

2019-2020

# DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT



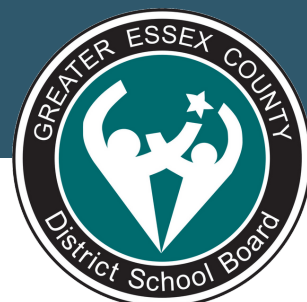
## Message From Erin Kelly, Director of Education

As is typical, the 2019-20 school year began with detailed plans, good intentions and soaring confidence. It took off gracefully but in a few months it staggered, then stumbled under the weight of a coronavirus pandemic. With long hours of hard work, however, we recovered to salvage the best possible outcome for students, considering the unprecedented circumstances of an ordered, province-wide closure of schools.

It was a year that tested our resolve and our resourcefulness, our wisdom and our wit. Ultimately we may have learned as much as we taught. We experimented and adapted and are now more prepared to handle practically anything we ever confront.

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## Camp Wonder

We had good reason for great expectations when the school year began. Camp Wonder, our summer learning program, which ran for three weeks in July 2019, was incredibly successful. There were 455 students with 38 staff at 10 different sites. This year we offered programs for math, French, Language, ELL and Indigenous Education.

The data was very encouraging. We are making a difference, closing the gap, for many young students. In math, 90% of observed students demonstrated improvement – an increase of 4% over the pre-program assessment. Ninety-three percent of these students also showed an improvement in their oral comprehension.

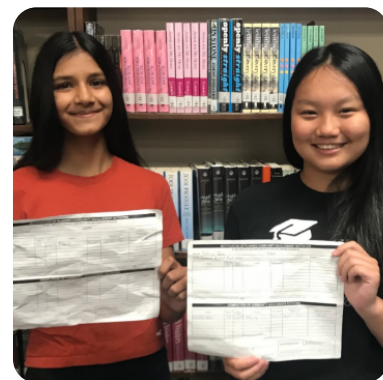


## Reaching Ahead

As well, in July more than 250 of our students at 8 different locations took advantage of our Reaching Ahead program to get a high school credit before they even started high school.

The recently graduated Grade 8s completed the Discovering the Workplace course - which usually covers an entire semester - in less than a month with classroom and on-line work. They also got a head start on earning the 40 hours of community service

required to complete their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Reaching Ahead also gives students an opportunity to ease the transition from elementary to secondary school.



## International Students

Overall, our student enrollment grew for a 4th straight year supplemented by the continued recruitment of international students. Coming mostly from Asia, there were 259 fee-paying students registered with the Board in 2019 of which 212 were in the secondary panel and 47 attending GECDSD elementary schools.

## English as a Second Language

It was the third year for our program supporting English Language Learners in the system through professional development for homeroom and ESL classroom teachers.

- 382 students increased one or more levels in English reading proficiency
- 353 students increased one or more levels in writing proficiency
- 422 students increased in oral proficiency
- 150 students moved up in all three strands
- 69 students were moved from the ESL classroom

With more students, more families and ever-increasing diversity it has become vital to have a parent engagement strategy with objectives to reach as many of them as possible, in a way that they will readily understand. Having forms and documents in formats that are easily translatable became a priority along with communicating in common channels – continuing to expand our reach in social media through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

This approach would serve us well later in the year when so much essential information needed to be shared in a very short period of time in all our communities.



7,400 Followers



6,844 Followers





## Indigenous Education

In the previous school year (2018-2019) our Board of Trustees approved our [Land Acknowledgement](#) - our statement recognizing the obligation we have to the first nations of this region.



During the 2019 Treaties Recognition Week artist Moses Lunham worked with students at West Gate Public School to create a visual depiction of our land acknowledgement. The 12 foot - 4 panel mural has been shared with schools throughout the Board to reinforce the region's history and the relevance of our Land Acknowledgement.



## Engaged Communities

We were faced with a rather pleasant dilemma early in September: what to do with a significant amount of basic school supplies donated by local real estate broker, [Rick Rose](#).

Rick's kindness illustrates the good will of our friends and neighbours in our school communities which we witness in so many ways, so many times each year. It was a resource that we would rely on to get us through the most difficult parts of the year.



We are inextricably part of the communities we serve and it is our goal to be a practical resource for them. In September, our Student Success department joined the [Windsor Residence for Young Men](#) to offer the [Youth Independence Program](#). It's an integrated educational opportunity designed to provide young people with some skills to reduce the risk of homelessness and rebuild their lives.

