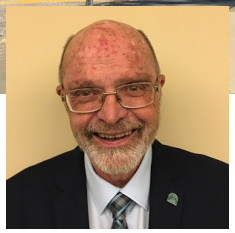
Trustee Newsletter

Fall 2020



Jim Dawson
Township of Southgate
Municipality of Grey Highlands

A Note of Thanks

With the 'return to school' transition now mostly behind us, I hope that despite the learning curve and many changes to our protocols, the 2020-21 school year has thus far been a rewarding and engaging experience for our students and staff. With this in mind, there are many individuals whom I would like to acknowledge. Whether you have opted for in-person or remote learning this year, thank you to our students, parents/guardians, and families for your continued cooperation and diligence in keeping our schools and communities healthy and safe during challenging times. I also thank our staff across the system. Regardless of your position, our board's current success in navigating the challenges of COVID-19 would not be possible without your professionalism and exemplary role modeling. My gratitude extends to our community partners, especially our local public health officials. It is both reassuring and remarkable to consider how well our schools and local region have done thus far in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Let us all keep up the good work and individually continue to do our part to follow the recommended health and safety guidelines. THANK YOU again for your efforts, patience, and understanding!

New Appointments

We are pleased to welcome three new additions to Bluewater District School Board's senior leadership team. Congratulations to Sheryl Elliott, Andrea Tang, and Keith Lefebvre, each of whom are assuming the position of Superintendent of Education. These appointments are part of our succession planning with the retirements of Superintendents of Education Cynthia Lemon, Wendy Kolohon, and Paul Hambleton. As we make this transition, we thank Cynthia, Wendy, and Paul for their many years of service to our students, staff, and families, and wish them the very best in their retirements!

Contact Me

As always, please feel free to contact me with your questions or concerns:

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Find me on social media:

Twitter
Facebook

Building New Schools

It was announced on October 29, 2020 that the Ministry of Education has approved funding of over **$26.4 million** through the Capital Priorities Program to replace **Kincardine District Senior School**. The new Grades 7 to 12 facility will accommodate 881 student spaces.

Construction continues in a timely manner for the replacement build of **Georgian Bay Community School** in Meaford despite some delays this past spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further details on a completion date are still to come.

Staff continue to work through the planning phase of the **Beavercrest Community School** replacement build project in Markdale. Ministry of Education approval for the purchase of additional land adjacent to the current school property has been provided. The ministry-funded $6.4 million new school will accommodate 236 student spaces with an additional $2.1 million used to create two childcare rooms and two EarlyON rooms. More information on the progress of the build is coming soon.

We Remember

Despite COVID-19 restrictions around gatherings, our students and staff found many unique and innovative ways to honour Remembrance Day on November 11, 2020. From the creation of poppy artwork, hallway displays of art and historical items, and outdoor wreath dedications, to virtual commemorations, educational videos, and theatrical productions, it was amazing to witness all the touching tributes to the brave Canadians whose sacrifices have enabled the freedoms we are privileged to enjoy today.

Honouring Ontario's Treaties

National Indigenous Veterans Day on November 8, 2020 honoured the contributions of our Indigenous citizens and communities to Canada's military service. This was preceded by Treaties Recognition Week from November 2 - 6, 2020, which provided students and staff with an opportunity to learn more about the importance of treaties, treaty rights, and treaty relationships in Ontario. This turtle artwork was created by Saugeen District Senior School students and a local artist to represent Turtle Island (North America) and the land we currently live on, including the Bruce Peninsula (middle section).

Important Links and Resources

Several resources are available on our board website to assist parents/guardians as we continue to work through these unprecedented times together. We encourage you to visit and bookmark the following pages (click on the underlined text). While you are there, we hope you notice and like the changes that have been made to modernize our website, which is now more accessible, as well as user and mobile friendly.

Return to School - daily COVID-19 screening links for students/ staff/essential visitors, attestation for returning to school following illness, regularly updated two-part Q and A for 'School Operations' and 'Program and Instruction', video resources, and other health and safety information

Remote Learning - vLE online learning portal, Brightspace self help videos, link to new 'BWDSB Remote School' Facebook page, remote learning (including Special Education) resources for families, Ministry of Education's Learn at Home portal

COVID-19 Updates - parent/guardian letters, Grey Bruce Public Health daily situation reports, advisories regarding positive cases in Bluewater District School Board schools/worksites

Cancellations Update

As we prepare for winter in Bruce and Grey counties, parents/ guardians are encouraged to subscribe to receive timely email or text updates on school and bus cancellations/delays from the Student Transportation Service Consortium of Grey-Bruce. Be sure to visit mybrucegreyschoolbus.ca and click on the Parent Portal icon on the righthand side to log in or create an account.

SCHOOLMESSENGER®

Parents/guardians can receive broadcasts from their child(ren)'s school(s) by phone, email, and text through SchoolMessenger Communicate. It is essential that the school has your most up-to-date contact information (i.e., email, phone, and mobile) in order to be able to receive these messages. For full instructions, click here and scroll down to the SchoolMessenger section.

Standing up to Bullying

Bluewater District School Board students and staff continue to pledge their support in standing up to bullying in all its forms, by working together to cultivate safe, accepting, equitable, and inclusive environments in our schools and worksites. Several resources have been made available for parents/guardians, classrooms, and students as part of Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, November 15-21, 2020.

Congratulating our Graduates

While in-person events were unable to occur in their usual format, many of our schools were able to find creative ways to recognize and provide memorable experiences for our 2020 secondary and Grade 8 graduates. Beautifully produced virtual ceremonies and interactive drive-by events were held across the district. The recent Adult Education drive-by graduation in the parking lot of the Bluewater District School Board Education Centre is just one of many fine examples. Congratulations and best wishes to all of this year's graduates!

Visit our website: **www.bwdsb.on.ca**

Find Bluewater District School Board on social media:

Download our free mobile app:

Macphail Teacher Receives Prime Minister's Awards Certificate

Congratulations to Tyler Boyle of Macphail Memorial Elementary School, who was recently honoured with one of this year's Ontario Certificates of Achievement as part of the 2020 Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence program! Tyler's immeasurable contributions extend well beyond his students and school community. As a passionate advocate for mental health and safe schools, he co-created Dreamwalkers Meditations with colleague and fellow teacher Janet Gracey, which has garnered an impressive following by students, teachers, and parents/guardians across Bluewater District School Board and further afield. His teaching approach is best summed up on the Government of Canada website:

Tyler is well known at his school for his energy, his enthusiasm and his empathy with students experiencing difficulties. He encourages all students to participate in interdisciplinary activities, and even the layout of his classroom changes frequently to keep things fresh and interesting.

We commend Tyler on receiving this distinguished honour and thank him for his amazing efforts to make a positive difference in the lives of our students, staff, families, and others who have the good fortune of knowing him.