



Director's Annual Report



Our Vision

**Learning Today,
Leading Tomorrow**

Our Mission

**To provide a quality education
for every student in a safe,
accepting, and caring
environment.**

Director's Message



Lori Wilder

The past year will long be remembered as an unprecedented moment in Bluewater District School Board history. The ministerial order issued in March to close Ontario schools due to COVID-19 prompted a monumental shift in our public education system. Despite the challenges in swiftly pivoting to remote learning for the remainder of 2019-20, and returning to a modified school environment in September, our students, staff, families, trustees, partners, and communities were able to work collaboratively, adapt, endure, and even celebrate successes. This report is dedicated to them as a snapshot of the year's highlights under each priority of our new [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#).

The following pages are also representative of Alana Murray, our previous director, who retired this year. Through her leadership much of the amazing work of the past 12 months was enabled and supported. I would like to extend my personal thanks and recognize the numerous system and school staff, who have gone over and above this year by committing countless hours of their time to support our students and families. My gratitude extends to every one of them. Thank you.

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to express thanks for the collective efforts of all stakeholders this past year, including students, parents/guardians, staff, Grey Bruce Public Health and various community partners, and many others. As unconventional as this year has been, we are proud of the support everyone has shown one another, and what has been accomplished in the face of adversity. This report is a fitting recap of that hard work and perseverance.”

– Chair Jan Johnstone

“As the 2020-21 Student Senate, our members are embracing the proactive work of the previous group of senators, while also developing our own new initiatives. Through surveys, social media, awareness campaigns, and a partnership with Grey Bruce Public Health, we are working to promote wellness and strengthen communication with students across the board so that their voices continue to be heard during the pandemic.”

– Student Trustees Sebastien Wall and Victoria Ernest



Honouring our Graduates

Due to COVID-19 restrictions related to gatherings, schools found creative ways to ensure graduation was a memorable occasion for students. A few of the many examples of this recognition included Kincardine District Senior School's [Grade 8](#) and [secondary](#) virtual ceremonies, secondary commencements at [Saugeen District Senior](#) and [Walkerton District Community Schools](#), and an [Adult Education drive-by](#) ceremony at the Bluewater District School Board Education Centre.

Board of Trustees



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Municipality of West Grey/The Town of Hanover



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Jan Johnstone, Chair
Municipality of Kincardine/Municipality of Huron-Kinloss



Jim Dawson
Township of Southgate/Municipality of Grey Highlands

First Nation Representative
TBD



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Marilyn McComb
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Fran Morgan
Municipality of Meaford/Town of The Blue Mountains



Jane Thomson, Vice-Chair
Town of South Bruce Peninsula/Municipality of Northern Bruce



2020-21 Student Senators: Natalie Rouse, Jenna Robertson, Sam Groves, Alexis Hollister, Lili Hawco, Sebastien Wall, Lilly Gibbons, Mariah Schneidmiller, Taylor Legge, Sonny Pilon, Victoria Ernest

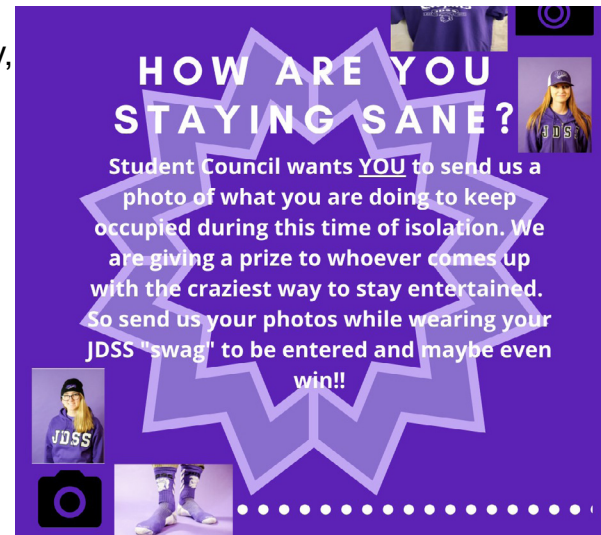


Administrative Council: Top L to R: Superintendent of Education Cynthia Lemon, Director of Education Lori Wilder, Superintendent of Business Services/Treasurer Rob Cummings; Bottom L to R: Superintendent of Education Paul Hambleton, Superintendent of Education Wendy Kolohon, Superintendent of Education Lauren Penner Lipsett

