

Edmonton Public Schools'
DISTRICT RECOGNITION
2018–19

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



Program

Kick-Off Video

Greetings and introductions

Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks

Opening Remarks

Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks

Sponsor Acknowledgement

Presentations for District Recognition of Service

Presentations for District Recognition of Teams

Presentations for District Recognition of Merit

Closing Remarks

Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks

Reception

Atrium, Centre for Education



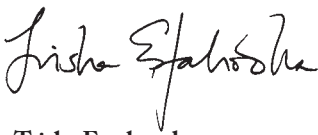
Message from the Board of Trustees

For over two decades, the District Recognition Program has shined a well-deserved spotlight on the remarkable accomplishments of a diverse group of students, parents, community members and staff. Tonight, the Board of Trustees is proud to acknowledge this amazing group of recipients. Congratulations to all of you.

This occasion celebrates those individuals and groups who spend time, energy, resources and talents in ways that have a lasting impact on our students. While each recipient may have different experiences in supporting teaching and learning, they share similar qualities that exemplify the true spirit of public education. Each individual supports, motivates, mentors and inspires students and colleagues.

To all of the nominees we have the privilege of honouring tonight, your efforts are far reaching and your devotion is nothing less than remarkable.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank our recipients for upholding the tradition of excellence for which our District is known. Through your ongoing contributions, we continue to create a welcoming, inclusive and responsive public education system—one that strives to help all students, regardless of their background or abilities, realize their own success and growth.



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' District Recognition Program for the past 20 plus years.

The initiatives undertaken by the District'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 District Recognition Program. There are three types of District 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 District 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

Chanelle Cluett-Alstad, Teacher, Balwin School

Chanelle is an extremely committed, kind and positive person. She was one of the first adopters of the Balwin Literacy Project work. For three years, she worked tirelessly to become a reading clinician. As a result, students' reading confidence and competence has risen substantially.

"She works tirelessly to promote student leadership and provide opportunities for students to build social and emotional learning," says Principal Christina Jones. Teacher Patricia Mosby says, "Chanelle provides students the chance to build relationships with peers and community, to learn to communicate effectively, and strengthen their patience, sense of responsibility and empathy for others."

Chanelle was directly involved in the development and implementation of a Balwin First Nations, Métis and Inuit school plan and also created the Kids Helping Kids Club, which involved elementary students focused on spreading kindness in the school and community. Among a host of several other activities, she oversees the monthly Student Kindness Awards, is a junior high student leadership teacher and mentor, organizes Balwin's Day to End Racism, is the LGBTQ+ safe contact and lead teacher, is the lead on the staff wellness committee, and was the committee lead for Hockey Helps Kids. Chanelle also spends time mentoring other teachers.

"Chanelle has created such a sense of family in our building," says teacher Kelsey Franklin. "She creates a kind, safe and loving space for students and staff to be."

Alva Shewchuk, Fund Development Associate, Edmonton Public Schools Foundation

“Alva is a rare superhero,” says Trustee Nathan Ip. “She uses her powers of charisma, wit and charm in the best way possible to support and service the District’s most vulnerable children.” She goes above and beyond to proactively seek out potential donors, enthusiastically cultivating and stewarding community relationships, while sharing the story of the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation.

Alva is dedicated and has an amazing work ethic. She wears many hats and no job is ever too big or too small for her. While raising funds for the Foundation, Alva organizes all the events. Some of these events include all the Kindergarten Show and Tell sessions, the Ready To Shine fashion show, the Ready for Life breakfast, and the Wrap and Roll initiative at Kingsway Mall (that involved organizing over 300 volunteers last year). For all these events, Alva does everything from finding facilities, performers and presenters, to organizing food and set up requirements. “Events are carefully, thoughtfully and genuinely done by Alva,” says Foundation Board member Judy Welch. “Participants and volunteers are always made to feel valuable.”

Former Foundation director, Sandra Woitas says, “Alva has remained dedicated to the mission and works hard each and every day, toward bringing change in a prudent and caring manner for marginalized children. She shows empathy, compassion, optimism, persistence and passion in maximizing day-to-day stability for this charity.”

Trustee Ip says, “The success of the Foundation would not have been possible without Alva.”

Shelby Olsen, Teacher, Ellerslie Campus

As a science teacher, Shelby has not only dedicated her career to supporting the academic success of students, but also the mental and emotional support students within the LGBTQ2S+ community. She developed a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) for both the elementary and junior high at Ellerslie. She provides students with an adult who is trustworthy and respects their individuality. “She is one of the most empathetic and compassionate person and teacher I’ve ever had the pleasure of knowing,” says teacher Karlee Hren. Teacher Brianne Donauer says, “She models welcoming, inclusive and respectful language and practices.”

Shelby provides students with accurate and relevant information to challenges they face. She provides students with the opportunity to ask questions, to engage in open discussion and to develop a supportive community. She has also given up her free time to offer unique and exciting extracurricular opportunities to the GSA members, like attending the Pride Parades and annual GSA conference. Shelby also helps students organize Pink Shirt and Orange Shirt days, fundraisers for Camp fYrefly and student support groups. She also coaches the school’s volleyball team.

One student explained that Ms. Olsen changed his life by allowing him to be himself no matter what others say or do. “I think this speaks to the relationship Shelby builds with our students,” says teacher Joyce Chaykoski.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Daina Posch, Assistant Curriculum Coordinator, Teacher, Ellerslie Campus

Daina has incredible work ethic, is a team player and has served as a mentor for other teachers. Acting for Assistant Principal Melissa Dziendzielowski says, “She is an exceptional teacher with a gift for differentiating for her students to ensure they learn all essential outcomes.” Colleagues say she is extremely organized, flexible, knowledgeable and considerate. She spends countless extra hours working with students, talking with parents and meeting with other teachers so students do not slip through the cracks.

She is also an expert in assessment and is one of the school’s key contacts for data collection and assessment. Daina reviews and updates the school’s assessment manual, and co-ordinates and supervises teachers’ use of Gradebook and PowerSchool. For Gradebook, she spends countless hours ensuring teachers are set up and using the system properly. In the school, teachers report student assessments every six weeks. Daina assists all teachers with this process. She also tracks and analyzes data in the school on a regular basis. She provides meaningful feedback to both staff and students, as well as modifying her own practice.

Daina has also been a leader in professional development at the school. Assistant Curriculum Coordinator Jan Frohlich says, “She makes everyone around her a better teacher by contributing solutions, sharing her best practices, and sharing her excellent resources, many of which she has created.”

Nancy Musica, Consultant - English Language Learners, Inclusive Learning

“Nancy is a well respected individual and her strong knowledge and understanding of English language learners has inspired many educators,” says English as a Second Language (ESL) Consultant Leanne Soll Hesterman. She is a gentle and positive role model, mentor and coach who shares her valuable expertise and experience.

Nancy has been a key support and guided the work in the north central catchment. In order to better support refugee students in our District, she helps other educators understand the impacts of trauma on learning. Nancy is often the go-to person for advice and support. “Her expertise, passion and collaborative spirit has made our ESL consultant team become stronger,” says ESL Consultant Christine Cao. “She has helped us develop a greater understanding of culturally-responsive teaching, trauma sensitive approaches and assessment best practices.” A strong example of her value came a few years ago when Nancy’s catchment welcomed 40 per cent of the Syrian newcomer students. She helped her principals develop ESL programming, gathered resources to support teachers, and worked with intercultural consultants to facilitate better communications with families.

She also volunteers with the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s ESL Specialist Council as the professional development director. She has organized two ESL conferences in Edmonton and continues to facilitate this work. In this role, she is a strong liaison between teachers and the council. ESL Consultant Annie Fung says, “Nancy has been a driving force in encouraging me to improve my craft as an ESL teacher and consultant.”

