

Edmonton Public Schools'
DIVISION RECOGNITION
2023–24

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



Program

Message from Board of Trustees

Board Chair Julie Kusiek

Message from Event Co-Sponsor

Scotiabank

Recognition of Service

Recognition of Teams

Recognition of Merit

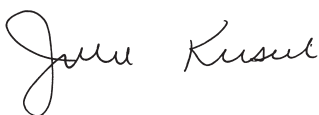


Message from the Board of Trustees

It is with great pride and sincere congratulations that the Board of Trustees celebrates your invaluable contributions to Edmonton Public Schools. For more than 20 years, this program has recognized the dedication and hard work of students, parents, staff and community members—and this year, you are one of the exceptional individuals we are proud to honour.

Your commitment to public education is truly commendable. The dedication, creativity and steadfast support you offer make a lasting difference in the lives of students, families and colleagues alike. Your work, whether it is recognized widely or more quietly admired, embodies Edmonton Public Schools' vision of enhancing pathways for student success. You are a key part of our shared success.

Your contributions inspire others and help foster a culture of excellence and growth. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we thank you for your ongoing dedication and support. Congratulations once again, and may your work continue to inspire, uplift and influence those around you in meaningful ways.



Julie Kusiek
Board Chair

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recognition of Service

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

STAFF

Allyson Probert, Sweet Grass School

Allyson Probert is a highly respected Administrative Assistant at Sweet Grass School, known for her exceptional organizational skills, kindness and dedication to the entire school community.

Teacher Stephanie Garcia describes her as “approachable, supportive and willing to help,” underscoring her ability to create an inclusive and positive atmosphere. She has an approachable nature, listens attentively and empathizes with every person she encounters, helping to create an inclusive environment at the school. Stephanie further mentions, “Allyson’s gentle and non-judgmental personality has fostered a safe and welcoming environment.”

Allyson’s commitment to efficiency is evident in the improvements she has made, such as new procedures for field trips and parent-teacher conferences, which have greatly streamlined operations at the school. Her contributions are celebrated as “genius,” and her efforts have made a lasting impact. Beyond her organizational prowess, Allyson’s compassion and personal touch shine through. Parent Jill Shaw notes that “Ms. Probert is one of the most open and receiving people I have met at the school.” She is known for consistently going the extra mile to support students, parents and staff alike.

Allyson also excels in her role as the lunch program coordinator, where she leads with warmth and professionalism. Her dedication to helping all children feel cared for and supported further emphasizes her pivotal role at Sweet Grass School. As Principal Vanessa LeCaine and Assistant Principal Rhonda Sader say, “Our school community is better for having her here.”

Amy Leslie, Technology and Information Management

Amy Leslie, the Office Administrator in Technology and Information Management, consistently demonstrates dedication and professionalism in her role. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Amy has contributed to creating a more inclusive and culturally diverse work environment, aligning with the Division's Strategic Priority 2: Advance action towards anti-racism and reconciliation.

Amy's impact is seen in her proactive leadership of projects like the Orange Shirt Day initiative, where she coordinated a student-led design project and distributed shirts across multiple departments. Manager Cynthia Prella says, "Amy's efforts to foster a more inclusive and culturally diverse environment within our team have been nothing short of inspiring."

Her contributions extend to organizing the First Nations River Walk, a team-building event promoting cultural understanding. "Thanks to her efforts, we achieved full participation, demonstrating the effectiveness of her initiative," says Managing Director Terry Korte.

Amy's attention to inclusivity is also reflected in how thoughtfully she recognizes various faiths and traditions, helping to create a warm atmosphere for all staff. As noted by Supervisor Aaron Muller, "Her initiative, dedication and impact are exactly what we strive for in our Division."

In every initiative, Amy brings creativity and dedication, transforming the workplace into a more united and culturally aware space. Her work not only enhances team spirit, but also aligns perfectly with the Division's core values.

Beatriz Cerezo, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School

Beatriz Cerezo is an exceptional Educational Assistant at Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School, where she is an indispensable support to students. In the past eight years, Beatriz has supported various classrooms and a wide range of students with complex needs.

Specifically, over the last two years, Beatriz has worked closely with Michaela, a student with cerebral palsy, helping her fully participate in the school's cheerleading team. Michaela's parents Eugenia Owusu-Ansah and Michael Taylor share, "What makes Beatriz exemplary is her commitment and the quality of service she provides. She always took advantage of every opportunity ... and ensured every activity was a fun experience for Michaela."

Beatriz actively pursues growth opportunities and helps out whenever she can, from translating for families to adapting activities for student inclusion. Teacher Chelsey Weinbeer says, "her commitment has made her a never-before-seen model of fostering a truly inclusive environment."

