

Edmonton Public Schools'
DIVISION RECOGNITION
2021–22

HONOURS
AND REWARDS
FALL TO THOSE
WHO SHOW THEIR GOOD
QUALITIES
IN ACTION. — ARISTOTLE



Program

Kick-Off Video

Greetings, introductions and sponsor acknowledgement

Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks

Opening Remarks

Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks

Presentations for Division Recognition of Service

Presentations for Division Recognition of Teams

Presentations for Division Recognition of Merit

Closing Remarks

Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks

Reception

Atrium, Centre for Education



Message from the Board of Trustees

For over two decades, the Division Recognition program has celebrated the outstanding efforts of students, parents, community members and staff. The Board of Trustees would like to congratulate you for being nominated for a Division Recognition Award.

This year's nominees all share a common set of qualities, exemplifying the true spirit of public education. Your efforts have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts. The passion, talent, dedication, support and sense of community you bring to our Division makes a true difference in the lives of students, families, the communities we serve and your colleagues.

You may be familiar with the stories of some of the individuals we're recognizing this year, but other stories will reveal the quiet, behind-the-scenes and often unrecognized work that happens every day in schools and offices across our Division.

Resilience and perseverance are key themes in our Division and this year's recipients did amazing things to support students and each other. Thank you for bringing energy and enthusiasm to your work and for guiding, motivating, and inspiring colleagues, students and families.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank each of you for your service to, and continued support of, our Division. We are so fortunate to have such a fantastic group of people dedicated to Edmonton Public Schools and to public education.



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

Message from Event Co-Sponsor **Scotiabank.**

At Scotiabank, investing in our communities has been a focus for over 185 years. We believe investing in young people is the path to community prosperity.

We aim to support organizations that are committed to helping young people reach their infinite potential. We believe this is an investment in the long-term security, stability and growth of both our communities and our business.

In that spirit, we have been very proud to sponsor the Edmonton Public Schools' Division Recognition Program for the past 20 plus years.

The initiatives undertaken by the Division's staff, students, parents and other community members have a positive impact on our children and our community.

We acknowledge all of the nominees for their contributions and achievements. Individually, you are both inspiring and accomplished. Collectively, you are ensuring our future leaders have the necessary skills and resources they need to support their success.

Brian O'Neill
Director, National Accounts, Edmonton
Scotiabank Commercial Banking

Terry Sparling
Senior Manager, Payments and
Cash Management
Scotiabank Commercial Banking

Edmonton Public Schools benefits greatly from the considerable contributions made by students, staff, parents and community members. Many people volunteer time, talent and energy that not only exceeds our expectations, but also sets an example for others to follow.

These outstanding achievements and important contributions to Edmonton Public Schools are recognized through the annual Division Recognition Program. There are three types of Division Recognition:

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE honours an individual's outstanding professional and/or volunteer contributions to the life of the school or community. Three recipient categories are recognized each year: parents or community members, students in Grades 7 to 12 and staff members. Nominations are made based on a number of criteria, such as: quality service, commitment and the relationship of the individual's activities to schooling and/or the enhancement of public education.

RECOGNITION OF TEAMS honours outstanding contributions or achievements made by groups through collaborative efforts. Three recipient categories are recognized each year: groups of parents or community members, groups of students in Grades 7 to 12 and groups of staff members. Nominations are made based on a number of criteria, such as: significant contribution, the achievement of excellence through teamwork and the relationship of the group's activities to schooling and/or the enhancement of public education.

RECOGNITION OF MERIT honours outstanding achievement of individuals who have demonstrated a standard of excellence in an area of endeavour. Three recipient categories are recognized each year: parents or community members, students in Grades 7 to 12 and staff members. Nominations are made based on a number of criteria, such as: meritorious, innovative, creative or inspiring achievements, leadership and/or endeavours that have brought distinction to the individual, the school, the community and Edmonton Public Schools.

Recognition of Service

CRITERIA: To recognize the contributions made to the Division by parents, community members, students in Grades 7 to 12, and staff through professional and volunteer service. Focus is on quality service and significant commitment to the life of the school and/or the education community by an individual.

STAFF

Erica Vaskevicius, Aleda Patterson School

Erica is the school's Library Technician. She took on the monumental task of opening up the new school's Learning Commons, a job that involved countless hours of sorting, evaluating and organizing books from four schools that were consolidated into the new Aleda Patterson School. She ordered and cataloged hundreds more brand-new texts. "Erica carefully selected books that would engage, enrich, entertain, and educate Aleda Patterson students," says Teacher Sylvie Tissandier. Further to this, she was handed pages of wishlists from staff to order, catalog, deliver and shelve. Sylvie says, "Her selections filled voids in our bookshelves we didn't know we had!"

"Erica works hard to inspire a love of literacy in students and fills the learning commons with her positivity, enthusiasm and kindness," says Grade 3 Teacher Sarah Bigam. She has been a leader in constructing a quality makerspace program to engage students and help them to develop a range of skills. "She masterfully weaves cross-curricular components into her inquiry projects," says Teacher Veronique Langevin. For instance, she started planning a 3D printing project with students after a group of students expressed a strong interest in creating 3D name labels for their cubbies. Veronique says, "Erica continues to shift the learning commons into a vibrant space for our students to learn and connect, including the design of a 21st century learning environment."

Her care and dedication to students extends beyond her many contributions to the physical space of the library. "She has also helped students feel connected while at school," says Sarah. The Library Club Erica established last year was a place where vulnerable students developed social skills, built positive relationships with one another and gained confidence through contributing positively to the school community.

"Erica's knowledge of inclusive literature and technology, as well as her community connections, greatly enrich the experiences of both students and staff," says Veronique.

Donna Kisilevich, Alex Janvier School

On any given day, you might see Donna working on filling hampers of food for families, completing grant applications for a school, or wheeling around a sandwich cart over lunch. As a School-Family Liaison for several schools, Donna is a vital bridge between school and home. Her warm, open and positive personality makes her a go-to person for students and families in need of support.

Students and families are often unaware of the supports available at their school to help with food security and getting to and from school. Donna is incredibly resourceful and highly creative in recognizing and sourcing what students need. “Our most vulnerable are sometimes so overwhelmed by their circumstances that they lack the capacity to initiate reaching out,” says Robert Smilanich, Principal of Alex Janvier School. “[Donna] has an uncanny gift for inserting herself into a situation in a way that is both respectful and well received.” Donna is also loved by students for her supportive and non-judgemental ear and sound advice.

Donna’s colleagues consistently note the “light and joy” she brings into a school. Karen Keats Whelan, Principal of Roberta MacAdams School, remembers her first encounter with Donna well: “Donna exuded such positive energy and enthusiasm for the role that I was truly left speechless,” she says. “Her passion is real and her love for the position and service and commitment to others is exemplary.”

Donna also helped kickstart partnerships at Aleda Patterson School, like Food for Thought, a hamper program in support of food security, and the Rainbows, a group that helps children who have experienced grief and loss. “Donna builds connections between families and community partners and in so doing, creates wrap-around services that enrich the lives of those who call our community home,” says Theresa Purificati, Principal of Aleda Patterson School.

Gaganpreet Lucky, Alex Janvier School

Described as passionate, kind and soft spoken, Gaganpreet’s impact on students and the school community extend far beyond learning. She has a natural ability to connect with and motivate her students, whether she’s teaching online or in person. “Miss Lucky instils a desire to learn and achieve. She encourages students with their talents and fosters their self esteem,” say parents Sarah Hasan and Hasan Baig. “Students love her because she is kind, fun and cares about them and gives acceptance to all kids.”

Gaganpreet shows students that a strong leader can be guided by kindness, empathy and acceptance. She can often be found lending her time to an array of cultural events and experiences, with the aim to celebrate the diversity of the school community. “Her leadership is infectious ... How she openly brings unity in and among the students and community by extending her cultural and diversity support to create a sense of opportunity and belonging,” says parent Allison Orenchuk.

Gaganpreet excels at teaching math, in particular. She is a skilled teacher who has a knack for making students feel confident not only in their learning, but also in life. “Effortlessly, Ms. Lucky makes everybody feel like they belong and are connected. Even when busy she still manages to say hi, check in and offer help in her own unique way,” says student Nathaniel Orenchuk. “Having a teacher like Ms. Lucky is such a privilege, there is no teacher like her.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Dean Jaster, Forest Heights School

Preparing students for junior high is about more than just academics. Dean embraces that challenge and more, as a Grade 5 and 6 teacher at Forest Heights School.

“Our daughter excelled academically but she recognized his influence to challenge her in other ways such as leadership, confidence building and flexibility,” says parent Megan Bulat. “He took the time, engaged us as partners and pushed her outside her comfort zone.”

Dean sees the strengths in every student and encourages them to share their perspectives openly for discussion. “He showed interest in the whole person (outside of just academics) and took everyone’s side even if they were arguing against each other,” says Reid Mattson, a former student.

