

## Exemplary Environmental Leadership/Sustainability Program or Initiative

**School Board**

**Bluewater District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address**

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**Name of Program/Initiative**

**Bluewater Outdoor Education Centre (BOEC)**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative**

**[www.oec.bwdsb.on.ca](http://www.oec.bwdsb.on.ca)**

**Description of Program/Initiative**

The Bluewater Outdoor Education Centre (BOEC) serves the students of Bluewater District School Board (BWDSB) in Grey and Bruce Counties. It has been in operation since 1973 and is currently run in co-operation with the Bluewater Education Foundation, which helps to fundraise for capital projects at the Centre.

The BOEC sits on a 320 acre old farm site near Wiarton and is staffed by a Site Manager, two Outdoor Education Specialists who deliver the programs and support staff. The priority is to ensure all grade six students in Bluewater have the opportunity to visit the BOEC for three days. In addition, some grade seven and eight classes participate in three-day camping trips. Various grades attend day trips when there is time available in the schedule, as well as secondary outdoor education, leadership and physical education classes also use the facilities.



The 40-year tradition of outdoor education in Bluewater and the resulting support for the program is overwhelming. The Bluewater Education Foundation (BEF) has met with great success in their fundraising, allowing for the construction of a new dorm and dining facility, classroom building, astronomy observatory, and repairs to the 1886 barn.

The BOEC and BEF forged a strong partnership with the Bluewater Astronomical Society (BAS) in the fundraising for and operation of the E.S. Fox Observatory and delivery of evening astronomy programs for students.



Staff members consistently work on program development focussing on inquiry based learning and incorporating the new Social Studies curriculum into the program.

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The BOEC maintains an inventory of specialized winter and summer equipment, including skis, snowshoes, telescopes, canoes, tents, furs, field guides, bird and mammal mounts, and maple syrup operation equipment.



Indicators of success for the BOEC hinge on participation in the program, favourable evaluations completed by visiting teachers and parent chaperones, economic sustainability and return visits by both educators and non-board groups. Of course, the excitement, thank-you notes and commentary from students are the guiding force for overall improvements to our program.

### **What has been the Impact on Student Learning?**

Students look forward to their BOEC experience for a very long time before they arrive. Teachers often report that those students who have trouble focussing in their classrooms thrive at the BOEC. They also comment on students who are quiet at school “come out of their shells” and interact with their peers more while at the BOEC. Some students report being inspired to take on environmental projects. The grade six trip sets a strong foundation for environmental activism in schools and Bluewater District School Board has a long tradition of success with Envirothon, Outers programs, environmentally focussed science fair projects and students going on to careers focussing on the environment. As well, this region boasts a high number of university graduates who return to the region because they feel connected to the landscape and living in the area is important to them. Many local students join environmental organizations and serve on the board of directors for these organizations.