



Highland County Public Schools



240 Myers Moon Road · P.O. Box 250 · Monterey, VA 24465 · P: (540) 468-6300 · F: (540) 468-6306

October 31, 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

Virginia Department of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Senator Hashmi, Delegate Rasoul, and Members of the Virginia Department of Education,

Highland County Public Schools respectfully submits this Accessibility Findings and Recommendations Report in accordance with the requirements of House Bill 2278 (2025).

Sincerely,

Dr. James "Nick" Nycum
Superintendent
Highland County Public Schools



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HB 2278 Accessibility Report

Executive Summary

Pursuant to Virginia House Bill 2278 (2025), Highland County Public Schools (HCPS) conducted a comprehensive review of physical accessibility across all school campuses and associated grounds. The assessment was designed to ensure equitable access for individuals with disabilities and identify strategies for ongoing improvement.

The evaluation addressed:

1. Barriers within school buildings and surrounding grounds;
2. Obstacles to participation in academic and extracurricular programs;
3. A division-wide strategy for removing identified impediments; and
4. Recommendations for state support to enhance accessibility compliance and progress.

Key affirmations from the review include:

1. All HCPS facilities were originally constructed in compliance with the building codes and accessibility standards applicable at the time of their construction.
2. Renovations and additions completed after initial construction have adhered to the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
3. HCPS maintains annual review processes to monitor and enhance accessibility in accordance with evolving standards and best practices.

Review Methodology



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HCPS conducts ongoing inspections of each school site, including classrooms, common spaces, athletic areas, and outdoor facilities. The review was guided by the framework outlined in the U.S. Government Accountability Office report (GAO-20-448), *K–12 Education: School Districts Need Better Information to Improve Physical Accessibility of School Facilities*, as referenced in HB 2278.

This process involved collaboration among building administrators, student services personnel, design professionals, and facilities staff to ensure comprehensive evaluation and compliance with the following standards:

- **Current Regulations:** The review referenced the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), Virginia Construction Code (VCC), Virginia Existing Building Code (VEBC), ICC A117.1, and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
- **Original Standards:** Each facility was confirmed to have met applicable codes and standards in effect at the time of its construction. Ongoing compliance with the Virginia Maintenance Code (VMC) was also verified.

Summary of Findings

Highland County Public Schools affirms that all facilities were designed, constructed, and renovated in compliance with the accessibility standards and codes in effect at the time of each project. All later renovations, modifications and additions have been designed and constructed in compliance with the USBC and ADA standards in effect at the time of each project.

Recognizing the intent of HB 2278 to evaluate facilities current functionality and not solely historical compliance, this review identifies opportunities for continued improvement in accessibility and functionality. HCPS remains committed to continued facility improvements that better serve students, employees, parents, and community members.

Action Plan



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Highland County Public Schools employs the following strategies to ensure continued progress toward full accessibility:

- Capital Improvement Planning (CIP):
The division reviews and updates its CIP annually, incorporating accessibility priorities into facility assessments and project planning. Accessibility needs are weighed alongside safety, instructional impact, and funding capacity.
- Facility Evaluations:
HCPS works with professional architectural and engineering consultants as needed to assess accessibility conditions, identify deficiencies, and develop cost estimates for upgrades or modifications.
- Annual Review Process:
 - Site-level feedback from principals and staff regarding accessibility barriers and program access;
 - Facilities department assessments of physical conditions and ADA-related needs;
 - Prioritization of projects based on safety, accessibility, and educational impact;
 - Integration of accessibility findings into long-term planning and budget development.

Conclusion

Highland County Public Schools remains fully committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment for all students, staff, and community members.

In alignment with House Bill 2278, HCPS respectfully requests that the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia General Assembly consider funding support for small, rural school divisions to address capital needs related to accessibility improvements. Sustained progress toward equitable access requires resources proportionate to legislative expectations and local fiscal capacity. HCPS looks forward to continued collaboration with the Commonwealth to advance accessibility, inclusion, and equity across all educational facilities.