All the students demonstrated an increase in key academic skills and all of them who completed the education component of the program received a high school credit. They were then connected to our Continuing Education program and 62% of the students continued their work toward an Ontario High School Diploma.



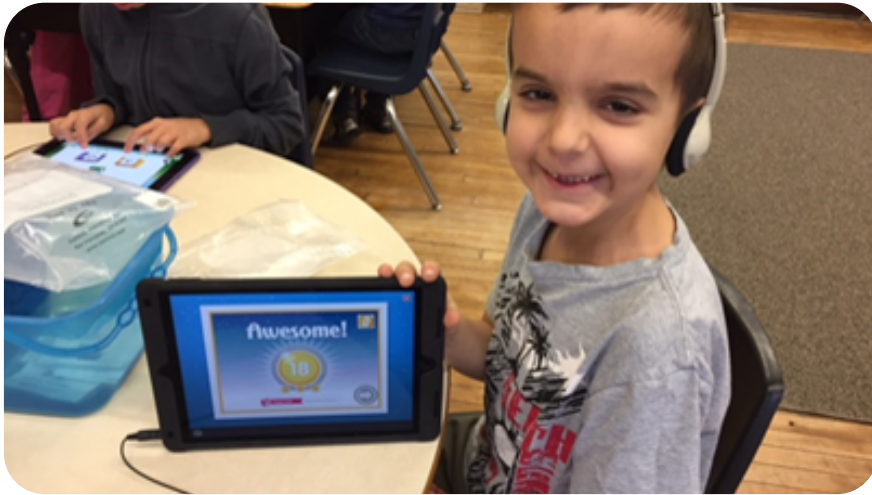


The community partnership dynamic often works in reverse. Our partners, businesses, service clubs, local organizations and many, many individuals are regularly responding to the needs of our students and enhancing outcomes for kids and their families.



The Goodfellows of Windsor has been an exceptional partner to the Board for many years and is actually our next door neighbour on Park Street. During the first semester, the organization delivered on the first of 2 promised installments of hygiene products that were packaged and sent to each school in the district. A recently conducted survey of schools had found that it was the most pressing need to support students on a daily basis.

## Special Education



We are usually able, each year, to support a certain number of young learners with Lexia, an enhanced reading support program, and we began the year with 2981 licenses for the program. Results for students using this tool have been impressive, which is why we approved the purchase of an additional 9,500 licenses to share with all students, in all primary grades regardless of their learning model as well as students in Grade 5 and any who attend the RISE program. After the ordered school closure, beginning in March, these licenses proved to be a valuable asset for students learning at home.

## My Way

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder got fuel for their learning through the My Way pilot program and it's had exceptional success. Nine students began this school-based initiative which helped them be happy, relaxed and engaged in school.

Five participants were able to develop their classroom learning skills, engage appropriately with peers and staff and maintain a full day at school with minimal risk of unsafe behaviour occurring.

An additional 6 students outside the pilot were also able to benefit from My Way.





## International Baccalaureate

It was a milestone year for the advancement of the International Baccalaureate Programme within the GECDSD.

Following approval, the previous June, of two elementary schools - Glenwood in Windsor and M.D. Bennie in Leamington – as IB candidate schools offering the Primary Years Programme, staff and administration began their training. They completed a 3-day session in November and continued with preparations for full accreditation. In December, staff leads and administrators participated in the IB Global Conference, which, at the time had a prescient theme, “Reimagine the Future”.

At Riverside Secondary School and Leamington District Secondary School, the first cohort of Grade 11 students began work in the IB Diploma Programme and the popular Preparatory Program continued for Grade 9 students. The pandemic, the closure of schools and the shift to on-line learning eventually created difficulties for students pursuing their IB programs. IB requirements cannot be fulfilled in on-line learning.

However at LDSS, 100% of the students taking the IB French course were successful and all of them achieved a mark equivalent to an Ontario grade of 83% or higher.



## EQAO

Due to the extraordinary circumstances facing the province, the Ministry of Education cancelled all EQAO assessments for the 2019-20 school year. As a result, the successful completion of the Ontario Secondary Schools Literacy Test (OSSLT – written by Grade 10 students each year), which is a requirement to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, was waived for students eligible for graduation this year.

