

Greater Essex County District School Board

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
2022-2026

Developed by the Accessibility Planning Committee in accordance with:
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)
Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)
and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)

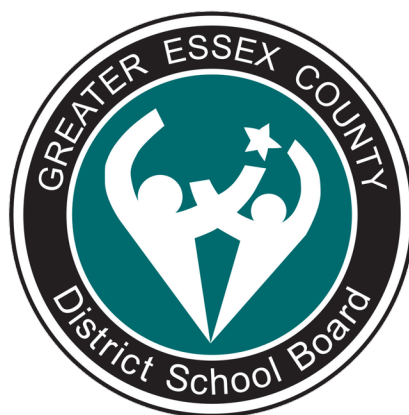


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1. Introduction

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and specifically Regulation 191/11 “Integrated Accessibility Standards” (the “Regulation”), Ontario school boards are required to develop multi-year accessibility plans outlining their strategy to prevent and remove barriers, and to meet requirements under the Regulation. (O. Reg. 191/11, s.4).

This plan describes the measures the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) will take over the next four years (2022 to 2026) to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who work, learn and participate in the school board community and environment. This includes students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and visitors to our Board sites and our schools.

The GECDSB’s plan sets out time frames for action, where appropriate, and in accordance with the Regulation. This plan will be posted on the GECDSB website.

GECDSB endeavours to provide accessible services and workplaces, including the removal of barriers, and providing accommodations to those requiring support. This plan will assist the GECDSB in coordinating these efforts to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

2. Aim

The GECDSB is required to establish, implement, maintain, and document compliance with a multi-year accessibility plan. This plan describes the GECDSB’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and enhance accessibility for individuals who work, learn and participate in the school board community and environment. The plan outlines how the GECDSB will meet its requirements under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Through accessibility planning and with the input of the Accessibility Planning Committee (APC), the GECDSB will strategically identify, remove and prevent barriers wherever possible. See Section 8 for more details on the APC.

The GECDSB is committed to providing an environment consistent with the principles of independence, dignity and equality of opportunity to all, including particular attention to individuals with disabilities.

3. Objectives

This plan:

- reviews recent efforts of the GECDSB to remove and prevent barriers;
- describes the process by which the GECDSB will identify, remove and prevent

- barriers;
- describes the measures the GECDSD will take in the next four years to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- makes a commitment to provide an annual status report on the implementation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan;
- makes a commitment to review and update the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every five years; and
- describes how the GECDSD will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

4. Commitment to Accessibility Planning

This plan will be presented to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for feedback and to GECDSD senior administration for approval. The GECDSD is committed to:

- a. Maintaining an AODA Accessibility Planning Committee that will meet bi-annually;
- b. Continuing the process of consulting with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and providing opportunities for Justice Inclusion Equity and Diversity (JIED) Committee members, who self-identify as having a disability, to provide feedback to the plan;
- c. Ensuring, wherever possible, that school board policies, regulations and administrative procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility and inclusive/universal design;
- d. The Accessibility Planning Committee (APC) providing input regarding accessibility issues, where appropriate, to new policies, regulations and administrative procedures and to those under review;
- e. Improving access to facilities, documents, programs and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the community;
- f. Ensuring the key principles of independence, dignity, integration and participation and equality of opportunity are reflected and valued in our learning and working environment;
- g. Accessibility being one of the key criteria that is considered in the location/relocation of programs;
- h. Designing any new facility with accessibility as one of the key criteria.

