

Trustee Newsletter

Fall 2021



*Katie Lutz
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Municipality of Arran-Elderslie*

A New Hope

It is not THAT 'new hope' from a galaxy far, far away; but the hope that comes at a turning point. With the start of a new school year (with its new notebooks and pens) and the current pandemic situation (with low case numbers and restrictions loosening), I am feeling hopeful. This fall I have been reading Thomas Homer Dixon's book, "Commanding Hope", which reminded me that hope is a verb - something we must do. This is something I see our students and staff doing so often as their learning and activities demonstrate the future they hope for. I see our students displaying incredible compassion and community spirit, which is hope in action. This past year and a half have been incredibly hard on everyone, and I see the energy and passion in our schools and know this is what hope looks like. As we consider our hopes for the 2021/2022 school year, I want to offer a HUGE THANK YOU to everyone involved in our school system: students, teachers, education support workers, administrators, custodians, bus drivers, the many staff that do not fit an easy category, parents, guardians, families, and community members. My hope is that we all continue working together to keep our students safe, healthy, and with hope for the future.

Accessible Period Products

We are encouraged by the recent news of a provincial partnership that will enable the distribution of free menstrual products to school boards across Ontario. Bluewater District School Board trustees, students, staff, and stakeholders have been advocating for this type of initiative for a long time. This past May, trustees voted to supply schools with free period products for students in Grade 4 and up, and in June, trustees wrote to Minister of Education Stephen Lecce to request full provincial funding for these products. In September, our board began offering free pads and tampons in designated washrooms to eliminate school attendance barriers.

[Letter to Minister Lecce - June 23, 2021](#)
[Media release - June 24, 2021](#)

Contact Me

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

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GBCS Official Opening

Trustees, staff, and students recently joined local dignitaries, community partners, build team members, and media for the [official opening](#) of the new Georgian Bay Community School in Meaford. The itinerary for the day featured a school tour, speeches, music, a ribbon cutting ceremony, and a plaque unveiling for the invited guests. Funded through approximately 29.6 million dollars from the Ministry of Education, the new JK-12 replacement facility opened in September.



BWDSB Recognized by Terry Fox Foundation

Despite COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, schools in Bluewater District School Board collectively raised just over \$34,315 this past year for the Terry Fox Foundation in support of cancer research. This past year's dollar amount signals a fundraising milestone of \$750,000 for our schools through annual Terry Fox School Run events since the event began. The Terry Fox Foundation has awarded Bluewater District School Board with a milestone plaque in honour of this latest accomplishment, which would not be possible without the amazing generosity and hard work of our students, staff, and families.



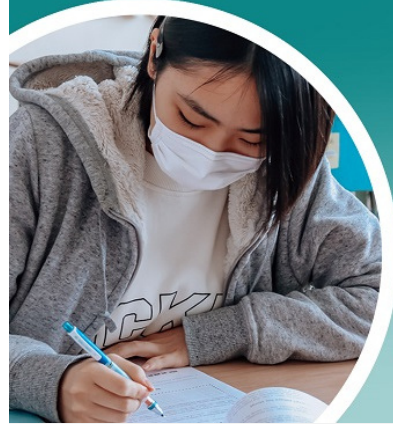
Survey on Online Learning

School and COVID-19

An Online Community Survey

Visit:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/COVID19andSchoolOntario



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION
Leading Education's Advocates

With the recent return to school, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) wants to hear from you!

An anonymous online survey has been launched to help inform public education advocacy to the provincial government throughout the 2021-22 school year and beyond. We are asking you, on behalf of OPSBA, to share some of your thoughts about learning online during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the post-pandemic school and learning environment.

[Click here to access the survey](#), which should take about 10 minutes to complete. The deadline to participate is **November 30, 2021**.

OPSBA's *Transitioning from the COVID-19 School Experience Discussion Paper* reflects the initial thinking of association membership from first-hand accounts of remote learning during the pandemic. A video summary can be found by [clicking here](#).

Important Links and Resources

Return to School

Access the daily COVID-19 screening link for students and staff, our three-part Q and A, and other health and safety information. [Click here.](#)

COVID-19 Updates

View the latest updates and advisories regarding the status of COVID-19 cases in our schools and worksites. [Click here.](#)

Mental Health and Well-Being

Resources to assist students and families from mental health partners, and a self-referral link for students/families to access mental health support are available here.

**Click here to see
our new section
containing mental
health and well-
being resources
for students.**



Kindergarten Registration

For those whose children are entering kindergarten for the first time in September 2022, follow this easy [three-step process](#) to register or click on the image on the right.



Visit our website: www.bwdsb.on.ca

Find Bluewater District School Board on social media:



Download our free mobile app:



BWDSB Marks First National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

On September 30, 2021, Canada observed the first ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, coinciding with the annual tradition of Orange Shirt Day. I had the privilege of attending the sacred fire and bridge ceremony hosted by G.C. Huston Public School and Saugeen Ojibway Nation. Across the board, flags were lowered at schools and work sites, while students and staff wore orange and purple, and participated in Truth and Reconciliation activities throughout the week. From collaborative whole school art projects and traditional ceremonies, to drama presentations and guest speakers, students were involved in many creative and thought provoking initiatives. Staff also engaged in various learning opportunities, including a live virtual presentation with educator and writer Dr. Niigaan Sinclair on how we can influence and empower through education, and be an ally. This occasion was just one opportunity to broaden our learning and understanding of the long-lasting damages the Canadian residential school system had on Indigenous Peoples and communities, and to honour the victims and survivors. [View our web article.](#)



Student created medicine wheel at G.C. Huston Public School