

Greater Essex County District School Board

Title: Program and Accommodation

Category: Policy

Reference No: P1

Responsibility: Board of Trustees / Superintendent of Education – School Operations

Effective Date: 1998 05 26

Last Revision Date: 2026 02 17

Next Revision Date: 2031 (5 Years)

Policy Statement:

The Greater Essex County District School Board has, as its primary goal, the responsibility of providing educational programs and services of the highest quality, in sustainable facilities conducive to a stimulating learning environment and designed to meet the needs of all pupils, within fiscal parameters. As a school board in Ontario, the GECDSB is responsible for providing schools and facilities for our students and staff that are operated and maintained as effectively and responsibly as possible to support student achievement.

In addition to facilitating the delivery of our Board Mission, the Board will endeavour to optimize the use of its facilities. Various factors beyond the control of the Board impact on this commitment. These factors include declining, increasing, and shifting populations, current funding and operational realities, new provincial legislation and policy, changing educational objectives, and physical limitations with the aging facilities and infrastructure.

In order to maintain our commitment to excellence, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate all schools and facilities on a regular basis. Where enrolment is increasing, the Board must provide adequate student accommodations that may include boundary changes, additional classroom space (temporary or permanent), relocation of some programs (temporary or permanent), and/or blending arrangements. Where enrolment is limited and/or declining, the consequent impact of limited staff, learning resources and programs create difficulties in providing adequate educational programs for students. Under these conditions, the Board will consider program needs, boundary changes, blending arrangements, consolidation, alternate use of surplus space, closure, or other measures. Reviews of consolidations and/or closures will be conducted within the guidelines and expectations of the Ministry of Education.

Our commitment mandates that the detailed study of any school be conducted from the broadest possible system and community perspective. The Board will maintain communication with the community and seek community input.

This policy reflects the Ministry of Education's Revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines, December 2024

Definitions:

Program and Accommodation Review: A process, as defined in a school board Student program and accommodation review policy, undertaken by a school board to determine the future of a school or group of schools.

Business day: A calendar day that is not a weekend or statutory holiday. It also does not include calendar days that fall within school boards' Christmas, spring, and summer break. For schools with a year-round calendar, any break that is five (5) calendar days or longer is not a business day.

Consultation: The sharing of relevant information as well as providing the opportunity for municipalities and other community partners, the public and affected school communities to be heard.

Facility Condition Index (FCI): A building condition as determined by the Ministry of Education by calculating the ratio between the one-to-ten-year renewal needs and the replacement value for each facility.

Family of Schools: A group of schools (feeder elementary schools to the secondary school) that may be included as a part of the program and accommodation review process based on their ability to address the overall accommodation issues.

On-the-ground (OTG) capacity: The capacity of the school as determined by the Ministry of Education by loading all permanent instructional spaces within the facility to current Ministry standards for class size requirements and room areas.

Program Accommodation Review Committee (PARC): A committee, established by a school board that represents the affected school(s) of a pupil accommodation review, which acts as the official conduit for information shared between the school board and the affected school communities.

PARC working meeting: A meeting of PARC members to discuss a program and accommodation review and includes a meeting held by the PARC to solicit feedback from the affected school communities of a program and accommodation review.

Public delegation: A regular meeting of the Board of Trustees where presentations by groups or individuals can have their concerns heard directly by the school board trustees.

Public meeting: An open meeting held by the school board to solicit broader community feedback on a program and accommodation review.

School Information Profile (SIP): An orientation document with point-in-time data for each of the schools under a program and accommodation review to help the PARC and the community understand the context surrounding the decision to include the specific school(s) in a program and accommodation review.

Space template: A Ministry of Education template used by a school board to determine the number and type of instructional areas to be included within a new school, and the size of the required operational and circulation areas within that school.

Utilization: The comparison of the school's enrolment to the OTG capacity of the facility. It is calculated by dividing the school's enrolment by its capacity rating and expressed as a percentage. A utilization rate of less than 100% means a school is underutilized while a rate of over 100% would mean the school is over capacity.

