

North Middlesex Regional School District

ADA Self-Evaluation Report



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Executive Summary

This ADA Self-Evaluation documents North Middlesex Regional School District's review of its facilities, programs, services, activities, communications, and administrative practices for accessibility under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The transition plan shows that the District already has a meaningful compliance base, including a public policy structure, nondiscrimination language, Section 504 coordination, and a website accessibility statement, but it also identifies recurring barriers that affect equal access across multiple schools and major program areas.

The review indicates that these barriers are not isolated to one campus or one type of condition. Instead, they recur in the form of inaccessible entrances and doors, inconsistent signage, restroom usability barriers, limited hearing access, emergency egress concerns, inflexible furnishings and equipment, and uneven access to assemblies, athletics, instruction, and public-facing services. These conditions appear across more than one school and more than one operational area; the District should view accessibility as a districtwide administrative responsibility rather than only a building-specific maintenance issue.

This self-evaluation is intended to serve as the District's formal administrative review baseline. It identifies existing strengths, summarizes barriers and policy gaps, evaluates access to core programs and services, and establishes the framework for corrective action through the accompanying ADA Transition Plan.

Purpose

The purpose of this self-evaluation is to assess whether North Middlesex Regional School District's services, programs, and activities are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities when viewed in their entirety. The self-evaluation also reviews whether current policies, procedures, communication systems, emergency practices, and facilities management approaches adequately support nondiscrimination and equal opportunity.



This document is designed to help the District move from collected audit findings to a formal Title II and Section 504 implementation framework that can support policy revision, administrative action, capital planning, staff training, and ongoing monitoring.

Scope

This self-evaluation is based on the content of the North Middlesex ADA Transition Plan, and the school-specific audit findings summarized within it. The plan identifies accessibility conditions and recurring barriers affecting the following schools and district facilities:

- Hawthorne Brook Middle School
- Nissitissit Middle School
- North Middlesex Regional High School
- Spaulding Memorial School
- Squannacook Early Childhood Center
- Varnum Brook Elementary School

The scope of this self-evaluation includes:

- Physical access to buildings, exterior routes, parking, entries, classrooms, restrooms, locker rooms, cafeterias, libraries, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and staff spaces.
 - Program access to instruction, extracurricular activities, athletics, assemblies, public meetings, household engagement, and employee functions.
 - Communication access, including hearing access, signage, posted information, alternative formats, and selected digital-access issues identified in the audit record.
 - Administrative policies, procedures, training systems, emergency planning, and accountability structures affecting accessibility implementation.
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Methodology

This self-evaluation relies on the ADA Transition Plan as the primary evidence base. That document synthesizes school-level facility audit findings, district governance context, policy review results, districtwide themes, prioritization strategies, and implementation recommendations.

For self-evaluation purposes, the findings were reviewed through five analytical lenses:

1. Physical access to facilities and site circulation.
2. Program access to core school and public functions.
3. Communication and information access.
4. Policy and administrative practice.
5. Emergency preparedness and safe egress.

This framework allows the District to assess accessibility in operational terms, not only in technical or architectural terms.

Existing Accessibility Framework

The transition plan indicates that North Middlesex Regional School District already maintains several governance tools relevant to accessibility. These include a district policy manual, a website accessibility statement, Section 504 coordination within district leadership, and district nondiscrimination language through Policy AC that references both Title II of the ADA and Section 504.

These features provide a meaningful starting point for compliance. At the same time, the plan concludes that the District still needs a more unified implementation structure connecting physical access, effective communication, digital accessibility, policy revision, emergency planning, and annual accountability into one districtwide process.

Summary of Findings

The self-evaluation finds that the District has many existing accessible features, but those features are accompanied by repeated barriers that affect safety, independence,

communication, and equitable participation. The most significant recurring issues identified in the plan are summarized below.

Area reviewed	Recurring condition	Accessibility impact
Entrances and doors	Excessive opening force, missing automatic operators, dragging doors, uneven thresholds.	Limits independent entry and movement through schools and public spaces.
Signage and wayfinding	Improper mounting height, missing braille, blocked signs, inaccurate room identification, missing directional signs.	Reduces independent navigation and creates confusion about accessible features.
Restrooms and locker rooms	Inaccessible accessories, incomplete grab bar configurations, inaccurate signage, inaccessible reach ranges, storage obstructions.	Limits independent and dignified use of essential daily spaces.
Assembly and event spaces	Missing stage access, limited assistive listening, uneven entries, inaccessible seating distribution.	Restricts participation in performances, assemblies, meetings, and events.
Instructional and specialty spaces	Fixed-height furnishings, limited adaptive equipment, inaccessible storage, insufficient accessible seating options.	Limits equal participation in instruction, labs, arts, athletics, and staff functions.
Emergency access	Missing evacuation chairs, inaccessible pull stations, dim exit signs, blocked emergency fixtures, poor stair visibility.	Creates unequal and potentially unsafe emergency conditions.

Area reviewed	Recurring condition	Accessibility impact
Information access	Paper-only practices, limited hearing access, weak digital alternatives, inaccessible sign-in methods.	Restricts effective communication and access to public information.

Physical Access Evaluation

The self-evaluation finds recurring physical barriers in core categories including site access, door operation, signage, restroom usability, stage access, classroom adaptability, and emergency route conditions. The plan identifies these barriers across multiple schools, showing that they are not isolated anomalies but repeating districtwide conditions.

Examples include unsafe thresholds and route barriers at Hawthorne Brook, inaccessible public entry and auditorium conditions at Nissitissit, missing evacuation chairs and widespread signage and door-force issues at the high school, route, signage, and technology-access barriers at Spaulding, safe arrival and circulation at Squannacook and inaccessible/unsafe entry conditions at Varnum Brook. These examples support the conclusion that physical accessibility should be addressed through both site-specific correction and districtwide standards for signage, doors, restroom details, and hearing-access infrastructure.