The Director of Education has authorized the Accessibility Planning Committee (APC) to review and update the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that will enable the GECDSD to meet these commitments. Accessibility goals are guided by the following:

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)

[Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11](#)

[Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(ODA\)](#)

[The Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

Moving forward, GECDSB policies, regulations, administrative procedures, programs and services are subject to the principles of inclusionary practices and freedom from barriers, to provide an accessible environment. Through the annual accessibility plan status report process and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) report, the GECDSB's programming, policies and practices will be assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

5. Description of the Greater Essex County District School Board

Our school board is the most southerly school board in Canada. It includes the City of Windsor, the County of Essex and the Township of Pelee (Pelee Island). There are 55 elementary schools, 13 secondary schools, two adult and continuing education locations (City/County), one Board Office, one Facility Services building, one shared office building that houses the Student Transportation Services Consortium and the Media Services Department (both these departments are jointly shared and operated with other school boards in the region), and one site for our Joint Employee Assistance Program. There are three main sites for secondary alternative programs, one in Amherstburg, one in Leamington and one in Riverside Secondary School. There are three Employment Assessment Centres (Windsor, Kingsville and Leamington). Our Newcomer Assessment Centre and Windsor Employment Assessment Centre are located in one building. There is one rented site in Leamington for our ESL (English as a Second Language) program. Kennedy Collegiate has established a temporary site, Kennedy North Campus, for the 2023-24 school year. District High School In summary, the Board is responsible for over 90 sites. In addition, as of 2022, there are five closed schools that are still owned by the Board. There are approximately 34,000 students as of the 2022-23 school year, and approximately 1,300 night school and continuing education students. The Board employs approximately 4,700 staff, making it one of the largest employers in the area.

6. Accessibility Terminology

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability*, defining disability is a complex, evolving matter. The term "disability" covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time.

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* adopts the broad definition of disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (see s.10(1) "[Interpretation and Application](#)").

Barrier is defined in the ODA and AODA as:

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, environmental barrier, policy or practice.

7. Board Strategic Plan

Vision

Building tomorrow together

Mission

Leading excellence in public education by creating confident learners, engaging diverse communities and demonstrating ethical stewardship

Strategic Priorities

Student success and well-being:

- Creating confident learners through personalized learning, supportive environments and trusting relationships.
- Engaging communities through equitable and reflective practices that respect and honour our diversity.
- Demonstrating ethical stewardship through thoughtful and intentional use of financial, human, environmental and community resources.



8. Accessibility Planning Committee Members:

The Accessibility Planning Committee (APC) provides input and responses to identified accessibility issues, provides input into new policies, regulations and administrative procedures involving accessibility and is responsible for identifying barriers and possible solutions.

Mike Wilcox, Superintendent of Special Education - Chair
Shelley Armstrong, Superintendent of Business
Chris Mills, Superintendent of Technology Integration
Ros Salvador, Human Rights and Equity System Advisor
Amie MacKinnon, Human Resources Coordinator
Kristie Sweet, Supervising Principal of Special Education
Giuliana Hinchliffe, Manager of Facility Services
Madeline McEachern, Communications Officer
Rob Romano, Elementary Principal
Jennifer Newton, Special Education Coordinator
Allison Forbes, Teacher
Peggy Russette, Administrative Assistant, Special Education

9. Work Towards Barrier Removal and Prevention

The following has occurred as part of the GECDSB commitment to accessibility:

- Formation of an Accessibility Planning Committee (2012)
- Development of a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2012)
- Development of an Annual Accessibility Status Report (annually updated)

Ongoing work is occurring in the following areas:

Customer Service

The goal of customer service is to provide an environment consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and the equality of opportunity for all, with particular attention on persons with disabilities.

The GECDSB provides mandatory online accessibility training to all staff on a cyclical basis. Educators including educational support staff and staff of the GECDSB are trained on accessibility awareness for accessible program or course delivery and instruction. Educators include those who are involved in designing, delivering, or instructing courses. The AODA/ TeachAble training e-learning module is located in Brightspace, an online learning platform that staff can access, and was last updated in 2019. The module will be further updated for spring 2024. This course is an orientation to the Integrated Accessibility Standards for GECDSB employees. The training focuses on the requirements of the accessibility standards set out in the IASR and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. All new staff are required to complete it as part of their new employee orientation. The GECDSB is committed to responding effectively to requests for materials in alternative accessible formats as well as being responsive to community feedback through our

main website page under the heading *Accessibility*. More information regarding the [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) and the [Annual Accessibility Status Reports](#) are available there.

