

ACHIEVE
LEAD
CELEBRATE
VISION
DISTINCTION
PERSEVERANCE
REACH
MERIT
EXCELLENCE
ENJOY
GRITTY
AWESOME
HONOUR

2017

Michael A. Strembitsky

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Honouring Student Excellence

Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence

Honouring Student Excellence

On June 20, 2017, the Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees had the honour of recognizing 17 outstanding nominees for the Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence.

A gold (\$2,000), silver (\$1,500) and bronze (\$1,000) medal and cash award are presented to three students who are completing their schooling and who best exemplify:

- excellence in personal, social and academic endeavours
- keen interest in a broad selection of subjects and activities
- willingness to seek meaningful change
- initiative, courage, confidence and a commitment to excellence
- co-operation with other students, staff and community members
- potential to provide leadership throughout life
- responsible participation in society

Michael A. Strembitsky Award Nominees

Blaye Chickosis
amiskwaciy

Zeyad Elsalhy
Jasper Place

Jack Chen
Old Scona

Alexander Wright
Vimy Ridge

Blake Mueller
Centre High

Sarena Lalani
Lillian Osborne

Mudassar Javid
Queen Elizabeth

Amanda Buchner
W.P. Wagner

Gina Pasaran
Eastglen

Molly French
McNally

Samaha Sajida
Ross Sheppard

Grace Konrad
Harry Ainlay

Percy Kergan
M.E. LaZerte

Kyle Hennig
Strathcona

Helen Ma
J. Percy Page

Stephen Stewart
Millwoods Christian

Robyn Learn
Victoria

GOLD Medal



Sarena Lalani
Lillian Osborne

Sarena is described as kind, witty, clever, hard-working and ambitious. She's an innovative leader and is dedicated to service and excellence in all things.

She is a full International Baccalaureate certificate student with a current average of 97.3 per cent. Despite her rigorous academic schedule, she seeks opportunities to get involved in school and community-based initiatives. Most of her extracurricular activities revolve around her passion to create change.

Principal Janet Hancock says, "Sarena gives hundreds of hours to a multitude of causes in order to help students understand and engage with issues such as mental health, privilege, homelessness, illiteracy and philanthropy." In fact, she was the recipient of Lillian Osborne's Legend Award, for building traditions that will remain in the student body for years to come

In the school community, Sarena is president of the student council. She works collaboratively with other students to organize activities, foster school spirit and build upon school culture. She used her excellent leadership skills to organize Culturama, which brought together students and staff of all cultural backgrounds to share their food, dress and performances. She also represented the school at the Canadian Student Leadership Conference, played on the badminton team, helped organize the school's orientation program and Helping Hampers program, peer-tutored math and social studies, and was on the debate team. As captain of the debate team, she competed in many competitions, helped organize the provincials hosted at Lillian Osborne, and coached and mentored Riverbend students in debate. Sarena was also captain of the Model United Nations (MUN) team; she was on Commission on the Status of Women at McGill's MUN and on the UNICEF Committee at the U of A's MUN. Of the numerous activities she was involved with, of special note, was her creation of the Inclusive Lunch Program. This program came out of her observation that special needs students often ate lunch alone. She didn't find this acceptable, so she decided to take action. This program brings students with special needs together to cook lunch with other buddies. She applied for a grant and received \$500 to put towards supplies for the initiative.

Sarena is also extremely involved in community initiatives. She created the Islamophoria art project. The intent is to build resilience in Muslim youth and allow them to share their Islam through art pieces curated into a national, travelling art exhibition. This initiative is supported by the Aga Khan Council for Canada. She is the co-founder and vice-president of the Nurturing Community Foundation, which fundraises to provide books, meals and clothing for communities in Edmonton's inner city. This enables students to engage with the not-for-profit organizations and gain a greater understanding of diversity and struggles faced by others. Sarena is a member of the City of Edmonton Youth Council; she sits on the Social Equity Committee, helping to create a more tolerant and accepting Edmonton. She also is on the Ismaili Youth Association, helping bridge racial and cultural divides between Ismaili youth.

"It is clear that Sarena has a genuine love for her fellow peers, her school and also her community at large," says teacher Paul Batchelor.

Sarena's dream is to one day work for Doctors without Borders.