Jim Litven, Educational Assistant (retired), John D. Bracco

Jim was an educational assistant in the District for 35 years, with the last 26 years being at J.D. Bracco. “He worked with a diverse group of students with grace, care, interest and support,” says Principal Sheri Long. “His support, experience and collegiality were invaluable.” “He served with character, talent, presence and integrity,” says teacher James Boyce.

Jim was enthusiastic and passionate while supporting some of the most high needs and challenging students. His dedication and actions went above and beyond his role as an educational assistant. “His passion for learning and education are one thing, but his patience, empathy, consistency and work ethic set a bar that every person in education should aspire to embody,” says teacher Glen Sharp. He was always student-centred, and he had an innate ability to create a learning conducive environment. Former J.D. Bracco teacher Tina Hudson says, “I always felt that working with Jim was like having a second teacher in the room.” Staff relied on Jim for advice and support with any high needs students participating or integrating in to inclusive environments.

He was also an entertaining story-teller and thoughtful encourager. Jim’s passion for the outdoors and science added significant value to the school community. He often brought little experiments or demonstrations—like firing rockets in the school field—to share his knowledge. Jim was also involved in setting up Camp Nakamun to welcome Grade 7 students and the Grade 9 Jasper trip.

Brandon Day, Teacher, Laurier Heights School

Last year, Brandon taught Grade 5 French Immersion and teaches Grade 6 French Immersion this year. Principal Lon McMullen says, “He is hardworking and enthusiastic, and is well respected by staff and students. He is patient and works effectively with all members of the school community.”

Students appreciate Brandon for the way he mentors and inspires them to do better, while still bringing an element of humour and fun into the classroom. He has the ability to teach difficult concepts while ensuring student understanding. His lessons are carefully and thoughtfully planned. He creates an environment where students are comfortable taking risks. He incorporates excellent strategies and different teaching techniques to make learning both challenging and interesting. One example of his strength of differentiating came from a parent who explained their straight A son was getting bored in class. Brandon worked with both the student and the parents to come up with a solution. He created enrichment materials and allowed their son to work ahead on the curriculum, as long as he concentrated on the subject at hand. Other parents reported the same level of support.

Brandon sets high expectations and motivates students to be the best they can be. His students are constantly informed about what they should be working on, what’s coming up and when various things will be due. This same information is shared with parents. His classroom is organized, colourful and welcoming. “He shows students the joy of learning and exudes positivity and energy,” say parents Renee and Kent Majeau. “Our son was not a confident student before Mr. Day’s class but by the end of the year, his attitude changed completely. He now says ‘I can learn this.’”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Virginia Kirchner, Teacher, Lynnwood School

“Ms. Kirchner literally changed my son’s life in a short period of time,” says parent Clara Yonca Yalcinkaya. Her son was in the Challenge Program, was overwhelmed and lost self-confidence. After having her son tested, Ms. Yalcinkaya discovered her son had dysgraphia. To get the special support he needed, he was transferred to Ms. Kirchner in the regular program. After only two months in her class, for the first time in elementary, her son was able to write a short story in his Grade 5 class. The parent recalls crying with happiness and gratitude. “As a result of Ms. Kirchner’s support and extraordinary skills, my son could reach his grade level in English. He regained his self-confidence and began enjoying writing assignments.”

Parents Claire and Doug Wilde also explained how their son was not a typical learner. Virginia prioritized opportunities to learn about his needs and adapt her classroom so he could succeed. She personalizes programming, is honest and forthcoming, and is flexible in her approach. “She made our family feel like our son was equally as important as every other student, and was clever about making sure supports were in place without anyone really noticing,” the Wildes said.

Virginia also arranges unique learning opportunities like enrolling her class in City School so they can learn more about Edmonton and how municipal politics work. She has a natural sense of humour, makes her students feel at ease, and gives parents a great sense of confidence that their children are getting a great education. Parent Shazia Virani says, “She looks beyond just the academics and considers the whole child and the complex world they live in.”

Houneida Ayed, Office Administrator, M.E. LaZerte School

Assistant Principal Bob Lowry says, “Houneida is a valued team player who has always presented herself in a professional manner full of integrity, commitment, flexibility and initiative. She always shows respect for individuals and has sound judgement.” In collaboration with school administration, she is responsible for the collection and disbursement of school funds. She co-ordinates the facility inside and out. “She operates with a high level of integrity and precision in all of her decision-making and communication,” says Administrative Assistant Susan Ketterington. “She is precise and detailed, and balances that with a warm heart and good nature.”

Houneida has an outstanding work ethic—she is often the first one to arrive and the last one to leave the school. “Her dedication is truly amazing,” says Department Head Julian Pacholik. Last year, the school had three major renovation projects on the go. She provided collaborative consultation with the Administration during the planning, implementation and maintenance and functioning of the school.

Houneida was meticulous about maintaining records and reports used by Financial Services for revenue and allocation of funds. She has been a champion of assisting students and families in financial need and is able to navigate setting up payment plans while keeping individuals privacy in place. She also maintains a spreadsheet of students receiving financial support to give the administration an idea of how families are impacted and supported.

Loretta Ng, Department Head, Old Scona School

Loretta is an exemplary role model to her students and the greater community. She is very organized and all her lessons are well thought out. She is the International Baccalaureate (IB) coordinator and she ensures students get all the supports they need to attain their IB certificates and diploma. She puts in countless hours preparing practise questions, labs and exams to help her students succeed. This program continues to grow and they have been exceeding world averages in their exam scores.

Loretta's classes are always well thought out and structured. Students are aware of her expectations and she incorporates a variety of learning activities. She also incorporates a couple minutes for students to take a break and recharge. She understands her students and is always available to provide extra help. She cares for students and their well-being. She even consults with students before setting exam dates to alleviate the stress of creating conflicts with other courses. Former student Monica Pan says, "It is clear from the enthusiasm she brings to her classes, that she loves what she teaches, and she works tirelessly to pass that passion on to her students as well."

She is very involved with student life and is well respected as both a teacher and a person. Loretta takes on extra roles to advise the Student Engagement Team and supervise three extracurricular clubs: Multicultural Club, Hip Hop Club and Engineering Club. The extra time she volunteers helps enhance student life at Old Scona. She even attends school council meetings. She models how to balance life with a young family, while being passionate about strong education and volunteering time outside of academics.

Ron Dominique, Educational Assistant (retired), Oliver School

Ron had so much wisdom, skills, insightfulness and experience working in challenging situations. He understood that building relationships and a sense of belonging was the key to everything else. He always tried new strategies that respected the whole child. He had the ability to find out what stressors were getting in the way of learning and would remove them or gradually introduce them so a student was not overwhelmed. He had great success bridging home and school life.

Retired teacher and assistant principal Cathy Pattison says, "Every teacher's dream is to work alongside an educational assistant who becomes a seamless extension of yourself. Ron was that. He extended ideas and built on lessons in creative and thoughtful ways." Ron understood the value of play in learning. He was always on the lookout for materials that would spark interest and make learning fun. Recycle bins and garage sales were always gold mines for Ron! He never lost sight of curriculum expectations and individual program plans.

Assistant Principal Sheelagh Brown says, "Ron understood self-regulation for learning, the importance of meaningful communication and that inclusion had a purpose beyond the student in the classroom. In every situation, he managed to bring a sense of humour, and did it with kindness, respect and deep care." One particular student Ron worked with had autism. Ron prepared visuals for his first day, read the student Individual Program Plans, met with the parents to discuss strategies, and worked closely with the teacher and Inclusive Learning team to implement strategies. He even recruited classmates to be 'buddies' with the student. Ron went above and beyond to connect students' interests to help them engage in activities. He also connected with families to share resources that were being used at school.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Shawn Nordstrom, Teacher, Westbrook School

Shawn commits to providing the best possible learning situation for students by adapting expectations to meet the range of student needs. He is always willing to spend extra time to help a child who may be struggling. When needed, he has even been known to provide assistance to parents and students through home visits. He even taught kids how to develop study sheets to study for their Provincial Achievement Tests. He is well respected by the parent community. “Without a doubt, Shawn has made a difference in the education of students and has contributed significantly to the culture and community of Westbrook,” says teacher Arlene Walker.

