

# Annual Director's Report 2020-21





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## JoAnna Roberto, Director of Education, Grand Erie District School Board

We've all said it and heard it many times – yet it remains undeniably true. This was an unprecedented school year. I am so proud of our students and staff, collectively rising to the challenges and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and finding countless innovations, large and small, to engage and inspire.

It is my pleasure to present this report as a small way to document the big things that happened over the course of the year. Grand Erie has 72 school and 26,000 students, making it impossible to record all the progress and learning, all the challenges and rewards. It is also impossible to capture the herculean effort required as we pivoted between in-person and virtual learning. A great deal went into making this transition as positive for students and educators as it could possibly be.

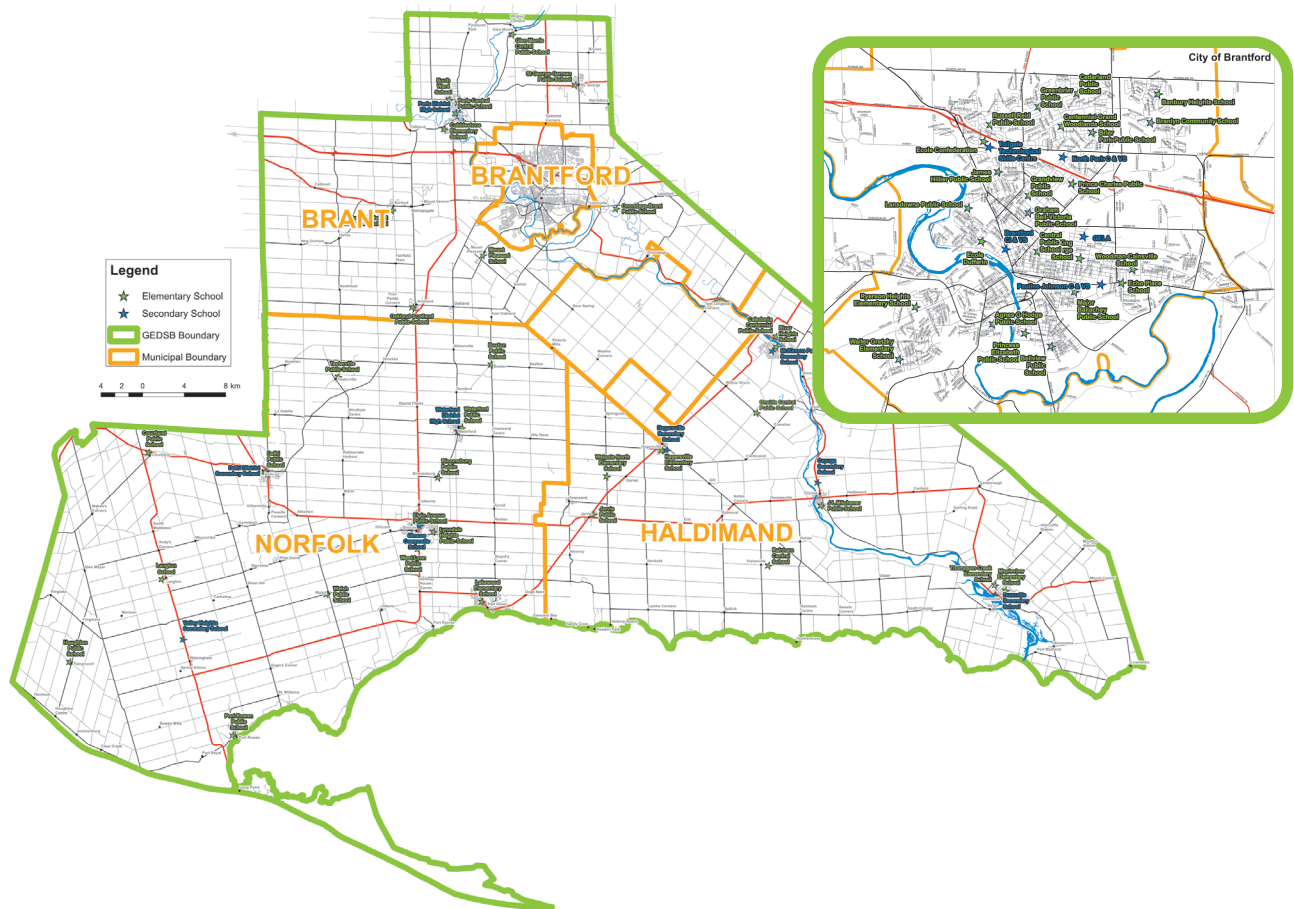
As we work through the 2021-22 school year, I'm continually amazed and thankful for the people working alongside me. Our educators and administrators demonstrate time and again their commitment to learning, well-being and belonging. I'm energized by this commitment. We have set ambitious goals, and I'm excited to be part of the Grand Erie team striving to learn, lead and inspire.



