



Greater Essex County District School Board
Annual Accessibility Status Report
September 2018 to August 2019

Prepared by

Greater Essex County District School Board Accessibility Planning Committee

Please note that this document is available in alternative formats upon request

Introduction

The Greater Essex County District School Board is committed to:

- the improvement of access to school premises, facilities and services to our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff that are free of barriers and biases;
- ensure that key principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity are reflected and valued in our learning and working environment;
- ensuring the design of any new facility will be constructed with accessibility as one of the key criteria.

Beginning September 1, 2003, all Greater Essex County District School Board policies, programs, procedures and services have been subject to the principles of inclusionary practice, free from barriers, to provide an accessible environment for all individuals. Through the annual accessibility plan status report process, the Greater Essex County District School Board's programming, policies and practices will be assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

The purpose of our annual accessibility report is to highlight the progress made yearly in providing an environment in all its facilities that builds independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for all students, parents/guardians, staff and the public.

Objectives

This annual report reflects all the objectives of the GECSB's multi-year accessibility plan:

- Describes the process by which the Greater Essex District School Board will identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- Reviews recent efforts of the Greater Essex District School Board to remove and prevent barriers;
- Describes the measures the Greater Essex District School Board will take in the next 5 years to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- Makes a commitment to provide an annual status report on the multiyear accessibility plan implementation;
- Makes a commitment to review and update the multi-year accessibility plan at least once every 5 years;
- Describes how the Greater Essex District School Board will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

Policy and Procedure

The five-year multi-accessibility plan demonstrates the GECD SB's commitment to accessibility and the goals for the next three years. The five-year multi-accessibility plan is available on the GECD SB website at:

<https://www.publicboard.ca/Community/Accessibility/Documents/AODA%20Multi-Year%20Accessibility%20Plan.pdf>

Training

We know that training about accessibility and inclusion is necessary to instill needed change. All Board staff are required to complete an eLearning module of the AODA TeachAble Project and complete a declaration on a cyclical basis as part of our commitment to better providing services. This eLearning module is also completed by all new staff as part of their orientation.

Education

The GECD SB is committed to addressing equity of access for students who may have limited opportunities to obtain professional recommendations for Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA). Our Special Education Coordinators work in conjunction with school staff to determine students that would benefit from the use of specialized equipment to support their learning. In the 2018-19 school year, our Board had over 700 SEA claims, including:

- 490 laptops - \$516,186.69 (includes the mouse, warranty and the occasional backpack)
- 490 Memory keys and sleeves - \$10, 258.00
- 490 Headsets - \$18, 896.00
- 210 iPads - \$107, 149.00
- 210 Earbuds - \$1,316.00
- 210 Keyboard/case and sleeves - \$23, 062.00

Training for both laptops and iPads was approximate \$489,576.00 (which works out to approximately 7418 hours). We continue to have classroom training facilitated by the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex. By utilizing this local agency, we are able to provide faster response time to training needs. This training is done individually with the student and in the classroom including other students and the classroom teacher.

We have continued our focus on building educator capacity through professional development sessions that incorporate technology, particularly technology utilized with SEA equipment.

Changes to Board Regulations and Policies Under AODA

In Ontario, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005) sets out a framework related to the use of service animals by individuals with a disability. This year the Special Education Department will be reviewing our existing regulation *Certified Service Animals for Students*(R-AD-31) and administrative procedure *Certified Animals for Students* (AP-AD-29) to ensure compliance with *Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 163* (PPM 163).

Information and Communication

The GECD SB provides internet websites and web content that conforms with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. A review of accessibility features of all updates and purchases related to Board and school websites is ongoing in preparation for the January 2021 deadline.

Our Information Technology Department is continually working towards reaching WCAG 2.0 level AA for the year 2021. We are continuing to work with schools to improve content management on their websites.

Employment

The offer to provide accommodations in the job application process for applicants is stated in all postings. Applicants are directed to contact the Human Resources Department to make their accommodations known. Our Human Resources Department has processes in place to support accommodation requests from potential applicants.

Our Board's Joint Employee Assistance Program (JEAP) provides information and support for individuals who may be experiencing either temporary or permanent disabilities through information provision regarding supports and/or programs aimed at improving overall wellness.

Our Human Resources Department regularly reviews and will continue to review their practices and procedures in the areas of recruitment, accommodations, return to work plans, and redeployment to ensure compliance with the AODA standards.

Transportation

The GECD SB in conjunction with our Transportation Consortium, conducts employee and volunteer training on the safe use of accessibility equipment and features of the Consortium's transportation vehicles.

Our Special Education Department developed our *AODA Student Transportation Plans* to support students who require accommodations on buses when being transported. The *AODA Student Transportation Plan* is developed for all students who require accommodations and then is updated as needed when accommodations change or are no longer required. In order to be efficient and effective with this process between the Transportation Consortium and our Board, we endeavor to maintain the following:

- Clear communication between the Consortium and our Special Education Coordinators who along with the school, identify a need for an *AODA Student Transportation Plan* for individual students;
- Input from our Consortium staff when developing plans and the processes for communicating the plan;
- Ongoing communication with the Board’s Information Technology Department, our Special Education Department and the Consortium to review and revise the *AODA Student Transportation Plans* and how they are accessed by staff;
- Continue to develop processes to share and update safety information between the GECD SB and the Consortium.

Our Special Education Department continues to revisit the above strategies to continually improve our responsiveness to student safety on transportation vehicles.

Built Environment

To assist in meeting our goals of accessibility, the following projects were undertaken and completed in the 2018-19 school year:

Coronation PS	Renovation to provide a barrier free washroom
Ford City PS	Ramp at front door to improve accessibility
Massey Secondary	Renovations to improve two barrier free washrooms

Monitoring

The Board will continue to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standard through a process for receiving and responding to feedback. Located on our GECD SB website, under the heading of *Public*, under *Accessibility*, the public can access the identified contact number and/or email to share concerns and feedback to the Special Education Department. The Board will also utilize various constituency groups such as the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Teacher Federations, Employee unions to gather feedback.

Feedback gathered will be shared with the Accessibility Planning Committee to determine how we can better support students, staff, parents/guardians, and members of the community who are identified as having a disability.

Moving Forward

The Special Education Department in conjunction with the Program Department, the Information Technology Department, the Human Resources Department and Plant Operations continue to work together to monitor our student needs, our staff needs and our community needs to identify and prioritize the removal of barriers.