



Greater Essex County District School Board
Annual Accessibility Status Report
2020 to 2021

Prepared by

Greater Essex County District School Board Accessibility Planning Committee

CREATING CONFIDENT
LEARNERS

STUDENT SUCCESS
AND WELL-BEING

DEMONSTRATING
ETHICAL STEWARDSHIP

ENGAGING
COMMUNITIES

Please note that this document is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact Peggy Russette at 519-255-3200 (Ext. 10219) and/or email peggy.russette@publicboard.ca.

Introduction

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECD SB) is committed to:

- continued 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
- ensuring 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 developed 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 are assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

The purpose of our *Annual Accessibility Status 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 identifies, removes and prevents 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 makes this accessibility plan available to the public.

Policy and Procedure

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

[Link to Five-Year Multi-Accessibility Plan](#)

Customer Service Standard

Training

We know that accessibility and inclusion training 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 cyclical five-year basis as part of our commitment to providing better services. The next system training date is May 2024. The AODA TeachAble eLearning module is also completed by all new staff as part of their orientation.

Administrators and Special Education staff are provided Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) training on a three-year cycle. BMS is also part of the orientation of our Educational Support Staff (ESS). 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 GECDsB 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 identify students who would benefit from the use of specialized equipment to support their learning. In the 2020-21 school year, our Board had 991 SEA claims, an increase of 42 claims from the 2019-20 school year. SEA claims included:

746 laptops - \$614,450.36 (includes the mouse and warranty)

- Sleeves - \$11,689.82
- Headsets - \$27,236.46

245 iPads - \$108,525.20 (includes warranty)

- Headsets - \$3,596.60
- Keyboard Case - \$9,621.15
- Sleeves - \$3,839.15

Student training sessions of approximately 3210 hours (and increase of 92 hours over the 2019-20 school year) for both laptops and iPads cost approximately \$233,014.04 This past year students were provided with both in-person and virtual training opportunities.

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 is available to classroom teachers as needed.

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.

Certified Service Animals

There was one application for a certified service animal in the 2020-21 school year in the secondary panel and it was approved.

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 Information Technology (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. The scanning tool (Monsido) will be used to identify uploaded content on board and school websites that does not meet AODA compliance. This past year, administrative staff received training regarding the creation of documents that are in compliance with AODA requirements.

Our IT Department is continually working towards reaching WCAG 2.0 level AA for the year 2021. They continue to work with schools to improve content management on their websites.

During the 2021-2022 school year, Communications Team and ITS team will migrate board and school websites to a new platform which will assist in meeting AODA requirements. The project is scheduled to be completed by end of February 2022.

Employment Standard

This year, to further demonstrate our commitment to encourage applications from members of groups with historical and/or current barriers, our postings now contain the following statement:

We actively encourage applications from members of groups with historical and/or current barriers to equity, including, but not limited to:

- *First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, and all other Indigenous peoples;*
- *members of groups that commonly experience discrimination due to race, ancestry, colour, religion and/or spiritual beliefs, or place of origin;*
- *persons with visible and/or invisible (physical and/or mental) disabilities;*
- *persons who identify as women; and*
- *persons of marginalized sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.*

We recognize that many of these identities intersect and therefore, equity, diversity and inclusion can be complex. We value and respect the contributions that each person brings to enriching the Board and are committed to ensuring full and equal participation for all in communities that we serve.

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 to individuals who may be experiencing either temporary or permanent disabilities through information regarding supports and/or programs aimed at improving overall wellness.

Our Human Resources Department regularly reviews their practices and procedures in the areas of recruitment, accommodations, return to work plans, and re-deployment 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. 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 the documents 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 2020-2021 school year:

- GECD SB provided wheelchair accessible transportation to 34 students, an increase of 7 students from the 2019-20 school year
- GECD SB provided student transportation to 345 students requiring AODA form submissions, an increase of 80 students from the 2019-20 school year

Design of Public Spaces Standard

To assist in meeting our goals of accessibility, the following projects were undertaken and completed in the 2020-21 school year:

Location	Renovation
Herman Secondary School	Renovations to upgrade a barrier-free washroom.
Harrow Public School	Installed auto-operator on main entrance to improve accessibility.
Princess Elizabeth Public School	Installed ramp and auto-operator on parking lot entrance to improve accessibility.
Sandwich Secondary School	Renovations to provide a third, barrier-free washroom.

J. A. McWilliam Public School	Renovations to upgrade a barrier-free washroom.
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Renovations planned at elementary and secondary schools for completion during the 2021/22 school year:

Amherstburg Public School	Renovations to the EarlyOn space to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dedicated, barrier-free entrance • barrier-free washroom
Essex Public School	Renovations to the new child care addition to install: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new barrier-free washroom • automatic door operators on the main exterior entrance doors • automatic door operators on the main interior entrance door from the entrance vestibule into the child care area
Harrow Public School	Renovations to the EarlyOn space to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dedicated, barrier-free entrance • barrier-free washroom
M.D. Bennie Public School	Installation of automatic door operators to the new, dedicated entrance
Princess Elizabeth Public School	Renovations to provide a dedicated, barrier-free washroom
Roseville Public School	Renovations to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier-free washroom • Dedicated, barrier-free entrance to the EarlyOn space
Sandwich Secondary	Renovations for the relocation of the STEPS Program within the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes a new kitchen area, new barrier-free washroom, new classroom, new activity room and a new Snoezelen room.

Policies/Regulations and Administrative Procedures to be Reviewed in the 2021-22 year, include:

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Customer Service Standard (AD-33)*

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 *Community*, 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.

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/caregivers, and members of the community who are identified as having a disability.

Moving Forward

The Special Education Department in conjunction with the other departments of the GECD SB, continues to monitor the needs of our students, our staff and our community with the intent of identifying, prioritizing and removing existing barriers.