# Annual Director's Report 2020-21



## Grand Erie by the numbers



**58**

Elementary Schools

**14**

Secondary Schools

**26,000**  
Students

**2,700**  
Permanent Staff

**4.2m**

Sq. Ft. of Facilities

**4,000**  
sq. km. in Area

**\$345m**  
Budget

**88%**  
Spent on Student  
Instruction and  
Accommodation

# Annual Director's Report 2020-21



## Board of Trustees

Thank you to our Trustees for their leadership and support of learning.



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STUDENT TRUSTEE



**Zachary Garbaty**  
STUDENT TRUSTEE

In June 2021, passed a

**\$345 million**

budget.



Provided leadership in the development and launch of a new **Multi-Year Strategic Plan** for 2021-2026.



Committed financial and human resources to support broad and equitable access to **virtual learning.**



Invested in **Indigenous Education and reconciliation** by approving the expansion of programming.



Invested in student **well-being** and **belonging** by supporting initiatives of the **Mental Health** and the **Safe and Inclusive Schools** teams.





## Learning and Leading in a Pandemic

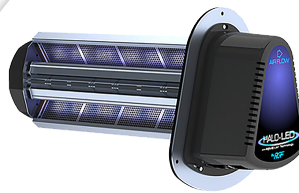
The story of the 2020-21 school year was without doubt the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges and demands of supporting learning while managing health and safety protocols and uncertainty was an incredible challenge. Yet we found ways to thrive.



**31,309** individual Brightspace users for online learning across the district. ✓

In August 2020, the board launched the **Virtual Learning Academy** to serve the unique needs of students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 with online learning. This proved to be instrumental later in the year as all students moved to this space. ✓

Countless hours were devoted to **managing** and **communicating** the impacts of COVID-19 across the district and province, with strong leadership paving the way. ✓



**NERVA**  
ENERGY

Grand Erie was among the first boards to start implementing **ventilation improvements** in its schools. ✓

Grand Erie's **Information Technology team** sprung into action, sourcing and deploying technology to families across the district to ensure every student had the resources required to fully participate in virtual learning. Grand Erie established a parent support line to help families manage technical issues as students moved to online learning from home. ✓



Educators **got creative**, finding new ways to engage students in learning. ✓



**Lena Latreille** received the Patti McClester Memorial Award for her tremendous leadership, patience, compassion and a consistent willingness to help supporting Grand Erie's pandemic response. ✓

## Elementary Education

Educational goals focused on numeracy and literacy for the 2020-21 school year. Educators, administrators developed programs and professional learning to support these goals.

Elementary educators were engaged in

### **differentiated professional learning**

to support students' mathematical skills.



Grade-specific and topic-focused **after-school workshops**

(face-to-face and virtual).



Administrators engaged in a

### **virtual professional learning opportunity**

with Dr. Christine Suurtamm.



Support for administrators with their planning and delivering of

### **professional learning**

at monthly staff meetings.



System support in 2020-21 focused on developing

### **educator understanding of effective instruction and assessment in literacy.**

Professional learning delivered in the effective implementation of the Benchmark Assessment System, GB+, Steps to English Language Proficiency-STEP, and the implementation of new digital resources.



**70%** of grade 3 students were achieving at Level 3 or higher in math.

**70%** of grade 7 students were achieving at Level 3 or higher in reading.

**70%** of grade 8 students were achieving at Level 3 or higher in reading.

**69%** of grade 7 students were achieving at Level 3 or higher in writing.

Report Card data June 2021





## Elementary Education

The reliance on virtual learning was also a springboard to new digital innovations to support education and well-being.