To create a comfortable, home-like setting in his classroom, Dean adds lamp lighting, interesting art and decorations, and plays music requested by students, so everyone feels inspired and ready to learn. An energetic and passionate teacher, Dean creates a fun learning environment that helps students to understand their self worth and true potential as individuals.

Parent Ashlee Allen says her daughter was a confident person who “finally had a voice in class and loved school” after being in Dean’s class. “[He is] a teacher we will forever be grateful for.”

Jennifer Domanski, Grovenor School

As the welcoming face for children starting Kindergarten at Grovenor School, Jennifer has an effortless way of making school feel comfortable, fun and exciting for children.

“Mrs. Domanski’s ability to build rapport with children and families in authentic ways is like watching magic happen. Children connect with her and their parents are put at ease within minutes,” says parent Carolyn Parkes.

Every child in Jennifer’s class is an individual she takes precious time to connect with and understand. As a result, her students are inspired and excited about school, and families feel a sense of connection in that first year. “Jen cares about each student’s development and their individual learning style. She gives feedback throughout the year to parents with meaningful ways to engage and help our children flourish in their first year of their education journey,” says parent Bernie Olsson.

A naturally playful and creative person, Jennifer has helped lead new initiatives and turned many into annual traditions students are eager to experience. Highlights include forest school, where children venture into the river valley to explore; tiny town, where students visit mini stations, like a post office and veterinary clinic; and Hawaii day, where students take a virtual trip, complete with boarding passes, flight attendants and snacks.

“I could not think of a more deserving educator and person to receive this recognition,” says Jaki Campeau, a teacher colleague. “Jennifer is a team player and seeks to connect with colleagues on a professional level as well as a personal level. Her calm demeanour and encouraging manner welcomes all in her company.”

When families in the community talk about the Kindergarten experience at the school, Jennifer’s name comes up with a mix of excitement, praise and appreciation for her being a skilled teacher and “wonderful human being.”

Ron Ramos, Grovenor School

As Head Custodian, Ron is always willing to help, and consistently goes above and beyond to make whatever school he's in a better place.

Kindergarten Teacher Jennifer Domaniski says, "Ron thoughtfully creates personal connections and often checks in with students and staff to see how their day is going." She shared that when Ron arrived, he started the 'Golden Garbage Can Award' to help motivate students to take care of their learning spaces. She says, "This award came complete with a stylized video that included animation and fun voice overs, a task that Ron clearly did on his own time." Ron also created a yearly Christmas video with staff singing a Christmas carol as a special greeting from the staff to the students and their families.

At Ron's former school, Athlone, Assistant Principal Pam Depeel says, "Ron was known as Coach Ramos. He gave tirelessly of his time to ensure our students could participate in the Free Footie and Free Hockey program." He ensured the teams were scheduled, organized busing and took the team to tournaments and even to an Oilers game. "His strong work ethic, coupled with his great attitude and genuine interest and care of children and staff, make him such an integral part of any team," says Pam.

Athlone BLA Educational Assistant Samantha Block says, "Ron had a huge impact on the school culture."

Not only did he help give students a love of sport, he also regularly brought treats for the staff.

Dena Boyle, Hardisty School (now at Jan Reimer School)

Dena is a pillar of continuity in the school community. Over the years, Dena has taught every grade at Hardisty from Kindergarten to Grade 9. She's described as a master teacher. "The more time you spend watching, the more impressed you are," says parent Tina Trigg.

Dena continuously shows her dedication to creating an inclusive environment by supporting students with special needs and their families. As a lead teacher, Dena worked with the family of a student, Inclusion Alberta and the school staff responsible for programming for the student to improve inclusivity. Dena makes meaningful inclusive education a reality for students with disabilities by accepting them fully into her regular program classroom, adapting curricular programming and offering peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Lyssa Horvyn and Aqeela Khalid, Inclusive Education Consultants from Inclusion Alberta, say, "Dena's collaborative spirit helped nourish each of her student's gifts and talents so that everyone could show the best of their learning." Dena truly believes each child has unique needs and she strives to meet the needs of each student.

Principal Jim Scott and Assistant Principal Kary Lavallee say, "Dena embodies the concept of service to others through her tireless efforts to provide an experience of dignity and fulfillment for all students." This approach to her work has been integral to the success of her students, her colleagues and the Logos Christian program.

Dena's service to the Hardisty Logos program has seen her build a strong faith community within the school community. Organizing monthly chapels, faith events, developing learning materials, leading professional learning, leading teacher, parent and student devotions and prayers and endless advocacy for faith-based public education are the hallmarks of Dena's efforts to this program and students.

Dena is a strong collaborative partner and leader amongst the staff in her school community. She endeavours to reach students on their level, whatever that may be, and sees it as her personal mission to move them forward. Without her dedicated years of service, the school and community would not be the same.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Rene Larochelle, Integrated Infrastructure Services (for service to Strathcona School)

Rene is a carpenter in the Division and has supported Strathcona School for many years. Described as unfailingly courteous, hard working and having the highest standards, Rene has an eye for design and is a master of his craft. No matter the job, Rene always shows up with a smile and enthusiasm.

Over the years Rene has supported Strathcona; he has beautified the school and helped showcase a wide range of projects including student artwork, Indigenous design pieces and the school's history. He has also been a key team member helping with office design configurations and essential maintenance projects. There is almost no place inside Strathcona that Rene hasn't worked on. "He's not only fixed things that are broken, he has transformed work spaces and enabled students to see themselves in the halls and on the walls," says Ron Ward, former Department Head of Student Services.

Art Teacher Christine Teplitsky says, "I have so much respect and admiration for his ability to adapt and problem solve so that every task is completed exactly how I envisioned it and always with the highest level of craftsmanship."

Just a few of his contributions to Strathcona include: building out a display cabinet to create a dedicated space for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to display ceremonial items; mentoring a former building construction student who hand-chiseled a wooden Indigenous turtle welcome piece that hangs in the centre of the school; working with two staff members to transform the conference room into an accessible art gallery; and helping craft a display of close to 100 graduating class composites on the walls spanning the upper and lower hallways of the school.

"Rene is an unsung hero of our Division," says Assistant Principal Natashya Shewchuk. "He gives his best to every job assigned to him and works with a smile on his face from the beginning through to completion."

Brett Goodnough, Jackson Heights School

As a Grade 2 Teacher, Brett is praised by his students and their parents as a superhero in his own right. Brett personally greets the children every morning and takes time to connect with each of them. Parent Kayla Stelter praises Brett's ability to go above and beyond saying "His ability to give 100 per cent to every single student is such an inspiration."

Brett not only took the time to handwrite personal and inspiring messages to every one of his students, but at each parent/teacher event, kids light up as he greets them and he manages to make all of them feel special. Toby Ann Bryngelson, parent to one of Brett's students says "I have never experienced such a high level of quality, care, attention to detail and passion in an educator." He is excellent at maintaining communication and updating parents about their child.

His classroom is full of personal touches, like a nickname on a student's namebar, the math jokes on the board, or the STEM display that's obvious he spent a great deal of time on so the children would love it. Colleagues and parents alike are impressed at how Brett shares his love of learning while simultaneously teaching a packed curriculum.

"Brett is simply a superstar among stars. If you talked to even a handful of his students for five minutes, you'd be handing him this award on the spot," says parent Phil McCarthy.

Ian Doktor, Jasper Place School

Ian Doktor's passion and energy for science and astronomy is contagious. Described as a dedicated, enthusiastic and time-generous teacher, Ian's contributions to science education in our Division and province are admirable.

Jasper Place School Science Lead Mark Haak says that Ian has been instrumental in securing grants to help further science education at the school. Ian has helped secure three Inside Education grants (for a total value of \$15,000) to support student-based renewable energy projects. He received the APEGA Innovation in Education Award (\$4,000) to support engineering and science projects.

"Ian cares deeply about teaching the deep concepts and methods in science," says Mark. "He continually brings ideas he is learning in his graduate studies to challenge students to question how scientists know what they know."

One of Ian's true passions is astronomy. He helped write the curriculum for the locally developed Astronomy 15-25-35 courses. Assistant Principal Rob Simpson says Ian is known to meet students at the school monthly stargaze with telescopes, teaching students how to do astrophotography.

"Occasionally, when time allows, Ian invites students' parents to bring their children to a dark site outside of the city, as well, for better viewing of the night sky," says Ron.

Student Karim Valji says Ian shows students that they can do incredible things, including contributing to real world endeavours.

"He ignited passion for science, learning and confidently embarking on projects far beyond what we believe ourselves to be capable of," says Karim. "Without him, and the opportunities he created, I know that I certainly would not be where I am today—working on satellites in Edmonton's rapidly expanding space sector."



Recognition of Service *continued*

Winnie Bang, Kirkness School (now at Joey Moss School)

When Winnie Bang started teaching at Kirkness School in 2015, it didn't take long for students, staff and families alike to notice her love of education and children. "Her excitement and enthusiasm shone through and those around her became enamoured with her infectious nature and innovative teaching style," says Teacher Susan French.

