

Accessibility Review Report

Conducted Pursuant to Chapter 566, 2024 Acts of Assembly

Division: Gloucester County Public Schools

Superintendent: Dr. Anthony Vladu

Date: 10/31/2025

Reporting Deadline: November 1, 2025

I. Purpose of Review

This review was conducted in accordance with Chapter 566 of the 2024 Acts of Assembly, which requires each local school board or division superintendent to examine the extent to which school buildings, grounds, programs, and supports present accessibility challenges and barriers for individuals with disabilities. The purpose of this review is to identify such barriers, document ongoing or planned remediation efforts, and provide recommendations for ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and related state laws.

II. Methodology

The review was conducted by the Division Superintendent and Facilities Department staff, in consultation with school administrators and relevant stakeholders.

The process incorporated elements of the **U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) methodology** as described in the June 2020 report *GAO-20-448, K-12 Education: School Districts Need Better Information to Help Improve Access for People with Disabilities*.

Key steps included:

- Site visits to school buildings and grounds to assess accessibility features and barriers.
- Review of existing facility condition data and capital improvement plans.
- Consultation with staff and community members regarding accessibility concerns.
- Identification of programmatic and physical access challenges impacting individuals with disabilities.

III. Findings

A. Physical Accessibility

1. **Botetourt Elementary School (1973 Wing)**
 - **Finding:** The 1973 wing of the building does **not have handicap-accessible restrooms**.
 - **Impact:** Individuals with mobility impairments face barriers to restroom access, limiting equitable participation in school activities and daily routines.
 - **Compliance Note:** This condition does not meet current ADA accessibility standards.
2. **Thomas Calhoun Walker Education Center – Auditorium Stage**
 - **Finding:** The **auditorium stage does not have ADA-compliant access** (no ramp or lift).
 - **Impact:** Individuals with disabilities are unable to access the stage area, restricting participation in performances, assemblies, and events.
 - **Compliance Note:** This presents an accessibility barrier inconsistent with ADA standards for assembly spaces.
3. **General Observations Across Division**
 - Some schools built prior to ADA enactment (1990) have **limited accessibility in entrances, restrooms, and interior circulation routes**.
 - **Signage and wayfinding** are inconsistent in older facilities.
 - **Playgrounds and outdoor spaces** vary in accessibility; some lack inclusive equipment or accessible surfacing.

B. Programmatic Accessibility

- While classroom instruction and most school programs are accessible through accommodations and support services, **some extracurricular and performance-based programs remain limited** due to physical facility barriers (e.g., stage access, restroom proximity).
- Staff awareness of ADA compliance procedures is generally adequate, but **continued training** would ensure consistent implementation division-wide.

IV. Current and Planned Actions

- **Short-Term (2025–2026):**
 - Include the installation of **ADA-compliant restrooms** in the next renovation phase at Botetourt Elementary School.
 - Conduct a **feasibility study** for adding a stage lift or ramp at the Thomas Calhoun Walker Education Center Auditorium.
 - Implement **updated accessibility signage** throughout all schools built before 1990.
- **Medium-Term (2026–2028):**
 - Incorporate ADA accessibility upgrades into all capital improvement planning (CIP) projects.

- Expand **inclusive playground access** and ensure ADA-compliant surfacing at all elementary schools.
- **Ongoing:**
 - Continue staff training on ADA requirements and inclusive practices.
 - Maintain collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education and state agencies for technical assistance and funding opportunities.

V. Recommendations

1. **Prioritize ADA restroom renovations** in facilities constructed before 1990, beginning with the 1973 wing at Botetourt Elementary School.
2. **Install ADA access** to the Thomas Calhoun Walker Education Center Auditorium stage to ensure full participation in events and performances.
3. **Establish a division-wide accessibility audit schedule** (every five years) to track improvements and ensure ongoing compliance.
4. **Engage with state agencies** (such as the Department of Education and Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services) for guidance, technical support, and potential funding.
5. **Develop an Accessibility Action Plan** aligned with the division's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to prioritize barrier removal systematically.

VI. Conclusion

This review highlights specific areas where accessibility barriers continue to exist within the division, particularly in older school facilities. The division is committed to addressing these deficiencies to ensure equitable access for all individuals with disabilities. Through targeted facility improvements, ongoing staff training, and strategic planning, the division will continue to work toward full compliance with state and federal accessibility standards.