

Director's Annual Report 2014



Vision:

**Preparing Our
Students Today
for the World of
Tomorrow**

Mission:

**We are a learning
organization committed
to providing a quality
educational experience
for every student in a
safe and caring
environment.**



Bluewater's Vision, Mission and Priorities

It is through the vision, mission and priorities outlined below that Bluewater's Multi-Year Strategic Plan is actualized to guide and inform all board decisions that serve the best interests of all students throughout the system. While the Multi-Year Strategic Plan was initially launched in January 2012, the Board of Trustees approved a recommendation at the Regular Meeting of the Board on June 17, 2014 to adopt a fourth strategic priority or 'pillar' to focus on the management of resources. The fourth pillar serves as a working draft until a full review of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan occurs in 2015.



VISION

Preparing Our Students Today for the World of Tomorrow

MISSION

We are a learning organization committed to providing a quality educational experience for every student in a safe and caring environment.

PRIORITIES

1. Ensure the well-being of students and staff in a safe supportive environment for teaching, learning and working
2. Provide quality instruction and learning experiences in an equitable and inclusive environment
3. Encourage parent engagement
4. Be accountable for the responsible stewardship of resources

Chair's Message



It has been a pleasure to return as Chair this past year. Aside from the usual board business around the trustee table, there has been a lot of activity as a result of the recent municipal elections. While we welcome our newest trustees and those returning for another term, we also bid farewell and extend thanks to our outgoing trustees for their years of dedicated service.

Through this report, it is my hope that you will learn some important things about the progress of our Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Our newest pillar that deals with accountability for the responsible stewardship of our resources speaks to some of the challenges and difficult decisions that we must face to ensure that each and every student has the very best opportunities to be prepared for their future success.

I also hope that you will enjoy reading about some of the accomplishments of the past year, thanks to the tremendous effort and leadership of our students, staff, parents and stakeholders.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marg Gaviller".

Marg Gaviller, Board Chair

Director's Message



As I reflect on my first year serving as new Director of Education at Bluewater, I am humbled by both the challenges and rewards of my position. It has been a privilege getting to know and work with a vast array of stakeholders in our local communities who display such passion for public education. All of these new learning experiences have been fulfilling on both professional and personal levels, and I feel proud to consider myself part of the Bluewater family.

It should come as no surprise that some of the difficulties that our board grappled with over the past year will continue to face us as we move forward. The ongoing trend of declining enrolment means that our board's escalating accommodation issues and financial pressures must be addressed. The recent addition of a fourth pillar to our Multi-Year Strategic Plan, which is to "Be accountable for the responsible stewardship of resources," is very timely as we strive for better alignment of our resources to our priorities. Under the guidance of this pillar, strategic decisions focus on fostering and maintaining the best programming options for the benefit of all students throughout Bluewater. I am pleased to highlight this important addition to our Multi-Year Strategic Plan as a pivotal part of my report.

You will also have an opportunity to read about the continued progress in the three other strategic priority areas and what we have planned for next steps, in addition to some of the many examples of the excellent work and achievements of our students and staff at Bluewater. We are proud of the gains we have made in standardized testing results as well as initiatives that focus on the well-being of our students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Blake". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steve Blake, *Director of Education*

Student Trustees' Message



L to R: Olivia McAlpine, Reed Bell, Sydney Myette

In 2013 – 2014, the Student Senate brainstormed and enacted ideas to build on positive school environments. We truly made an effort to justly represent our students by looking out for their interests at the board table and playing a role in the process. Goals were set to become more fiscally responsible and to ensure our time and resources were utilized in the best manner. We also had significant input in revising the Student Senate policy and procedure.

For 2014-2015, our group of eager students has already laid the ground work for the impact that we want to make through opportunities to contribute and bring information back to our schools. Student voice and involvement are necessary and essential! We have identified issues affecting many of our peers, including technology, innovative classrooms, healthy eating and lifestyles, mental health, policies and spirit. One idea that has already been acted upon is the creation of our focus for the year, "Creating an Innovative School Community for All Students", which incorporates the modernizing of our classes and welcoming and inclusive school environments. We look forward to enacting initiatives that highlight the importance of our focus.