Winnie gained a reputation for being the school's tech whiz. Whether it was running the Kirkness School News network, school website and Instagram account, video and sound equipment for assemblies and concerts, or online events that helped the school maintain a sense of community, her tech skills made her a saving grace to her colleagues.

Her service goes far beyond technology—Winnie is known for supporting staff and students in unique and personal ways according to Principal Britt Petracek. She has a passion for books and has been integral to the school's efforts to enhance the school and classroom libraries, particularly helping to make the library's collection more inclusive and diverse. Whenever a first year teacher joined the staff, she was there to help them with their classroom setup. She did the shopping for the breakfast and snack program and came to school early to hand out food to students. Using the school's Instagram, she supported Literacy Tip Tuesday and Favourite Book Friday, two fun initiatives to engage parents and share games they can use with their children. These are just a few examples of her contributions to the school community.

She also notices little things make a big difference. While students waited for the bus after school, Winnie provided them with chalk to play with when the weather was warm and movies in the Learning Resource Centre when it was cold. During the school's winter festival, she organized special physical education activities to give students new experiences. She even dropped homework packets to students' homes when they needed it most.

Known for her playful side, whether playing a silly prank or planning a birthday surprise, "Winnie Bang is like a ball of sunshine. People gravitate toward her and they do so for good reason," says Teacher Merry Neale.

Ferdinand Gonzales, Lauderdale School

Ferdinand treats Lauderdale School as if it were his own. A committed head custodian, Ferdinand is an active member of the school community, working tirelessly to complete jobs quickly and efficiently.

Lauderdale Principal Allison Barber says students know how hard he works to keep the school clean and safe for them. Earlier this year, Lauderdale School alumni (from the 1960s) took a trip down memory lane, seeing their old school. All three visitors commented about the care and condition that was obvious throughout the building, much thanks to Ferdinand.

“He is an active part of our school and the students show great respect for Ferdinand and happily greet him each day,” says Allison.

Cameron Ertman, who has taught at Lauderdale School for over 25 years, many of which have been alongside Ferdinand, says his work is top notch. His efforts to keep the school clean and safe makes the staff’s jobs easier because they know the building is so well cared for.

“Ferdinand has a great working knowledge of the various systems in the school and is proactive regarding maintenance (he knows our 60 year old boiler quite well!). I can tell he takes great pride in his work,” adds Cameron.

Lauderdale Curriculum Coordinator Lyndsey Smyth says Ferdinand is exceptional at his job.

“Ferdinand demonstrates the Division’s core values—accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity every day,” she says. “Lauderdale is incredibly fortunate to have such a great team player.”



Recognition of Service *continued*

Cindalee Petersen, Spruce Avenue School

Assistant Principal Tammy Lang says, “Cindy is an impeccable role model teacher with an unfettered commitment to students. Every year, Cindy amazes me with a new whole school initiative or project to engage our students and share her commitment to the community.” Cindy is adored by her students.

Cindy leads the school’s Literacy Team and Citizenship Committee. Her expertise in literacy education is always apparent in the development of her lessons and assessment. Last year, she and her Grade 7 class built a little free library to share and inspire the love of reading with the Spruce Avenue community. She applied for a grant and worked tirelessly to lead her students through the entire project. The class was so proud to win last year’s Make Your Mark contest. This initiative helped students build confidence, leadership skills and increased awareness of the effects of poverty in the community.

Cindy has applied for multiple grants to help the school community. Grade 7 Teacher Tara Flewwelling says, “One that we were most grateful for was the Love of Reading grant.” Cindy successfully applied for the grant and the school received \$25,000 from Indigo/Chapters. “With this grant, Spruce Avenue was able to fill the sparse library with all sorts of amazing pieces of literature!” Cindy is also a driving force behind the school’s awards program and associated partnerships in the community. Because of her efforts, the Lions Club and Kiwanis Club provide prizes and incentives for students, year after year. She is also a major part of our school’s monthly Citizenship Awards, promoting being a positive role model in the school community.

Cindy is always available to mentor and support colleagues as well—whether it’s to discuss lesson ideas, assessments, organization or whatever it is they find challenging. Through collaboration, Cindy created the Program of Study for Language Arts, giving Spruce Avenue staff an effective path to follow to maximize students’ growth. She also established the Spruce Ave Success Tracker to track students’ growth in order to establish the effectiveness of the program of study and to use that data to meet the students at their level. Literacy Teacher Brent Bistriz says, “She has made me a better teacher, the school a better place and the community closer knit. She is the soul of Spruce Ave. Her positive attitude radiates throughout our school. Her light has touched everyone. Her energy lifts us all up.”

Christian Prufer, Strathcona School

When Strathcona School looked to implement a high level Sports Performance program, Christian rose to the occasion and established one of the best High Performance programs in the province. Christian not only brings exceptional athletic expertise to his role, but his unwavering positivity and infectious kindness creates an environment where all students feel welcomed. Assistant Principal Narindar Riar says, “He has created an environment that allows students to both fail and be successful. When they fail, he lifts them up, and when they succeed, he pushes them further the next time.”

Christian created a physical space that allows students to maximize their time when training and a fitness training program individualized for each athlete. Colleague and Teacher Chris Buffi says, “His dedication to the athletes has been a major reason athletes all over the school come to him for any athletic question or concern, and he is seen as a crucial part of the athletics community at Strathcona.”

Equipment in the school’s fitness centre also underwent major assessment in the past year under Christian’s guidance. It now provides more space for larger group workouts and offers students equipment to help them progress in their training. Student Kailtin Tetteh-Wayoe says, “The influence he has had on the athletes he trains is immeasurable.”

Christian is also the school’s go-to first aid provider. No matter the situation, Christian always takes the time to assess each student and make sure that they’re safe. When a student needs first aid, he communicates well with parents and routinely follows up with the student. In a busy high school, this is such a valuable service.

Christian continues to show his kindness toward students and staff on a daily basis and without hesitation. The wealth of knowledge and wisdom he shares with his classes and the immense passion he takes with him everywhere he goes is inspiring.

Bethany Dalmer, Svend Hansen School

Bethany is a Kindergarten teacher, described as being ‘one in a million’. Through her dedication, ability to build foundational relationships and focus on literacy, numeracy and physical literacy, her students go to Grade 1 with confidence and preparedness.

In the 2021–22 school year, Bethany taught an online Kindergarten class. Her consistency and ability to adapt to the online environment helped build trust and strong relationships with her students. Parent Jo-Ann Marvin says, “She continually had a smile and endless patience, which is remarkable considering she taught a large online Kindergarten class. Ms. Dalmer worked tirelessly to make the kids feel welcome and included.”

In Bethany’s online class, students went on virtual field trips to farms and zoos. They went on virtual journeys and exciting scavenger hunts—Bethany went out of her way to create exciting and creative opportunities for students to make real world connections to what they were learning. Bethany also created opportunities so students could interact with her and other students like they would in a physical classroom. She had “Talk Time” some mornings so students could sign in early and have an unstructured conversation with their peers and created breakout rooms so students could meet a variety of their classmates virtually throughout the year.

Bethany’s commitment to every student in her class saw her implement accommodations, strategies and adaptations so that every student could experience success in her virtual classroom. “Her patience and grace dealing with all her students is unparalleled,” says Jennifer Gartner-Barker, whose son was in Bethany’s class. “She has set the tone for what schooling is and what it should look like in his mind and heart.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Umamaheswari Perumal, Svend Hansen School

Uma is the lunchroom supervisors' coordinator at Svend Hansen School, overseeing one of the largest lunchroom supervisor crews in the Division. She helps the school coordinate and supervise over 40 part-time lunchroom supervisors.

Described as efficient, humble, kind and an energetic presence in the school, Uma is respected by her crew and within the community. "Uma is an amazing constant in our work to support students and staff during the lunch hour," says Assistant Principal Christine Leclare.

Uma's high standard for her work has helped shape the efficiency of the Svend Hansen School lunchroom supervision team. Uma serves as a critical connection between the supervisors and school staff. In any situation, Uma is consistent and dependable, which is needed when schedules are juggled daily. She communicates effectively to support the daily, and sometimes unpredictable, nature of the school's lunchroom supervision needs.

Administrative Assistant Jessica McCafferty says, "When I consider how important it is to have compassionate adults working with students, I am reminded that Uma is an exceptionally kind person who loves children unconditionally."

Nancy Lastiwka, Westglen School

To say that Nancy goes above and beyond for students is an understatement. Her attentiveness and care for students who need extra support or help to cope with situations in the classroom, in school and beyond is always accompanied with inclusivity, empathy and kindness. As the assistant principal, Nancy has been instrumental in making Westglen a safe place for students and provides invaluable support to staff and students.

In her over nine years at Westglen, Nancy has helped establish and maintain a culture of safety and respect within the school. She ensures the emotional, social and physical safety of students is met using feeling checks, emotional thermometers and community circles when working with students.

"We have no doubt she has been integral to the emotional and social success for many of these children, ours included," say parents Taylor and Danielle Reese.

The leadership, knowledge and support she provides in helping teachers support students with challenging behaviours, the approach she takes interacting directly with students, and the additional initiatives she leads to support students provide a positive environment for hundreds of children.