Fellow cheerleading coach Kendra Psiurski echoes this sentiment, "Her care and attention to each individual, helping them succeed not only in cheerleading but in their overall growth, is truly remarkable." Her positive attitude, selflessness and commitment to inclusion have made a lasting impact on the entire school community.

Beatriz's work exemplifies the power of dedication and compassion, and her contributions are a testament to her character. Her efforts have not only empowered Michaela but have also fostered an inclusive environment for all students.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Berni Yakoweshen, Queen Elizabeth School

Berni Yakoweshen has left an indelible mark on Queen Elizabeth School during her 25 years of service as Business Manager. Known for her deep commitment to both the school's operations and people, many saw Berni as the heart of the institution. Principal Brent McKeown says, "Berni has a connection to virtually every aspect of our school operations ... and more importantly, how the lives of our 100-plus staff intersect in meaningful ways."

Berni was a steadfast supporter of both staff and students, working hard to help ensure the community's needs were met. Even after retiring in August 2024, Berni has continued to assist her successor, making for a smooth transition. Throughout her years at Queen Elizabeth School, she was known for creating a familial atmosphere, where her care and compassion touched everyone around her.

The administrative team shared how Berni "walked the fine line between manager and friend," always offering a balance of professionalism, fairness and understanding. With an open-door policy, she was a consistent resource on matters ranging from payroll to personal challenges. "Berni's office was our safe space," says the administrative team. Berni's legacy is defined not just by her work, but by the love and care she brought to those around her.

Mathematics Department Head Val Lytviak says, "Berni's work ethic and dedication to the school has always been impressive, but it's the care she takes with the people around her that make her deserving of this recognition."

Brandon Langmi, Eastglen School

Brandon Langmi is a remarkable All In For Youth Coordinator whose dedication and compassion significantly enrich the Eastglen School community. His commitment to supporting students, particularly those facing challenges, makes him a vital part of the school community. Brandon creates a welcoming atmosphere where every student feels valued. Principal Denise McNeill says, "One of Brandon's most significant contributions is his ability to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among students. His efforts to create a safe and supportive space for all students, regardless of their background or experiences, are truly commendable."

Brandon actively participates in weekly Circle of Support meetings, identifying students in need of assistance and advocating for their success. Assistant Principal Alina Engstrom says, "His ability to listen and provide thoughtful solutions highlights his commitment to student well-being. He also devotes countless hours to tutoring, ensuring that students believe in their potential to succeed."

Brandon's initiatives extend beyond academics. He organizes engaging field trips that create lasting memories and fosters a sense of community among families. His welcoming approach reassures parents and encourages their involvement in their children's education. His dedication is summed up well by Curriculum Coordinator Anne Lambert, "Brandon is always willing to help in any way he can, connecting with students and their families to see how he can support."

Brandon exemplifies the spirit of Eastglen School, and has a profound impact on the lives of students and families through his exceptional service and support.

Carolina Alborno, John D. Bracco School

Carolina Alborno is an exceptional Teacher at John D. Bracco School, whose dedication to her students and passion for the arts, culture and literacy have made a lasting impact. Over the past year, she has led numerous initiatives, including the school's musical theatre production, literacy programs and the annual talent show.

Teacher Danielle Black says Carolina “put her heart and soul” into the musical production, dedicating hours to ensure its success. She not only directed the production, but also managed costume design, choreography and rehearsals, providing students with an unforgettable experience.

Carolina's contributions extend beyond the arts. She has also developed a literacy intervention program focused on supporting English as an Additional Language students. “Her resources and phonics lessons were easy to administer and provided many new and unique opportunities,” says Teacher Myles Grunling. The program has helped many students improve their reading and comprehension skills, making a real difference in their academic development.

In addition to her commitment to literacy and theatre, Carolina also fosters cultural appreciation within the school. Her leadership in hosting sessions on Latino culture, including Día de los Muertos and Latin dances, has enriched the school community. Teacher Vivian Kham highlights her ability to create “a brave space for students,” where even the most shy participants find themselves thriving.

Carolina's dedication, creativity and passion for teaching continue to positively shape the lives of students.

Harold Roscher, Edmonton Christian Northeast School

Harold Roscher, Indigenous Knowledge Keeper at Edmonton Christian Northeast School, has had a lasting impact on the school community through his dedication to truth and reconciliation. His leadership in guiding staff and students fosters deep respect for Indigenous traditions, bridging cultural gaps with compassion and wisdom.

Assistant Principal Sibin Ammanethu commends Harold for “creating safe spaces for honest conversations, encouraging staff to engage with difficult histories,” and embedding Indigenous knowledge into instructional practices. Through monthly meetings and events like Wicahitowin Night, Harold's openness and gentleness spark meaningful discussions, helping staff and families challenge biases and reflect on their roles in reconciliation.

