



*Jennifer Miller
City of Owen Sound*

A Message of Hope

With the recent return to remote learning for an undefined period, I know that the feeling is all too familiar as our students, staff, and families once again adapt to different routines and juggle competing responsibilities. Students and staff are missing the social connections with their peers that cannot be replicated outside a face-to-face learning and working environment. While it is anyone's guess as to how long the current provincial order will remain in effect, thankfully, our previous experiences and built up capacity for resilience over the past year are proof that we can get through this again. We also have more reason to be optimistic compared to where we were a year ago with the COVID-19 pandemic as we look forward to the positive results that increased vaccinations will bring both locally and provincially. Please rest assured that your Bluewater District School Board trustees are thinking of you, and wish you strength, good health, and positive well-being as you navigate through this time of uncertainty. We are in this together, and we have got this!

Vaccine Advocacy

Trustees recently sent a letter to Minister of Education Stephen Lecce, Minister of Health Christine Elliott, and Grey Bruce Health Unit's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Ian Arra to request that COVID-19 vaccines be prioritized for frontline essential education workers. We are so pleased to see that this process has been expedited with all Bluewater employees now eligible for their first doses. To ensure the safe reopening of our schools, additional protection for our staff is a next step to reduce the risk of COVID-19 and avoid further disruption in our school communities. [View our letter here.](#)

Contact Me

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

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Building for the Future

Through Ministry of Education funding, new build projects are on the horizon to further expand learning opportunities for our current and future students. These include:

- 1.5 million-dollar [child care centre addition at Spruce Ridge Community School](#) in Durham, which will add 39 licensed spaces to the existing program
- 26.4 million-dollar Grades 7-12 replacement for Kincardine District Senior School
- 29.4 million-dollar Georgian Bay Community School replacement in Meaford opening to JK-12 students in September
- JK-8 replacement for Beavercrest Community School in Markdale valued at \$6.4 million with an additional \$2.1 million for two child care rooms and two EarlyON rooms



Georgian Bay Community School build project

2021-22 Budget

Trustees continue to work through the 2021-22 budget process. A public budget consultation survey recently enabled parents/guardians, students, and staff to submit feedback on the focus areas they consider to be most important for the next school year. According to the [survey results](#), educational programs and services that rank highest in priority include 'reading and writing skills', followed by 'math', and 'mental health and well-being'. [Click here to learn more about the 2021-22 budget](#). Trustees thank those who provided input, which will help to inform decision-making on the efficient, effective, and equitable use of board resources for 2021-22.



Trustees Voice Online Learning Concerns



In a letter to Minister of Education Stephen Lecce, trustees recently expressed concerns over a possible move by the provincial government to change how eLearning is delivered to students in Ontario. This information has come to light in various media reports referencing private government documents. The plan would also include a push to make remote learning a permanent option for those who choose this method of education delivery. If implemented, the delivery of eLearning courses would shift from the current localized approach to a centralized model coordinated through TVO/TFO. There are several concerns related to this proposed plan, including the loss of involvement and expertise of local educators. In regard to the plan for a permanent online option, there are concerns related to the potential impacts on in-person learning, such as staffing and resources. Trustees are requesting that public conversations related to the proposed plan involve consultation with school boards and education stakeholders in Ontario. As we continue to gather evidence from this past year on the full impact of online learning, we want to work with our provincial and education partners to ensure any plan meets the local needs of students, while honouring the firsthand expertise and leadership of school boards. [Click here to view our letter](#).