Nancy is trained as a Peace Learning Centre facilitator and Rainbows Program facilitator. Nancy has trained Westglen staff in the Peace Learning Centre process and is a mentor to many teachers, which is helping to build a collective capacity at the school. Nancy also initiated the Rainbows Club and Social Skills Club. Her dedication has created meaningful bonds with the students and families she works with and her programs have become synonymous with Westglen School.

Parent Heather Manweiller says, "My kids are learning invaluable lifelong skills at Westglen School through people like Ms. Lastiwka. I'm simply amazed at the level of support and certainly grateful."

Wolf Kolb, Winterburn School

Wolf is described as respectful, open-minded, professional, a great problem solver; someone who encourages staff and parents to share their thoughts and concerns with him.

Parent Tonya Luffman says, “Principal Kolb has made a difference at Winterburn and has positively impacted the school and the lives of so many. His heart, skills, knowledge, willingness to help others and dedication to our children and the community make him a great nominee.”

He thrives knowing that all school community members feel welcome and included. During morning and after-school supervision, Wolf is always present. He takes the time to talk to and engage with students and their parents. He also invites role models and leaders from the community to share their experiences with students. “He demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to the Winterburn community,” says Tonya. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wolf provided less fortunate students and families with their essential needs, which had a huge positive impact on their lives. Within the school, he also actively promotes many initiatives such as Asian Heritage Month, Refugees World Day, Indigenous Day, Homework Club, Cultural Day, Breakfast Club, Fingerprint Project and I Identity Project.

Educational Assistant Rula Khanfar says, “Wolf has a great sense of responsibility toward all students regardless of their needs, backgrounds or requirements.” He ensures proper supports are in place, like providing special programming, specialists and a therapist to support “the successful room” where students can access mental and emotional support. Parent Fatema Al refaie says, “He is dedicated to keeping parents updated and informed. I am sure my daughter will have the best education, social skills and care.”



Recognition of Service *continued*

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Ruby Swanson, Balwin School

Ruby is a dedicated community volunteer. “She has had a meaningful impact on the Balwin community,” says Teacher Chelsea Robbins.

Ruby spends three full days a week at the school. While she’s there, she often spends time giving students who are recent newcomers to Canada extra help with their literacy and numeracy skills. She found ways to teach foundational reading, writing and numeracy skills through games, dance, and simple conversation. Assistant Principal Andy Connelly says, “She was relentless in her support of students and learned multiple research-based practices in order to support the students better. She took a number of non-readers with no previous schooling and had them reading by the end of the year. The sheer joy students had being able to read to their friends and family was evident as they shared their growing skills. And that was a result of Ruby’s dedication.”

Outside of class time, Ruby teaches students to crochet at recess and lunch, attends field trips and regularly supports fundraisers. Grade 6 Teacher Sarah Ferrante says, “It’s no surprise that every single student wanted time with Miss Ruby. They would give up Phys Ed, recess and lunch, just to be able to read with Miss Ruby, or learn to crochet—and if 22 Grade 6 boys giving up their recess to stay in and learn to crochet doesn’t exemplify how much Miss Ruby is loved, I don’t know what will!”

“Ruby’s commitment has given our students an even greater opportunity for lifelong success,” says Assistant Principal Connelly.

Ruby recognized a need for clothing within the school so she single-handedly organized and executed a very successful school-wide clothing drive. Over five months, she collected over 3,300 items of clothing, all of which she stored in her basement. She transported, organized and set up the most successful school-wide clothing drive. Over multiple days in the school’s small gym, she enthusiastically helped families go through and select what they needed and wanted. She even coordinated numerous volunteers to work the clothing drive through the day and into the evenings.

Grade 6 Teacher Sarah Ferrante says, “Ruby is the embodiment of what it means to be #balwinfamily.”

Liyu Makonnen, M.E. LaZerte School

Liyu is a Program Coordinator at the Africa Centre and has been a great community partner to M.E. LaZerte. Liyu's impact is felt far and wide by students and staff at M.E. LaZerte. Student Success Liaison Naveed Chaudhry says, "I have witnessed first-hand the impact she has on our school community. Not only is Liyu a strong advocate for students and families in need of support, she is an excellent communicator and values [collaboration] with others."

In the last year, Liyu has brought a connection with the Africa Centre to the school, as an additional layer of support for students. She works closely with M.E. LaZerte's Black Student's Association, which has included supporting students by organizing activities and exhibitions during Black History Month.

Student Olanrewaju Lawal Rasaq says Liyu helped students participate in conferences such as the Black Student's Association Summit. She was instrumental in bringing in the Sangea Drumming Academy to perform in the school's atrium and teach dance lessons to the physical education class.

"Liyu has impacted our school community making us feel safe to be at school. She has helped us feel proud of our skin colour, heritage and culture. She has connected with so many students from our school, and is helping us to create positive change in our community," adds Olanrewaju.

Assistant Principal Jason Smith notes Liyu's ability to work with students who might be experiencing conflict is admirable.

"Her perspective, calm demeanour and outstanding problem-solving skills have helped lead to positive, restorative outcomes for students that we have worked with. We are lucky to have her as a member of our school community," says Jason.

Steve Theriault, Princeton School

"During the 2021–22 school year, some of our students and families were given a gift. It didn't come in a box or bag, but rather in a yellow bus!" That's what Principal Shannon Gilson of Princeton School has to say about bus driver Steve Theriault.

Steve was a new driver assigned to a route driving the school's Interactions program students to and from school. Before he took over, there had been some disruptions in bus service, which was difficult for students and families who need a little extra routine and predictability. Quickly, Steve proved he was reliable and consistent—someone families could really count on.

"As time went on and we got to know Steve a little more, we could see that he was no ordinary bus driver. Steve truly cares about the kids on his bus, he greets them every day with a smile and kind words. It's clear the kids really like Steve and they respond well to him," says Darcy Crichton, Interactions Teacher.

Safety is never far from Steve's mind. He's proactive with bus seating plans so he can help students who need extra support. He's even helped other bus drivers adjust student harnesses to help make sure their bus was safe for students and staff.

Administrative Assistant Lisa Leskow-Luce describes Steve as "Bus Driver Extraordinaire." Principal Shannon adds that "Driving children with special needs, and doing it well, takes a special person—and that person is Steve Theriault."

STUDENT

Maxwell Li, Lillian Osborne School

Grade 11 Lillian Osborne School student Maxwell Li is passionate and motivated by the issues students are facing, and is dedicated to keeping the school community safer. Active in both the school community and within the city, Maxwell volunteers for the food bank and canvases for local politicians.

He was elected to the student council in both Grade 10 and 11, and was a member of the Student Senate from 2020–22.

Parent nominator Sarah Chen says of Maxwell, “He has made the school community more inclusive. His peers are so proud of him to continue to be a representative of Grade 11.”

Peer Rick Lin says, “Maxwell is a great motivator of people, and he works extremely well with others. He is friendly and will earn your trust quickly. Maxwell is a great leader.”

In addition to the countless hours he spends volunteering, Maxwell is also the junior men’s volleyball team captain and member of the team that has won two city championships.

His generosity of time started at a young age. He was school environment leader and class leader in primary school and spent five years helping his elderly neighbours remove snow.

Kirsty Ball, a teacher at Lillian Osborne School says of Maxwell, “Maxwell is an innovative student, creative, kind and has patience like no other. I assure you that Maxwell has intentions to listen to his peers, promote change when needed and act as an exemplary facilitator, voice and classmate to those who vote him into the school council.”

Recognition of Teams

CRITERIA: To recognize the contributions made to the Division by a group of parents and community members, the achievement of a significant goal through co-operative group efforts by students in Grades 7 to 12, and the excellent contributions made to the Division by staff through collaborative group efforts. The focus is on co-operation, participation and excellence in performance by a group of people. Achievement or contribution has brought distinction to the group, the school and/or the Division.

STAFF

Balwin Custodial Team

The members of this team are Bernarda Bachlan, Nellie Cayabyab, Felino Dela Cruz and Carol Manahan.

The Balwin custodial team are described as “superhumans” and the backbone of Balwin School. The team adapts to different situations without hesitation and are dedicated to keeping everyone safe and healthy. They demonstrate exceptional teamwork, selflessness, dedication and care in their work every day.

Especially during the pandemic, the team went above and beyond to clean, disinfect and support the school community. They expertly dealt with multiple changing cleaning schedules quickly, communicated effectively with staff and built on the strong relationships they already had established. Their support allowed Balwin School to manage the learning environment during the pandemic. “The energy and connection throughout the two main COVID-19 years was exceptional with the work done to support students, teachers and families during COVID-19 and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment,” says Christina Jones, Principal at Svend Hansen School and was principal of Balwin last year.

Whether they are setting up for an event, shovelling snow or repairing things around the school, this positive and hard working team is always taking care of Balwin School students and staff. Teacher Jasmine Derkach says, “Students’ faces light up when they see them in the hallway or when they come into our classrooms. You can tell the bond they have made with some of our most vulnerable students.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Communications Management Team

This team is made up of Acting Director Carrie Rosa and Managers Andrea Sands, Mangal Singh and Katie Woodfine.