Information and Communication

The GECDSB trustees approved the board's Communications Team and IT Department's migration of board and school websites to a new platform in February 2022. This new platform provides greater ability to meet AODA requirements and achieve compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0). The IT Department, in conjunction with the Superintendent responsible for AODA, purchased additional software to monitor AODA compliance of the GECDSB websites. The GECDSB developed a WCAG 2.0 compliant staff Intranet, which was launched in 2022.

Social media communications use accessibility tools available on main social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Throughout the 2021-22 school year, AODA website training was provided to central office staff and elementary and secondary school administration. Information Technology staff are available on request to assist with any further communication support as required. Web and document compliance training will also be provided to administrative staff during the 2022-2023 school year.

During the 2022-23 school year, school administrators will receive foundational training on the duty to accommodate students in relation to protected human rights grounds.

Employment

Our Human Resources Department is committed to regularly reviewing their practices and procedures in the areas of recruitment, accommodations, return to work plans, and redeployment to ensure compliance with the AODA standards and the *Human Rights Code*. The GECDSB has put in place processes to ensure that individuals who apply to internal and external postings are informed of the availability of accommodations based on their individual needs. Accommodations are also available to prospective candidates who are moving through the interview process. As part of the hiring process, new staff are required to complete the AODA/TeachAble Project accessibility training before they start in their new role.

Staff accommodations are developed in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) policy and guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate. The goal of accommodations is to support staff to be successful in the workplace or in their return to the workplace. Our Human Resources Department is committed to regularly reviewing their practices and procedures in the areas of recruitment, accommodations, return to work plans, and redeployment to further align our practices with AODA standards.

Transportation

Student transportation is provided through the Windsor-Essex Student Transportation Services (WESTS), a separate legal entity, which provides services to four school boards which include the GECDSB, Windsor Essex Catholic DSB, Conseil scolaire Viamonde, and Conseil scolaire

catholique Providence. In keeping with its policies and procedures which ensure compliance with accessibility standards, the WESTS develops, monitors and provides student transportation. All students requiring accommodated transportation must have the Special Education Transportation Application and the AODA form completed. This form was developed collaboratively with the Special Education Department and the WESTS. The AODA form identifies any equipment requirements or accommodations required for transportation.

Design of Public Spaces

The GECDSB Special Education and Facility Services departments work collaboratively to determine accessibility project priorities throughout the year. Where possible work is completed through the school year and where necessary due to the impact of the construction, some projects are completed over the summer months.

Individual student accessibility needs are determined by school administrators, Special Education Coordinators and/or John McGivney Children's Centre occupational therapists who share the needs with the Special Education Department. This information is shared with Facility Services who works with the Special Education Department to develop a plan to implement the necessary accommodations.

[Annual ODA \(Ontarians with Disabilities Act\)](#) reports are available on the main GECDSB website page under the *Accessibility* link. The ODA reports outline the accessibility projects undertaken by the board to allow greater access to the physical environment by students, staff and the community.

Systemic Discrimination

As noted in the OHRC's *Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability*, discrimination based on disability exists not only in individual behaviour, it can also be systemic or institutionalized. Systemic or institutional discrimination is one of the more complex ways that discrimination occurs.

In the 2021-22 school year, the GECDSB created the role of Human Rights and Equity System Advisor. One of the initial areas of focus for this position was professional development in the area of Human Rights and Duty to Accommodate. The Human Rights and Equity System Advisor provided professional development to our senior administration and school administrators.

10. Barrier Identification

The Accessibility Planning Committee (APC) uses the following methods to identify barriers to accessibility for people who work, learn, and participate in the school board community and environment.

Group Methods

Students

Barriers to accessibility are identified by students, parents, guardians and school staff. Facilities Services, Special Education and Transportation departments work with stakeholders to develop accommodation plans.

Staff

Human Resources staff, specifically Wellness Officers, identify restrictions and limitations for staff and develop accommodation plans for individuals to support their success.