Bluewater Quick Facts

Coverage Area: 8,673 square kilometres within Bruce and Grey Counties

Schools: 42 elementary
11 secondary

Students: 15,425

Staff: 1,800 permanent
(approximate)

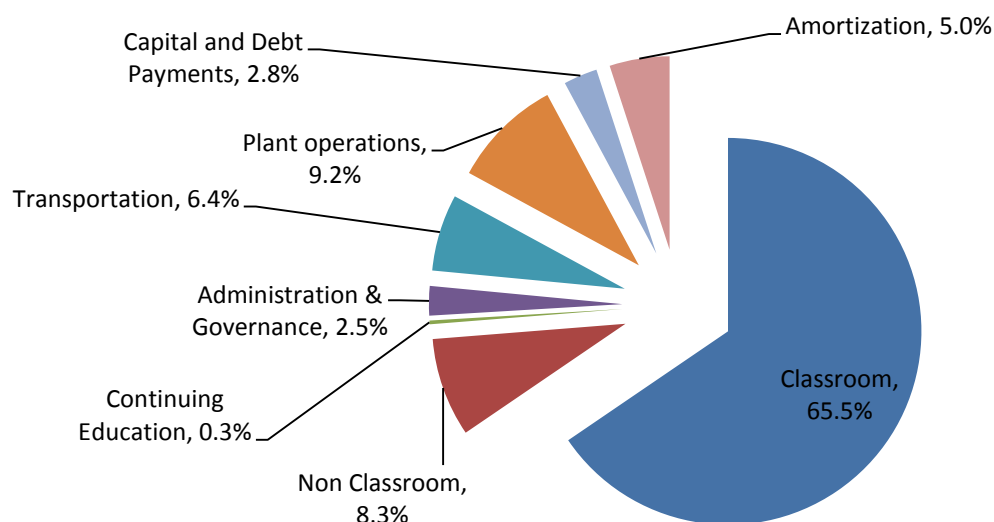
Full-Day Kindergarten: 39 schools

French Immersion: 13 schools

First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI): 317 secondary students took advantage of 19 Native Studies courses offered throughout the district in 2013-2014

2.2% of the 2013-2014 student enrolment self-identify as FNMI

2013-2014 Budget:



Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The four priorities below collectively form the basis of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Each priority is accompanied by a set of goals, which are measured through specific actionable ground level strategies that are implemented on an annual basis. This report provides a snapshot of the progress that has been made in each priority area over the past 12 months.



1. Ensure the well-being of students and staff in a safe supportive environment for teaching, learning and working

- provide a safe and supportive work environment that values and recognizes the personal strengths, professional contributions, and personal well-being of staff
- create conditions where students, staff, and parents/caregivers are comfortable and confident in seeking help and responding to student mental health and emotional well-being issues

2. Provide quality instruction and learning experiences in an equitable and inclusive environment

- create a learning environment that promotes high expectations for all students
- provide authentic and relevant experiences that enable all students to connect their learning to the real world

3. Encourage parent engagement

- in conjunction with the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), the Parent Engagement Committee will collect information to assist Bluewater District School Board in developing strategies to further engage parents

4. Be accountable for the responsible stewardship of resources **NEW!**

- create alignment of human and financial resources through both short term and long term strategic planning
- maximize operational efficiencies including the use of instructional spaces to enhance program opportunities for students
- focus on leadership development and succession planning
- ensure effective communication within and between departments, between departments and schools and within schools
- manage risk in all aspects of operations and program delivery
- promote our education system and encourage partnerships



Strategic Priority: Ensure the well-being of students and staff in a safe supportive environment for teaching, learning and working

Throughout the past year, a significant amount of work has been done to support both student and staff wellness.

Student Well-Being

The Mental Health Lead has been working collaboratively with staff, students and community partners to coordinate/implement the priorities of the [School Mental Health ASSIST](#) initiative:



Consultation/collaboration

- Information was elicited from internal and external stakeholders including key community partners to complete a gap/needs analysis and inform our developing mental health board strategy. This included some elementary and all secondary school based teams and meetings with various partners. Support was provided to administrators and school staff on resources/interventions/pathways to care for high risk or vulnerable students.

Presentations

- Several presentations have been made during the year including: Safe and Accepting Schools Planning Day; all Learning Services teams; ASSIST Advisory working group; Board of Trustees; Tri-Ministry Regional London Conference – ‘Together We Mobilize for Youth Suicide Prevention’; staff workshops on mental health and well-being; and various staff on early dismissal days at schools.

Workshops and committees

- Workshops included the ASSIST Advisory Committee (both internal and external membership), all Learning Services staff groups, and school teams on our procedure of Suicide Prevention and Intervention. Committee work also involved the Psychological Health and Safety Management committee, ‘We Care’ Community mobilization collaborative committee on student mental health, well-being and suicide prevention, and the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Advisory Group.