Communications Consultant Erin Cook describes the Communications Management Team as a supergroup of musicians: “Each of them is skilled and competent on their own. Put them together, and their talents and abilities combine into something even more impactful.” This team is composed of Acting Director Carrie Rosa, and managers Andrea Sands, Mangal Singh and Katie Woodfine. “I don’t know another group of people that are so willing to give their time and their wisdom so openly. I feel extremely proud to be part of their team and privileged to be able to learn from them,” says Willa Kung-Sutton, Graphic Designer.

Carrie is calm, strategic and responsive, bringing a sense of intuition that guides even the most complex work. “Our team is set up to thrive everyday because of her,” says Heather McIntyre, Communications Consultant. Andrea Sands’ vision and creativity, along with open collaboration with her team, is respected and appreciated. “Andrea never stops challenging us to keep our words strong, meaningful and focused on our audience,” says Erin Cook. Mangal Singh brings technical know-how and project management expertise to keep the work on track and improve how information is shared. Heather says, “His drive to make things better, combined with his patience, attention to detail and collaborative nature is integral to our team.” Katie Woodfine’s dedication to staff communication, great content and ensuring a seamless intranet experience is second to none; while also leading large projects and urgent pieces. Erin says Katie is a “champion for all of us and always makes time for thoughtful feedback.”

Creativity and solution-building is abundant when you get all four of them in a room together. Thanks to their leadership, the Communications team won silver in two Awards of Excellence at the 2021 Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) National Awards Ceremony for their work on the Edmonton Public Schools COVID-19 Re-entry Communications Plan. This achievement came in addition to communicating large initiatives such as the Division’s Anti-racism and Equity Plan and developing new ways to tell positive stories from throughout the Division. “I know we are able to achieve what we do as a department because of them,” says Heather.

For Willa, “the Communications managers are both the brain and the heart of our department. Brain, because they are incredible strategic thinkers, highly organized, proactive and intuitive decision-makers. Heart, because they lead with compassion, empathy and genuinely care about our team members and all the work we do together to support this organization. They always ensure our workplace is a welcoming and positive space for collaboration and creativity.”

Dovercourt Interactions Team

This team is composed of teachers Kelsi Lowe, Ashley Mullan, Karishma Sarin and Breanne Spence, and educational assistants Melania Abad, Tatiana Celemin, Gilda Guillera, Felicidad Mazive, Rabi Musah, Jane Reilly, Melissia Walton and Shelley West.

The Dovercourt Interactions team supports three Interactions classrooms at the school. One of the first things that's obvious when you enter one of their classrooms is the cheerful environment that supports students visually, kinesthetically and orally. Students know they belong and are cared for in these environments. The team upholds each student's dignity in all that they do.

"It is truly remarkable to be in a space where the uniting belief is that all children have the potential to learn," says Principal Leanne Moncrieff. "And that when provided with a rich learning environment, they will indeed learn."

The team is always looking for new ways to help students learn—they use multiple types of supports and ingenuity to meet the diversity of needs and behaviours in their classrooms. They work tirelessly to create differentiated lessons so students experience success, and feel engaged and motivated in their learning. The team is dedicated to improving their knowledge of autism spectrum disorder so they can better serve each student. They also generously share their expertise with other teachers at Dovercourt and other Interactions teams in other schools.

One of the many strengths of this team is how well they communicate with each other. They seamlessly adjust as needed to make sure students are safe. They collaborate and communicate constantly all day long and have built respectful relationships within the team that allows for authentic conversations.

"The program feels like a family," says parent Angel Hrycan. "They truly believe in the potential and possibilities of the students they teach. They encourage, challenge and support all of their students."

Recognition of Teams *continued*

D.S. MacKenzie School Staff Team

The members of this team are: Principal Larry Payne, Assistant Principal Erin Regnier, Curriculum Coordinator Allison Zimmerman, Office Manager Ali Whelan, Clerk Shelby Painchaud and Library Technician Jody Kimble; teachers Heather Belanger, Kevin Bissoon, Landen Blize, Maurie Fontaine, Katie Griffith, Marjorie Helder, Jared Henze, Jerick Holberton, Claire Jarock, Kim Krahn, Dave Krawchuk, Shawn Magee, Alena Manera, Justin McMain, Kurtis Nozack, Sara Nyitrai, Amanda Payne, Mark Phillips, Jaelyn Ryan, Catherine Savoie, Deb Sitter, Stacey Taylor, Davis Wiber and Tammy Willard; educational assistants Dolly Kariuki, Tara McEachren and Jay Petersen; Head Custodian Leticia Orozco, Custodian Michael Atsebha and custodial assistants Vicki Artunduaga Ceballos and Milagros Sugui.

The staff at D.S. MacKenzie go above and beyond for students every day. They provide an inclusive environment for all students and have built a strong school community that both students and families feel part of.

Thanks to the dedication and care of the D.S. MacKenzie School team, led by Principal Larry Payne, students are able to step out of their comfort zones—the team has huge school spirit and helps build confidence in students while providing them a safe and trustworthy support system.

“We are beyond grateful to all of the staff,” say parents Nancy and Darren Kirkpatrick. “Dr. Payne has created a sense of community and dignity in how he treats his student body. This is something to be recognized and applauded.”

Every staff member at D.S. MacKenzie contributes to the supportive environment students experience. Staff genuinely care for the well-being of students. They are always approachable, visible and involved in the life of the school, and have created a community of respect and dignity where every student matters.

“The teachers take pride in making sure students from all walks of life are provided with the best education and opportunities possible,” says parent Meighan Carriere.

Horse Hill Music Teachers Team

Joanna Dick and Marilyn Gehring are described as the “dynamic duo” of the Horse Hill music program.

They are accomplished and experienced music teachers in their own right, and their sense of teamwork and collaboration only makes them stronger. They worked together during COVID-19 online learning, even when at different schools, and have since jumped at the opportunity to put their collective strengths together at Horse Hill School. “Their dedication and commitment to the success of all students has always been at the forefront of their minds when planning for all grades and stages,” says Teacher Morgan Harbaruk.

Joanna and Marilyn have a deep love for music and fine arts, and their passion comes through in their teaching. “Their strong commitment to collaboration and innovation has prompted tremendous opportunities for our students to engage with the arts through a variety of artists in residence, musicals, instruments and theater experiences,” says Principal Nouha El-Ali.

They create a teaching environment that is welcoming and inclusive for all students, and are always considerate of the close-knit family feel of the school. Joanne and Marilyn consistently exceed the expectations of their colleagues—they’re described as team players who are always willing to jump in and help students where they can. “Joanna and Marilyn have gone above and beyond their work with students whether it’s working with students with COVID-19 limitations and creating virtual concerts to being part of the wellness committee and providing opportunities for staff to come together and socialize,” says Assistant Principal Clair Sprake.

This skilled pair of music educators inspire a love of music in Horse Hill students and embody the Division cornerstone values of collaboration, equity and integrity.



Recognition of Teams *continued*

Mental Health Transitions Team, Hospital School Campuses

This team is composed of nurses Ryan Forster, Danielle Pawliuk, Jeffrey Cheng, Lynne Finch, Agnieszka Damiza and Rob Seifeddine, and Therapist Shantelle Joevenazzo.

The Mental Health Transitions Team (MHTT) is a group of healthcare professionals who help students, families and staff as students transition in and out of Hospital School Campuses.

“MHTT is incredibly resourceful, non-judgemental, quick to respond, eager to support and most importantly of all, approachable,” says Renee Parker, Student Support Counsellor at Centre High. When reflecting on her experiences with the team, she reinforces the vital role they play in transitioning students from a hospital campus to a school setting.

The team guides each student in their transition to regular school with great care, attention and compassion, recognizing when they may be struggling and need more or less support. “It can be an extremely challenging situation knowing students are possibly dealing with medical issues that are either physical, emotional, psychological or a complex combination of the three. The MHTT [supports] these students while empowering the adults in the life of the student,” says Renee.

The MHTT takes a measured, compassionate approach to supporting students who need to access both education and targeted health care supports. The team is often described as the bridge or glue that connects the two separate, but interwoven, systems of education and health care. “Bridging gaps between health and education is critical to Edmonton Public Schools’ priority of promoting a comprehensive approach to student and staff well-being and mental health,” says Karl Merritt, a former program manager and clinical lead at CASA Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health.

In the 2021–22 school year, the MHTT partnered with select schools with Behaviour and Learning Assistance programs. Satoo School was one of the schools who benefited from the expertise and knowledge of the team. Principal Deanna Neilson counts the partnership as a resounding success for students and families of the school. “It promoted the needs of students, facilitated strong relationships and connection with home and school, and supported families with knowledge and resources that school staff do not have expertise or possibly the awareness of,” says Deanna. “We feel very strongly that the Mental Health Transition Team directly impacted the success of our students.”