Shawn goes above and beyond to shape the lives of students, and accepts and respects each student for who they are. Parent Neelam Mahil shared how Shawn was able to help her daughter come out of shell through opportunities like student-led government, job positions and speeches. Another parent, Mary Crockett, shared how he also made learning fun and incorporated a class currency system with auctions. Student earned ‘money’ for things like good marks and behaviour. Their currency was then used for things like paying a fine for having an untidy desk. Students could put items up for auction for other students to bid on, which helped them learn to budget too. Parent Tameeza Chatur says, “During the year my son was in Mr. Nordstrom’s class, my son excelled, and looked forward to attending class and being involved.”

He is friendly and caring, and makes the extra effort to get to know students from all grades. Shawn can often be found shooting hoops with students or chatting with them about their weekend. Shawn consistently volunteers for roles others shy away from—like lip syncing and dancing to pop songs in assemblies—and he is committed to having students adopt a healthy lifestyle. He coached the running club and other sports clubs, and organized intramurals and the year end fun run.

Rebecca Robins, Teacher, Westbrook School

Assistant Principal Sarah Holmgren says, “She is a quiet leader who supports students, staff and parents within the school community and beyond.” “Rebecca’s leadership and contributions have enhanced public education, contributed to a warm and caring school environment, and subsequently increased the academic and non-academic achievement of our students,” says Principal Darren Sweeney.

She is an exceptional educator, leader and mentor who lights up a room with her enthusiasm. Rebecca works hard to provide an inclusive, caring, respectful and safe environment that provides opportunities to enhance student achievement, well-being and citizenship. She helped build, and now leads, the Kindness Project. With her guidance, the entire school commits to performing acts of kindness within the school and beyond. “Her selflessness and kind heart have changed the lives of many families and kids,” says Assistant Principal Fatima Dayoub.

Last year, when she heard students at Malmo were going to school without snacks, she helped establish a food program at Malmo School and rallied Westbrook staff and students to help support it by bringing in healthy snacks to donate. When Malmo School decided to start a breakfast program this year, Rebecca secured a donation from a local radio station to help them start the program.

“Her level of thoughtfulness and dedication to meet the needs of all children is truly inspiring,” says Assistant Principal Holmgren.

Gil Lacampuenga, Head Custodian, Windsor Park School

Gil has been a committed staff member at the school for over 25 years. He keeps the school and sidewalks clean and safe, is always there to help clean up an unexpected mess or help set up chairs, and all the time with a smile on his face. He knows all the students' names and also knows their parents names as well. It's not uncommon to see him holding open doors, greeting students and families in the hallways, or asking kids about the activities and sports they're involved in—yes, he even knows about what the kids are interested in outside of school! "Through actions and gestures like this, he teaches us the value of connecting and caring for one another as part of a community," says parent Salima Bandali.

"I love that Mr. Gil is a role model for my three kids," says parent Esther Stocker. "His constant demonstration of kindness, positivity and commitment to excellence is a wonderful." Another parent, Maria Reddy says, "Mr. Gil's kindness and genuine care and concern for our children and our Windsor Park community makes this school special."

Many students have fond memories of the monthly Mr. Gil Award. The award was given out to the class who took best care, effort and thought into helping keep the school tidy, clean and safe. The reward was one hour of play in the gymnasium with Mr. Gil.

Patricia Martyn, Principal, Windsor Park School

Principal Martyn has showcased exemplary leadership skills, dedication and commitment to students, staff and families. Teacher Craig Michaud says, "Patricia continually collaborates to create and implement a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning and well-being. She is committed to fostering a love of teaching and learning in all and to create a strong, positive school culture." Her contagious laugh and open door policy helps foster positive relationships.

Parent Maricel Reddy says, "She is a kind, approachable, compassionate role model who excels in leadership, organization, communication and interpersonal skills." Parents boast about how Principal Martyn has transformed Windsor Park into a brighter, happier and more modernized space. She managed her budget effectively to allow for new technology, floors, windows, paint, up-to-date furniture, updated gymnasium and the creation of new learning environments like the Imagination Room, Learning Commons and Broadcast Studio. Parent Megan McDougald says, "These updates have made a significant difference to the educational experience of my children."

She plays an active role in school events and day-to-day initiatives with the students. For instance, she leads and mentors Grades 5 and 6 students every morning as they run our broadcast studio for daily announcements. Students have the opportunity to not only be the newsmakers, they also learn the technical components of putting the news together. Students have a chance to improve public speaking and writing skills. She also supports and takes part in established school events like the annual book fair, the pumpkin parade and the arts and science blitzes.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Craig Michaud, Teacher, Windsor Park School

Craig is a friendly, engaging and thoughtful teacher who motivates students to be their best selves, as individuals and as learners. “His eager, energetic, engaging and inclusive style of teaching draws students to him, making them want to learn more, know more and be more,” says parent Gillian Mah-Thompson. He helps children see that they are valued, intelligent and able participants in both the classroom and in their social lives. Former student Deven Reddy says, “His teaching style is engaging.”

Craig created the Entrepreneurial Club. Students submit resumes to apply for positions within the club, submit proposals to suggest which charities to support, and then organize, promote and run the fundraising activities. Student also presented their proposals to the parent council to request start-up funds. He brings in various community entrepreneurs to share their experience. Students gain valuable insight into managing a project from start to finish.

Parents speak of their gratitude for incredible attention Craig pays to individual student needs like keeping a watchful eye on a student’s anxiety and changes in behaviour while adjusting medications. Another parent shared how his son lacked confidence and was substantially below grade level in reading and math, not due to cognitive learning abilities but because he was disengaged. In Craig’s class, his son truly believed he was capable, intelligent and able to learn. “For the first time, he loved being in the classroom and was successfully working at grade level and above,” says parent Randy Allarie.

PARENT/COMMUNITY

David Amrhein, Community Volunteer, Archives and Museum

David has volunteered at the Archives and Museum since October 2018. He has shown the utmost respect for the buildings and the staff.

David is helping make sure a collection of news clips that span over three centuries remains viable by being easily accessible and searchable. He diligently transcribed handwritten entries, that were started by a team of retired volunteers in the 1990s, into a database and then physically compared the news clips to the entries.

The database has over 8,000 entries.

David's attention to detail is remarkable. His contribution highlights the history of public education by making it accessible to all.

Marlene Hamblin, Parent Volunteer, Delton School

Marlene is a dedicated, selfless and compassionate volunteer. Every week, she helps many of the Grade 4 students improve their reading skills, encouraging them and making them feel capable and successful. She shows genuine interest in their lives and helps create a safe and caring classroom environment. Principal Christine Simmons says, "Her ability to connect with our students and be a positive role model is truly inspirational."

She also regularly helps out with field trips and when extra adults are needed, helps out with art projects and other hands on projects.

"Marlene's contributions help to build our community and build capacity in our students," says Assistant Principal Nicole Wiebe.

Darren Reynes, Parent Volunteer, Dr. Donald Massey School

"Darren brings life to our school and community," says Assistant Principal Ronali Ferguson. He can be counted on to help out with whatever the task.

Almost every day, since the spring of 2015, Darren has supervised the drop off zone so it runs smoothly and safely. Rain or shine, he is outside ensuring the safety of students, parents and staff. He engages in conversations with parents, works closely with administrative staff, and also works closely with bylaw enforcement and traffic unit police members. As a result of his commitment, Principal Camille Loken says "The school is seeing more compliance with safety expectations."

Darren is also an active member of both the school council and parent advisory committee. He has helped co-ordinate many school activities, and also raises funds by popping and selling popcorn every Monday.

