

October 10, 2025

The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi, Chair
Senate Education and Health Committee
201 North 9th Street
Virginia General Assembly Building
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Sam Rasoul, Chair
House Education Committee
201 North 9th Street
Virginia General Assembly Building
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Hashmi and Delegate Rasoul,

Buchanan County Public Schools hereby submits this accessibility assessment report in accordance with Virginia House Bill 2278 enacted during the 2025 legislative session. Our school division has completed the required evaluation of physical accessibility throughout our facilities and has developed strategies to enhance access for individuals with disabilities.

For questions or additional information regarding this submission, please contact:

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Respectfully,

Sherry Fletcher
Superintendent
Buchanan County Public Schools

Buchanan County Public Schools
School Facility Accessibility Assessment
House Bill 2278 Compliance Report

Executive Summary

This document presents Buchanan County Public Schools' response to House Bill 2278 (Chapter 566), approved March 24, 2025. The legislation requires each Virginia school division to assess accessibility in public school buildings and grounds, identify barriers affecting individuals with disabilities, and report findings to the General Assembly by November 1, 2025.

Our assessment addresses four key areas mandated by the statute:

1. Physical accessibility challenges present in school buildings and grounds that may prevent full participation in educational activities
2. Barriers to programming and support services for individuals with disabilities
3. Current and planned measures to address and remove identified barriers
4. Opportunities for state agency assistance in eliminating accessibility barriers and achieving full compliance with applicable laws

Methodology of Review

Buchanan County Public Schools conducted a systematic evaluation of all educational facilities in the Summer of 2025. Our assessment team included:

- Special education Supervisor
- Facilities management personnel
- Building principals and administrative staff

As recommended in the legislation, our methodology incorporated principles from the U.S. Government Accountability Office report GAO-20-448 (*K-12 Education: School Districts Need Better Information to Help Improve Access for People with Disabilities*, June 2020). This framework helped ensure our evaluation was comprehensive and aligned with federal best practices.

Regulatory Framework

Our assessment examined compliance with multiple regulatory standards:

Historical Compliance: We verified that each facility was originally built according to the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) requirements in effect during construction. All schools met the applicable building codes, accessibility standards, and safety requirements at the time they were designed and built.

Current Standards: We evaluated all renovations, additions, and modifications completed since original construction against the Virginia Construction Code (VCC), Virginia Existing Building Code (VEBC), ICC A117.1 accessibility standards, and the 2010 ADA Standards for

Accessible Design. We also reviewed ongoing maintenance practices against the Virginia Maintenance Code (VMC) to ensure facilities remain safe and functional.

Summary of Findings

Buchanan County Public Schools can verify that our facilities meet applicable building code requirements from their respective construction periods. All major renovations and additions undertaken in recent years have been designed and constructed to comply with current accessibility standards and ADA requirements.

While our buildings comply with historical codes, we recognize that House Bill 2278 asks divisions to look beyond mere code compliance and consider how current facilities can better serve all members of our community. With this forward-looking perspective, we have identified several areas where improvements could enhance accessibility and inclusion for students, staff, and visitors with disabilities.

Our commitment extends beyond meeting minimum regulatory requirements. We strive to create welcoming, fully accessible educational environments where every individual can participate meaningfully in school activities and programs.

Strategic Planning for Accessibility Improvements

Buchanan County Public Schools integrates accessibility considerations into our long-range facilities planning through several mechanisms:

Proactive Action Plan

Each year, our school division develops a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that projects facility needs over a multi-year horizon. This planning process explicitly incorporates accessibility as a key evaluation criterion. When prioritizing capital projects, we consider:

- Impact on students with disabilities and their ability to access educational programs
- Safety considerations and emergency egress capabilities
- Facility age, condition, and remaining useful life
- Cost-effectiveness and opportunities to bundle related improvements
- Available funding sources and budget constraints

Stakeholder Engagement

Our planning process draws on input from multiple sources to ensure we understand real-world accessibility challenges:

- Building-level administrators report concerns and observations from daily operations
- Special education staff provide insights about barriers affecting students with specific needs
- Facilities personnel conduct regular inspections and document maintenance issues
- Parents and families share feedback through our advisory committees

Screening and Prioritization

Once accessibility needs are identified, we develop project scopes and cost estimates for consideration in our budget planning. Projects are sequenced based on urgency, available resources, and strategic alignment with other facility work. This approach allows us to make steady progress while managing financial constraints responsibly.

We review and update our accessibility priorities annually to reflect changing conditions, new feedback, and evolving needs within our school community.

State Support and Resources

To achieve the accessibility goals envisioned by House Bill 2278, Buchanan County Public Schools respectfully requests the General Assembly's consideration of the following:

Dedicated Funding Assistance: Many accessibility improvements require significant capital investment. State funding support would enable school divisions to accelerate accessibility enhancements without compromising other essential educational priorities. We urge the legislature to provide targeted grants or matching funds specifically designated for accessibility projects.

Technical Guidance: Collaboration with state agencies such as the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities would help school divisions identify best practices, access expertise, and share effective strategies for removing accessibility barriers.

Conclusion

Buchanan County Public Schools shares the General Assembly's commitment to ensuring that all Virginia students have access to safe, inclusive educational facilities. This assessment demonstrates our division's existing compliance with applicable building codes while identifying opportunities for continued improvement.

We recognize that achieving truly equitable access requires sustained effort and adequate resources. New mandates, while well-intentioned, must be accompanied by appropriate funding mechanisms to prevent placing undue financial burden on local school divisions that are already managing numerous competing priorities with limited budgets.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this report and welcome continued partnership with state agencies, advocacy organizations, and the General Assembly to advance accessibility for all Virginians.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Fletcher
Superintendent
Buchanan County Public Schools