International Programs Team

This team is composed of Program Liaison Meguru Nakaya, student advisors Christopher Jette and Christian Laubman, and Administrative Assistant Jhun Plaza.

Chika Hashimoto, Director of the International Department at Kyoto University of Advanced Science Senior High School in Japan, says “The Edmonton Public Schools International Program Team has proven to be one of the most trusted school boards among our many partner schools.

“This team is in close contact with us all the way from the preparation stage of studying abroad to when [students] arrive back in Japan. They warmly support us not only in the enrolment process but also with the acquisition of study permits and the complicated immigration procedures during the pandemic period. They are very attentive to individual needs and careful in their selection of schools,” says Chika.

Specialized Learning Supports Supervisor Elizabeth Shen says this team is meticulous, fully understands and embraces the concepts of honesty and humility, and fully supports each and every member of the team. Every member is able to pay attention to the most minute details which has resulted in high quality, timely service. This alleviates frustrations students and agents can otherwise experience. They have charts, spreadsheets and files that ensure they have every last shred of information on each child in order to best support them. There is consistent honest, frank conversation and expression of viewpoints to meet goals. Through every possible imaginable situation, this team always has time to truly hear the needs of others and support each other without hesitation. “They do what they do each and every day, in a way that exemplifies the best of the human spirit, that deserves the utmost respect and recognition,” says Elizabeth.

Harry Ainlay Assistant Principal Yanick Jean-Proulx says, “Their diverse experiences are a tremendous asset, especially since they are the first line of contact when students, families and outside agencies from all around the world. This group facilitates the transition of many students of varied educational programming and cultural backgrounds. Dealing with all these stakeholders can mean having to navigate highly anxious individuals; however, their wealth of knowledge always de-escalates situations quickly that could otherwise become problematic.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Jasper Place First Responders Team

The members of this team are Athletic Trainer Hailey Collier, Physical Education Department Head Sid Brandsma and Teacher Andrea Facendi.

Nearly 3,000 staff and students walk through the doors of Jasper Place School each day. As in any school, every day is different and the community must be ready for anything, including medical episodes and injuries. As the members of the First Responders Team, Sid, Hailey and Andrea are the first to be called to these events. “Together they help create a safe and supportive learning environment for all staff and students,” says Assistant Principal Susan Meunier.

The Jasper Place First Responder Team has responded with care and compassion to everything from serious allergic reactions and seizures to compound fractures and automobile accidents. When Emergency Medical Services are called, they often comment on what a tremendous job the team has done to triage and stabilize the patient. Assistant Principal Meunier has seen first hand how, “their knowledge and professionalism is a calming presence in times of panic.”

Both students and parents are grateful for the efforts of these amazing First Responders. Cadence Jonasen is a Jasper Place School student who has experienced their care firsthand. “When I am having a seizure they block me from the view of the other students and keep me calm when I am in distress. Hailey, Sid and Andrea create action plans according to my personal needs.” Cadence’s mother Jennifer Jonasen says, “in these times of need, they always keep her safe, comfortable, and calm.”

In addition to handling an urgent medical issue with professionalism, they also ensure that proper treatment and medical care is followed up with later. “They provide students and staff with the highest quality of care and compassion I have ever witnessed,” emphasizes Assistant Principal Meunier.

Interactions Program Educational Assistants Team, Jasper Place School

The members of this team are Somdatta Biswas, Rowan Massing, Arooj Usman and Shirley Wilson.

This team of educational assistants work together every day to support students in the school's Interactions Program. They are equal parts educators, advocates and role models. Described as caring and capable, their skill set and experience with all kinds of learners helps students have a positive and productive school experience. "These students come to school daily with complex needs and the love, patience, and support that these individuals show students and the support they provide to the classroom teacher does not go unnoticed," says Assistant Principal Dusty Freimark.

While the team supports students in school, their expertise extends to families. It's in their nature to advocate for the best for each student. "The team has many years of experience working with special needs and are willing to share their personal experiences to the benefit of both the students and their families," says Teacher Amanda Donst.

This team of caring professionals is always ready to face new challenges, including those that came with the COVID-19 pandemic and at-home learning. During this time, they willingly adapted their job duties and remained focused on how to help students and families make vital connections in a safe way.

A rare combination of skill, kindness and a positive attitude has helped this team earn the respect of their students. They take every opportunity to build their knowledge through professional development, including continually learning new ways to help students communicate. "Some of my greatest moments with my boys are possible because of the work done by these people to help my boys engage with people, show patience, and understand 'first-then' contingencies, which allow us to move through challenges to get to the fun parts of outings," says parent Carol Alderson. "I know that these things came with many years of patience and hard work from our Jasper Place Interactions team."

Johnny Bright Lunchroom Supervision Team

The members of this team are Bushra Akbar, Nadia Arif, Syeda Aslam, Memoona Atta, Seema Gupta, Samiya Iftikhar, Rhea Logan, Anika Louie, Lubna Rehan, Sam Rikstad, Pat Scherger, Rodolfo Tan, Kate Vinson, Sadaf Waseem and Zahida Yasmin.

Assistant Principal Jacqueline Baker says, "This team started together last year and created a school-wide lunchroom environment based on the principles of strong character education, community building and safety. This was one of the most exceptional school-wide programs created during the COVID-19 pandemic that we had in place for supporting safe and caring schools. They embraced the challenges of creating zones, encouraging play while making sure students were fed and ready to engage in learning. They approached the school's students as one large family in different spaces and supported the building of a community around mutual respect, physical literacy and shining bright, our school motto."

Principal Kathleen Marzolf says, "The lunch supervisors worked exceptionally well as a team. Each member arrived on time, with a smile and positive attitude. Their communication skills were a strength. Through the leadership of this team, students were provided a safe and caring environment during a year where this was a challenging task."

"They were prepared every day to provide a comfortable, safe environment for our students during the lunch hour," says Administrative Assistant Patricia Peddle. "They work well together as a team and are very flexible within their responsibilities."

"This team was gentle and demonstrated caring for all students that was reminiscent of parents taking care of their own children," says Assistant Principal Baker.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

M.E. LaZerte Mandarin Bilingual Program Team

The members of this team are teachers Melanie Chan and Ling Zheng, and Confucius Institute Teacher Yang Wu.

Assistant Principal Heather Parrish says, “The Mandarin Program at M.E. LaZerte is exceptional.”

After the two former Mandarin teachers left and retired, Melanie and Ling (both M.E. LaZerte graduates) stepped up to build a LaZerte Chinese community. They gathered support from school administrators, the Confucius Institute, junior highs and especially LaZerte students who were eager to see the program return. Career and Technology Studies and Arts Department Head Julian Pacholik says, “Teaming up with the Institute infused a powerful dimension in the classroom by having a Chinese educator, Yang Wu, assisting with the multi-level instruction.” The Confucius Institute supplied funding to ensure technology (iPads and Chromebooks) were provided. The Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association offered enormous support through the entire Mandarin graduation process. “The two young Mandarin teachers researched what they needed to provide authentic and accessible cultural resources with the support of the school and the library, including a mobile online language lab.” Julian went on to share, “The program’s pride to share their learning and advancements was second to none from covering the second storey atrium with over 400 Chinese lanterns, celebrating Lunar New Year, to designing, building and erecting a Chinese gate, and bringing awareness to Mandarin Grad.”

Student Stacey Yee says, “The Mandarin Bilingual Program promotes a more hands-on, interactive and entertaining way of learning that allows students to be more engaged in their education.” Stacey shared she has also been able to broaden her perspective and love of the culture through the cultural activities incorporated into the curriculum.

“Students in the Mandarin Program get to be part of something exceptional and are challenged to find ways to contribute and make the community a better place,” says Assistant Principal Parrish. “We now have a Chinese gate in our atrium to acknowledge and celebrate this program.”

Old Scona Administrative Assistants Team

The members of this team are administrative assistants Tracy Cheng, Elaine Ho and Corrie Malek.

Old Scona has always prided itself on being a family and their personal nature towards students and parents exemplifies this. “These ladies work tirelessly behind the scenes, enabling our school to function efficiently,” says parent Maricel Reddy. “Despite the large number of students, they still seem to know all the students by their name and are always there to troubleshoot, lend a helping hand and guide our students to where they need to be and what they need to do!”

This team functions as one and sets high standards for everything they do. As a result, the school runs like clockwork. Collectively, they support the school with budget information, overseeing textbooks students need, helping prepare for events and school council meetings, tracking student attendance, answering general questions, supporting colleagues, and so much more. They are also calm, collected and helpful voices on the other end of the phone, or in the office or library. They provide first aid help when needed and are trusted adults to those that need listening ears.

To support the school council and Friends of Old Scona Academic Society, they helped at staff retirement events and with weekly staff appreciation shout-out boards. They made sure each teacher got their daily “treats” in their mailbox and that shout-out boards were ready to go at the beginning of each week.

Parent Hang Cai says, “Their hard work and dedication deserve a big round of applause!”

Soraya Hafez Custodial Team

The members of this team are Head Custodian Luis Machado, Custodian Fernanda Soares, and assistant custodians Irma Gonzalez and Robeleen Pineda.

