



The
Blackboard

Grand Erie District School Board's Highlights from the Board Room

Inaugural Board Meeting | December 14, 2020

All reports for this meeting can be found here: <https://bit.ly/37SSxM0>

Chair's Inaugural Address

In his inaugural address as Board Chair, Trustee Greg Anderson thanked staff for their efforts during COVID-19:

- "I am so pleased with the ongoing efforts of our more than 2,500 employees. They do their best every day to serve our students in all of our communities and provide education that Trustees can rightfully be proud of."
- "I would like to personally thank each of our superintendents who worked long and tirelessly to meet the many changes required in our delivery of education this year – both in class and virtually. Your ability to provide our students and families with viable options for learning during the pandemic has been greatly appreciated by all Trustees."
- "I would also like to thank retired Director of Education, Brenda Blancher, for her wonderful leadership during the past five years. Trustees look forward to the leadership of our current Director, JoAnna Roberto, as our Board will have to continue to navigate learning during a pandemic."



Given the uncertainty of dealing with COVID-19, Anderson said he was grateful to have the experience of fellow Trustees in key leadership roles:

- "I look forward to working closely with Trustees Susan Gibson and Rita Collver in the year ahead as they take on the roles of Vice-Chair of the Board and Committee of the Whole Chair, respectively. Trustee Tom Waldschmidt, who we welcomed back this month, will be a worthy Committee of the Whole Vice-Chair. I'm pleased that we once again will have two experienced former Board Chairs as OPSBA Voting Delegates in Trustees Carol Ann Sloat and Don Werden."

Anderson highlighted the work of the Board over the past year and emphasized the importance of Grand Erie's current Multi-Year Plan and the development of the next plan in the year ahead:

- "This year, it was very gratifying to once again pass a balanced budget, despite the various challenges brought on by COVID-19. This fall, Grand Erie received approval and funding for a new elementary school to be built in the rapidly growing area of West Brant. We're excited to get this project underway in 2021 as we work with our partners at the City of Brantford."

- “Our Multi-Year Plan, [Success for Every Student](#), summarizes what we stand for and value in Grand Erie. By focusing on students and staff in a culture of high expectations, we will continue to achieve success.”
- “As Trustees, we must continue to guide our school board in a time of uncertainty. We must also realize that we are responsible for keeping a watchful eye on our education system to make sure it serves the needs of all of our students.”
- “Our Grand Erie Multi-Year Plan will be updated or changed in 2021. With support and input from Trustees, senior staff, employees and community members, it is my expectation that this new Multi-Year Plan will be developed and implemented by the end of 2021. This will be a large undertaking, and the leadership of Director Roberto in this activity will be critical.”

Anderson also paid a special tribute to Superintendent Linda De Vos:

- “I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Superintendent Linda De Vos, who will be retiring shortly. Linda has worked diligently and tirelessly as a Family of Schools Superintendent and a leader in our Elementary Curriculum and Program areas. All the best to you in retirement, Linda!”

In closing, Anderson wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year:

- “On behalf of all Trustees, I’d like to thank every Grand Erie staff member for their continued support of our students in so many ways. While this Christmas and holiday break will be much different than those in the past, I hope each of you has time to rest and reflect on the year that was. I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May there be better days ahead for all of us in 2021!”

Anderson, who will lead Grand Erie as Board Chair for the fourth year in a row, was selected by his peers at last week’s Board Nomination Meeting. Find Anderson’s complete Inaugural Address here: <https://bit.ly/3gLtLBH>.

Reading of the Trustee Code of Ethics

As is the practice each Inaugural Board Meeting, all Trustees stood and read the Code of Ethics together. The Trustee Code of Ethics can be found on page 5 here: <https://bit.ly/37SSxM0>.

ANNUAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2019-20

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, JOANNA ROBERTO

Grand Erie's Annual Director's Report is an opportunity to share with the board and our wider communities the many accomplishments and initiatives throughout the system during the past 12 months, and helps set the direction for the upcoming year. As the new Director of Education for Grand Erie District School Board, I continue to build upon those who served before me and strive to reinforce the Board's valued tradition of focusing on achievement and well-being for everyone across our learning communities, part of our shared goal of Success for Every Student.

The unprecedented impact from the global pandemic continues to influence in 2020. In response, our Grand Erie team did an admirable job to pivot, consult with, and adopt best practices advised by our Ministry of Education and Public Health Unit partners, to ensure a safer reopening of schools. This fall, we launched the Virtual Academy (Kindergarten to Grade 12) with more than 4,500 students taking part. We also delivered additional technology enhancements during the first trimester structure of learning. While we will continuously adjust for many months to come as we deal with COVID-19, the good news is, our Grand Erie team will adapt accordingly and stay focused on our students.

Additionally, the announcement this fall of a new Grand Erie elementary school in southwest Brantford has set the course for a new direction of growth that we will design together.

JoAnna Roberto,
Director of Education

Draft Director's Annual Report for 2019-20

On Monday, Director of Education JoAnna Roberto presented her draft Annual Director’s Report for the 2019-20 school year. The report, which is required by the Education Act, provides an overview of how Grand Erie is performing based on its Multi-Year Plan, [Success for Every Student](#). The report highlights the goals, outcomes and activities that took place during the past school year through the lens of the Multi-Year Plan’s six indicators: Achievement, Community, Environment, Equity, Technology and Well-Being. The report, which is online, can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3njPhA6>.