Support for student based activities

- Bullying prevention initiatives;
- Mental health awareness/promotion events;
- Development of mental health clubs in secondary schools such as The Box, Mental Health Momentum, The Cougar Den, the first Gay Straight Alliance conference; and
- Promotion and inclusion of youth in the development of youth school based initiatives/mental health strategy as recommended by the Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) youth policy paper.



The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario “Positive Space” wall plaque at the Bluewater District School Board Education Centre

Procedures, protocols, and development of the Mental Health Strategy

- A foundation was established including Suicide Prevention and Intervention protocols as well as a procedure and supporting documents for board-wide use and school based teams. This includes a framework/flowchart for school teams to ensure consistency of response and easy identification of pathways to care, process for intervention and identify school based Critical Response Team members.
- Documentation and a flowchart were completed to clarify referral processes.
- Training, including safeTALK, was provided to Critical Response Team members and administrators.
- Our board Mental Health Strategy was completed with defining the goals/strategies to be implemented over the next 3 years and organizational conditions to support the same.

Staff Well-Being

In June 2013, the Organizational Health and Wellness Committee determined that a Psychological Health and Safety Management System (PHSMS) should be developed to support the staff wellness component of our strategic priority. A work group of approximately twenty union and non-union members has been meeting monthly to develop a draft policy. A procedure has also been developed that includes the following principles:

- Organizational culture;
- Psychological support;
- Clear leadership and expectations;
- Civility and respect;
- Psychological competencies and requirements;
- Growth and development;
- Recognition and reward;
- Involvement and influence;
- Workload management;
- Engagement;
- Balance; and
- Psychological protection.



The Bluewater District School Board Education Centre

The procedure also considers the accountability mechanisms, system and school leadership that are required to ensure the PHSMS' success.

Next Steps: Strategies/Initiatives for 2014 – 2015

Strategic Goals:

- To provide youth with increased support and access to resources;
- The Organizational Health and Wellness Committee will develop, initiate and implement supports to the PHSMS procedure to support staff wellness; and
- The Organizational Health and Wellness Committee will communicate initiatives to Bluewater District School Board employees using various communication mechanisms.

Professional Activity Days Focus on Mental Health

Professional learning for Bluewater staff continues to focus on student and staff mental health and well-being. For example, the Professional Activity (PA) Day on October 24, 2014 was themed "Supporting Minds" with presentations/workshops on respect in schools, understanding mental health in the classroom, social media, the WES for Youth Online counselling/information resource, among others. Other recent PA Days in Bluewater have also addressed this pillar.



Strategic Priority: Provide quality instruction and learning experiences in an equitable and inclusive environment

Goals/targets in 2013 – 2014 for the priority of quality instruction were as follows:

- Secondary students '16 by 16' goal – continue to maintain or increase successful credit accumulation
- Graduation rate to meet or exceed the Ministry of Education goal of 85%
- EQAO – continue with goals to increase the percentage of grades 3 and 6 students achieving at or above provincial standard on 2013 – 2014 EQAO testing
- Students will have access to and use technologies to support and document their learning
- Authentic real world experiences are built into all subject areas and programs to provide meaningful connections for students
- Strive to increase access and practice for students with special education needs in their daily computer use



A number of strategies/initiatives were developed for these goals:

- All system initiated projects focus on:
 - The effective use and implementation of learning goals, success criteria and descriptive feedback;
 - Creating opportunities for students to deepen their understanding through dialogue, problem solving and student inquiry projects;
 - Student tasks that are relevant, challenging, allow for multiple entry points and reflect the diverse interests found in the classroom;
 - Recognizing the importance of hearing the student voice to inform instruction and planning;
 - Using computer technology in a pedagogically sound manner and as a mechanism to strengthen the student voice.



Standardized Test Results Show Improvements

Bluewater saw increases this past year in its Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) standardized test results. Improvements in Grade 9 Applied Math not only place the board above the provincial average, but also signal a 13 percent increase when compared to the previous year's score. In Grade 9 Academic Math, Bluewater is above the provincial average with 86 percent of our students meeting or exceeding the provincial standard. Grades 3 and 6 test results for Reading and Writing have also seen increases across the board. We will continue to build on this momentum while focusing our efforts on improving our scores for both junior level math and intermediate literacy.

Next Steps: Strategies/Initiatives for 2014 – 2015

Strategic Goal: *The specific strategies and initiatives for quality instruction and learning experiences will continue to focus on student achievement from the goals above and provide authentic real world experiences in all subject areas and programs as detailed in the Board Improvement Plan.*

Full Roll Out for Full-Day Kindergarten

In September 2014, the remaining 11 schools were added as part of the fifth and final year of the full-day kindergarten roll out in Bluewater. This resulted in 27 new classrooms throughout the board (19 English and 8 for French Immersion). This brings the total to 39 schools that offer the program to our youngest learners.



