



*Jim Dawson
Township of Southgate
Municipality of Grey Highlands*

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](#).

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. Click on the headings to visit and bookmark the following pages:

[COVID-19 Updates](#) - the latest letters to families, Grey Bruce Public Health daily situation reports, advisories regarding positive cases in our schools and worksites

[Remote Learning](#) - vLE online learning portal, Brightspace self-help videos, remote learning resources for families, Ministry of Education's Learn at Home portal

[Return to School](#) - daily COVID-19 screening links for students and staff, attestation for returning to school following illness, two-part Q and A for 'School Operations' and 'Program and Instruction', and other health and safety information

[Mental Health and Well-Being](#) - resources to assist students and families, including pandemic related supports, links to various articles and tips from School Mental Health Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association, and other partners

[SchoolMessenger](#) - parents/guardians can receive broadcasts from their child(ren)'s school(s) by phone, email, and/or text by ensuring that the school has their most up-to-date contact information

[Kindergarten Pre-Registration](#) - for those entering kindergarten for the first time (children born in 2017-Year 1, and children born in 2016-Year 2 who are not already registered)

[Secondary Transitions](#) - for those starting Grade 9 in September, learn about registering, course selection, and career pathways at all nine of our secondary schools, or take a virtual school tour

Visit our website: www.bwdsb.on.ca

Find Bluewater District School Board on social media:

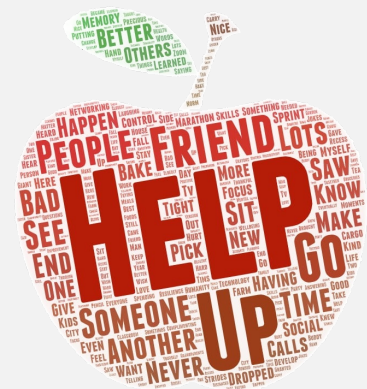


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Students Reflect on Pandemic in Multiple Ways

To commemorate the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization's declaration of the COVID-19 global pandemic, students and staff at Peninsula Shores District School participated in the development of a word cloud comprised of 365 words for 365 days of the year. The reflections focused on some of the often overlooked positive aspects of the past year. [View the story here.](#)



Grade 9 Visual Arts students at Owen Sound District Secondary School recently had a unique opportunity to collaborate virtually with local artist JP Morel on a mural project displayed at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery. The #myessential community art project allowed students to reflect on what the pandemic has deemed as 'essential' in their lives. Students responded via text, conversations, and drawings, which were then rendered on the walls of the gallery by the artist. [View the story here.](#)