Purpose:

The Greater Essex County District School Board is responsible for operating and maintaining its schools as effectively and responsibly as possible to support student achievement. The Director of Education presents a Long Term Accommodation Plan to the Board. This incorporates a review of student accommodation needs with prior and future enrolment trends which may impact upon the delivery of educational programming within our school system. The Long Term Accommodation Plan addresses issues in the context of a community of schools, as well as in the greater context of total jurisdiction.

Within the Long Term Accommodation Plan, the Director of Education shall identify individual schools or groups of schools to be considered for a change in accommodation status. Identification of an individual school or group of schools to be considered for a change in accommodation status may occur at any time during the year.

Policy Guidelines:

A. IDENTIFYING A PROGRAM and ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

1. The Director of Education, or designate, shall prepare and present to the Board a Long Term Accommodation Plan which incorporates a review of student accommodation needs.
2. Identification of a school or group of schools to be reviewed for a change in accommodation may be considered if one or more of the following reference criteria apply:
 - a) Provision of an appropriate range of viable programs;
 - b) Effective deployment of staff;
 - c) Schools and/or groups of schools have current enrolment and projected
 - d) enrolment in adjacent families of schools in excess of 10% of the school's on the ground capacity;
 - e) Schools and/or groups of schools have current enrolment and projected
 - f) enrolments in adjacent families of schools less than 90% of the school's on the ground capacity;
 - g) The Board's ability to operate all its schools within the grants available for school operation is negatively affected by one or more schools;
 - h) Schools require major repairs to maintain safe, operable conditions;
 - i) A school is experiencing above average building maintenance and/or operating expenses due to aging infrastructure and/or high renewal needs;
 - j) Any other reason, any school, group of schools or area which, in the opinion of administration, should be considered due to exceptional circumstances. Examples include, but are not limited to health, safety or environmental conditions; fire or other catastrophes; unforeseen changes in funding, policy, or legislation.

B. PLANNING PRIOR TO A PROGRAM and ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

1. The Director of Education, or designate, shall undertake Long Term capital and accommodation planning, informed by any relevant information obtained by local municipal governments, area trustee(s) and other community partners, which takes

into consideration Long Term enrolment projections and opportunities for the effective use of excess space in all facilities under the GECDSB's jurisdiction.

2. If a school or group of schools is identified for a program and accommodation review, an Initial Staff Report with one or more options that address the accommodation issue(s) must be prepared and presented to the Board of Trustees. The report will include a recommended option if more than one option is presented.
3. The Initial Staff Report must include option(s) that will address the following:
 - a) Summary of accommodation issues(s) for the school(s) under review;
 - b) Where students would be accommodated;
 - c) If proposed changes to the existing facility or facilities are required as a result of the program and accommodation review;
 - d) Identify any program changes as a result of the proposed option;
 - e) How student transportation would be affected if changes take place;
 - f) If new capital investment is required as a result of the program and accommodation review, how the GECDSB intends to fund the project, as well as a proposal on how students will be accommodated if funding does not become available;
 - g) Any relevant information obtained from municipalities and other community partners prior to the commencement of the program and accommodation review, including any confirmed interest in using the underutilized space.
4. Each recommended option must also include a timeline for implementation.
5. A School Information Profile (SIP) will be prepared by GECDSB staff for each of the school(s) under review. The SIPs are prepared to help the Program Accommodation Review Committee and the community understand the context surrounding the decision to include specific school(s) in a program and accommodation review.
6. The SIP will include data that addresses the following considerations about the school(s) under review:
 - a) Value to the Student;
 - b) Value to the School Board; and,
 - c) The minimum profile requirements addressing the facility, instructional, and school uses as set out in Appendix 1.
7. The School Information Profile may include additional items that could be used to reflect local circumstances and priorities.
8. The Initial Staff Report and School Information Profile will be made available to the public and posted on the GECDSB website following the decision to proceed with a program and accommodation review by the Board of Trustees.

c. NOTICE OF INITIATION OF A PROGRAM and ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

1. Upon the Board of Trustees' approval to initiate a program and accommodation review, the GECDSB will provide written notice of the decision within five (5) business days to the following:

- a) The affected single and upper tier municipalities through the Clerk's department (or equivalent);
 - b) The Directors of Education of coterminous boards;
 - c) Community partners that expressed an interest prior to the review;
 - d) The Ministry of Education through the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Financial Policy and Business Division;
 - e) The school Principal(s), staff, students, parents of the identified school(s);
 - f) The School Council Chair(s) of the identified school(s);
 - g) The general public by posting a notice on the GECDSD website; and,
 - h) Any other person or body as the Board may direct or the Director may determine.
2. An invitation for a meeting to discuss and comment on the recommended option(s) in the Initial Staff Report to municipalities and partners must be included.
 3. The affected single and upper-tier municipalities and other community partners that expressed an interest prior to the review must provide their response on the Initial Staff Report before the final public meeting.

D. PROGRAM ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE (PARC)

1. Upon the Board of Trustees' approval to initiate a program and accommodation review, a Program Accommodation Review Committee shall be established by the Board.
2. The PARC must be established prior to the first public meeting.
3. The appointed Superintendent or designate shall:
 - a) Coordinate appointments to the PARC;
 - b) Ensure that GECDSD staff resources are available to the PARC to provide support;
 - c) Interpret and ensure compliance with this Program Accommodation Review Policy;
 - d) Ensure meeting records are kept;
 - e) Ensure attendance for all meetings is recorded; and,
 - f) Organize and chair all PARC and public meetings.
4. Membership of the PARC should consist, at a minimum, of the following persons:
 - a) An appointed Superintendent or designate;
 - b) One (1) parent/guardian representative from each of the schools under review, chosen by their respective Principal, School Council and/or Home and School Association;
 - c) One (1) staff representative from each school under review;
 - d) One (1) principal from each school under review;
 - e) One (1) community member from the broader general community (ideally, the community member will not be a member of a specific school under review and should be a public school board supporter and have no perceived conflict of interest);

- f) One (1) student representative if a secondary school is a part of the review process (preferably the student council prime minister); and,
 - g) An appointed Recording Secretary.
5. The appointed Superintendent will recommend to the Trustees the appointment of the Program Accommodation Review Committee (PARC).
 6. The Program Accommodation Review Committee must be approved by the Board.
 7. When the PARC has been appointed by the Board, members will not be replaced if unable to actively continue as members throughout the process.
 8. Written invitation (letters sent home with students, application forms posted on website) to participate on the PARC will be issued following the Board of Trustees' consideration of the Initial Staff Report but prior to the first public meeting. There will be a deadline date for consideration. No response by that date indicates a non-interest.

E. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PARC

1. The terms of reference for the PARC include the following matters:
 - a) The mandate of the PARC which will refer to the GECDSB education and accommodation objectives in undertaking the review and reflect the GECDSB's strategy for supporting student achievement and well-being;
 - b) The role and responsibility of the PARC is to act as the official conduit for information sharing between the GECDSB and school communities. The PARC:
 - i. Will review the Initial Staff Report and other information presented by staff;
 - ii. Provide feedback on the Initial Staff Report;
 - iii. May provide other accommodation options with supporting rationale;
 - iv. Does not need to achieve a consensus regarding information provided to Trustees.
 - c) The PARC shall hold a minimum of two (2) public consultation meetings in the review area to receive input or comments from the public on the program and accommodation review and Initial Staff Report;
 - d) The PARC shall hold a minimum of two (2) working meetings which will not entertain delegations, but will be public for observation only;
 - e) Meeting agendas are to be made available by email to the PARC members and posted on the GECDSB website, when possible, prior to the scheduled meeting;
 - f) The appointed recording secretary will ensure the notes/minutes are recorded to reflect the discussions that took place at the working and public meetings. PARC notes will be posted on the website after they have been reviewed by the Committee. Both working and public meeting notes/minutes will be included in the Final Staff Report to the Board of Trustees.