Revised Budget Estimates

Revised budget estimates for the 2020-21 school year are due to the Ministry of Education on December 15. On Monday evening, Trustees were provided with a preview of the information that will be shared with the province. Understandably, Grand Erie’s 2020-21 budget has been severely challenged by the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. Some funding from the Ministry is down this year as enrolment has decreased due to a larger number of families choosing to home school,

however, the Ministry has provided Grand Erie with approximately \$2.1 million in stabilization funding. COVID-19 has also had a profound impact on school operations with additional health and safety protocols, and the required purchases of equipment and supplies. Despite these challenges, Grand Erie's Senior Administration Team is pleased to report that the Board is still on track for a balanced budget in 2020-21, which includes an anticipated increase of approximately 90 staff positions across the system. These positions include: Teachers, Designated Early Childhood Educators, Custodians and Virtual School Administrative and Clerical staff. To read the full report, see pages 53-58 here: <https://bit.ly/37SSxM0>.

Enrolment Update

Each October, school boards across Ontario report their enrolment numbers to the Ministry of Education. On Monday, Trustees were presented these numbers for Grand Erie:

- As of October 31, 2020, Grand Erie's elementary enrolment is 17,838. This is a decrease of 365 students from the Board's 2020-21 budget projections (18,203). The decrease is attributed to COVID-19 and some families choosing homeschooling this year, which removes the students from Grand Erie.
- Grand Erie's secondary enrolment as of October 31, 2020 is 7,648. This is an increase of 100 students from the Board's 2020-21 budget projections (7,548).

Overall, Grand Erie's total enrolment as of October 31, 2020 is 25,486. This is a decrease of 265 students from the Board's 2020-21 budget projections. To review the report, see pages 61-64 here: <https://bit.ly/37SSxM0>.

Director's Report

JoAnna Roberto, Director of Education, shared the following items with Trustees on Monday during her report to the Board:

- The Minister of Education announced the launch of the Support for Learners program. Through this program, the government is providing financial support to help parents and guardians with additional costs during the 2020-21 school year and specifically during COVID-19. Eligible parents or guardians will receive a one-time payment of \$200 for each child up to age 12 or \$250 for each child or youth up to age 21 years with special needs.
- In November, Grand Erie launched a Virtual Learning Academy Technology Survey. Parents, students and teachers from the Virtual Learning Academy were sent a survey asking about technical challenges they experienced this school year as well as for any suggestions about how the Board could support them. In total, there were 971 parents/guardians, 114 teachers and 902 students that responded.
 - Highlights from the survey included:
 - 89.1 per cent responded that they have reliable internet at home
 - 26.9 per cent indicated they required a board device
 - 84.7 per cent felt that they received regular communication from the teacher
 - Areas of concern included:
 - How to submit student work
 - Who to contact when there is a technology-related challenge?
 - Understanding how to use interactive tools
 - Request for cyber security support
 - As a result, next steps to support students and families include:
 - Help Desk Support accessible to parents and staff
 - A virtual session for parents and additional virtual workshops for educators
 - Share cyber security supports to Virtual Academy staff and students



Additional Items

Memorial: A memorial statement was read to honour Grand Erie Custodian Douglas Campbell. Doug died November 7. He joined the Board in 1984, working at Hagersville Elementary for nearly two decades. Doug was a beloved member of the school community. He watched out for every student, staff member or family that stepped inside his building. Lovingly referred to as an honorary Vice-Principal, Doug volunteered many hours to help run school events. He was a big part of parent council and the person many looked to as a kind-hearted and trusted father figure.

Approval of minutes: Trustees approved the minutes of the following meetings:

- November 23, 2020 – Regular Board
- November 25, 2020 – Special Board
- December 2, 2020 – Special Board
- December 7, 2020 – Nominations; Organizational

Trustees also received the following reports:

- Student Trustees' Report
- Striking Committee – December 7, 2020
- Audit Committee Annual Report
- Borrowing Authority
- Signing Officers
- Review of Borrowing Bylaws Not on Board's Regular Review Scheduled
- Contract Award Insurance
- International Student COVID-19 Readiness Plan 2020-21
- Summary of Accounts – November 2020
- Special Education Advisory Committee Minutes – October 15, 2020
- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee Minutes – November 19, 2020
- Safe and Inclusive Schools Committee Minutes (Draft) – November 19, 2020

Multi-Year Plan Stories

In 2016, Grand Erie approved a new strategic direction to guide the work that the school board is doing. At the centre of this Multi-Year Plan is *Success for Every Student*. Grand Erie will achieve *Success for Every Student* through a focus on students and staff in a culture of high expectations. The six indicators that support the Multi-Year Plan are: Achievement, Community, Environment, Equity, Technology and Well-Being.

The following stories showcase some of the most recent stories related to the Multi-Year Plan.

Achievement

- SOAR Program a Tee-riffic Experience for Student Golfer
 - <https://bit.ly/3mfkKSz>
- Grand Erie Reaches Tentative Local Agreement with ETFO Teachers' Bargaining Unit
 - <https://bit.ly/3oOqDrz>

Community

- COVID Can't Cancel School Spirit of Haldimand-Norfolk B.O.S.S. Competition
 - <https://bit.ly/2KjoAg8>
- Greg Anderson Selected as Grand Erie's Board Chair for 2020-21
 - <https://bit.ly/2Wb700t>