Program Access Evaluation

The self-evaluation finds that many barriers affect program access even when a person can physically enter a campus. The plan identifies access limitations in cafeterias, libraries, auditoriums, classrooms, music rooms, science spaces, gyms, locker rooms, and other high-use program environments.

This distinction is central to the District's obligations because program access requires more than nominal entry. Students, staff, households, and community users must be able to participate meaningfully in educational, extracurricular, civic, athletic, and employment-related functions when those programs are viewed in their entirety.

The plan also indicates that interim programmatic measures may be necessary while permanent corrections are pending, such as relocating events, reserving accessible seating, using portable hearing-access equipment, and moving meetings or classes to more accessible locations. These temporary measures are useful, but the self-evaluation finds that they should not replace long-term barrier removal.

Communication Access Evaluation

The self-evaluation finds recurring communication-access issues in offices, auditoriums, libraries, front-entry areas, and public information systems. The plan specifically notes missing induction loops or comparable hearing-access systems, single-format information practices, and repeated need for captions, digital access, QR-supported information, and accessible public-facing communication methods.

These findings indicate that communication access is not yet being managed as a consistent districtwide system. The District should therefore adopt formal procedures for effective communication, alternative formats, accessible event information, assistive listening access, and accessible front-office communication practices.

Policy and Administrative Evaluation

The plan reports that 270 district policies were reviewed with recommendations made on 97 existing policies using an accessibility and inclusion framework, and that three new policies were drafted to address missing infrastructure. This is substantial evidence that the District has begun serious policy review, but it also confirms that accessibility-related administrative reform is still in progress.

The self-evaluation finds that the District needs stronger and more coordinated administrative procedures in at least the following areas:

- ADA and Section 504 grievance and complaint procedures.
- Reasonable modification and accommodation procedures for school events, public meetings, and facility use.

- Effective communication procedures.
- Signage and wayfinding standards.
- Door-force testing and maintenance procedures.
- Emergency access and evacuation standards.
- Digital accessibility and multi-modal information standards.
- Accessible procurement standards for furniture, technology, fixtures, and public-use equipment.

Taken together, these findings show that the District's existing policy base is a strong starting point, but it is not yet integrated enough to ensure consistent implementation across schools and departments.

Emergency Preparedness Evaluation

The self-evaluation finds that emergency preparedness is one of the most significant accessibility risk areas identified in the plan. Missing evacuation chairs, inaccessible pull stations, dim or inadequate exit signage, blocked emergency equipment, inaccessible emergency information placement, and poor route conditions all affect the ability of people with disabilities to respond safely and independently in emergencies.

These findings show that emergency accessibility must be treated as both a life-safety obligation and a program-access issue. The District should adopt standardized emergency-access procedures, equipment protocols, staff training requirements, and recurring inspection practices to ensure that safety systems are accessible and usable across all campuses.

District Strengths

The self-evaluation identifies several strengths that support future compliance work. These include the existence of a public policy framework, nondiscrimination language, Section 504

coordination, a public accessibility statement, a substantial policy review, detailed facility audit findings, and a districtwide planning structure already captured in the transition plan.

The plan also reflects that many school spaces already contain some accessible elements, such as accessible counters, ramps, compliant restroom features in select locations, and other usable components that can be preserved and built upon. This means the District is working from a partial foundation that can be strengthened through more coordinated policy, operations, and capital planning.

Areas Requiring Modification

Based on this self-evaluation, North Middlesex Regional School District should strengthen or modify the following areas:

1. **District governance and oversight**, including annual reporting, barrier tracking, and cross-functional implementation management.
2. **Policies and procedures**, especially in grievance response, event access, effective communication, emergency preparedness, and procurement.
3. **Facilities management practices**, including recurring inspection and correction of signage, door force, restroom details, route obstructions, and hearing access systems.
4. **Program access planning**, including interim and permanent solutions for assemblies, athletics, classrooms, libraries, cafeterias, and public events.
5. **Communication access systems**, including assistive listening, alternative formats, accessible notices, captioning, and accessible front-office practices.
6. **Training**, so that administrators, facilities staff, teachers, front-office staff, and event personnel understand and preserve accessibility requirements.
7. **Monitoring and annual updates**, so that corrected barriers do not reappear, and new barriers are addressed promptly.

Recommended Administrative Actions

This self-evaluation supports the following next steps for the District:

- Adopt this self-evaluation as the District's formal Title II administrative review baseline.
- Use the ADA Transition Plan as the companion implementation document for corrective action, scheduling, and funding.
- Maintain a district barrier-action register identifying the school, location, barrier, user impact, interim measure, corrective action, responsible party, target date, and status.
- Assign implementation roles across administration, Buildings and Grounds, Section 504 coordination, student services, technology, communications, food service, athletics, and human resources.
- Provide annual reporting to the School Committee on progress, delays, expenditures, policy changes, and newly identified barriers.
- Continue stakeholder engagement through surveys, comments, and ongoing feedback from students, staff, households, and community members with disabilities.

Conclusion

This self-evaluation shows that North Middlesex Regional School District has both a workable compliance foundation and a clear need for stronger coordination, standardization, and accountability in accessibility implementation. The barriers identified in the transition plan are systemic rather than isolated, particularly in the areas of doors, signage, restrooms, hearing access, emergency egress, and adaptable furnishings and equipment.

For that reason, the District should use this self-evaluation as the formal administrative basis for continued ADA and Section 504 implementation. When paired with the ADA Transition Plan, policy revision, staff training, district monitoring, and phased capital planning, it can support a more measurable, durable, and equitable accessibility program for students, staff, households, and community users across North Middlesex Regional School District.