He is extremely committed to the school and is very much part of the Dr. Donald Massey School family.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Melinda Styles, Parent Volunteer, Forest Heights School

Melinda is incredibly organized, adaptable, patient, enthusiastic and committed. Principal Nicole Schmidt says the word volunteer doesn't do justice to Melissa's outstanding contributions. During the last and current school years, she has been at the school almost every day, assisting numerous students and teachers.

Last year, she helped implement the Read Up! Program—a reading program for at-risk students. She even went for a day of training where she learned new strategies to bring back to use at the school. Melinda continues to provide support to struggling readers, and her calm presence makes even the most reluctant readers feel safe. She has supported the work of the library, helped with field trips, event organization and classroom materials preparation, and is currently also helping out in the German bilingual classroom.

“The joy she finds in selflessly investing in the lives of others radiates to each and every individual who has the privilege of knowing her,” says teacher Rosalie Semenjok.

Birgitte Lund, Community Volunteer, Garneau School

Birgitte has been volunteering at Garneau for over 15 years, working primarily with English Language Learners who are new to Canada. She is patient, kind and creative, and has had a considerable impact on building student comfort and confidence.

Parent Jenn Roggeveen explained Birgitte is at the school so often, it wasn't until a few years after she had been involved at the school that she learned Birgitte was a volunteer and not a staff member. Jenn says, “I have seen many students become more confident and able to become part of their classroom community due to Birgitte's guidance and care.”

Several students explained that when they first came to Canada, they only knew a few English words. One student said, “Every time I left Birgitte, I knew a few new words. Now I speak English fluently at home.” Birgitte built meaningful relationships with the students and made learning English fun. Being an immigrant herself, Birgitte also spoke to classes about her experiences. “She not only nurtures the growth of language and self-esteem with students, she builds connections with their families, our staff, and the general school community,” says teacher Carley Bowman.

Angela Halwa, Parent Volunteer, George P. Nicholson School

Angela is a kind, dedicated and generous parent volunteer whose long-standing commitment and support has been unwavering. She is a member of the school council and parent society (current and past treasurer). She is a 'go-to' parent who frequently helps out at school events and field trips. Angela is always positive in her interactions with students, and developed rich relationships with the students.

Angela is described as a grant writing guru with a keen ability to articulate the needs of the school. She has devoted immeasurable effort and time helping securing money (like the Make your Mark on Poverty grant from United Way) for numerous projects to support the learning and development of students.

Although she was not part of the creation of the outdoor environmental garden, she keeps this amazing outdoor classroom alive and well maintained, doing everything like weeding, planting, spreading mulch and winterizing the pond. She uses her knowledge of horticulture to support students with planting and with their science unit. Angela also provided the school with research photos and information about the history of the land the school is on, supporting social studies learning of First Nations groups and settlers.

Principal Geoff Sader says, “She is the catalyst for a great school community and the spirit of true volunteerism.”

Laurel Granger, Parent Volunteer, Greenview School

Laurel is the secretary of the Parent Advisory Council and was instrumental in the creation of the school's Makerspaces room and club.

Along with another parent, Laurel researched makerspaces activities, then found and purchased resources through financial support from the parent council. Laurel, along with her team, transformed the old computer room into a space filled with all types of recyclable materials, tools and visual supports. This space allows students to engage in hands on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) projects.

"Laurel has wonderfully creative ways to get the students excited and involved in owning their learning through a hands on approach," says teacher Amanda Kates. "Without her tireless efforts, the room would not be what it is today."

Kristy Hamm, Parent Volunteer, Kildare School

For the past two years, Kristy has served as the president of the school council and the fundraising chair of Kildare's Parent Support Society. She is an experienced collaborator who is reliable, dedicated, trustworthy and transparent.

Kristy is a non-Mandarin speaking parent with two kids enrolled in Kildare's Mandarin bilingual program. Last year, she enrolled in Mandarin night classes to both connect better with her children's learning and strengthen relationships with adults in the community. Bridging conversations around change can be challenging. Principal Cheryl Belyea says, "Kristy has worked very hard to build trusting relationships with all parents, and has demonstrated patience, insight and thoughtfulness." She is solution focused and committed to doing what's best for all. As a result of her efforts, the school council has grown to over 20 members and clarity around roles and responsibilities has been established.

Kristy also volunteers to help out with numerous events such as the Kindergarten open house or welcome back barbecue, and initiatives like the new playground, purchasing technology for classrooms and supporting guest speakers focused on anti-bullying.

YC Morrissey, Parent Volunteer, Kildare School

YC leads by action, and is the first to step up to help with anything and everything. Since the 2016-17 school year, she has played an active role on both the school council and Kildare's Parent Support Society (K.I.S.S.)—as a vice-president and secretary. She is currently co-secretary of the school council while she mentors a new parent for the role, and the president of K.I.S.S.

Over the last four years, she has helped write grants for a new playground, assisted with numerous fundraising initiatives, knitted Chinese New Year animals to give away during annual celebrations, worked with Kildare's Artist in Residence (bringing the school's walls to life with student artwork), and volunteers in her sons' classrooms.

YC goes above and beyond, making sure everything stays organized and timely, while making sure communication is clear. "YC brings her joyful demeanour everywhere she goes," says administrative assistant Rebecca Diaz. She's even been known to bring in warm, freshly made scones to the office, with her youngest daughter in tow. Principal Cheryl Belyea says, "We truly appreciate YC for her endless energy, her desire to make our school a better place, her steadfast commitment to do what's best for all kids, and for the never ending smiles she puts on our faces daily."

Recognition of Service *continued*

Dan Chow, Community Volunteer, Norwood School

Dan is a long time everyday hero at Norwood. “He truly models the attributes of an outstanding citizen,” says Assistant Principal Sandra MacRae.

For more than 20 years, Dan has generously shared his knowledge and passion for geology and learning.

Every year, he enriches the Grade 3 rocks and minerals science unit by sharing his expertise and asking students questions to spark their curiosity. He also donates kits (from Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta) filled with interesting specimens for students to investigate to allow students to connect with hands-on learning. At the school’s Literacy Evening event, Dan hosts a geology stations, creates some hands-on activities, and teaches people of all ages about the different rocks in the school’s rock garden. As a member of the Edmonton Chinese Lions Club (ECLC), Dan also co-ordinates book donations from ECLC for a citizenship recipient from each class annually.

In the Grade 6 class, Dan has shared inspiring books and stories about people who have overcome challenges and made a difference to others and the world. Once he has shared the book, he leaves it for the class or school library. He has also shared with the classes his own story of how he overcame poverty and limited English to pursue his dream. “He inspires students to follow in his footsteps and give back to others,” says teacher Susan Strebchuk. Teacher Jan Preiss says, “His ability to work with at-risk children, reassuring them that education will take them places they can’t even imagine, is inspiring.”

Susan Dueck and Hope (therapy dog), Community Volunteer, Rideau Park School

For more than seven years, Susan and Hope volunteered countless hours listening to Interactions students read, or just providing emotional support to both students and staff. Susan often told staff that Hope practically dragged her to the school.

Each Friday, students’ eyes would light up when they realized their very special visitors were coming. Most of the children struggled with reading and with communication altogether. Without judgement or correction, children could build their confidence in reading while spending time with their furry friend. Hope seemed to be able to tell if there was someone at the school that needed extra attention. Assistant Principal Patti Lorentz says, “There was something very special about Susan and Hope.”

Principal Kyril Mueller says, “I personally observed students with significant regulation challenges calm themselves and self monitor with the support of Hope.” Over the years, Interactions students have become more confident in social situations. There has been a significant increase in the ability for Interactions students to be included and actively participate in learning experiences.

Due to some age-related changes, Hope is no longer able to volunteer. “Susan and Hope will always have a special place at Rideau Park and we are so grateful for their generosity of time and their commitment to our students,” says Principal Mueller.

Dr. Dipak Patel, Parent Volunteer, Rutherford School

During the past nine years his children have been at the school, “Dr. Patel has made significant and ongoing contributions that have positively impacted student progress and achievement, interest in career pathways, health and well-being, and strengthened relationships within the school community,” says Principal Simon Williams.

Dr. Patel created and runs the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) club every Friday at lunch. He teaches students the scientific method and academic vocabulary in a fun way while providing hands-on learning opportunities and experiments to engage students. He supports the interactive learning with materials students may not have had a chance to work with before, like a rocket kit or a laser to measure the speed of a car. Each year, the Kindergarten classroom is transformed into a kinderhospital. Students learn about x-rays, injections, fractures and casting, while also learning about careers in health care.

Dr. Patel helps out on field trips and even brings additional supplies to support learning on the trip, including engaging learning on the bus. He also leads drop-in soccer games after school on Fridays, providing an informal and inclusive environment for the students to play. Former Rutherford Principal Mike Morison says, “He deeply cares for everyone around him. He brightens your day and lets you know he is there to support you.”

Grachella Garcia, Community Volunteer, Strathcona School

“Grachella has had an exemplary impact on the women’s volleyball program, the student athletes and the overall athletic community at Strathcona,” says athletic director Joshua Spronk. In addition to her full time job, she has spent countless hours volunteering her time—five to six days a week—training and practicing with students during the season. As a result, Grachella has led this team to three consecutive city championships, three undefeated seasons and numerous tournament wins. She has also helped organize and run some of the largest high school tournaments in Edmonton.

The forefront of her coaching philosophy is stressing leadership, hard work, discipline and fundamental technical skills. She is an excellent communicator and builds strong relationships with fellow coaching staff, players and parents alike. Assistant Principal Narindar Riar says, “Grachella works extremely hard to create a ‘family first’ attitude for the athletes to practice and play in. She wants everyone to have an outstanding experience and also become better people. She encourages her players to give back to the community through volunteering activities. In fact, each year she takes the team to volunteer doing things like packing boxes at the Food Bank or mentoring youth on younger volleyball teams.

Parent Margaret Stasiak says, “Grachella has taught my daughter how to balance being an athlete and an honours student. She is not only a volunteer—she is a mentor, leader, friend and role model.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Wesley McConnell, Community Volunteer, Westlawn School

Wesley has been coaching the boys basketball team for the last three years. Westlawn is a high needs school and being able to provide athletic opportunities is invaluable. He dedicates many hours to provide a strong program and safe place for students to develop skills. “He is welcoming and inspiring, and constantly tries to promote integrity, dedication and perseverance in the athletes he works with,” says athletic director Dominique Adams.

Last year, and outside the regular basketball season, Coach McConnell offered many basketball development sessions at lunch and after school. Wesley even opened these training sessions to both boys and girls throughout Grades 7-9.

One student shared that Wesley is very positive and at the end of every practice, he gives speeches about the importance of work ethic. “His players gain so much character in working with him,” says Principal Wolf Kolb. “The players demonstrate hard work, commitment, honesty, trustworthiness, kindness and determination.”

Recognition of Teams

CRITERIA: To recognize the contributions made to the District 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 District 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 District.

STAFF

Archives and Museum Program Teachers Team

This team is comprised of Laurel Baizley, Gwen Boehres and Brian Christy. They work together to create memories for students as they become time-travellers in the three distinct field trip programs. Each year, the number of students participating in the curriculum based field trip programs increases—this is a result of this team's collaboration in finding new opportunities for more teachers to bring their classes.

To date, they have helped send more than 10,000 students back in time to the 1881 Schoolhouse, to Grandma's Place in the thrifty '30s and to Mr. Puffer Goes to Provincial Parliament in 1906!

They enhance public education and student achievement with their enthusiasm for teaching history in a hands-on, experiential based approach. They are passionate about: preserving the historic landmarks (1881 Schoolhouse and McKay Avenue School); educating students by sharing stories that have shaped our province, our city and Edmonton Public Schools; and inspiring students by creating unique experiences and lasting memories for them. Their co-operation, flexibility, respect for one another and dedication brings distinction to Archives and Museum.

Athlone BLA Educational Assistants Team

This team is comprised of Abena Asarfo-Adjei, Wendy Dumont, Darcey Hicks and Gloria Polowy.

"They have demonstrated exemplary performance when working with at-risk students," says Curriculum Coordinator Pam Depeel. They consistently go above and beyond, and are always positive and proactive. "They are able to handle high stress situations with discernment and care."

This team applies the most current brain-based research to support students with complex needs. They also use trauma-sensitive practices to help kids regulate and learn. Their incredible patience has resulted in growth for all students. Teacher Jennifer Katz says, "They have the ability to work as a team, to organize and plan, to problem solve and communicate, to resolve conflicts and to be flexible." "The success of the 2018–2019 school year in the BLA program is a result of the collaborative efforts of our team, often led by these four individuals," says Principal Karla Loberg-Walter.

They have earned the respect of the students, their families and the rest of the school staff.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Avonmore Community Living Skills (CLS) Program Team

This team is comprised of teachers Heather Danilak, Cathy McCoy and Hazel Quigg. “The work they do daily in their classrooms is nothing short of amazing,” says Principal Dawn Schmitz.

These teachers have a very diverse and complex group of students. They work collaboratively across all grade levels to create an engaging, loving and warm environment while providing tailored learning for each student’s unique needs. They continually provide strong, authentic teaching methods, while demonstrating confidence and an amazing sense of humour.

Their students love coming to school and feel like valuable members of the school community. “This is largely a result of the sense of worth and accomplishment they developed in their classes,” says teacher Andrea Waldon. For many of their students, they first started school with tears and were shy to talk and play with others. “Now they are social, happy and learning many words, skills and abilities,” says Administrative Assistant Christine Allegretto. These teachers have created this environment for these students.

Balwin Recess Initiative Team

This team, made up of teachers Kelsey Franklin and Pat Kerr, started this program. They wanted to combat bullying and student inactivity to create a more successful recess time. They even received training in Recess Guardians and District LEADS.

“Kelsey and Pat support and promote a safe and caring recess environment where older elementary students learn to lead the recess games and activities in a manner that supports physical activity, and social and emotional development,” says Principal Christina Jones. They spent endless amounts of their own time, selecting and training students in many different games that included as many students as possible. These games were designed to keep every student moving and engaged. They avoided ‘you’re out’ type games and situations where students might be playing alone.

Assistant Principal Andy Connelly says, “They developed a community that looked forward to recess, while building student leadership capacity.” Balwin School saw an instant decrease in student conflict and dysregulation. “Students began to learn to positively interact with each other, solve problems in appropriate ways, and to initiate games and activities independently.” Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad. “Our Balwin family is better because of Kelsey and Pat.”

Central Custodial Team

This team is made up of Elizabeth Cevallos, Arnold Elima, Veronica Faundez, Brenda Fong, George Korobkov, Milady Krisa, Olga Maryschuk, Bryan Tura, Jesus Villanueva, William Vivanco, Joseph Woldiy-Bogale and Fasil Wondie.

This team is friendly, professional, responsive, service-oriented and are great problem solvers. They bring competence and humour to the workplace and are a true pleasure to work with. Executive Assistant Janene Wagner says, “I admire their commitment to the people at the Centre for Education. They provide the best service and care.”

They work to collectively assist each other in completing work in a timely and efficient manner. They are extremely flexible and adaptable with making last minute changes in the Centre for Education. Staff members say, “Their accommodating nature is greatly appreciated.”

Edith Rogers Educational Assistants

The members of this team are Myraldine Balderama-Bana, Florecita Barayuga, Madhu Dutt, Carol Friesen, Jane Jorgensen and Becky Motyka.