More than **200 students** participated in Camp SAIL and the Transitions program. Summer Adventures in Learning highlights included digital artisans, digital creations, and digital storytelling. ✓

As part of the **mathematics long range plan**, a new digital resource was developed. Providing teaching supports for each grade to support the development and implementation of the new elementary mathematics curriculum. ✓



Kindergarten registrations relied heavily on digital and virtual outreach. Grand Erie staff rose to the challenge, developing a **digital flipbook** to help get our youngest learners ready for Kindergarten. Brant Life, a regular program on local Rogers TV, hosted a special segment about Kindergarten registration with Director Roberto, students from King George Public School and Vice-Principal Dina Atanas. ✓

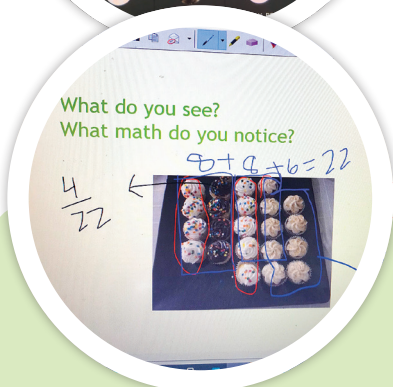
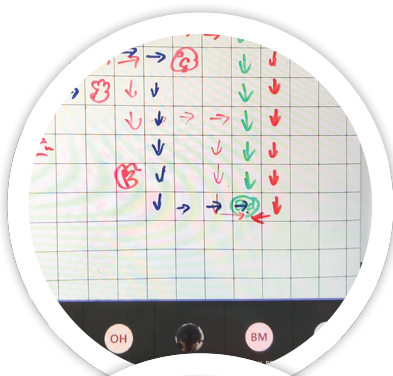


In March, the **Mid-Term Board Improvement Plan** for Student Achievement Well-Being shone a spotlight on accomplishments and continuous student improvement and the dedication of staff and administrators. ✓

More than 50 educators took advantage of facilitated **Additional Qualifications** learning for elementary mathematics instruction. ✓

## Secondary Education

Educational goals focused on mathematics and literacy for the 2020-21 school year.



The November 13, 2020, PD Day focused on **mathematics teaching and learning.**



A **Secondary Math Facilitator** provided coaching support for educators of MFM 1P in four Grand Erie secondary schools.



Members of the Student Success team facilitated **virtual sessions** with secondary educators on data and numeracy.



### A cross-curricular literacy pre-assessment

was distributed to all secondary schools. The pre-assessment identified reading and writing skill gaps across the different curriculum areas and supported individual teachers with strategies to close identified literacy gaps.



### Grade 9 open houses

went virtual in this school year, as secondary staff connected with prospective students through a variety of digital platforms.





## Secondary Education

Blended and remote learning due to COVID-19 provided the opportunity to build teachers' and students' digital literacy skills.



### Credit recovery sections

introduced in semester two and summer learning programs were two Student Success interventions to help students recover credits and stay on track for graduation.



Grand Erie's semester one pass rate in MFMIP was **87%** for all students. The intensive support schools had a pass rate of **90%**.



Summer learning included

**1407** registrations in eLearning courses and **480** registrations in online learning courses.

**170** students participated in Reach Ahead credits, **87** in credit recovery and **23** in course upgrades.



### Adult learners:

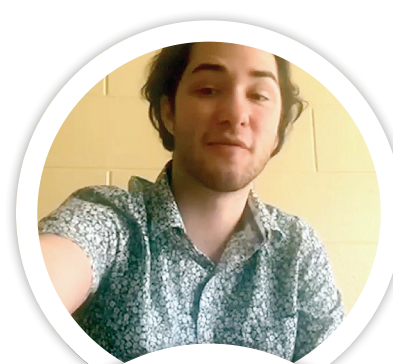
Students under age 21:

**10** graduates

Students over age 21:

**115** graduates

**2,215** credits earned



The pandemic forced **graduations** into the virtual realm, but administrators and educators still found fun and creative ways to celebrate secondary success for students.



## Indigenous Education

Grand Erie serves Indigenous communities including the Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We are committed to creating welcoming spaces of belonging for these students and sharing Indigenous learning with all our students.



Grand Erie hired **Robin Staats** as System Principal Leader of Indigenous Education and Equity. ✓

### Cultural Mentors

joined staff at many secondary schools, providing one-on-one support to Indigenous students and helping infuse Indigenous knowledge and learning into the curriculum. ✓



### Our Indigenous Education Team

works to provide professional development and curriculum resources to elementary and secondary schools across the district. ✓

Grand Erie launched a

### Cultural Competency

program to provide leaders and administrators with training in Indigenous culture and knowledge. ✓



### Education Services Agreement

reports were presented to Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. ✓





## Special Education

As we pivoted between in-person to remote learning, Special Education continued with an enhanced focus on supporting educators to meet the strengths and learning needs of their students. This was achieved by increasing understanding and implementation of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction, and supporting educators' access to training and programming to build resourceful, adaptive environments in which to achieve and thrive.



The number of lessons passed or mastered by students increased by **500%** through use of TeachTown. ✓

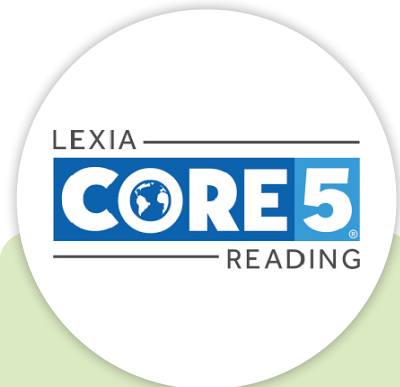
### Continued practices

to support educator understanding of effective differentiated instruction and assessment for students with special education needs. ✓



### The Enhanced Autism Training Program (EATP)

was offered to all Learning Resource Teachers who supported a self-contained Intensive Support – ASD classroom, leading to an increase in educator comfort level and confidence. ✓



**Lexia Core5** was consistently offered to **3,203** students. **38%** advanced at least one grade equivalent level. **33%** increase in students who improved skills and achieved success at grade level. ✓

Implementation of **Tier 1 Interventions and classroom-based strategies** lead to overall improved academic performance. ✓

# Annual Director's Report 2020-21



## Safe and Inclusive Schools

All students deserve to be safe and to feel safe in school, and everyone in Grand Erie shares this commitment. Through this collective responsibility, we contribute to a culture of learning, well-being and belonging. This past year, when staying safe meant staying home, the Safe and Inclusive Schools team shifted from the physical classroom to re-establish supports for equitable, responsive learning environments in a virtual world, keeping student voice at the centre of the work it does.



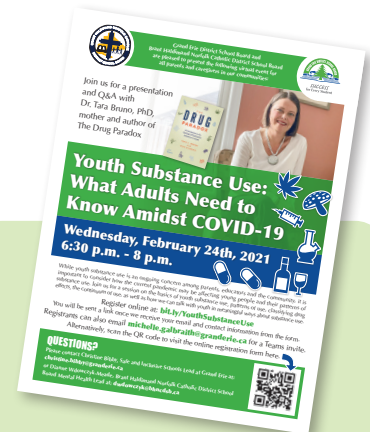
Grand Erie partnered with The Bridge in Brantford to offer two sessions on **LGBTQ2S+** topics, exploring tolerance vs. acceptance, making physical spaces more welcoming and practical tips for using inclusive language. ✓



### Unlearn: Provoking Thought To Inspire Positive Change

introduced participants to the “unlearn” poster designs and how they can be incorporated into schools and classrooms to promote conversations about equity and inclusivity. ✓

Grand Erie completed **student and staff surveys** to gather data around identity in relation to equity and inclusivity and perceptions of marginalization. ✓



The Safe and Inclusive Schools team provided a series of learning opportunities for staff and families with speakers from a variety of experiences to support better understanding and learning, including:

Open and Engaging Conversations with

**Imam Tarek**

Creating Safer Spaces

Youth and Substance Use:

A virtual learning opportunity

with **Dr. Tara Bruno** from Western University

**Jean Samuel** Virtual

Equity Series: Transforming

Education Through

Equity. ✓



## Mental Health and Well-Being

Grand Erie prioritizes building a culture of well-being to support the cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs of each student and staff member. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges to staff, students and families. With schools closed to in-person learning for significant periods of time last year, building capacity, increasing supports and connecting virtually were crucial strategies in meeting the unexpected changes that came our way.