## Graduation Coach

During Black History Month 2020 the Greater Essex County District School Board announced the creation of a pilot Graduation Coach Program for secondary school students who self-identify as Black, African and/or Caribbean along with the appointment of Dr. Venus Olla. She provides additional, targeted, culturally responsive supports for self-identified students to improve their academic achievement and well-being. The intention is to improve attendance and graduation rates and advance Black, African and Caribbean students in their chosen pathways. Dr. Olla is based at Kennedy Collegiate Institute and is working with students at all GECDSD high schools. Funding for the Graduation Coach program has been provided through a grant from the Ministry of Education.



**The Graduation Coach Program**

Supporting the academic achievement and well-being of Black, African and Caribbean GECDSD Secondary School Students.

EDUCATION IS OUR PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE, FOR TOMORROW BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE WHO PREPARE FOR IT TODAY.

For more information or to become a participant CONTACT DR. OLLA AT 519-818-4850 OR CONTACT YOUR SCHOOL'S PRINCIPAL

## School Closure

In late January, the first cases of the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus were discovered in Canada and by the end of February, there were federal government recommendations to make emergency preparations for this global pandemic.

All schools in Ontario were ordered closed by the Ministry of Education for March 14 through April 5th, an unprecedented mid-year interruption of a school year and the beginning of a series of unparalleled events in education.

The lockdown of schools would be further extended to the end of the year with a switch, in April, to an on-line model of teaching and learning.

I am proud of our response to the COVID-19 emergency, as a board. Each of us: administrators, teachers, support staff and of course, the parents and guardians have applied knowledge, experience and creativity to the vital task of maintaining education through distance learning. Students, as well, have had to be innovative and flexible and I have been amazed at their resourcefulness.

## Technology

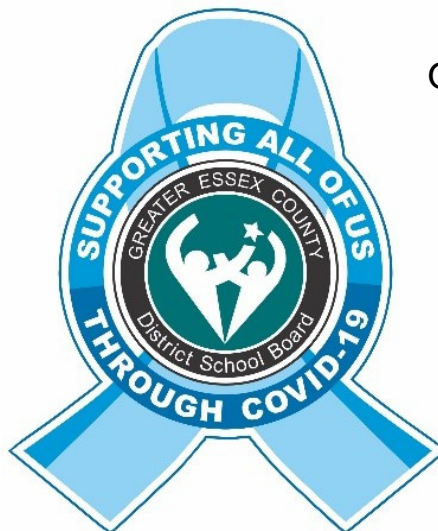
With the urgent shift to on-line education, technology became a priority for both staff and students. The GECDSB Information Technology department was forced to immediately inventory our resources, clean and image thousands of machines and get them to where they were needed.

Technological support was also a priority and the department mobilized all staff to the task of making sure that those who had board-supplied devices could use them effectively. It was a monumental effort!

## Mental Health and Well-Being

While we have maintained an awareness of and concentration on the importance of mental health and well-being for a number of years now, the pandemic required us to focus even more intensely on the needs of our staff and students and their families.

We developed a section of our website we titled Supporting All of Us Through COVID-19 for that purpose; to provide resources to students, staff and families from our many partners in the community and those which we gathered and created ourselves. The GECDSB Psychological and Social Work staff produced a series of podcasts and videos to help young children, teenagers and adults. That is a pleasant benefit from an emergency situation that will continue to serve our board after the crisis is over.



GECDSB\_Psychological Services

@GECDSB\_psych

GEC Student Well-Being

@GecWell



GEC Student Well-Being

@gec.studentwellbeing



## School Construction / Renovation

With the exception of a short period when the pandemic lockdown affected construction, one thing on which we were able to make steady progress was the design, construction and renovation of schools.

### *Legacy Oak Trail*

The new school in LaSalle, that will replace the current Prince Andrew Public School, started taking shape. The name selected for the new building was Legacy Oak Trail Public School, as a tribute to the area's natural history and to instill a sense of environmental awareness in the school community. The name establishes an identity - the cultivation and preservation of nature - and acknowledgement of its importance in the future health and growth of our communities. Foundations for the school were laid near the beginning of the pandemic and it should be ready to open in September of 2021.



### *James L. Dunn*

The School on Mercer Street – a new home for Giles Campus French Immersion Public School – has been named after James L. Dunn, a trailblazing, 19th century Black politician, business person and community activist.

Work on the first phase of the project, the rehabilitation and renovation of the existing heritage building on the site, was complete this year and when the design was finalized work commenced on the new addition.