SILVER Medal



Kyle Hennig
Strathcona

Kyle is committed to learning and consistently achieved Honours with Distinction while taking a full Advanced Placement (AP) course load. In fact, he completed Math 10 and Science 10 in Grade 9 to free up time in his high school schedule. He filled his extra time with more AP courses and has already achieved the status of a National AP Scholar. Kyle scored 5 out of 5 on five AP exams and 4 out of 5 on two other AP exams. He also completed an independent project through the AP Capstone program, where he focused on neural networks and the application to cardiac imaging. This offered him an introduction to undergraduate research with a 5,000-word academic paper and oral defense.

Kyle is a well-rounded individual. While he is focused and committed to learning, he is also very involved in the school community and is compelled to help others.

He is the founder of the school's programming club. When his biology teacher lost almost all of her teaching resources due to a hard drive failure, he volunteered to examine it and was able to recover 98 per cent of the data. He also designed an app to help her dance studio streamline communication between staff and parents; this now exists in app stores. He then designed a mobile app for the school to use; it will launch in the 2017–2018 school year.

He was a school council member throughout high school and was actively involved in organizing events to generate a sense of community and school spirit (e.g. Fan Bus, Festivus and Puttin' on the Ritz). He represented the computing science program at the general open house. He also represented the AP physics program at the AP open house and made a speech to more than 800 parents and prospective students. One of the more notable campaigns he played a lead role in was the Scona Initiative school fundraiser. He designed the logo and created a fundraising website where online donations could be accepted. He even designed a mobile app for the fundraiser to provide information directly to volunteers and participants. The campaign raised almost \$447,000.

Kyle was a member of the following teams: debate, ultimate frisbee, cross-country, swim and track and field, where he mentored younger teammates. He also peer-tutored Math 31/35 AP students, both in class and at lunch. He used his construction technology course knowledge to voluntarily spend multiple weekends to build the stage set for the school musical.

Principal Hans Van Ginhoven says, "Kyle's passion for learning and the application of knowledge, his keen understanding of technology and the function it plays in everyday communication, and his altruistic nature, speak to a promising future."

Kyle intends on pursuing a degree in electrical or computer engineering.

BRONZE Medal



Grace Konrad
Harry Ainlay

Principal Gane Olsen says, “Grace combines a high level of academic excellence with an impressive record of involvement in student leadership, personal initiative and service to others. She works to bring about positive change in the world and demonstrates initiative, courage and commitment far beyond her years.”

Grace has been a partial International Baccalaureate (IB) program student throughout high school (courses in humanities and math/science areas) and attained marks in the mid to high 90’s. She also received excellent marks in non-IB courses like music and Spanish. For Grace, all courses require the same commitment and effort; excellence is the only acceptable standard.

Grace works efficiently with large numbers of people on a wide variety of initiatives towards a common goal. She enjoys learning new skills and never stops challenging herself. She displays remarkable confidence, maturity and poise, and is able to impact the thinking of others without alienating them. Grace is well respected at school and in the community.

She is passionate about community work and has a well-developed social conscience. She continually seeks out volunteer opportunities and motivates others volunteer too. She strives to provide the underprivileged with same comforts afforded to the rest of us. Grace volunteers at Hope Mission, preparing and serving food and helping with clean-up. She also volunteers at Shepherd’s Care Facility, whether just talking with residents or doing activities with them. Volunteering through her church, she works with children in a number of ways like Big Brothers Big Sisters, Bible clubs and kids’ camps. Grace believes these small acts can better the lives of others, one moment at a time.

Grace is also very involved in school events and initiatives. This past year, she was a Titans Athletics board member and the Titans volleyball crew director. She was a key member of the Helping Hampers initiative and she led the Operation Christmas Child shoebox drive; donations were collected in each class to distribute to more than 100 poverty stricken children world-wide. Grace also started the Titans International Club. This club helps international students feel welcome in an unfamiliar place and allows them to feel more connected to the school and greater community. Grace has mentored younger students to take over her roles after she graduates.

She is a gifted and decorated athlete and musician. She is a key member of the track and field and cross-country running teams, and was also a member of the basketball team. Grace also participated in both the stage and concert bands.

Grace plans to pursue career in nursing and eventually work with a missionary organization to provide health care to people in Third World countries.

She has already been accepted to Trinity Western University and will be on the track team.