The Staff Wellness Committee created the Grand Erie **Wellness Hub** to act as the central location and easy access for staff to a wealth of wellness-related resources and materials. ✓

### To mark **Mental Health Week**

(May 3 – 8) Grand Erie's Mental Health and Wellness team provided classroom lessons and used social media to engage around "Five Ways to Well-Being." ✓

### **Social Workers**

were trained in evidence-based in-person and virtual counselling. ✓

### **Social-emotional lessons and activities**

were delivered in most elementary schools both in-person and virtually. Thirteen elementary schools received year-long professional learning in Shanker and Hopkins' Self Reg Schools. ✓

### **Working with Dr. Lewis**

Social Workers developed the Grand Erie Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Protocol (NSSI). Professional learning in this area was provided to support staff. ✓

*"...the program prompted a lot of positive conversations with the class and heightened awareness of their social-emotional states."*

*"A positive impact from the Super Self Reg and transition camp is that all but one of the students have had a smooth transition."*

# Annual Director's Report 2020-21



## Belonging

We build a culture of belonging to support an equitable, inclusive and responsive environment for each learner.



Students in the weekend **Punjabi language class** offered through Walter Gretzky Elementary co-wrote a Punjabi-language children's book. ✓

In February, Grand Erie celebrated **Pink Shirt Day** to promote bullying prevention and safe and inclusive schools for all. Staff and students across the district **got in on the message**. ✓



The Safe and Inclusive Schools team delivered **newsletters** to Grand Erie staff to provide resources and information around topics like Black History Month, character education and racism. ✓



We marked **Orange Shirt Day** with the launch of a new Indigenous author English course, Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices. ✓



**Pride celebrations**  
Grand Erie schools, students and staff celebrated Pride across the district. ✓

Grand Erie completed a **staff survey** to gather data around staff to how they perceived their identity in relation to equity and inclusivity, as well as if they felt they had been marginalized at work because of a particular identity. ✓



## Building Capacity

Grand Erie continued to invest in educators, providing professional development experiences and training to help learn, lead and inspire.



More than **49 new elementary and 15 new secondary teachers** went through the New Teacher Induction Program to help orient them to the profession, board and school and to build in mentorship connections.



**Brian Kingshott**, teacher at Paris District High School, was the 2021 recipient of the Baillie Award, recognizing excellence in secondary school teaching.



Grand Erie launched the **#LeadGEDSB Speaker Series** in the spring of 2021, bringing in engaging speakers and inviting administrators and leaders to join, lean in and listen, focus on themselves and leave inspired and renewed.



Grand Erie partnered with **Laurier Brantford** to offer educators access to additional French teaching qualifications.



Anne Goodrow (Lansdowne-Costain Public School) and Tracy Reese (Langton School) were in a group of only 53 teachers across the country to be awarded the **Impact Influencers** honour from Knowledgehook for outstanding data-driven instruction in mathematics.



Through scheduled **professional development days and training** offered throughout the year.



## Human Resources

Over the year Grand Erie made significant investments hiring educators and education leadership to support student learning.



Grand Erie welcomed **April Smith** as Superintendent of Program K-12 (Teaching and Learning).



Grand Erie welcomed **Jennifer Tozer** as Superintendent of Human Resources



**Kevin Graham** joined Grand Erie as Superintendent of Education with responsibilities for secondary and Indigenous education.



More than

**350** educators  
were hired to build teaching capacity.

**200**  
Elementary Occasional

**37**  
Full-time Elementary

**65**  
Secondary Occasional

**38**  
Secondary Full-time

**33**  
Permanent EAs

**28**  
Casual EAs

**19**  
Casual ECEs

**2**  
Permanent ECEs

**2**  
Permanent Early  
Childhood Educators



## Information Technology

The past year highlighted our reliance on technology to enhance learning and maintain learning continuity as classes shifted between in-person and online. Grand Erie's IT professionals proved up to the challenge.



