



## Accessibility & Inclusion Policy

### Going to School (GTS) Designing for Dignity, Participation, and Belonging

#### 1. Introduction

Going to School (GTS) believes that **accessibility and inclusion are non-negotiable rights**, not acts of charity or accommodation. We are committed to creating environments—physical, digital, educational, and organizational—where **every child, young person, colleague, and partner** can participate fully, equally, and with dignity, regardless of their physical, sensory, cognitive, or emotional abilities.

This policy outlines our principles, practices, and accountability systems to ensure that **inclusion is designed, not improvised**, and that **barrier-free participation** is embedded across every layer of our work.

#### 2. Definitions

- **Accessibility** refers to the **removal of physical, communication, attitudinal, and systemic barriers** that prevent individuals with disabilities or diverse needs from fully engaging in a space, service, or activity.
- **Inclusion** means designing environments and processes that proactively **welcome, value, and empower** people from marginalized groups—including but not limited to persons with disabilities, neurodivergent individuals, and those who use non-verbal modes of communication.
- **Disability** is understood as a **result of interaction between impairments and attitudinal/environmental barriers** that hinder full participation in society (UNCRPD definition).

#### 3. Legal and Ethical Foundations

This policy is grounded in the following frameworks:

##### **Indian Laws:**

- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016**
- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020**
- **RTE Act, 2009** – Provisions for children with special needs
- **IT Act, 2000** – Guidelines on accessible digital content



## International Commitments:

- **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
  - SDG 4: Inclusive & equitable quality education
  - SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

## **4. Scope of Application**

This policy applies to:

- All GTS programs, content, and partnerships (in schools, on screen, online, or in the field)
- All team members: full-time, part-time, interns, consultants, volunteers, and trustees
- All physical and digital infrastructure used by GTS
- All children, youth, adults, and communities we engage with—including those with visible, invisible, permanent, temporary, or situational disabilities

## **5. Guiding Principles**

- **Universal Design:** Programs and content are designed from the outset to be usable by as many people as possible, without the need for adaptation.
- **Nothing About Us Without Us:** Persons with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals must be involved in designing, reviewing, and testing all accessibility strategies.
- **Intersectionality:** We recognize the compounded exclusion experienced by children and adults at the intersection of **disability, caste, class, gender, language, and geography**.
- **Language of Dignity:** All communications—internal and external—must use non-stigmatizing, identity-affirming, person-first or identity-first language based on self-identification.

## **6. Accessibility in Practice**

### **6.1 Physical Accessibility**



- GTS ensures that offices, partner spaces, field sites, and content creation locations:
  - Have ramps, handrails, and wide doorways where possible
  - Offer accessible seating, toilets, and signage
  - Avoid clutter and provide clear circulation paths
- Accommodations are made in **internship placements** for students with mobility or sensory impairments

## **6.2 Digital Accessibility**

- All websites, mobile apps, and digital content must:
  - Follow **WCAG 2.1 AA standards**
  - Be compatible with screen readers and keyboard navigation
  - Avoid flashing content or complex interfaces that cause sensory overload
- Alt-text for all images, transcripts for audio/video, and Easy Read versions of key documents are provided

## **6.3 Communication Accessibility**

- GTS provides:
  - Content in multiple languages and formats (text, audio, symbol-based)
  - Large print and dyslexia-friendly typefaces where needed
  - Access to Indian Sign Language interpreters or captioning for public-facing events
- Staff are trained in **inclusive communication** and respectful interaction

## **6.4 Programmatic Accessibility**

- All skill development, storytelling, and research programs:
  - Use **multi-modal instruction** (visual, auditory, tactile, experiential)
  - Include **reasonable accommodations** like extra time, visual aids, or sensory breaks
  - Provide assistive devices or transport where feasible
- Inclusion is **budgeted for and resourced**, not treated as a favor or exception



## **7. Employment & Organizational Inclusion**

- Hiring processes must be **bias-aware and accommodation-ready**
- Reasonable accommodations are available during recruitment and onboarding
- Performance evaluations are adjusted for accessibility barriers, not productivity bias
- GTS celebrates **neurodiversity, lived disability experience, and access expertise** as organizational strengths

## **8. Inclusion in Storytelling and Content Creation**

- GTS is committed to:
  - **Authentic, respectful representation** of children and adults with disabilities in its content
  - Avoiding tropes of pity, inspiration, or “overcoming” narratives
  - Including persons with disabilities as **creators, not just subjects**, in storytelling
  - Providing consent forms in **accessible formats** and ensuring understanding before participation

## **9. Inclusive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)**

- All M&E tools will be reviewed for **language complexity, visual layout, and sensory load**
- Feedback from persons with disabilities and caregivers will be **prioritized**
- Accessibility indicators will be built into MEL frameworks (e.g., # of materials in Braille/audio, % of events with sign language)

## **10. Grievance Redressal and Accommodations**

- Anyone can request accommodations or report inaccessibility via:
  -  **accessibility@goingtoschool.com**
  -  A dedicated disability-inclusive helpline
- GTS will respond within **5 working days** and implement reasonable accommodations within **15 working days**



- Grievances related to accessibility will be reviewed by the **DEI and Safeguarding Committee**

## **11. Oversight and Accountability**

- The **Inclusion & Accessibility Taskforce**, composed of internal and external advisors with lived disability experience, will:
  - Audit quarterly progress
  - Recommend corrective actions
  - Co-create training and awareness materials
- The Board will receive an **annual accessibility report**, including case studies, impact stories, and feedback from disabled stakeholders

## **12. Review and Continuous Learning**

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months or sooner based on:

- Evolving legal mandates
- Feedback from disabled children or adults
- Technological advancements in accessibility tools
- Programmatic learning from implementation in field sites

**Training and orientation on this policy is mandatory for all staff and partners and will be embedded in GTS's onboarding, leadership development, and content team processes.**