Year of the GSA

Approximately 100 students attended the first ever Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Student Forum at the Bluewater District School Board Education Centre in Chesley on Friday, April 11, 2014.



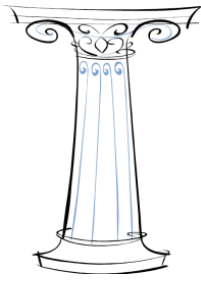
GSA themed art collage created by students on display at the first ever Gay Straight Alliance Student Forum on April 11, 2014

The [“Diverse Voices”](#) event included several themed workshops, a musical keynote address by activist performer Kate Reid, an interactive theatre presentation by Sheatre and more.

To date, Gay Straight Alliances have been established at 19 Bluewater schools with additional schools anticipated in the near future. A number of this past year’s Ministry of Education approved *SpeakUp* Project grants throughout Bluewater were focused on Gay Straight Alliance activities.

Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program

Saugeen District Secondary School has partnered with the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative and Bruce Power to offer First Nation and Métis students in grades 11 and 12 the opportunity to learn firsthand about business and entrepreneurship. The [Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program](#) was launched at the school in September and assists students in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for success upon the completion of secondary school. Areas of focus include Business Mathematics, Financial Literacy, English, Accounting, Marketing and Information/Communications Technology. There are also funding options to enable any qualified student to start their own micro-business. On September 24, 2014, seven students in the program were among those who had an opportunity to attend a presentation by Paul Martin, a former Canadian prime minister, whose CAPE Fund (Capital for Aboriginal Prosperity and Entrepreneurship) helped to develop the program.



Strategic Priority: Encourage parent engagement

The following was identified as the 2013 – 2014 strategic goal for the priority area of parent engagement:

Build and support home, school and community partnerships by sharing current information about student learning and achievement in an ongoing and transparent manner.



Several strategies/initiatives were implemented to meet this goal:

- We were able to build on the results of our first Parent Engagement Survey (2013), to share best practices and examples of parent engagement strategies that improve student achievement.
- Available online tools are now being used, including the Parent Involvement Committee website and Bluewater District School Board Twitter feed, to provide timely opportunities and resources to connect parents with their child's school and learning, with the help of our Communications Officer.
- For clarity, the Strategic Planning for Parent Engagement Committee (SPPEC) was permanently merged with the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). A representative from our Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and a teacher representative from a federation (currently OSSTF) will attend PIC meetings.
- Parent Engagement, related to student achievement, will be a regular item on PIC agendas.
- Our Learning Services staff presented "New Trends in Education" at the School Council Networking event in April 2014.
- School Improvement Plans will continue to have a specific parent engagement goal.

Next Steps: Strategies/Initiatives for 2014 – 2015

- Parent Engagement will continue to be a standing item on the Parent Involvement Committee meeting agenda.
- Continued efforts will be launched to better communicate upcoming events, new trends in educational strategies, homework suggestions and links to educational articles.
- Regular contributions will be made to the PIC website.
- School Improvement plans will continue to have a specific parent engagement goal as one of their key pillars.
- Our efforts to provide "Just In Time" helpful tips is one avenue we anticipate will engage more parents.



'Parent Tips' Series

The past year saw the introduction of a series of articles designed to provide parents/guardians with helpful tips on a variety of education related topics. Articles are posted regularly on the new Parent Involvement Committee [website](#) and also linked through the board's website and Twitter feed. Examples include:



[Math Tips for Parents: Ensuring your child's success at school](#)

[Parent Tips: How to keep learning happening over the summer](#)

[Homework Tips for Parents: Ensuring your child's success at school](#)

School Improvement Initiatives

Each school highlights parent engagement goals in its School Improvement plan. Here are a few examples from the past year, which also align with our board goal targeted at mathematics:

At **Beaver Valley Community School**, last year's school goal was to have parents attend at least one workshop per class/grade to help provide them with a better idea about math instructional strategies and assisting their children at home. Parents of children in kindergarten to grade 6 were invited to the classroom during math instruction. Attendance was very good. The school also hosted a well-attended evening session for parents of grades 7 and 8 students.

Highpoint Community School held an evening where 60 parents, teachers and students shared a fun experience promoting family involvement with math. The school's aim is to build strong family-school partnerships and create a sense of community by connecting family engagement to student learning. Parents and their children took part in a variety of problem solving activities and games. Each family went home with a gift bag of games and strategies they could use at home to help support their child in the area of numeracy.



