



Greater Essex County District School Board
Annual Accessibility Status Report
September 2019 to August 2020

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 (GECD SB) 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 each year 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 GECD SB's multi-year Accessibility Plan. Specifically, the report:

- 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 multi-year 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 two 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>

Customer Service Standard

Training

We know that training about accessibility and inclusion is necessary to instill needed change and understanding. All Board staff are required to complete an eLearning module of the *AODA TeachAble Project* and complete a declaration on a five year 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.

Administrators and Special Education staff are trained on Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) training on a cycle of three years. A review of BMS training is available to school teams or individuals throughout the school year with Principal and Behaviour Transition Specialist consent.

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 2019-20 school year, our Board had over 949 SEA claims, which is an approximate increase of over 249 claims from the 2018-19 school year. SEA claims included:

749 laptops - \$674,556.89 (includes the mouse and warranty)

- Memory keys and sleeves - \$16,762.62
- Headsets - \$30,461.83

200 iPads - \$86558.00 (includes warranty)

- Headsets - \$2,960.00
- Keyboard/case and sleeves - \$13,878.00

Training for both laptops and iPads cost approximately \$249,377.58 (which works out to approximately 3118 hours). We spent less this year in training probably due to parents deferring training as a result of school closures and COVID concerns even though we offered virtual training in May and June.

We continue to have classroom training facilitated by the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex (LDAWE). By utilizing this local agency, we are able to provide faster response time to student training needs. 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 (Special Equipment Amount) equipment.

Information and Communication Standard

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. This year the IT Department, in conjunction with the Superintendent responsible for AODA, will be purchasing software that will be used to monitor AODA compliance of our Board's main website.

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

One of our areas of focus moving forward is the accessibility of the content being uploaded to our individual school websites. This past summer we posted for and hired a summer position for an educator who would be able to create professional development for our key communicators at each school site as well as our Administrative Assistants working out of the Park Street Board Office. These PD sessions are scheduled to take place in the fall of 2020. The PD session is designed with two asynchronous front-loading videos followed up with a synchronous session to reinforce concepts and answer any outstanding questions. As well, the following were created as follow up resources:

- Produced checklists for accessibility for creating Microsoft word documents with live video links for each point

- Produced checklists for accessibility for creating Power Point Slideshows with live video links for each point

As well, through this summer position, we were able to ensure key documents pertaining to school re-entry and special education were in AODA accessible format. The following documents were checked to ensure accessibility standards were incorporated:

- The *GECD SB Back to School Plan* and subsequent updates
- The *GECD SB Special Education Plan 2020* and subsequent updates
- Recreated an accessible version of *IPRC Parent Information* document
- Recreated an accessible version of *IEP Parent Information* document

Employment Standard

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 and will continue to review and revise with the goal of providing optimal support.

Our Board's Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) provide 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 Standard

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 Plan* form 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 practices:

- 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.

During the 2019-2020 school year:

- GECD SB provided wheelchair accessible transportation to 28 students
- GECD SB provided student transportation to 265 students requiring AODA form submissions.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

To assist in meeting our goals of accessibility, the following projects were undertaken and completed in the 2019-20 school year:

Location	Renovation
Sandwich SS	Hold open device installed on Cafeteria Doors to improve accessibility
Frank W Begley PS	Modifications to stairwell and washrooms to improve accessibility
King Edward PS	Lift system installed in CR164 to improve functionality
Parkview PS	Lift system installed in W7 to improve functionality
Roseville PS	Installed auto-operator on main entrance to improve accessibility
Forest Glade (Primary Learning Centre) PS	Installed auto-operator on main entrance to improve accessibility
Riverside SS	Ramp and auto-operator on west side of school to improve accessibility
Queen Victoria PS	Accessible washroom stall to improve functionality

To assist in meeting our goals of accessibility, the following projects were undertaken and completed during the summer of 2020:

Location	Renovation
Herman Secondary	Renovations to provide a barrier free washroom
Harrow PS	Auto-operator on main entrance to improve accessibility
Princess Elizabeth PS	Ramp and Auto-operator on parking lot entrance to improve accessibility
Sandwich Secondary	Renovations to provide a third barrier free washroom

Monitoring

The Board will continue to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standards 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 519-255-3200 (Ext. 10219) and/or email peggy.russette@publicboard.ca to share concerns and feedback to the Special Education Department. The Board will also utilize constituency groups such as the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to gather feedback.

All 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, prioritize and remove barriers for all.