“I have truly never seen a more efficient, professional, dedicated, and caring custodial team,” says Alix Brown, Assistant Principal at Soraya Hafez School.

Soraya Hafez School opened in September 2020 with new students, families and staff together for the first time in a pandemic-era environment. As the school community navigated the evolving landscape over the 2021–22 school year, the custodial team emerged as a calm, collaborative and innovative team in the school.

They work very hard to maintain the school environment, going above and beyond to keep the school safe and taking extra care to protect vulnerable individuals. Alix Brown is emphatic, “the impact of safety they have had on our staff is profound.”

Beyond their primary responsibilities, the team truly shines in their interactions and relationships with staff and students. Luis always has time for curious questions from students, and helped create a student leadership initiative to keep the school yard clean with Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator Basem Ayoubi. Fernanda, Irma and Robleen are quick to help when staff are working late into the evening. “The integrity of their work, effort and respect for all individuals in the building is to be commended,” says Principal Heather Langenhahn.

Basem adds, “I truly cannot think of a more deserving custodial team to be recognized than the one here at Soraya Hafez School.”

Assistive Technology Team, Specialized Learning Supports (SLS)

This team is composed of Assistive Technology Consultant Lindsay Ballance and Supervisor Ross Ehalt.

This team provides students who present with physical and cognitive exceptionalities the opportunity to increase their independence, participation, access and engagement in academic and environmental activities through identification, implementation and exposure to assistive technology. Assistive technology enables students to compensate for certain impairments. This specialized technology promotes independence and access to the curriculum, and decreases the need for other support. “Bringing increased awareness of tools available, and modelling appropriate use and potential, has enabled students to have a vehicle to share their thoughts and ideas,” say SLS supervisors Lori Anne Ledda and Treva Lunan. “This team has made such a difference in the lives of the students we serve.”

Alex Janvier Teacher Shannon Paul had the privilege of this team working with students in class over the past couple years. Shannon says, “With a patient and research-based approach, they always considered a student’s strengths and interests when finding appropriate technology for that student. They provided ongoing support to help staff learn how to implement, adapt and model a device with the student, and assess the student’s progress with the new technology. Most importantly, they took into account our vision and goals for the student’s learning. They provided newfound independence for my students to communicate and engage in learning, but they also gave me new methods of assessing students’ skills and growth.”

Hardisty Teacher Lane Burchnell says, “Their leadership in the Division’s Stepping Stones to Switch Access pilot project significantly impacted my students’ ability to access education and helped me reform the interventions I regularly use in my classroom. Students have shown us that they are excited to have a say, as well as a bit of control over their environment, with their engagement and huge smiles on their faces.”

Lane adds, “Thank you for your tireless support. Your patience was beyond abundant.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

SLS Google Machine Team, Specialized Learning Supports (SLS)

This team is composed of Occupational Therapy Consultant Jade Batemen and Speech Language Pathology Consultant Regan Petrosky.

Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) provides multidisciplinary services for K–12 students, staff and families in our Division. As a part of this service, consultants write notes and reports to document and share information to support students in their pathway to success. Coordinating and streamlining the note and report writing means that consultants spend less time writing reports and more time in direct service to students and school staff. Jade, with the support of Regan, designed and implemented the use of a tool—the Google Machine—to assist SLS consultants in this work.

Essentially the project involved automating a form to create Google documents from SLS-made templates, and then populating information from the form entry directly into the documents. Step-by-step instructions with screenshots were provided to consultants to support set-up. Former SLS Director Jana Pedersen says, “Their ingenuity and willingness to share has been met with thanks and appreciation.”

Speech Language Pathology Consultant Carolyn Sparrow says, “Jade has mentored and coached her colleagues in using Google Machine, converting those who were initially skeptical into using the program almost daily at points throughout the school year.”

Speech Language Assistants (SLAs) Team, Specialized Learning Supports (SLS)

This team is composed of speech language pathology assistants Kelly Brisebois, Nicole Boddez, Nancy Brown, Jodeanne Clark, Aatifa Gilani, Kathy Horvath, Christina Kehoe, Nicole Kinal, Rashmi Kirkire, Alex Kubbernus, Tina Nixon, Jamie Papp, Kayla Petersen, Melanie Price, Thea Rawani, Chelsea Ross, Brigitte Roy, Tracy Russell, Brandi Turner and Aimee Vermette.

SLAs work with an identified agent of change, such as a teacher, educational assistant or family member, to model and co-teach strategies for students with a complex communication diagnosis (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy) as well as students requiring an augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) system to communicate effectively with others. They direct the teachers/educational assistants/families to resources, professional learning or other opportunities that may help build skills, knowledge and training to support students’ growth. They also provide professional learning opportunities to all Division staff when requested. Although they work under the direction of a speech language pathologist, they work with a high degree of independence with a variety of individuals in various schools every day. “Their role in supporting student communication plays a critical role in student success,” says SLS Supervisor Christie Ladouceur.

SLS Supervisor Cathie Graves-Evans says, “This cohort is a kind, caring, collaborative and solution-focused group! They enthusiastically share materials, ideas, strategies, solutions, ‘workarounds’ and concerns as a way of supporting each other. And I am constantly in awe of their creative thinking!”

“Each team member brings a wealth of knowledge and experience, and new ways to engage students in games and activities designed to support their communication. Each member is willing to try something new, and the gains the students in our Division make is remarkable,” says SLS Supervisor Alexis Renwick.

During the pandemic, the challenge to continue to provide effective support to students, teachers and families while working within Division guidelines to keep themselves and others safe, made their role even more complex and challenging. When COVID protocols required that they not meet in person with students, they developed engaging virtual activities that focused on students’ goals. They also worked closely with families to ensure that supports to develop communication skills continued even when the learning environment was different. Throughout the many new procedures and changes, the team continued to devote energy and resources to students, families and colleagues.

Community Living Skills/Behavior Learning Assistance (CLS/BLA) Team, Strathcona School

This team is composed of Teacher Greg Kereliuk, educational assistants Kelly Pumphrey and John Van Valkenburg, and Lab Technician Pam Fistic.

At the height of the pandemic, while most of the population was working or learning from home, these team members were in the classroom working closely to educate our students. They put aside their personal fears to work with some of our most vulnerable students. “Every day, they came to work and provided education and a safe environment for our CLS/BLA students,” says Principal Hans Van Ginhoven. “Given the context of their work, they truly are heroes.”

Tracy Gerun, Department Head of Student Services, says, “They truly see each student as an individual; they meet each student where they’re at, look for opportunities for growth, celebrate every success, and handle each challenge in a calm and respectful manner that maintains the dignity of all involved. They create an inclusive and encouraging atmosphere.”

Greg has tried to implement inclusion as much as possible, trying to involve students in day-to-day activities within the school. Opportunities for other students to be able to volunteer in the classroom have also been created. “This has been highly successful in helping maintain a culture of caring and empathy in the school community,” says Joshua Spronk, Athletic Director and Physical Education Department Head.

This team has provided consistency to vulnerable students throughout the last few years. It’s an impressive feat when you factor in the variety of needs—physical, medical, mental and emotional—many of the students have.

Joshua says, “This team has become much more than teachers. They have become mentors, counselors, caregivers, and sometimes the only constant in these students’ lives.”

“Our school is a better place because of what our CLS/BLA team brings,” says Tracy.

Svend Hansen Office Administrative Team

This collaborative team is made up of administrative assistants Tamara Dochuk, Jessica McCafferty and Shelly Zugec.

Principal Christina Jones says, “The team has achieved a high level of skill in working within the unique requirements of a lottery school and, in the process, have created a positive relationship with the community, all during the unstable pandemic school operations period.” They’re known to have a strong work ethic, create a happy and energetic presence in the office, and collectively draw on their strengths to support students, parents and staff—even when their workload is substantial. Principal Jones says, “They are exceptional professionals.”

“They went above the call of duty in the pandemic learning period to organize, support and fulfill very challenging office supports,” says Assistant Principal Christine Leclerc. “The online and door-to-door service provided by this team to our students and families was noticed in the community and I am so proud of this group. Their commitment to leadership and support is inspiring.”

Teacher Cheryl Trachimowich shared that the team ensured staff were connected and supported regardless of the teaching environment. With a large number of staff online, this process was a huge responsibility.

This team has incredible skills in technology and digital media which further enhances efficiencies and processes in a large school. “This team has become an integral part of the school community,” says Cheryl.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

PARENT/COMMUNITY

All in for Youth Team, John A. McDougall School

The members of this team are Success Coach Jenna Boonstra, Mental Health Therapist Meena Goalen, Mentor Coordinator Sara Guthrie, Nutrition Support Worker Denise Gutsche, Roots and Wings Worker Hermila Rodas, Out of School Time Coordinator Eva Schneider and Nutrition Support Worker Chanchal Singh.

Principal Corene Zmurchik and Assistant Principal Kristel Busby say, “[This team has] gone above and beyond in the areas of service to kids, families and our community. Over the last six years, through their work and in collaboration with school staff, this team has had a huge impact on our school community. This team has provided wrap-around services which specifically target building resilience within students.”