2. In carrying out its duties the PARC shall have regard for the following matters:
 - a) Attention should be paid to the value of the school(s), to the student, and to the SchoolBoard;
 - b) There is a full range of actions that can be recommended to the Board of Trustees, including but not limited to, boundary changes, changes in grade organization of schools, construction replacement facilities, facility upgrades and renovations, program and model of delivery changes, consolidations, school closure, etc.;
 - c) PARC members shall refrain from any discussions about specific personnel, property or legal matters;
 - d) The PARC working meetings and public consultation meetings should be held at schools in the review area if the school(s) has the appropriate capacity or, if necessary, at another community facility if barrier free accessibility cannot be provided at a school; and,
 - e) The PARC will be informed at the beginning of the process about partnership opportunities or lack thereof as identified as part of the GECDSB Long Term planning process.
3. Feedback from the PARC, as well as broader public consultation, will be compiled into a Community Consultation section of the Final Staff Report that will be prepared by the GECDSB staff.
4. The committee will endeavour to ensure that all information relevant to the review is made public by posting it in a prominent location on the Board website and, upon request, make it available in print. Technical language is to be rewritten to be easily understood. Communication barriers within the community will be identified. The same responsibility applies to the school board administration and the Board website.

B. PUBLIC MEETINGS AND TIMELINES

1. In addition to the PARC working meetings, GECDSB staff will facilitate a minimum of two (2) public meetings that must be held for a (standard) program and accommodation review process. A minimum of one (1) public meeting must be held for a modified program and accommodation review process to receive broader community input and comment on the Initial Staff Report.
2. The Notice of all Public Meetings will occur through the school(s)' usual means of sharing information with their community. (Notification of meetings may be shared in a variety of ways that may include school newsletters, the school and Board websites, the school sign, community messaging services, letters to all students in the school(s) involved, media releases, etc., with the aim of as much of the school/community as possible being informed).
3. Senior administration will call the first public meeting no earlier than thirty (30) business days after the date of approval to conduct a program and accommodation review by the Board of Trustees.

4. The first public meeting, at a minimum, shall include:
 - a) An overview of the PARC orientation session – the committee’s role; outline how the committee will operate; the data they received; and how they receive community input;
 - b) The Initial Staff Report with recommended option(s); and,
 - c) A presentation of the School Information Profile.
5. There must be a minimum period of forty (40) business days and a maximum of sixty (60) business days between the first and final public meeting.
6. The second and/or final public meeting shall include:
 - a) Presenting the Draft Final Staff Report;
 - b) Providing Draft accommodation recommendation(s); and,
 - c) Receiving community input.
7. The Final Staff Report must be posted publicly on the GECDSB website no fewer than ten (10) business days after the final public meeting.
8. Once the final report is submitted to the Board of Trustees, the Board must allow the public to provide feedback through delegations to the Board of Trustees. The public will be notified of the opportunity, which will occur no fewer than ten (10) business days after the final report is made public.
9. The Final Staff Report must include:
 - a) A Community Consultation section;
 - b) Recommended option(s); and,
 - c) A proposed accommodation plan and a timeline for implementation.
10. Public delegations following GECDSB policy will be received at the Board meeting when the Final Staff Report is presented. Input from these delegations will be compiled and presented along with the Final Staff Report at the next Board meeting. Decisions by the Board concerning the recommendations outlined in the Final Staff Report shall be made at that meeting of the full Board in open session.
11. The Board of Trustees will make a final decision no fewer than ten (10) business days after the public delegations have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Final Staff Report.
12. The Board of Trustees has the discretion to approve the recommendation(s) of the Final Staff Report as presented, modify the recommendation(s), or approve a different outcome.
13. Should the Board of Trustees vote to close/consolidate a school(s), the Board must provide clear timelines regarding the closure/consolidation and ensure that a transition plan through a committee is provided to all affected school communities.

14. Following the Board's decision(s), the Director of Education will formally, in writing, notify the school(s) principal(s) and school council chair(s) of the final decision of the Board of Trustees.
15. The community will be informed by the principal(s) per their usual/regular forms of communication with their community. (This may be done in a variety of ways that may include school newsletters, the school and Board websites, the school sign, community messaging services, letters home with all students, press releases, etc., with the aim of as much of the school/community as possible being informed).
16. The Ministry and Board recognize that, wherever possible, schools should only be subject to a program and accommodation review once in a five-year period.

TRANSITION PLANNING

17. In situations where the Board approves a recommendation to close/consolidate a school(s), a Transition Committee shall be established to facilitate the process.
18. The Transition Committee may include the Superintendent responsible for Accommodations, the School Superintendent, the Staffing Superintendent, the school principals, and the school council chairs or designates of schools affected. The committee may invite others to become members of the Transition Committee such as various Program, Special Education, Information Technology, Facility and Business staff, etc.
19. The Transition Committee will identify the issues, needs, resource allocation and responsibilities related to the implementation of the school closure/consolidation. It will monitor progress on transition activities and the well-being of students affected, and communicate this information to stakeholders on a regular basis.

c. OPTIONAL MODIFIED PROGRAM and ACCOMMODATION REVIEW PROCESS

1. In certain circumstances, where the potential accommodation options available are deemed by the school board to be less complex, school boards may find it appropriate to undertake a modified program and accommodation review process. The optional modified program and accommodation review process may be undertaken where two or more of the following criteria apply to one or more school(s) within a group of schools:
 - a) A school facility that is not suitable to serve the school community (retrofitting involves major capital investment, FCI deems the school prohibitive to repair, school has higher than average operating and maintenance costs);
 - b) A school with a utilization rate of 75% or lower;
 - c) A school with a Facility Condition Index (FCI) that is greater than 30%;
 - d) An elementary school with an enrolment of less than 225 students;
 - e) A secondary school with an enrolment of less than 350 students;
 - f) An elementary school is less than 10 km from the nearest school;
 - g) A secondary school is less than 20 km from the nearest school;

- h) The relocation of a program or grades where the enrolment constitutes 50% or more of the school's enrolment. The enrolment will be based on the enrolment at the time of the relocation, or the first phase of a relocation carried over a number of school years.
2. The modified program and accommodation review process is implemented in accordance with the remainder of this policy and regulation document except for the following:
- a) The Initial Staff Report must provide rationale for exempting the school(s) from the standard program and accommodation review process;
 - b) No PARC is required to be established;
 - c) A minimum of one public meeting must be held.

D. EXEMPTIONS FROM THE PROGRAM and ACCOMMODATION REVIEW PROCESS

1. The Ministry of Education's Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines provide a number of circumstances where School Boards are not obligated to undertake a program and accommodation review process. These include:
- a) Where a replacement school is to be built by the Board on the existing site, or built or acquired within the existing school attendance boundary, as identified through the school board's policy;
 - b) When a lease for the facility is terminated;
 - c) Where a replacement school is to be built by the Board on the existing site, or built or acquired within the existing school attendance boundary, and the school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students and staff during the reconstruction, as identified through the school board's policy;
 - d) When the Board plans to relocate a grade(s), or a program(s), in a school year or over a number of school years where the enrolment constitutes less than 50% of the school's enrolment. This calculation is based on the enrolment of the school at the time of relocation, or the first phase of a relocation carried over a number of years;
 - e) When a school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students during a school's repairs or renovations;
 - f) Where a facility has served as a "holding school" for a school community whose permanent school is over-capacity and/or is under construction or repair;
 - g) Where there are no students enrolled at the school at any time throughout the school year.
2. Although a program and accommodation review is not required in these situations, the GECDSB should provide appropriate notice of decisions where the accommodation circumstances of students will be affected.

Reporting Requirements:

A policy review cycle of every five years has been established to ensure regular review of Greater Essex County District School Board policies, unless otherwise required by system need or legislation.

Reference:

Ministry of Education “Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline” Revised December 2024
Ministry of Education “Administrative Review of Accommodation Review Process”
Ministry of Education “Community Planning and Partnership Guideline” Revised March 2015

APPENDICES

P1A: GECDSB “School Information Profile”

P1B: GECDSB “Guidelines for Community Meeting Input”

[Ministry of Education “Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline” Revised December 2024](#)

[Ministry of Education “Administrative Review of Accommodation Review Process”](#)

[Ministry of Education “Community Planning and Partnership Guideline” Revised March 2015](#)