“Each member brings diverse experiences, talents and characteristics that mold together to make an efficient, co-operative group that visibly respects each other,” says Assistant Principal Donna Rae Godziuk. They assist students with personal care, academic needs and option activities like field trips and art projects. “I have to say this is one of the strongest, most dedicated, caring, sincere and genuine group of educational assistants that I have ever had the pleasure of working with,” says Principal Tim Boan. “They truly make Edith Rogers a better place to work and we would be lost without them.”

They are skilled relationship builders who put their hearts and souls into their work and always go above and beyond. They are organized and trustworthy, have a strong collaborative spirit and excel in taking initiative to help students and teachers. Assistant Principal Joel Stephens says, “This team continues to have a high impact on academic results, implementation of specialized supports for students, and an impact on an overall positive, welcoming and safe school culture.”

Busy Bee Kindergarten Teachers, John A. McDougall School

The members of this team are teachers Melissa Andrews, Kristel Busby, Russell Campbell, Joanne Henderson and Scott Zubot. “This team has provided young students and their families with a strong beginning to support life-long learning,” says parent Katie Kovaliv. They created a positive and welcoming environment while delivering a high quality of education to a diverse inner city school population. “My daughter made considerable gains during her time with this team,” says Katie. They made children feel confident and excited about learning.

Parent Rachael Robertson shared that her son was a nervous child and she was worried about him in the months leading up to the start of Kindergarten. Although it was a daily team effort to help her son overcome his struggles, they used their incredible expertise to help him overcome his fears. “My son wants to be a teacher now,” Rachael says. “As a parent, I will be forever grateful!” Another parent, Nadine Riopel, says, “These teachers are a dream. My son had an amazing experience—he learned so much, and was cared for and valued to a very high standard.” Parents expressed how great it was that all students and families received the same standard of excellent service. Many of these teachers had taken advanced training in certain specialties. They rotated between classes to provide extra support and coaching in the areas they were strongest, which added to the excellent education students received.

They hosted literacy nights to educate families on the importance of literacy for young learners, gave families the tools to help their children grow as learners and readers, and gave families the opportunity to connect. They also informed families about First Nations, Métis and Inuit education by incorporating cultural practices such as smudging.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

DISTRICT STAFF/COMMUNITY

Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) Team

This group of social workers, psychologists and mental health workers is made up of both District staff and community partners. The members are Carolynn Archibald, Heather Auschrat, Paula Blashko, Ines Cesar, Ian Cunningham, Erin Davis, Tamara Dorn, Karon Dragon, Mary Fiakpui, Jenifer Fontaine, Leah Fraser, Cara Freeman, Donna Granson-Heise, Ashley Gunter, Kate Herbert, Faren Hochman, Dong Kim, Christie Ladouceur, Pam Lamash, Linda McFalls, Donna Mondor, Denise Moulder, Lisa Najdziak, Jimi Ogunfowora, Kathy Patras, Danielle Pawliuk, Joe Racz, Rachel Rogers, Kiarra Sampson, Billie-Jo Scott, Ellen Shott, David Skakoon, Leslie Stephenson (and therapy dog Fernie), Chrissi Stribling, Teena Tojo, Kim Unrau, Rhonda Wizniak, Kristyn Wright and Kristi Zubick.

This team provides exemplary support to schools in the aftermath of tragic events that affect the school community—like a death of a student or staff member. A school or community can become overwhelmed and their coping mechanisms and normal functioning are disrupted. They provide direct and immediate support to students, staff and parents, and their skillsets are unlike others in the District.

Their supports take on many forms such as providing guidance to the Administration, meeting with staff, assisting with classroom discussions, as well as providing individual and small group counselling for both staff and students. Their work often continues in the days and weeks following an event. Principals Tanja Caley and Donna Forfylow say, “The result is that a school community who has faced a tragedy or traumatic event, can come out the other side with the skills to cope, heal and move forward.”

One District principal also shared that this team helped their school decide on a memorial for their loss. They were also able to identify staff members who were in need of additional support and connected them to grief counselling. The physical, mental, emotional, social development and well-being of the school community is foremost in everything they do. “The support they provide is invaluable,” says Director Laurie Barnstable. “They work with compassion, strong leadership, teamwork and flexibility while determining how best to support each unique situation.”

Hazeldean Breakfast Club

This team is comprised of staff, community members and parents, with participation from students as well. The key members are: Danielle Adeyemo, Pearl Biggar, Dawn Collins, Alicia Dean, Tana Donald, Sarah Fischer, Amanda Freeman, Wayne Kaiser, Shauna Kenny, Louise Martiniuk, Karri McKinnon, Kerri Perry, Fran Robertson, Florencia Romero Hernandez, Ron Schlender, Betty Stieglitz, Emily Sudthitarn Chaotakeongite, Subi Sukumara Pillai and Maureen Thompson. The initiative was spearheaded by Pearl Biggar, a retired educational assistant from Hazeldean. Through her determination, she was able to secure a sponsorship from Wayne Kaiser, the owner of the Brewery District COBS Bread. Without the support of Cobs Bread, the school would not be able to sustain the breakfast club. In fact, it's estimated that approximately \$75,000 worth of bread has been donated to date. Pearl and Wayne continue to be the main driving forces that make this program run smoothly.

This program is in its third successful year. Through a great deal of cooperation, coordination and hard work, this team provides food to students every Monday morning. They also typically have enough food to be able to feed students throughout the week, even sending loaves of bread home to some families. To financially support this club, donations are also consistently received from parents, staff and community members. They even collect recyclable drink containers at the school and use the refund money to buy things like butter, jam, WOW butter and some fruit. When students are fed, they are better able to focus on their learning and they are also more successful in getting along with their classmates. Parent Richelle Wissink says, "I don't have to worry because I know my son will have a full stomach and be ready to learn."

Through this program, children learn about community, support, cooperation and empathy. Students are eager to take on leadership roles to help out alongside peers and adult role models. The benefits are far reaching.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

DISTRICT STAFF/STUDENT

J. Percy Page District Foundation Ambassadors

This team was lead by teachers Jacob Feniak (Music Teacher), Andrew Martin (Food Studies Teacher) and Colin Powles (Department Head of Student Leadership), and students Isha Babbar, David Chan, Louis DeVittorio, Aiden Fraatz, Zinnia Jibran, Amber Lee, Seth Marquez, Corban Miller, Kaylee Patuelli-McLellan, Alex Sather and Maddie Towers.

Foundation Fund Development Consultant Alva Shewchuk says, “The lead teachers and students invested innumerable hours—during their days, nights and weekends—to help organize the 10th District Foundation’s Ready for Life fundraising breakfast at J. Percy Page.” “As one entered the gymnasium, it was evident that you were going to be part of a very memorable experience,” says Foundation board member Judy Welch.

Colin organized students to help with everything from room set-up and take-down, to coaching two student emcees. A number of his leadership students also helped in the development of the Kids Helping Kids video that was showcased at the breakfast, where students were shown talking about their experiences mentoring students from Tipaskan. Andrew led his group of Foods students in preparing and serving a continental breakfast and in providing coffee and tea service. Jacob and his students provided pre-breakfast entertainment. In addition, he and nine students, created a second video called Community Helping Kids. This video profiled a variety of donors explaining why they chose to Raise Their Hand to support full-day Kindergarten. They wrote the music and lyrics for Raise Your Hand anthem.

Their attention to detail and dedication to doing a great job was exceptional. “I was truly inspired by their commitment to ensure the Foundation’s signature event was entertaining, impactful and successful in terms of raising funds for full-day Kindergarten,” says Career Pathways Supervisor Lindsay Adrian. Thanks to this team’s help, \$75,000 was raised while the 425 guests enjoyed a variety of entertainment, good speakers and good food.

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Abbott Tales and Talents Intergenerational Volunteer Group

This team consists of community volunteers Anne Gibney, Bob Henning, Alan Jones, Karen Kennedy, Michael J. Markle, Joan McGregor, Ron Nichol, Pili Ocaranza, Lynda O'Carroll and Audrey Peltier.