This team has helped stabilize families into homes, provided parenting advice and helped with funding to support their children’s medical needs. They have helped bridge cultural support and awareness. They also provide direct support to families experiencing trauma or crisis.

Students have been equipped with vocabulary around emotions and learning to calm themselves when dysregulated. Students have access to positive role models who help them develop appropriate social skills and improve academically. After school, students have the opportunity to engage in different learning experiences and learn how to work with one another in a different environment. And lastly, they help ensure students have access to food every day.

Parent Council Chair Diana Deodat says, “My family has personally used counseling services after a loss. Not only did Meena counsel us, she also checked in once a week to make sure I was doing OK. I cherished this very much as she was going above and beyond.” Diana also shared that her children were connected to mentors who also helped them to find a big sister who can help them with homework and have someone else to talk to.

Curriculum Coordinator Laura Bohachyk shared a story of how a former student appeared in the school’s parking lot on a very cold day, wearing inadequate clothing for the day, and seeking out Ms Meena. It had been four years since this student and their siblings had attended the school but still this is where they turned for support. This speaks to the important role members of this team have played in the lives of students.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, they engaged families in virtual family nights, did numerous home visits and wellness checks, provided food hampers and even transported students to school. They also collaborated weekly with teachers to create success plans for students at risk. “The members of this team help prove to students that we care: we can meet their needs, be trusted and keep them safe,” says Laura.

STUDENT AND STAFF

Black Students' Association (BSA), M.E. LaZerte School

This team is comprised of Teacher Andrew Parker, and students Deeq Ali Ibrahim, Ghadeer Alyunis, Najma Badol, Doldgie Eliacin, Lashaun Ellis, Suhayb Farah, El Shaddai Gizaw, Rayaan Ilmi, Haveito James, Christian Kokob, Abibah Kromah, Ayomide Lawal Rasah, Olanrewaju Lawal Rasah, Dwight Donte Legister, Anas Madey, Huda Musse, AO Omar, Abdullahi Shirwac and Yusra Yusuf.

Assistant Principal Jason Smith says, "The M.E. LaZerte Black Student's Association has become a pillar of leadership within the school." The group has led a number of initiatives and projects including spearheading Black History Month celebrations. Students took leadership in defining what they want to achieve in celebrating the month and how they could best achieve that. Community partner Liyu Makkonen says, "Under the wonderful guidance of Mr. Parker, their dedication to completing each activity with excellence was beyond what I expected to see from a newly formed BSA."

The group has also helped to educate the school community on the importance of anti-racism and have led fundraising initiatives to support those in need. Jason says, "I can personally attest to the passion, leadership and genuine care for others that exists within this group."

Liyu shared, "In no time the BSA was able to participate in a BSA summit including those from other schools and universities. They were also active participants in the anti-racism summit organized for schools." This year the BSA has grown in size, is already organizing and running activities, and is collaborating with other school communities and reaching out to more students.

Student Leadership Department Head Michelle Sabourin says, "The impact the Black Students Association had on our school community can not be conveyed through words. The impact is something that must be felt in our school, in our halls, in our classrooms and into our community. They created a space that was for everyone. A space where everyone could be seen."

Recognition of Merit

CRITERIA: To recognize the outstanding achievement or exemplary performance of an individual parent or community member, student in Grades 7 to 12 or Division staff member who has demonstrated a standard of excellence in an area of endeavour. Focus is on achievements, leadership or contributions that are meritorious, innovative, creative, or inspiring and have brought distinction to the individual, the school, the community and the Division.

STAFF

Adam Ward, Balwin School

Success Coach Janelle Jaster says, “I have witnessed the positive changes Adam has had in our community. He has spent time building meaningful relationships, laying the groundwork to help students engage with schoolwork, yet holding them accountable.” For instance, he prioritized building a positive relationship with one particular student who needed a positive male role model. This student respected Adam and listened to him. “Relationships can be agents of change and that was evident when this student chose to write a very nice story about Mr. Ward for one of his assignments.”

Teacher Nick Reilly says, “Adam became a confidant and a strong advocate for students that identify as LGBTIQ+ over the past years, and has always offered a classroom that is incredibly accepting and inclusive. He has made sure that those students are championed and supported as much as he is able to, and has brought many issues to light for the classroom to ensure that all students have a voice in any space that he is in.”

Adam takes pride in everything he does—whether coaching a variety of sports or preparing his construction lab. Teacher Alexandra Pike says, “Adam doesn’t just teach math. By his own example, he teaches his students resilience, growth mindset, patience and how to problem solve. He also single-handedly rebuilt and facilitated a woodshop program at Balwin. On his own time on weekends and summer holidays, Adam revamped the workshop, making it safer and more accessible for all the junior high students. He was the driving force behind finding funds and purchasing new equipment and lumber resources for the program. Because of this, the students are able to learn and engage in very practical and applicable skill building activities.”

Adam has recently become the school’s athletic director and is responsible for organizing coaching and practice time for many of the sports that the school offers. Throughout the pandemic, he found ways to offer coaching and play opportunities to students, even if a traditional competitive season was not possible.

“Students look up to Mr. Ward as a mentor and have learned many valuable lessons through sport that aren’t always delivered as well in the classroom,” says Nick.

He wants to give students opportunities because he sees their potential.

Carrie Rosa, Communications

In her role as Acting Director of Communications, Carrie oversees the media, internal, external and executive communications teams. Collectively, they are responsible for communicating to 15,000 staff and more than 110,000 students and their families.

Carrie took on the role just as the COVID-19 pandemic began in March of 2020. “Being thrown into this role is challenging at the best of times but she unwaveringly jumped in and navigated our department and Division through incredibly challenging, stressful and unpredictable times,” says Cathy MacDonald, Communications Consultant.

With a vast amount of information and misinformation circulating in the public, Carrie kept the team focused on getting helpful, correct information to students and families in a timely way. “Carrie’s leadership throughout these years ensured our Division was providing students, staff, families and media outlets with clear, timely and accurate information, a critical component to the way our Division operates,” says Veronica Jubinville, Communications Consultant.

Guided by her initiative and leadership, the Communications team was awarded two silver awards from the Canadian Public Relations Society for work on the COVID-19 school re-entry plan.

Carrie is a dedicated leader, always seeking ways to learn and improve as the field of communications and public relations evolves. Never one to shy away from hard work, she recently completed her APR (accredited in public relations) certification. Within the Communications team, she’s notorious for her ability to see the big picture, all while spotting pesky typos. She synthesizes information and offers thoughtful, strategic direction on extremely short timelines, and with amazing accuracy.

Anyone who knows Carrie knows she’s the go-to person in a crisis: taking control, remaining calm and letting her solid intuition guide her. Principals often turn to her for support and advice through school crises, big and small.

Says Communications Consultant Megan Normandeau, “I admire her ability to stay calm in a crisis, manage multiple priorities and advocate for her team. Through her ongoing lead-by-example approach, I credit Carrie with the team cohesiveness of our department and the collaborative approach to our work.”

In her relatively short time as Acting Director, Carrie has been a strong leader and mentor to her team in a time when it was needed most.

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Jeff Karas, Old Scona School

Jeff is a well-loved and respected teacher by his students and their families. He passionately shares his knowledge and expertise in math and computer science, and continually inspires students to enjoy these subjects. In addition to teaching, he's the International Baccalaureate (IB) Coordinator and Athletic Department Head.

Jeff has taught at Old Scona for 23 years and in his recent role as IB coordinator he was faced with a new responsibility—coordinating all curriculum plans and ensuring students are supported in attaining their IB certificates and diplomas. He also mentors teachers at Old Scona and other schools in Computer Science IB and has developed curricular material and assignments for Grades 10, 11 and 12. He willingly shares his material with new and existing teachers.

Jeff has been instrumental in providing students with the opportunity to find balance with their academia through sports. Even though the school doesn't have a gym, many sports are available to students. Jeff has been resourceful in ensuring students have the right facilities to practice and train. "A third of the school population is involved in athletics so Jeff created The Athletics Council 12 years ago. This council has strategically grown and as a result, there has been an increase in school involvement, school spirit and fundraising initiatives—all promoting health and wellness at Old Scona," says parent Bhupinder Lahl.

Somehow, Jeff still finds the time and energy to volunteer at extracurricular events and school dances.

Grade 12 student Natalie Nakatsui, says "Mr. Karas takes the time to make us feel supported and comfortable. His classes are lively and fun and he challenges us to become stronger thinkers rather than just providing us with information. He is always understanding of our situations and does his best to help us to get through them. He truly is a person who wants us all to succeed and be the best that we can be. Not only is he uplifting in times of stress, but he encourages us to be better for ourselves with his kind and compassionate heart."

Parent Maricel Reddy says, "My kids have always said 'Karas Cares.' He genuinely cares for his students, is funny and very understanding of the workload these students take on. He has an open door-policy and is approachable."

Thank You.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Darrel Robertson



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS