaken since their original build date.
2. **Original Construction Codes and the Virginia Maintenance Code (VMC), as applicable:** We confirmed that each school building and its original components were constructed in compliance with the Virginia USBC and other applicable state and federal codes in effect at the time of construction.

Summary of Findings

After a thorough review, WPS confirms that our facilities meet the building codes that applied at the time of their original construction. In addition, all later new construction, renovations or additions have been carried out in accordance with the Virginia USBC and ADA standards in place at the time of each project.

Aligned with HB2278's intent to assess present conditions rather than only historical compliance, we recognize that our buildings were designed to meet the up-to-date requirements at their construction dates, and that subsequent improvements have aimed to satisfy applicable code and ADA provisions. This planning assessment also identifies opportunities to further strengthen accessibility for students, staff, and visitors.

Proactive Accessibility Action Plan

Winchester Public Schools integrates ongoing accessibility improvements into the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process in conjunction with the City of Winchester Government. Each year, WPS facilities are assessed with a focus on removing barriers that limit participation in school programs and activities for individuals with disabilities. The findings from these assessments guide the CIP request process and planning and help in prioritizing projects for funding recommendations.

Inputs to the Annual CIP

- Administrator Feedback: Program access concerns and site-specific observations
- Facility Department Assessments: Building conditions and barrier identification
- Capital Needs: Lifecycle planning, project bundling, and cost analysis
- Security Considerations: Circulation, egress, and operational constraints

Screening and Prioritization

- Evaluate safety, accessibility, impact on students and staff, feasibility, and funding alignment
- Develop preliminary project scopes and order-of-magnitude cost estimates for CIP review

WPS updates this planning framework annually as part of the CIP cycle to incorporate current conditions, stakeholder feedback, and available resources.

Conclusion

Winchester Public Schools remains dedicated to fostering safe, inclusive, and accessible learning and extracurricular environments for all students, staff and visitors. This report verifies our adherence to all relevant codes and presents a clear plan for ongoing improvements. To fulfill the objectives of HB2278 and guarantee access for all, WPS respectfully seeks targeted support from the Virginia General Assembly. Sustainable advancement depends on pairing new requirements with the resources needed to meet them, while avoiding funding mandates. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with state agencies to enhance accessibility throughout every public school in the Commonwealth of Virginia.