Student Councils Keep the Spirit during COVID-19

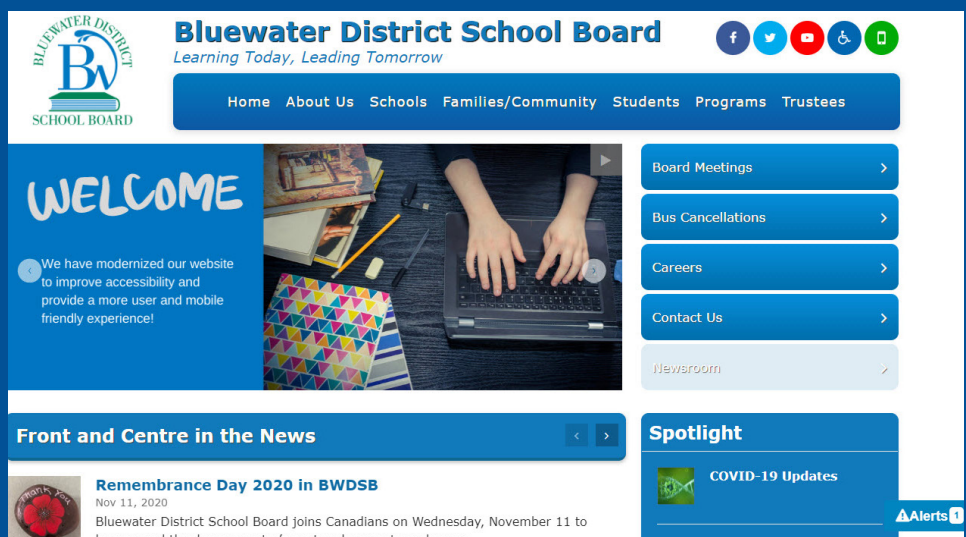
Student Councils are devoted to uplifting the student body. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these groups have been finding creative ways to make adjustments and maintain school spirit. For example, spirit days at Grey Highlands Secondary School are planned to improve the atmosphere of the school. Several themes are offered each year, such as green day, beach day, ugly sweater day, and others. With restrictions around school events this year, the council has been trying to host as many spirit days as possible by brainstorming creative new themes. A recent spirit day involved dressing up as a teacher at the school. This theme was a definite favourite that resulted in a great turnout amongst the student body. Seeing the whole school participate in this humorous activity raised spirits and brought students together in a way that physical distancing measures could not come between. It is amazing to see how the little things, such as dressing up in a funny outfit, can really improve school spirit and create a sense of unity.

While schools were closed during the spring, John Diefenbaker Senior School's Student Council created a space to encourage students to be social and involved with others by launching its [Internet Café](#). In addition to the opportunity to chat and connect, students had access to career and mental health resources from several partners, including Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, among others.



Website Improvements

A modernized version of the [board website](#) was introduced to improve accessibility and provide a more user and mobile friendly experience to parents/guardians and members of the public. The revamped platform, which aligns with the recent improvements made to our school websites, also features an alert system for emergency announcements. This has proven to be a useful tool for sharing important COVID-19 daily screening information and advisories during the pandemic.



Priority #1: Safe Supportive Learning Community

Safe Reopening of Schools

To prepare for September, staff with the help of student volunteer actors, developed "[Welcome Back - A Guide to Return to School in Bluewater District School Board](#)", a video for students and families outlining new routines and protocols. Dr. Ian Arra, Medical Officer of Health from Grey Bruce Public Health, facilitated a [return to school virtual session](#) for staff on September 1 to help clarify facts related to COVID-19, and ease uncertainty with the back-to-school transition.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health resources and supports were developed for students and staff in response to COVID-19, including a newly dedicated [web page](#) and staff newsletter from the board's Mental Health Lead. The themes of equity and inclusion continued to resonate through the observance of occasions, such as [Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week](#), [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#), and [Pride Month](#), among others.

During the ministerial closure of schools in the spring, many schools used social media and other platforms to share hopeful and encouraging messages to help students and families to stay connected and engaged. Trustees and student trustees also launched their own [messaging campaign](#).



ASD Sessions

A series of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) parent engagement sessions were coordinated early in the new year. Despite the pandemic, student programs were able to run during the summer. An exclusive [ASD virtual session](#) with author Temple Grandin was also provided to parents/guardians.

Indigenous Education

Students continued to learn about reconciliation and the history, culture, and contributions of Canada's Indigenous communities and citizens through curriculum based activities and occasions, such as [Treaties Recognition Week](#), [Orange Shirt Day](#), and [National Indigenous History Month](#). Trustees attended an anti-racism themed professional learning session facilitated by the board's Indigenous Advisor.



Priority #2: Quality Instruction

Remote Learning

The K-12 Remote School launched in the fall with over 1,800 students enrolling and approximately 120 staff members. In response to varied student needs, options include synchronous, asynchronous, and alternative learning. The Brightspace and O365 Teams platforms are used to connect daily. A virtual school council meets regularly to provide a strong connection between home and school.

Skilled Trades

New Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs introduced this year included Construction at Owen Sound District Secondary School, Manufacturing at Walkerton District Community School, and Environment at Grey Highlands Secondary School. The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program Level 1 Carpentry program launched for the first time in second semester with 15 students participating.



Literacy and Numeracy

As part of the board's professional learning plan in mathematics, there was a significant district wide increase in the use of the instructional resource, MathUp. The number of MathUp licenses grew to 520 from 135 purchased in 2019. This includes all teachers in Grades 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and the Elementary Remote School.

A partnership with Brock University resulted in 57 staff members completing their Mathematics Additional Qualification course. Ninety additional staff members will be funded this coming year for various sections of the course.

To mitigate learning loss in literacy and numeracy, the Summer Learning Program was offered once again. Sixty-three students participated in three classes for two hours daily from July 6-24. There were 78% of students who showed improvement, while 22% maintained their level.

Revised Curricula

Schools implemented revised sections of the Ontario Curriculum: [Grades 1-8 Mathematics](#), [Grade 10 Career Studies](#), [Grades 1-8 Health and Physical Education](#)

Priority #3: Community Engagement

Staying Informed during a Global Pandemic

To prepare for the start of the school year, staff established a return to school committee that worked diligently over the summer months planning for various possible scenarios in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Grey Bruce Public Health, and other partners. To align with the [provincial decision](#) on July 30 for a conventional return with enhanced public health protocols, a [return to school](#) page was launched on the board website, which included an extensive and frequently updated two-part Q and A for 'school operations' and 'program and instruction'.

To help ease the transition, [regular letters and messages](#) from the director were sent directly to families during the summer utilizing the SchoolMessenger Communicate platform. These, and other ongoing updates, were also posted on the board website and social media pages, and shared with local media. From the shutdown in March and onward, regular communications from the director to staff, trustees, and union leaders also helped to keep internal stakeholders informed and ensure they felt supported and valued.

Surveys

Input from families, students, and staff was solicited utilizing the crowdsourcing platform, Thoughtexchange. The first exchange, which garnered over 1,800 participants, asked for feedback on remote learning. A follow-up exchange delved deeper into differentiated instruction with 1,550 participants helping to determine the areas that were working well and those needing improvement. The [Parent Involvement Committee](#) assisted with the purchase of the Thoughtexchange license to support this form of interactive parent/guardian communication. The committee is now working on additional survey ideas for families.

A return to school survey was conducted in the summer to help inform planning. Most of the almost 7,000 respondents supported a safe return for students in September, while identifying the key concerns of parents/guardians in sending their children back to school. Among the emerging themes were cleaning protocols, physical distancing and movement within schools, opportunities for safe outdoor time/play, personal protective equipment, and the teaching of proper hand hygiene.



PIC

Bluewater

Priority #4: Stewardship of Resources

New Builds

An [announcement](#) at Kincardine District Senior School on October 29 shared the good news of **over \$26.4 million** in approved funding through the Ministry of Education's Capital Priorities Program, to build a new Grades 7 to 12 replacement school accommodating 881 student spaces.

Despite a brief provincially-mandated pause on construction in the spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the new replacement build for Georgian Bay Community School continued to progress in a timely manner. Students and staff will transition to their new building in the coming year with more details to come.

Staff continued to work through the planning phase of the Beavercrest Community School replacement build project. In January, the Ministry of Education approved over \$320,250 in funding for the acquisition of additional land adjacent to the current school property. Further details will be provided as the build progresses.

Capital Projects

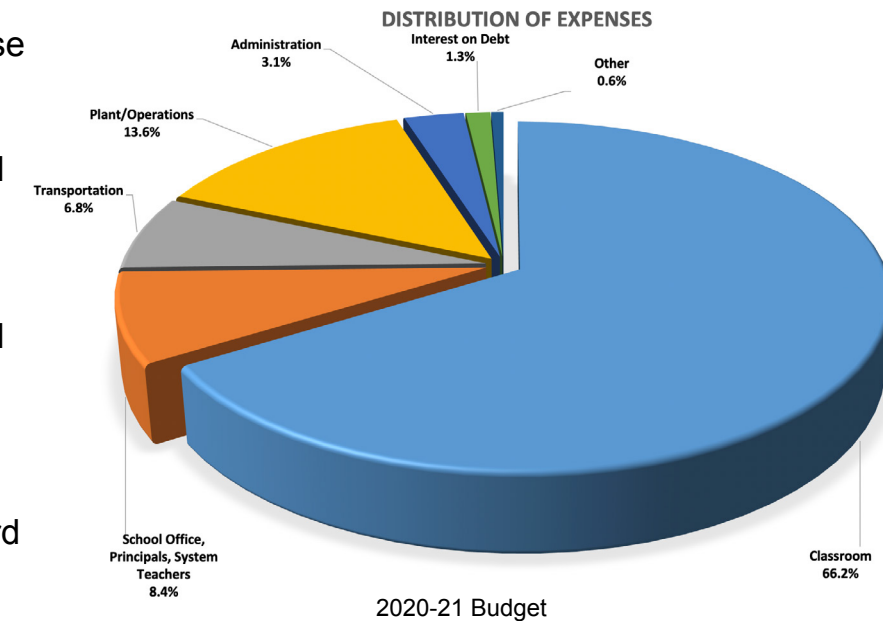
A **\$4.9 million investment** in [capital projects](#) completed over the summer will ensure safe and sustainable school environments for students and staff. Ministry of Education funding sources for the projects included the Capital Priorities Program, the School Renewal Allocation, and School Condition Improvement program.

COVID-19 Response

As part of the board's COVID-19 response to ensure the safe reopening of schools, nearly **\$5.3 million in one-time investments** were made in personal and protective equipment, air quality and ventilation, additional teaching and custodial staff, increased support for special education and mental health, and technology to support remote learning, among other areas.

Budget

At a Special Regular Meeting of the Board held on June 30, trustees approved the [2020-21 budget](#) in the amount of approximately **\$226.3 million**.



Schools

- 41 Elementary
- 9 Secondary

Indigenous Education

- 870 students participated in and completed 85 unique Indigenous classroom and co-op courses
- 2 schools offered Ojibway as a second language

Quick Facts

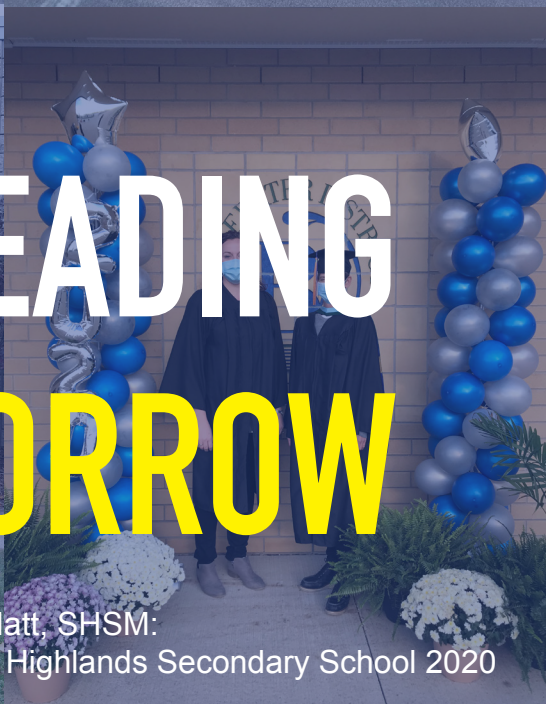
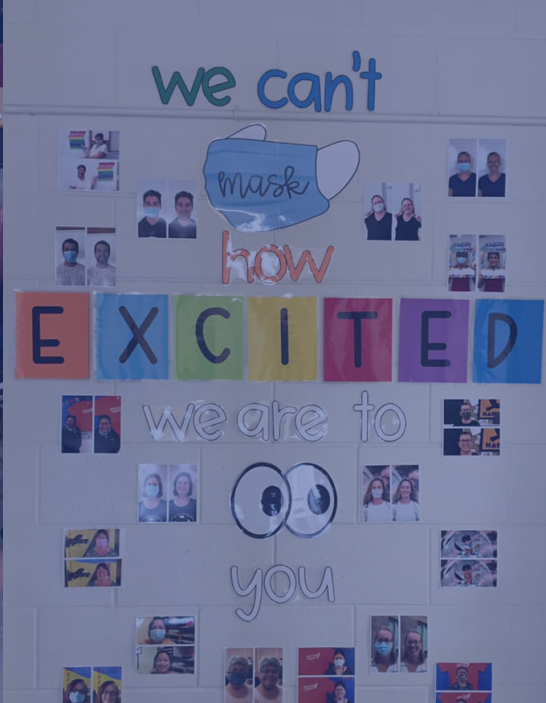
French Immersion(FI)

- 11 elementary schools (2 are French only)
- 6 secondary schools with FI and/or Extended French

Students/Staff

- 16,500 students (approximate full time equivalent)
- 3,000 staff (approximate permanent and casual)

LEARNING TODAY,



LEADING TOMORROW



Visit our website at www.bwdsb.on.ca

Designed by: Jessica Hatt, SHSM:
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