



# Director's Annual Report 2023

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## Our Mission

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

## Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow



# Messages

## Chair's Message

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to introduce the Director's Annual Report, which recaps the highlights of 2023 in Bluewater District School Board (BWDSB). I want to personally commend our multifaceted team of experts across the district. The progress and achievements of the past 12 months outlined in this report are a direct result of our educators, administrators, office professionals and technicians, custodians and maintenance workers, and countless other staff in their unique areas of expertise. Recognition is also owed to our parents/guardians, volunteers, partners, and other supporters, who champion our students and contribute to our schools. I continue to be impressed by our students' learning, growth, and responsible stewardship, and am excited for the yet to be realized successes that await in 2024.



**Jane Thomson,**  
**Chair**



**Lori Wilder,**  
**Director of Education**

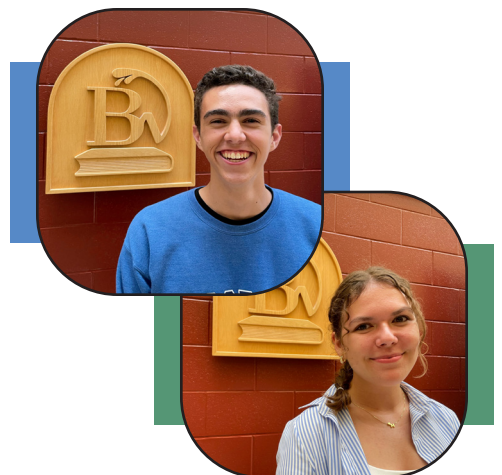
## Director's Message

As 2023 winds down, I invite every student, parent/guardian, staff member, trustee, partner, and other stakeholder to join me to celebrate all the accomplishments in our education system this past year. From an unrelenting focus on

student wellness, and proactive approaches to mathematics and literacy, to marked progress on new build projects, each priority area of our Multi-Year Strategic Plan was well-represented. As we revisit some of these moments of excellence through this report, I share thanks with our trustees and staff in their varied positions for supporting me through their work and passionate dedication to our students and families. The pages that follow symbolize their steadfast commitment and diligent efforts in upholding our mission to provide a quality education for every student in a safe, accepting, and caring environment.

## Student Trustees' Message

The 2023-2024 Student Senate's priorities for the year are focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and safe spaces for all in our schools. With many Gender Sexuality Alliance and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour groups now in place, a key goal is to encourage the establishment of an action-based equity committee in all secondary schools. To complement these efforts, student senators have been organizing a series of student forums. Each forum serves a different audience and theme, including sexuality and gender, and support for Indigenous and Black students. The senate is also working to bolster communication among students, teachers, and other staff of the many fantastic school events occurring district wide. Through the student voice, we look forward to supporting these and other initiatives that promote success and well-being for the students of BWDSB.



**Ethan Enns and**  
**Macy Robinson,**  
**Student Trustees**

# Quick Facts

## Schools

40 elementary  
9 secondary



## Students

18,500 approximate  
full-time equivalent



## Staff

3,000 approximate  
permanent and casual



## Coverage Area



8,673 square kilometres  
within Bruce and Grey  
counties

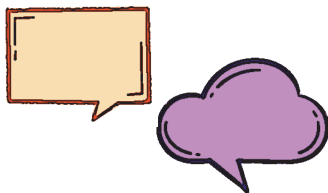
Bluewater District School  
Board is located on the  
traditional land of the  
Saugeen Ojibway Nation,  
which is represented  
by the communities of  
Saugeen First Nation and  
Chippewas of Nawash  
Unceded First Nation.

## Specialist High Skills Majors

37 programs  
offered



## Multilingual Learners



1,166 students

## Indigenous Education



1,357  
students are  
enrolled in  
Indigenous  
classroom and  
co-op courses; 2 schools  
offer Anishinaabemowin  
language instruction

## French Immersion

10 elementary  
schools  
(2 are French  
only)

6 secondary  
schools





# Priority One

# Safe Supportive Learning Community

## Strategic Goals:

- work together to support wellness
- foster the strengths, contributions, and overall health of students and staff

## Student Wellness

Through an equity-centered, trauma-responsive approach, mental health and wellness strategies continued to utilize a three-tiered, differentiated support model:

## Tier One Services – Promotion and Prevention

- Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Literacy offered and provided to elementary classes
- resource sharing from School Mental Health Ontario
- student-led mental health groups and staff training
- revived School-Police Committee
- mental health and addictions strategic plan for goal setting



## Tier Two Services – Targeted Prevention

- seven mental health workers providing students with therapeutic support
- clinical supervision and consultation to ensure evidence-based practices
- alternative learning hubs for academic and social-emotional needs
- summer programs for professional development
- reintroduction of Grey Bruce Public Health clinics in secondary schools

## Tier Three Services – Intensive Clinical Care

- revised suicide prevention procedures
- expanded Tragedy Response Team support
- community partnerships helped to strengthen accessible pathways for students

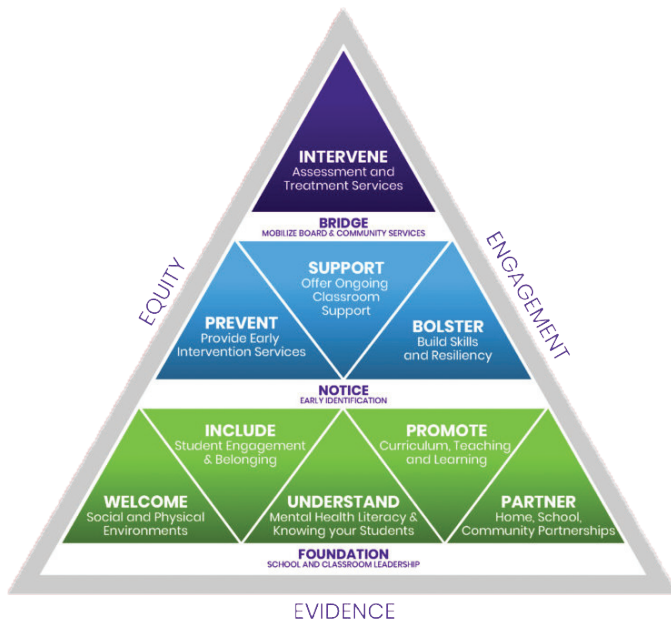




School  
Mental Health  
Ontario

Santé mentale  
en milieu scolaire  
Ontario

## Aligned & Integrated Model (AIM)



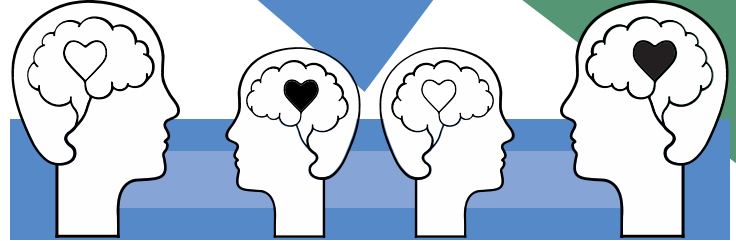
### Rainbow Conference

Students from several secondary schools attended the [Rainbow Conference](#) on June 5 at the BWDSB Education Centre. Anticipated as an annual event run by students in Gender Sexuality Alliance clubs, “True Colours” was the theme, with participants joining together in a safe space for presentations, music, dance, and dramatic arts.



### Get REAL

Eight schools participated in [workshops](#) on inclusivity and kindness facilitated by Get REAL, a highly-acclaimed Canadian organization that works to combat 2SLGBTQIA+ discrimination, racism, and bullying in schools, summer camps, and workplaces.



### Mental Health Week

From May 1 to 7, daily themes, including personal values, asking for help, self-acceptance, and self-care, were provided to schools by the BWDSB Mental Health Team as a framework to initiate participation in [Mental Health Week](#).

### Indigenous Student Forum

The BWDSB Education Centre hosted over 100 Indigenous students from several schools for a day of empowerment at the [Indigenous Student Forum](#) on May 4. Led by the organization, Turtle Concepts, there was a focus on the importance of a positive mindset, remaining true to oneself, and fostering pride and confidence as an Indigenous person.



### Resources for Staff

To further support the well-being of employees and their families, the BWDSB Organizational Health and Wellness Committee continued to promote the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). With the EFAP provider moving to a new platform in 2023, permanent employees received professional activity day training and promotional material on how to access the many support services and wealth of information that are available.

# Priority Two

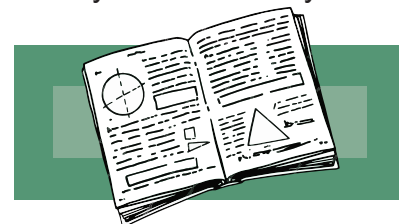
# Quality Instruction

## Strategic Goals:

- provide relevant learning experiences that foster critical and forward thinking, innovation, creativity, and problem solving
- use evidence informed instructional methods to support competency in literacy and numeracy

## A Focus on Mathematics

In 2022-2023, a student-centered coaching model was used to provide mathematics professional learning in many schools. Mathematics coaches worked directly with teachers to identify students' strengths, plan for next steps for learning and teaching, and share resources and high-impact instructional practices in alignment with the board improvement goals for mathematics. Knowledgehook Premium, a curriculum-aligned instructional guidance system for teachers, was purchased for use in kindergarten to Grade 10. This digital tool provides opportunities to gather evidence of student learning through interactive game shows and self-paced missions, and insights into common misconceptions in mathematics. Knowledgehook can be used in combination with MathUP Classroom, a resource that is now available in all BWDSB classrooms from kindergarten to Grade 9.



## Summer Institute 2023

Voluntary professional learning sessions delivered by system staff were held in August. Topics included literacy, mathematics, assessment, special education, technology, science, environmental education, land-based learning, French, multi-language learners, and trauma-informed practices. There were 196 educators registered for 22 sessions with many attending more than one session for a total enrolment of 540.

## Tutoring

In Grades 1 to 12, 2,314 students were supported in mathematics and literacy through tutoring programs. Individual and small group instruction addressed learning needs for each child. Before and after school tutoring was provided in some schools, while several secondary schools offered tutoring during the lunch break. Grade 1 students in 12 schools participated in the Strong Start literacy program.



## Keeping Learning Active During Summer

Secondary students earned 645 credits during Summer School (an increase of more than 200 since 2022). Four schools hosted primary and junior Summer Learning Programs focused on literacy and numeracy, while 23 Grade 7 and 8 students enrolled in mathematics and/or literacy camp to build skills and support their secondary transition. Grade 8 students could also gain a reach-ahead credit in Grade 9 English or mathematics.

Through the Ontario eLearning Consortium, BWDSB students earned 106 credits via other school boards, while 139 external students registered for BWDSB courses.

The Landing Success program was offered in Saugeen First Nation with 23 Grade 8 and 9 Indigenous students taking part in a reach-ahead/credit recovery course focused on hands-on, land-based learning. Mindfulness, mental health, and a connection to culture and community were emphasized.

## Adult Education

Growth in Adult Education over the past year included an alternative program for students aged 18 to 21. Twenty-five students graduated in their fifth year of secondary schooling. Night school online courses in mathematics and English occurred twice per semester, and the Adult Education day program continued to be offered. Commencement in June included more than 100 graduates receiving their secondary school diplomas.

## Regional Skills Returns

The [Regional Technological Skills Challenge](#) returned on March 8 as secondary students in trades programs from across Bruce and Grey counties joined together to compete. Hosted by the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, competitions were held in the categories of Culinary and Welding. Six BWDSB students advanced to compete in the provincial qualifiers, eventually leading to a provincial silver.

## Supporting Growth in Literacy

In Grade 2 classrooms, four primary reading coaches administered reading screeners, supported students, and offered teacher professional learning. A primary Science of Reading coach worked with a kindergarten and Grade 1 teacher in every school, including those with French Immersion programs. A junior coach supported a co-planning and co-teaching project with junior teachers across selected schools. In June, the Ministry of Education launched the new [Ontario Language Curriculum](#) (2023) for Grades 1 to 8 and a de-streamed [Grade 9 English course](#). As of September, BWDSB had increased the number of coaches to nine (six primary, two junior, and one secondary) to support implementation of the curriculum, universal screening, and tiered instruction from kindergarten to Grade 9.

## Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Growth Continues

With 33 SHSM programs already offered in BWDSB, applications were submitted and approved for four additional offerings: Energy, Kincardine District Senior School; Environment, Peninsula Shores District School; Non-Profit: Community Action, John Diefenbaker Senior School; and Transportation, Saugeen District Senior School. In 2023-2024, the Agriculture SHSM is being piloted at Grey Roots Museum and Archives in Owen Sound.



# Priority Three

## Community Engagement

### Strategic Goals:

- use effective communication skills (e.g., listening, speaking, observing, and empathizing) to engage families and community to support students and enhance learning
- actively seek input from students, staff, families, and community on matters of achievement and well-being



### Partnering for Sustainability

A partnership between BWDSB, The Sustainability Project, Regenerate Grey Bruce, Lake Huron Forever, Stewardship Grey Bruce, and The Rotary Club of Wiarton is creating a culture of sustainability and narrative of regeneration at Peninsula Shores District School. In September, Town of South Bruce Peninsula Council visited the school for the unveiling of a Miyawaki tiny forest, a manicured urban plot that is planted with dense, quick growing native tree, shrub, and groundcover species.

### Parent/Guardian Learning Partners

A variety of student activities across the district were designed to include parent/guardian participation, such as in-person 'Welcome to Kindergarten' sessions during the spring, school assemblies, skilled trades events, and family mathematics nights. The After School Applied Behaviour Analysis Social Skills Building Program allowed students and parents/guardians to engage in lessons and practical applications to support ongoing learning. Parents/guardians were also invited to attend events hosted through the Summer Learning Programs, where they learned about supporting their children in literacy and mathematics, and participated in activities with the students.



### Nearing the Million Mark

BWDSB achieved yet another [Terry Fox Run milestone](#) by surpassing \$950,000 in funds raised towards cancer research since the Terry Fox Foundation's inception. This success is directly attributed to the many school runs that are supported by local families and communities annually. For another consecutive year, a milestone plaque was awarded to BWDSB by the foundation in recognition of this latest success.





### Parents Engaging Parents

The BWDSB Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) invited school councils to submit applications for funding to support parent engagement projects at the school level. Projects were aimed at meeting the following objectives: social inclusion and equity, a safe and welcoming environment, respect for parents as valued partners within the education system, enhanced communication with teachers, and informing parents about the expectations of the Ontario curriculum. In January, parents/guardians learned about the role of mathematics and literacy coaches in supporting teachers with structured literacy and high impact strategies in mathematics.

The PIC hosted a fall networking event at the BWDSB Education Centre on October 23 for school council chairs, members, and school administrators. In addition to sharing best practices with peers from across the district, approximately 45 participants had an opportunity to learn about the Right to Read inquiry and literacy activities, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion in schools. Details were also provided on how to apply for PIC funding, along with recent examples of successful PIC funded school projects in BWDSB.

### Community Partners Support Learning

BWDSB partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Grey Bruce (BBBSGB) and Bruce Grey Child and Family Services (BGCFS) to provide tutoring programs for students. The BBBSGB project supported individual and small groups of elementary students in developing engagement with school, building confidence, and improving well-being. The BGCFS project supported individual elementary and secondary students after school and on weekends with academic support in literacy and mathematics.



### Expanding Voices for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Community stakeholder meetings were held with various groups across the district and included invitations for participation on the recently established Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Education Committee to help increase representation from marginalized groups of families.

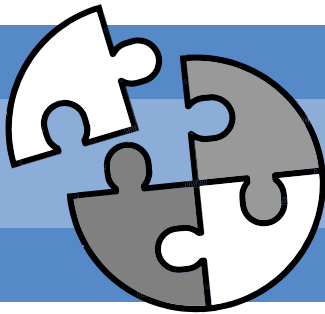
# Priority Four

## Stewardship of Resources

### Staff Recruitment and Onboarding

Efforts continued to focus on improving efficiency in the recruitment and hiring of new employees and onboarding initiatives. Human Resources Services staff participated in local and provincial job fairs to expand promotion of BWDSB.

As part of recruitment efforts in the identified area of French as a Second Language, a [recruitment video](#) was developed to promote the many benefits of a career in BWDSB. The project was a collaboration between student success system-level staff and SHSM students from Grey Highlands Secondary School.



### Community Planning and Partnerships

BWDSB's annual Community Planning and Partnerships meeting was held virtually on April 25. Partners representing upper and lower tier municipalities and community organizations were on hand to present, and to learn about the board's [potential partnership opportunities and capital planning priorities](#).

### Strategic Goals:

- align human and financial resources to maximize operational efficiencies and manage risk
- cultivate leadership to facilitate succession planning
- ensure transparency
- encourage partnerships
- support and promote, where possible, the implementation of environmental procedures, practices, and programs that are consistent with a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment



### Child Care Expansion

The new Ministry of Education funded 39-space child care centre (one toddler room and one preschool room) located in St. Edmunds Public School in Tobermory, [opened in the fall](#). BWDSB was allocated approximately \$940,000 through Child Care Capital Funding and the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan for the renovation. The project is a partnership with Tobermory Primary Place Child Care Centre.

Occupancy of the new stand-alone two-room child care centre and two-room EarlyON Child and Family Centre at Egremont Community School in Holstein took place in June. The total project budget of over \$3.9 million was a combination of the ministry's Child Care and School Condition Improvement funding programs. The centre is operated by Kids and Us Community Childcare and Family Education Centres and includes a partnership with Grey County.



### Building for the Future

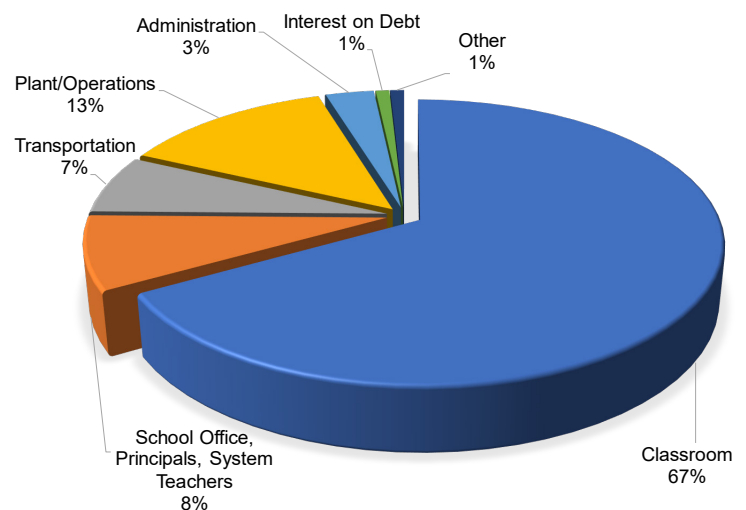
As part of the Ministry of Education's 2023-2024 Capital Priorities Program, project proposals were submitted for two growth elementary schools in Dundalk and Saugeen Shores, respectively. A business case submission was also made for a replacement Kincardine elementary school in conjunction with BWDSB's child care partners. Successful business cases will be announced by the ministry in the winter of 2024.

Construction is underway for a 328-pupil junior kindergarten to Grade 8 replacement for Beavercrest Community School in Markdale. The new facility is being built next to the current school site, and will also include a two-room child care centre and two-room EarlyON Child and Family Centre. To keep up with market price escalation and unique site costs, the ministry granted BWDSB's request for a revised Approval to Proceed in the amount of more than \$19.6 million for the project. A [groundbreaking ceremony](#) took place on July 6 as BWDSB Chair Jane Thomson, staff, and students were joined by Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Rick Byers, local dignitaries, community partners, and members of the media.

### School Renewal Summer Work

Capital funding of more than \$11 million through the ministry's School Renewal and School Condition Improvement programs helped to ensure safe and supportive learning and working environments in BWDSB schools for students and staff. From washroom, classroom, parking lot, play area, and roof upgrades, to lighting, ventilation, electrical, and accessibility enhancements, work spanned several schools across the district during the summer months.

### DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES



### Budget

At the Regular Meeting of the Board on June 20, trustees approved the [2023-2024 budget](#) in the amount of \$258,150,330 in revenues, \$257,604,792 in expenses, and \$535,538 in reserve contributions. A [budget public consultation survey](#) conducted in February on the board website allowed students, parents/guardians, staff, employee group presidents, and other stakeholders to share feedback as part of the annual budget planning process. From the input received, educational programs and services that ranked highest in priority included 'reading and writing skills', followed by 'mathematics', and 'mental health and well-being', consistent with previous years.



# Board of Trustees



**Tracy Lynn Atkinson**

Municipality of West Grey, The Town of Hanover



**Michael Craig**

City of Owen Sound



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**Fran Morgan**

Municipality of Meaford, Town of The Blue Mountains



**Richelle Ritchie**

First Nations Representative



**Jane Thomson, Chair**

Town of South Bruce Peninsula, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula

## Administrative Council



**Left to right:** Director of Education Lori Wilder, Superintendent of Education Wendy Louwerse, Superintendent of Education Lauren Penner Lipsett, Superintendent of Business Services and Treasurer Rob Cummings, Superintendent of Education Melissa McEwen, Superintendent of Education Keith Lefebvre

## Student Senate



**Bottom Row** (left to right): Bonnie Kwon-Bentley, GBCS; Macy Robinson, OSDSS; Brie Dales, PSDS; Carter Snobelen, KDSS; Trinity Bechan, GHSS; Tanness Eby, PSDS; Lexi Ritchie, SDSS; Ethan Enns, JDSS  
**Back Row** (left to right): Samantha Oestreicher, WDCS; Mackenzi Hawke, BPDS

**Absent:** Afnan Shahid, SDSS