Public Barriers

Barriers to accessibility are identified by individuals accessing programs and services offered by the school board. Members of the public may bring concerns to the attention of the school, school board satellite sites, the Board Office or may use the board website Accessibility link to share concerns or comments. Barriers identified by members of the public are referred to the Board's Accessibility Planning Committee. Development of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Annual Status Report as well as ongoing feedback opportunities from individuals are important methods to identify barriers to accessibility.

Board Wide

The GECDSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the Annual Accessibility Status Report provides updates on emerging barriers to accessibility. SEAC, ODA reports, AODA, IASR, and Customer Service Regulation are examples of some of the lenses used for barrier identification. Bi-annual meetings of the Accessibility Planning Committee will allow the committee to review concerns brought forward by the public and our staff through the [accessibility reporting process](#) on our website. Once a barrier is identified through either Facilities Services, Special Education or John McGivney Children's Centre staff, these groups work together to develop a plan to remove the barrier or accommodate the needs of the individual(s) involved.

11. Barriers Identified

The AODA (2005) identifies specific barriers to accessibility through the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 165/16](#).

Policies and procedures were developed to meet the board’s requirements under the Accessible Customer Service Regulation and further policies and procedures have been developed to address the requirements of accessibility standards in the areas of Information and Communications, Employment and School Transportation as set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

The following facility-related barriers have been identified. When required at a specific date, or when completing major renovations or constructing new facilities, the board will strive to remove identified barriers. These updates are reported annually in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act report that is shared with and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Barrier	Objective	Means to Prevent/Remove	Performance Criteria	Timeline	Responsibility
Updating Building Construction Standards as deemed necessary or when built into funded projects	To ensure that older buildings where feasible are updated with accessible materials	As items are requested for repair or replacement, new and more accessible items are installed (e.g. door handles)	Buildings will be updated as required. Students will be accommodated at the closest accessible site.	Ongoing	Facility Services, Special Education Department, School Principal
Accessible Washrooms	To provide access to washrooms	Provide appropriate beams and lifts	Meet needs as determined by student/staff need	Ongoing	Facility Services, Special Education Department, School Principal
Accommodations for individuals with Blind/Low vision challenges as deemed appropriate	Submit request to the Superintendent of Special Education	Provide appropriate accommodations	Meet the needs as necessary	Ongoing	Facility Services, Special Education Department, School Principal
Automatic Doors and access ramps	To provide access to schools for people with disabilities	Install access ramps and automatic doors, openers and frames as needs are identified	People with disabilities will have access to schools	Ongoing	Facility Services, Special Education Department, School Principal

12. Accessibility Outcomes

The following chart indicates accessibility outcomes and reports that the Board either has already put in place or will put in place over the next 4 years. Please note the accessibility outcomes, where applicable, are taken from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and the *Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy: accessible education for students with disabilities (2018)*.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	OUTCOME	TIME FRAME	Reference
Accessibility Planning Committee	Maintain and update Multi-year Accessibility Plan	Implemented and ongoing	AODA
Accessibility Planning Committee	Maintain and update the annual Accessibility Status report	Implemented and ongoing	AODA
Accessibility Planning Committee	Communicate effectively to students, parents, caregivers, staff through multiple platforms about the right to disability related recommendations	Implemented and ongoing	OHRC Recommendation 16
Accessibility Planning Committee	Create an effective mechanism for reporting and addressing accessibility concerns for students, parents, caregivers, community and staff	Implemented and ongoing	AODA and OHRC Recommendation 16
All	Embed Universal Design for Learning in all professional development whenever appropriate	Implemented and ongoing	OHRC Recommendation 19 and 22
All	Ensure timely accommodations are provided to support student success	Implemented and ongoing	AODA and OHRC Recommendation 17