Every Wednesday afternoon, this incredible group of volunteers come to Abbott to facilitate a science club, crochet club, art club and board game play. Throughout the week, you can hear students excitedly counting down the time to the arrival of these trusted and caring adults come to the school. Students love the individual attention, learning something new and being engaged in hands-on learning. Assistant Principal Bobbi Whitrow says, "I have watched students who often struggle in class, shine in these small groups." "They create positive relationships with adults, teach social and emotional regulation and instill the value of community partners," says Principal Sheri Tchir.

Not only do they share their time, they have written grants, and provided equipment, books and resources to ensure the students have the best experience possible.

These volunteers even meet regularly with the mental health nurse to become trauma informed to ensure their work aligns closely with the trauma sensitive culture at Abbott. They have participated in brain development training and even worked with other agencies to support the creation of an Intergenerational Toolkit for those who may wish to replicate this project in their community. "They bring an energy and vibrancy to our school that leaves all our staff with big smiles," says mental health nurse Mardi Hardt (Bernard). "Their advocacy for the children and families at Abbott is stunning and heartwarming, and provides a sense of hope to the students, their families and the many staff members serving this community."

Parent support duo, David Thomas King School

Tami Dmytruk and Pamela Thivierge are the two kind and helpful parents who make up this team. Starting before the school even opened, these two devoted parents worked tirelessly to establish a school council and fundraising group. They also successfully partnered with the Second Community League to fundraise for a school playground. In just over 18 months, the teams collected \$700,000 from donations, fundraising initiatives and grants. Only two years after the school opened, the new equipment is already being installed. Their tireless efforts and dedication does not go unnoticed!

Before the school even opened—and despite the fact that they both work and have young children—volunteered many hours every week to help get the school all set up for the arrival of students. They helped with everything from stamping library books to setting up chairs and tables. They also helped initiate, organize and participate in numerous school events and initiatives such as family dance, turkey dinner, hot lunch program, the home reading program, science bins and lunch supervision. They continue to run successful monthly school council meetings and are always the first to offer to help. Tami and Pam are always cheerful, and always have the best interest of the school and community at heart.

Principal Lyndi Karbonik says, "It takes amazing, supportive and heartfelt parents like Tami and Pam to be the 'village' to support our school." "The school would not be as warm and welcoming without them," says Assistant Principal Jenell Thomas. "We are so lucky to have this team at our school," says Administrative Assistant Donna Joyes.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) Edmonton, Grace Martin School

This team consists of community volunteers Sajida Asghar, Safya Aziz, Afshan Fatima, Sabeena Khan, Farzana Muhammad, Saba Najeeb and Nigar Shafique.

ICNA has a wonderful way of reaching out and making connections to help students and families in a variety of ways. “They consistently ask what they can do for our students,” says Principal Dale Cooper. “We are incredibly grateful for their support and contributions in making a difference in the lives of our families.”

They have: arranged to have free dental work performed on some students; provided winter clothing for families; collected items for the Food Bank; helped connect with families; and helped set up a community fridge at Grace Martin. Teacher Fatima Fayad explained that the goal of setting up the community fridge was to prevent leftover restaurant food from going to landfills and instead donate readily available meals to low income families within the school and community.

These individuals are truly inspiring and truly appreciated by the school community.

Londonderry Mall, M.E. LaZerte School

This team consists of Jordan Adams, Pat Carson, Nancy Jarnevic, Vanessa Julio and Kevin Kelly.

M.E. LaZerte prides itself with the relationship it has developed with Londonderry Mall over time. Each year, another layer of support gets added on, whether it’s exploring a new initiative, employing students or letting students park in the mall’s lot.

Londonderry Mall has supported the school’s Perfect Attendance Award. A \$25 gift certificate is given to three students monthly, and at the end of the year, two students with perfect attendance for the year are given a \$50 gift certificate. “We know that attending regularly leads to the development and continued success in academics,” says Assistant Principal Charney Erickson. “This incentive motivates students to aim for perfect attendance.” Simons has also become an essential contributor to the school’s food and clothing bank. Their contributions have supported many of the school’s at-risk students, allowing them to focus on studies rather than basic needs.

Mall security has also been a key collaborator. With over 1,000 students going to the mall every lunch hour, student behaviour and safety require constant cooperation and communication with community stakeholders, including the mall security team. They are quick to collaborate on working towards prevention rather than correction. They see value in getting to know students and they work hard to build positive relationships based on mutual respect. “Knowing the calibre of their professionalism and dedication to safety gives me the confidence each one of our students is safe when at Londonderry Mall,” says Constable Joshua Maeda.

Strathcona School Council Executive, Strathcona School

This team of parents consists of Salima Amiri, Lisa Dickner, Megan McDougald and Cheryl Chetkiewicz.

“They have been a transformational force at Strathcona,” says Assistant Principal Natashya Shewchuk. “They are strong parents, smart communicators, efficient workers and dedicated community members.”

These parents organized and rebuilt the Strathcona school council. They immediately set out to engage parents and staff. Part of their engagement included organizing guest speakers to come in and give presentations on topics like legalization of cannabis, student mental health and Indigenous culture. Presentations were always interactive, and encouraged parents to share their experiences and ask questions. These meetings were well attended. Presentations by students also became a regular feature at school council meetings. These ladies also took on the very labour intensive task of revising and updating the bylaws. This process involved many hours of intense discussions at council meetings, sharing information on SchoolZone, drafting updates and pulling together the final version. Throughout the process, this team remained extremely professional and focused.

Through their work with the Strathcona Educational Foundation, they have also played a vital role in fundraising to enhance learning and support activities. Last year, they helped raise \$80,000! One initiative they supported was replacing the old bike racks with more secure models due to the amount of theft that was being experienced with the old models.

Principal Hans Van Ginhoven says, “Due to the work of the Executive, the school council has been revitalized and re-energized. Attendance is up and there is excitement about the school council.”

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 District 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 District.

STAFF

Laurie Baker, Administrative Assistant, Balwin School

Laurie is described as kind, funny and energetic role model. She has a strong work ethic and consistently applies successful and proven practices. Even in heightened stress and workloads, Laurie continues to be caring and compassionate. Last year, she transitioned her career from educational assistant to administrative assistant at Balwin, and was dedicated to becoming a highly effective at her new position. She is masterful at juggling many roles and draws on her former educational assistant skill set to support students.

Assistant Principal Andy Connelly says, “She has excelled in her new role and has become a cornerstone of the work we do at Balwin.” In her new role, Laurie created new systems to support her work and the work of schools. She developed a new strategy for tracking the collection of student information over time and cross referencing that information with District systems. She has the ability to solve problems, figure out or learn about new solutions, and ensure others are supported.

Laurie genuinely cares about how every student is doing and takes the time to make them feel special. She also consistently recognizes staff for the positive things they do. “We appreciate her beyond belief and she is a critical part of our Balwin family,” says teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad. Principal Christina Jones says, “Laurie’s presence is a gift to the staff and students at Balwin, where she is held in the highest regard.”

Marcia Augustin, Curriculum Coordinator, Ellerslie Campus

“Marcia is a master relationship builder who continually seeks out and forges strong links with the greater community,” says Assistant Curriculum Coordinator Steve Bell.

Marcia developed the Tiger Learning Opportunity (TiLO) program. This program allows teachers the flexibility to plan learning activities that inspire them, while weaving literacy, numeracy and career pathways together to offer a multitude of rich, and often hands-on, cross grade learning activities to junior high students. Students also get the opportunity to try new things and expand their areas of interest do things like playing an instrument or golfing.

She facilitates visits from community members, like local restaurateurs Barb and Ernie, to share their passion for cooking by teaching students how to prepare snacks or cook meals. She also brings in guests through the Money Mentors program so students have access to financial literacy training. Marcia works with teachers to ensure students know how to use myBlueprint. This online tool helps students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 learn about self-reflection, goal setting and portfolio building, allowing students to learn about age-appropriate pathways and occupations.

