Greater Essex County District School Board

Title: Community Planning and Partnership

Category: Policy
Responsibility: Superintendent of Business, Treasurer and Facility Services and Board of Trustees
Effective Date: May 9, 2010
Review Date: October 20, 2026
Next Review Year: 2031

Policy Statement

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) recognizes that schools are valuable public assets that play a vital role in supporting student success and strengthening communities. In accordance with the Education Act, Ontario Regulation 374/23 *Acquisition and Disposition of Real Property*, and the Ministry of Education's Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (B09), the Board is committed to collaborating with municipalities, public sector organizations, Indigenous partners, community agencies, and other eligible organizations to maximize the use of publicly funded facilities and property.

The Board supports community planning and partnership opportunities that:

- Enhance student achievement, well-being, and belonging.
- Improve access to services, programs, and supports for students and families.
- Promote the efficient and sustainable use of public assets.
- Strengthen relationships between schools, municipalities, government agencies, and community organizations.
- Support coordinated community planning and long-term accommodation planning.
- Generate operational efficiencies and reduce costs through shared use of facilities.
- Contribute to vibrant, healthy, and connected communities.

The Board will actively seek and consider opportunities for community partnerships when developing new schools, undertaking significant capital projects, evaluating surplus or underutilized space, and planning for the future use or disposition of Board properties.

All partnerships must support the Board's mission, strategic plan, and student-focused objectives while preserving the safety, security, and integrity of the learning environment. Community use or occupancy shall not interfere with instructional programming, student learning, or Board operations.

The Board expects all partnerships to demonstrate financial sustainability, accountability, transparency, and compliance with Board policies, legislation, and regulatory requirements.

Definitions

Not applicable

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for community planning, facility sharing, and partnership development that supports student achievement, responsible stewardship of public resources, and the effective utilization of Board facilities and properties.

Policy Guidelines

Community Planning

The Board shall participate in collaborative community planning processes by engaging municipalities, community organizations, public agencies, and other eligible partners in discussions regarding accommodation planning, capital development, land use, demographic trends, and community needs.

To support informed and transparent planning, the Board shall:

- Maintain and publicly share information regarding long-term accommodation plans and capital priorities, in accordance with Ministry requirements.
- Conduct annual community planning and partnership consultations to identify opportunities for collaboration and joint use of facilities.
- Provide notice to prescribed community organizations regarding significant capital projects, surplus space, and opportunities for co-location or co-building as required by legislation and Ministry direction.
- Continue to follow the circulation requirements established under Ontario Regulation 444/98 when property or space is declared surplus.

Community Partnerships

The Board may enter into partnership arrangements where the partnership:

- Supports the interests of students, families, and communities.
- Is compatible with the educational purpose of the facility.
- Does not compromise student safety, security, or well-being.
- Aligns with Board priorities and strategic objectives.
- Represents an appropriate and beneficial use of Board property.
- Complies with applicable legislation, regulations, and Board policies.

Partnership opportunities may include:

- Shared use of school facilities.
- Co-location of community services.
- Joint-use agreements.
- Co-building arrangements.
- Other collaborative initiatives that advance community access to services while supporting the efficient use of public infrastructure.

Partnership Evaluation

All partnership opportunities shall be evaluated to ensure they:

- Protect the health, safety, and welfare of students and staff.
- Preserve the Board's ability to deliver educational programming.
- Respect facility and site limitations, including zoning and operational requirements.
- Demonstrate financial viability and sustainability.
- Provide value to the Board, students, and the broader community.
- Support responsible stewardship of public assets.

The Board reserves the right to approve, deny, modify, or terminate partnership arrangements based on student needs, operational requirements, strategic priorities, financial considerations, or legislative obligations.

Financial Stewardship

Community partnerships shall operate on a cost-recovery basis unless otherwise approved by the Board or required through legislation, Ministry direction, or funding agreements.

Partners shall be responsible for costs associated with their occupancy, operations, renovations, construction, maintenance obligations, and other expenses as determined by agreement.

The Board shall not assume financial liabilities, provide guarantees, or subsidize partnership costs beyond those approved by the Board and supported by applicable funding sources.

Eligible and Ineligible Partners

The Board will give consideration to partnerships with public sector organizations, municipalities, childcare providers, social service agencies, health organizations, Indigenous organizations, recreation providers, and other entities whose services support students and communities.

The Board will not enter into partnerships that:

- Compete directly with publicly funded education programs.
- Conflict with the Board's mandate or values.
- Create undue risk to students, staff, or Board operations.
- Are incompatible with the educational purpose of the facility.

Accountability

The Board of Trustees is responsible for establishing the strategic direction for community planning and partnership initiatives and ensuring the effective stewardship of public assets.

The Director of Education shall ensure that appropriate procedures are established to implement this policy and that partnership opportunities are assessed, managed, and reported in a manner consistent with legislative requirements and Board priorities.

The Superintendent responsible for Business Services shall oversee the administration of partnership arrangements, accommodation planning processes, facility utilization reviews, and compliance with applicable Ministry and regulatory requirements.

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

- Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2
- Ontario Regulation 374/23, Acquisition and Disposition of Real Property
- Ministry of Education Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (B09), March 2015

GECDSB Long-Term Accommodation Plan

Appendix

Not applicable