**600**

Teacher  
Laptops  
Deployed



**2,200**

Classroom  
Laptops  
Deployed



**600**

iPads Sent to  
Students to  
Support Learning  
from home



**2,800**

Refurbished Laptops  
Sent to Students  
to Support Learning  
from Home

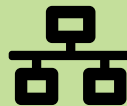


Outdoor Access  
Points Installed  
at all Schools



**500**

Laptops and  
Desktops Deployed  
for Labs and  
Learning Commons



**25**

Schools Converted  
to Direct-to-  
Internet Service



Support and  
Delivery of  
Online Learning  
Platforms

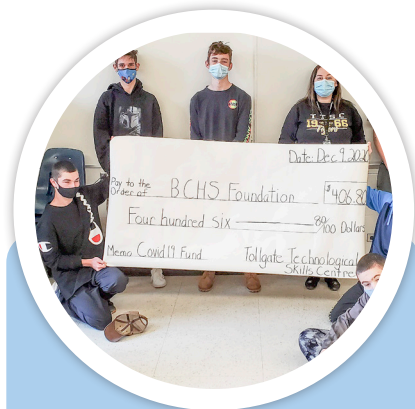


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## Community

Partnerships with communities, community groups, and parents and guardians brought inspiration, challenging ideas and new approaches to support students across the district.



A Special Education Class at **Tollgate Technological Skills Centre** raised more than \$400 for Brant Community Healthcare System's COVID-19 relief fund to directly help our community. ✓



The Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee launched a **Speaker Series** to offer parents practical advice, industry insight and professional experience across a range of topics. ✓

**Targeted Grade 8 to Grade 9 transitions support** was provided to all Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation schools to ensure connections to secondary schools were made and anxiety was reduced. ✓



Sarah Nichol  
Chair of the Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee

- Parents are an important part of every school community



Great things happen when parents and schools work together.

The Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee developed and launched a **new video** to encourage parent participation in school and board councils. ✓

## Building for the Future

Grand Erie is investing in improving learning spaces and infrastructure, collectively working to build a culture of learning, well-being and belonging. We welcomed funding announcements from the province to support growth.



Grand Erie directed provincial funding received during the 2020-21 school year to **improve HVAC systems**, add ventilation systems and improve air circulation and quality in all schools. ✓

**New childcare spaces** were built at Hagersville Secondary School and Central Public School providing space for 20 infants, 30 toddlers and 48 preschoolers, along with family support space. ✓



**Facility improvement projects** included a new sports track at Cayuga Secondary school, Learning Commons projects in multiple schools, upgraded electrical and ventilation systems, and new asphalt and windows at Tollgate Technological Skills Centre. ✓



Over the year, Grand Erie completed **11 Learning Commons** projects, creating open and collaborative learning spaces in schools across the district. ✓

The province is investing **\$16.2 million for a new elementary school** and community facilities in the fast-growing area of Shellard Lane in southwest Brantford. ✓

## A New Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Trustees, community members, students and staff came together to help shape a new vision to guide Grand Erie through the next five years.

**We have a  
Vision to Learn,  
Lead, Inspire.**

**Our Mission:  
Together, we build  
a culture of learning,  
well-being and  
belonging to inspire  
every learner.**

**We build a  
culture of well-being  
to support the  
cognitive, social,  
emotional and  
physical needs of  
each learner.**

**We build a  
culture of belonging  
to support an  
equitable, inclusive  
and responsive  
environment for  
each learner.**

**We build a  
culture of learning  
to nurture curiosity  
and opportunity for  
each learner.**

**We have specific  
goals in place for  
2021-22 and beyond  
to move us forward  
on our Mission  
and Vision.**



*"Everyone should be given an opportunity to learn and grow no matter their ability. The world needs differences - opinions, abilities, interests, experiences."*

*"Prepare students for the future. Connect work to skills they are developing, with more connections to business and problem-solving."*

*"Teach about Canada's history regarding the Indigenous community. Teach what has happened so that it never happens again. Kids are the future."*







349 Erie Avenue,  
Brantford, Ont., N3T 5V3

**Telephone:** 519-756-6301 | **Toll Free:** 1-888-548-8878

**Email:** [info@granderie.ca](mailto:info@granderie.ca)  
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