As part of the focus on math at **Elgin Market Public School**, an evening for students and parents enabled the opportunity to examine how math is used in various professions (e.g. programming in engineering, use of measurement of angles/length for firefighters, mapping skills for pilots, counting money in banking). There were also games using probability, a chance to measure the height of various objects and a 'parent help centre' with tips and resources on how to help with math at home.

Osprey Central School hosted a successful 'family fun math night' with 40 people attending. It was an excellent opportunity for parents to engage with their children working on math together. A variety of curriculum related activities were organized by teachers. Games with a math application were given out as gifts and snacks were provided by the School Council.



Strategic Priority: Be accountable for the responsible stewardship of resources

At the Regular Meeting of the Board held on June 17, 2014, the Board of Trustees approved a recommendation to adopt the following fourth pillar as an addition to Bluewater's Multi-Year Strategic Plan:

Bluewater will ...

Be accountable for the responsible stewardship of resources

- create alignment of human and financial resources through both short term and long term strategic planning
- maximize operational efficiencies including the use of instructional spaces to enhance program opportunities for students
- focus on leadership development and succession planning
- ensure effective communication within and between departments, between departments and schools and within schools
- manage risk in all aspects of operations and program delivery
- promote our education system and encourage partnerships



At the beginning of the 2013 – 2014 school year, all departments throughout Bluewater were required to construct goals that connected their work to the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Many managers and supervisors expressed that they were finding it difficult to link their work to the three existing pillars, which are program based. At the same time, discussions were taking place between senior administration and trustees about financial challenges impacting the board. Therefore, it was agreed that consideration be given to adding a fourth pillar that would focus on accountability. The final wording as outlined above is the result of consultation with a variety of stakeholder groups, including trustees/student trustees, senior administration, other employee groups, principals with their staffs and School Councils, the Parent Involvement Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, union leaders, parents and the community.



A classroom visit from Director of Education Steve Blake

2015. Many groups within the system have already embraced the new direction and are referencing it in their work.

Next Steps: Strategies/Initiatives for 2014 – 2015

- Departments are developing and implementing goals to align with this strategic priority.

2014 Awards of Excellence

At the Regular Meeting of the Board on June 17, 2014, the outstanding efforts of dedicated Bluewater District School Board volunteers were celebrated with the presentation of the [2014 Awards of Excellence](#). Trustees had an opportunity to recognize an individual from each family of schools for their contributions to the betterment of education in Bluewater. Each recipient was nominated by others within the family of schools, including teachers, administrators, parents, guardians, students, support staff and/or community members. Congratulations are extended to the recipients along with a special 'thank-you' to the many other dedicated and caring individuals who volunteer in our school communities.



2014 Awards of Excellence recipients

Board of Trustees



Front L to R: Marilyn McComb, Chair Marg Gaviller, Vice-Chair Terry Bell
 Middle L to R: Jan Johnstone, Fran Morgan, Dan Wong
 Back L to R: Jim Dawson, John Chapman, Kevin Larson
 Absent: Tony Pedoniquotte, Theresa Root

As the key decision making body, the Board of Trustees is representative of all municipalities, townships and First Nations throughout the Bluewater district.

The Student Senate represents the student voice at meetings of the board. Each year, a member is elected at each Bluewater secondary school. Three of these elected senators are then chosen by the Senate to sit at the board table as student trustees.

The Administrative Council provides system leadership to staff in daily operations while offering expertise to inform the Board of Trustees in its decision making processes.

Administrative Council



Front L to R: Superintendent of Education Lori Wilder, Director of Education Steve Blake, Superintendent of Education Alana Murray
 Back L to R: Executive Officer Human Resources Services Cynthia Lemon, Superintendent of Education Jean Stephenson, Superintendent of Business Services/Treasurer Rob Cummings

Student Senate 2014-2015



Front L to R: Emily Kewageshig, Chloe McGilveary, Emily McCullough
 Middle L to R: Kiahna Foster, Megan Thomson, Kurt Dutfield-Hughes
 Back L to R: Sydney Myette, Reed Bell, Olivia McAlpine
 Absent: Patrice McDonald, Robyn Mercanti, Sydney Neumann, Eryn Rumsey



P.O. Box 190, 351 1st Avenue North
Chesley, Ontario N0G 1L0
Telephone: (519) 363-2014 Fax: (519) 370-2909
www.bwdsb.on.ca



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