### *W.C. Kennedy C.I.*

A major reconstruction of the historic façade of W.C. Kennedy Collegiate Institute was begun this year. The budget for the project is approximately \$5 million. Much of the work is cosmetic in nature, yet necessary to prolong the legacy of the classic structure.

### *Kingsville K-12*

It was a pleasure to join Chatham-Kent-Leamington MPP Rick Nichols for a major announcement in Kingsville last December. We were able to finally reveal the location of the new K-12 school which will serve the Kingsville – Harrow area. A 25 acre parcel of land has been purchased on Jasperson Drive near the Kingsville arena. Work continued last year on the design and we hope to have this school finished some time in 2023.



### *New School Designs*

We also approved the design and budgets for and hosted public meetings to preview the designs of the new high school in Amherstburg that will replace General Amherst High School and Western Secondary School and the school which will combine the Eastwood and Parkview communities in Windsor.

## Essex P.S.

Work began in the Spring on a 10 thousand square foot addition to Essex Public School. It's going to be the home of Story Book Early Learning Centre, which will provide 120 daycare spaces for children from birth to age 4, which were much-needed in that area of the county.



## Heritage Award

We have been able to utilize increased levels of renewal funding, from the Ministry of Education over the past 3 years to complete some long-overdue work on these three schools, which are all approaching their 100th anniversaries. Prince Edward PS was opened in 1921, Queen Victoria in 1922 and Hugh Beaton in 1929.

Three GECDSD schools: Hugh Beaton Public School, Queen Victoria Public School and Prince Edward Public School have been recognized by the City of Windsor with Built Heritage Awards. This honour acknowledges "excellence in long-time heritage stewardship and/or recent well-done conservation work"



## Schulich Scholarship

Anish Aggarwal, a grade 12 student at Vincent Massey Secondary School received an \$80,000 Schulich Leader scholarship to study computer science at the University of Waterloo. Anish is a great student who gives back to the community. He founded and ran the Code Reach program at Massey, introducing Elementary students to coding and computer science; participated in numerous hackathons; established Massey's first chapter of Canadian Young Physicists; and he is a lead member of the computer science club.

Through The Schulich Foundation, these prestigious entrance scholarships were awarded to 100 high school graduates each year, enrolling in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) undergraduate program at 20 partner universities in Canada.





## GECD SB Graduation

The ordered closure of schools by the Ministry of Education did not impede our students from graduating, though the work under the unique circumstances was challenging. It also made the acknowledgement and celebration of their success impossible in the traditional way. Proms and convocations had to be cancelled, which required a creative solution to recognize successful students and share their achievements with their communities.

School staff and administrators took the energy and enthusiasm usually invested in large assemblies and channeled it into videos and on-line events for students. As well, the board provided schools with lawn signs for each graduate, Grade 12s and Grade 8s, so they could boast to their neighbours about their accomplishment.

It certainly wasn't the same but it was unique and that, on its own, will make graduation in 2020 a memorable experience.



## Acknowledgments

There has never been a school year comparable to this one. 2019-20 will be memorable for so much, and not just for the uncertainty, urgency and singularity of the experience. I am proud of the GECD SB senior team for their creativity and effort to devise and organize a learning model that salvaged what might have been a lost year.

I am humbled by the diligence of our staff to adapt to and meet the challenges we faced, guiding students through a turbulent learning landscape. It was heroic!

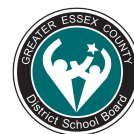
Parents and guardians were equally gallant, not only, in managing their own, individual circumstances during the emergency, but in their advocacy for their children's right to adequate educational conditions.

The GECD SB Board of Trustees managed the unpredictable circumstances with equanimity. Their guidance and support was focused and respectful and they effectively represented the concerns of the residents of Windsor and Essex County.

Our students were certainly victims of the turmoil and they suffered in many ways, but I hope they also gained greater appreciation for school, which many often minimize or take for granted. You are never made so aware of the important things in life until you risk losing them.

Time was lost, but, I feel, not wasted. The preceding pages are a testimony to that. Nothing was perfect, except the commitment to our vision and our mission - that was always precise. We will never be the same, certainly better - in no way diminished by the experience.

We are prepared for adversity in whatever form it now appears. 2019-2020 was a year most worthy of reflection and our perseverance demands that we look back on this school year not at the times we stumbled but for the mountain that we climbed.



*Erin Kelly*

Erin Kelly, Director of Education

For details on the school year, please visit the [2019-2020 Operational Report](#) and [2019-2020 Budget](#)