Teacher Jia Hui Li says, “Marcia has provided our students cross-curricular opportunities to be leaders, to connect with community partners and acquire valuable life skills.”

Trish Kolotyuk, Director, Human Resources Consulting

Trish designed and implemented the Special Needs Teacher Pilot Project.

A high need for training, resiliency and commitment is required to teach in the Behaviour and Learning Assistance (BLA) program. BLA teachers are required to work with some of the most at-risk students. Traditionally, the teachers have had little or no classroom experience, and often did not yet have any specialized training for students with severe emotional and social disorders. Curriculum Coordinator Pam Depeel says, “By focusing on mentoring, professional learning and collaboration, the pilot project set teachers and schools up for success.”

Teacher Jennifer Katz from Athlone School shared how their new teacher participated in the pilot program. This teacher worked alongside a mentor teacher in the BLA program for two months. The additional training provided them with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to support some of the most at-risk students. The level of expertise she developed now allows her to meet the needs of the students in her class and even offer additional training at staff meetings. “It is a benefit to our profession,” says Jennifer. As a result of participating in the pilot program, Athlone School has seen a huge difference in the levels of planning, instruction, assessment and classroom management from their BLA teacher this.

Athlone Principal Karla Loberg-Walter says, “We are setting these students up for greater success by providing them with a teacher who is choosing to work this demographic, and who has the training and experience needed to serve them well.”

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Debbie Gawlik, Principal, McLeod School

Debbie is an outstanding leader with a big heart. She is well respected by staff, students and families. “She takes pride in the school and elicits an amazing culture of support and learning,” says teacher Darcy Chrichton. She leads by example—she’s the first to help out and it’s not uncommon to see her moving furniture in a dress and heels. Her door is always open and staff regularly seek out her advice. She also appreciates and acknowledges the good work her staff does. For instance, she surprised staff with the opportunity to order ‘room service.’ She took orders, put on an apron and even delivered right to each person with the help of her assistant principal.

She is a strong advocate for supporting students with whatever they need to be successful. She ensures there is consistency and equity in assessment practices and reporting procedures. She believes in her staff and lets them try new things and develop their teaching practices. She also brought in practices that have become embedded in the school culture: Leader in Me, growth mindset, mindfulness and zones of regulation.

Debbie promotes and supports community outreach. She builds incredible relationships with families, and through this, becomes aware of their individual circumstances and challenges. For instance, when she made a house call to a family whose kids had not yet shown up for school, Principal Gawlik learned the father could not afford to buy clothes or supplies. She quickly jumped into action and with the help of her staff, rounded up supplies, clothing and food to deliver to the family the very next day. Debbie firmly believes that if you can get kids to school, we can make a difference. “The full impact of this we will never know. However, the trust built and the smiles on the faces of the children was worth every sacrifice made,” says Assistant Principal Shannon Gilson.

Stephanie Gower, Teacher, Old Scona School

Stephanie’s approach to teaching math is creative and innovative. Her classes are lively and she uses various stations, games and activities to breathe life into lessons. She also uses a variety of technology to create activities for students to have different learning experiences—like using a mountain biking app that tracks performance and times, which she in turn creates graphs for students to visualize. Stephanie’s door is always open to students who want to ask questions and clarify concepts.

Students say she teaches with a sincere passion and enriches learning with interactive activities. She cleverly relates new concepts to prior ones, and introduces problem-solving techniques in an accessible way.

Outside of class, Stephanie is involved in several Old Scona clubs and teams: cross-country and swim teams, Reach for the Top club, the math society advisor, and the Student Engagement team. She supports student endeavours. For instance, Stephanie regularly takes time out of her schedule to supervise and set up math contests throughout the school, which has led the math team to several zone championships. As student Oliver Cheng explained, she even gave up her time in the middle of spring break, to proctor the Canadian Math Olympiad competition that he and two fellow students were a part of. Oliver says, “Without Ms. Gower, the community of math-lovers at Old Scona wouldn’t be anywhere near as warm, accommodating and connected as today.”

Brian Lee, Teacher, Old Scona School

Brian is a science teacher with a masters of genetics. He has an incredible passion for teaching, and he uses a multidisciplinary approach. Brian's expertise and knowledge in various areas of science allows him to draw in biology concepts in his chemistry classes, or an example from chemistry while explaining a physics concept. Parent Hang Cai says, "Mr. Lee is a born leader!"

"Every class with him is a lesson filled with not only valuable course content, but also humour, fun and interactivity," says student Alexander Cai. "His enthusiasm for teaching spreads to all of his students and motivates us to pursue our learning to the greatest extent." He has an in depth understanding of the International Baccalaureate approaches to learning. Students say he doesn't just teach them what they need to know for the course, he teaches them how to be critical and inquisitive thinkers and study effectively.

Brian co-ordinates the school's Science Olympics team to compete in this engineering challenge hosted by the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA). With Brian's guidance and training, the teams over the past few years have achieved gold level. Mr. Lee has also been a prominent supporter of Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, & Technology (WISEST) and Heritage Youth Researcher Summer (HYRS) programs. "It is his dedication and mentorship that has resulted in multiple students getting accepted into these programs and becoming exposed to these amazing scientific experiences," says parent Darrell Lu.

Scott Couprie, Teacher, Strathcona School

Scott is an amazing computing sciences teacher who advocated for the introduction Advanced Placement Computing Science Principles at Strathcona. This course allows students to experience university level material in high school for university credit. As a result of his leadership, Strathcona School became one of the first schools in Canada to offer Computing Science Principles. He has worked tirelessly to promote the program and it has grown to the point where another lab had to be installed and another teacher hired. He is especially a strong advocate for more women to take up computing sciences. Last year, Scott was invited by the Advanced Placement College Board to train teachers across the country in computing sciences. "He never stops pushing himself and his students to take risks and meet new challenges head on," says Assistant Principal Kelly Reierson. "He is a truly innovative leader."

"Scott guides and mentors students, and challenges them to become strong thinkers rather than just providing them with information," says Curriculum Coordinator Tracy Gerun. Former student Kyle Hennig says, "He really is everything it means to be a Scona Lord, demonstrating both inclusiveness and excellence. He has had a lasting impact on his students." Kyle explained how Scott recognized he had more advanced skill sets and was willing to accelerate his learning. He created extra special projects for him to enroll in and taught him how to create websites in preparation for the Skills Canada national competition.

He is also very involved in extracurricular activities at the school. Scott started the robotics club and now he hosts and organizes an annual tournament for District schools. He also led the Strathcona curling team to three consecutive city championships, including the provincial championship.

Recognition of Merit *continued*

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Brenda Tyson, Community partner, M.E. LaZerte School

Brenda is a member of the Rotary Club of Northeast Edmonton. Trustee Michelle Draper says, “I’m so grateful for all the work she does with our students.” She is an invaluable resource and sponsor for M.E. LaZerte’s Interact Club, working closely with the leadership teacher to support students. This club has grown to over 40 students. She promotes relationships between the school and community, and equips students with the leadership skills to become active members of both the local and global communities.

Brenda attends every meeting, helps with student planning, and ensures students are aware of opportunities and external learning activities students can participate in—such as her rotary club sponsoring students to visit the Human Rights museum. She has also helped organize leadership camps, the Helping Hampers program, the Jeff Dartnell scholarships (for deserving junior high students), Root for Trees planting sessions. She is also a part of the flute making program at Abbott School and supports many other initiatives in the northeast.

Students say things like, “Brenda inspired me to be the person I am today,” and “She has inspired me to become both a leader and a mentor to those around me.” “Each conversation I have with her fills my bucket and each interaction I have seen her have with a student has made me a better teacher, person and father,” says former student leadership advisor, Daniel Card.

Thank You.

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