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DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	OUTCOME	TIME FRAME	Reference
All	Provide resources that support inclusion and equitable outcomes by building understanding and sharing best practices	Implemented and ongoing	AODA and OHRC Recommendations 18 and 19
All	Creation of JIED (Justice Inclusion Equity and Diversity) Committee in the 2021-22 school year to provide input and feedback and provide consultation from staff who identify as marginalized	Implemented and ongoing	
All	Provide Accessibility training to all third-party contractors and school volunteers	2023-2025	AODA
Business	Ensure the board budget supports the removal of barriers for people with disabilities	Implemented and ongoing	OHRC Recommendation 21
Curriculum/ Special Education/ Student Success	Identify immediate and anticipated student needs and provide support to promote equitable outcomes for all	Implemented and ongoing	AODA and OHRC Recommendation 17
Director's Office	Develop and facilitate a student demographic survey that identifies equity indicators	Upcoming	OHRC Recommendation 144 – Right to Read
Facility Services	Identify and remove architectural and physical barriers	Ongoing	AODA
Facilities Services/Special Education	Incorporate the principles of universal design which meet provincial accessibility standards in all new buildings	Ongoing	AODA
Facility Services and Schools	Gender inclusive	Implemented	

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DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	OUTCOME	TIME FRAME	Reference
	washrooms designated in each of our schools	and ongoing	
Human Resources	Embed accessibility training into orientation for all new staff	Implemented and ongoing	AODA and OHRC Recommendation 19
Human Resources/Human Rights and Equity System Advisor	Provide training for trustees, senior team, school administrators, and all school staff on Human Rights Training for managers and supervisors is being planned	Partially implemented and ongoing	OHRC Recommendation 19
Human Resources	Collect demographic data on staff who self-identify with a disability to better understand staff needs	Implemented and ongoing	Ministry of Education
Human Resources	Ensure workplace and employment practices are accessible to potential and current employees with disabilities	Implemented and ongoing	AODA
Human Resources	Conduct an Employment Systems Review with an external consulting firm to review written and unwritten, formal and informal employment policies, practices and procedures that identifies and makes recommendations for the removal of systemic/institutional, cultural and attitudinal barriers to promote equitable policies and	In progress in the 2022-23 school year	AODA

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DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE	OUTCOME	TIME FRAME	Reference
	practices, a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment		
Human Rights and Equity System Advisor/Special Education	Provide training to school administrators on the Duty to Accommodate for Students	In progress in the 2022-23 school year	OHRC
Information Technology/Communications Office	Make all internet websites and web content conform with internet accessibility standards	Implemented and ongoing	AODA
Safe Schools	Monitor and ensure the proper use of exclusions for all students, particularly students with a disability	Implemented and ongoing	OHRC Recommendation 20
Special Education/Business/Transportation Consortium	Maintain integrated accessible student transportation services as well as alternative services as needed	Implemented and ongoing	AODA
Special Education	Development of a policy, regulation, and administrative procedure regarding certified service animals	Implemented and ongoing	AODA
Special Education	Provide professional development to staff regarding ableism	Upcoming for the 2023-24 school years and ongoing	

13. Review and Monitoring Process

Throughout the year, evaluation of the effectiveness in implementing the barrier-removal and prevention strategies will be ongoing in preparation for the next year of accessibility planning.

The Accessibility Planning Committee will meet to review the progress and evaluate the effectiveness of barrier removal and prevention strategies and to continually plan for increased accessibility throughout the Board. The Accessibility Planning Committee will meet twice each school year.

The Accessibility Planning Committee will take the following steps to ensure that they are reporting progress moving forward:

- a) An annual status report on the progress of the implementation of the plan is prepared and posted on the board website;
- b) At least once every five years the plan is reviewed and updated with the input of the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Accessibility Planning Committee and others as deemed appropriate.

14. Communication of the Plan

The Greater Essex County District School Board's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is posted on the Board's website at www.publicboard.ca. Hard copies will be available upon request. On request, the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be made available in other accessible formats. The Board will also post an Annual Status Report on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan which can also be made available in other accessible formats on request.

Contact information for accessible format requests:

Special Education Services -Tel: 519 255-3200 ext. 10219 or Fax:519 255-3242.

Any questions, comments or feedback regarding the GECSB Multi-Year Accessibility Plan should be directed to:

Peggy Russette
Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Special Education

519-255-3200 (Ext. 10219) or email: peggy.russette@publicboard.ca