As Grade 2 Teacher Holly Sperling shares about his influence: “Harold's servant leadership has touched me to the core ... Edmonton Public Schools is richer because of the knowledge, teaching and transformative leadership Harold has gifted us with.”

Harold's ability to connect Indigenous and Christian values, demonstrating how the principles of love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth serve all, is a hallmark of his work. Dominique Dickau, Grade 7 Teacher, notes that Harold “brings an attitude of compassion and peace” and “walks alongside us as we work to advance action towards anti-racism and reconciliation.”

Loved and respected by the school community, Harold's continued commitment to relationship building, education and healing is deeply appreciated by students, staff and families. He uplifts and inspires all those he works with.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Heather Taschuk, Old Scona School

Known for her energy and unwavering commitment to student success, Old Scona School Teacher Heather Taschuk always demonstrates exceptional dedication and service. She teaches drama, art and French, where her innovative methods inspire students to embrace both their academic studies and creative expression.

Principal Will Deys praises Heather for her “engaging and creative lessons,” which consistently ignite a love for learning in students. Her involvement goes far beyond the classroom; she plays a key role in organizing school events such as the drama showcase and art shows, both of which are central to the school’s vibrant arts culture. Heather’s leadership ensures these events are successful and memorable for students, staff and the broader community.

Naresh Reddy, a Grade 12 student, fondly recalls how Heather “brought 1,000 per cent energy to every class,” fostering a welcoming environment and encouraging students to be “wholly unapologetic in who you are.” Heather’s emphasis on real-world experiences, from workshops to theatre outings, gives students invaluable opportunities to grow both artistically and personally. As Naresh notes, “Ms. Taschuk was a crucial part of my growth and self-discovery in my high school experience.”

Parent Maricel Reddy highlights Heather’s ability to calm nerves, break down barriers and build community, describing her as a driving force behind the Art Society’s community mural project. Maricel is especially grateful for Heather’s role in helping students build confidence and pursue their creative interests with passion and purpose.

Holly Hugman, Daly Grove School

Holly Hugman, Interactions Teacher at Daly Grove School, demonstrates exceptional dedication and commitment to her students. Her unwavering patience, kindness and ability to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment have made an impact on students, colleagues and families.

As described by parent Cassandra Cory, Holly “engages with each child so thoughtfully, recognizing their individual strengths and needs—and creating an environment where they can flourish.” Cassandra emphasizes that Holly is a master at ensuring every student feels seen, heard and valued. “She is changing lives, helping every child grow and realize their potential.”

Student Records Clerk Najma Kharadi describes Holly as the “kind of teacher every child deserves and the kind of colleague every school dreams of having.” Patient, calm, kind and compassionate, Holly goes above and beyond to ensure that every student at Daly Grove School knows they are safe and welcomed.

What stands out for Assistant Principal Keltie Thompson is Holly’s responsiveness to individual student needs: “Whether adapting her teaching methods or taking a bold risk to implement a new strategy, Holly is always willing to step outside of her comfort zone to ensure that every student receives the support they deserve. She is truly a risk-taker in the best sense—fearlessly advocating for her students and finding innovative ways to meet their needs.”

Holly’s incredible dedication, creativity and inclusive approach set her apart as an exemplary educator.

Irene Montgomery, Malmo School

As Lunchroom Supervisor at Malmo School for nearly three decades, Irene Montgomery consistently demonstrates commitment to her role and genuine care for the well-being of students and staff. Assistant Principal Lisa Hauer notes that Irene has made “an indelible mark on our school.”

Irene’s dedication and positive attitude are invaluable to the school community—her impact is far-reaching. Her presence, cheerful disposition and ability to create a welcoming atmosphere fosters “a comfortable space where students can relax and enjoy their time together as they eat and play,” Lisa adds.

Irene’s dedication to her role is evident in her impeccable attendance record; she has never missed a shift or arrived late. Principal Fatima Dayoub shares that this reliability is a source of stability for both students and staff, and Irene’s consistency fosters a safe and caring environment for all.

Beyond her professional duties, Irene builds strong relationships with the students she supervises. Fatima says, “Irene’s calm demeanour, paired with her compassionate approach, ensures that students feel both safe and respected.” Her ability to connect with students on a personal level makes her a trusted figure in the school community.

Irene’s positive influence extends to her colleagues as well. In Administrative Assistant AnneLise McCoy’s words, Irene’s “kindness and professionalism make her stand out as a person and colleague. She is a much-beloved member of our Malmo family.”

With her genuine enthusiasm and willingness to help others, Irene has made a lasting impact at Malmo School.

Jackie Chu, Parkallen School

Admired for her passion for teaching Chinese language and culture, Mandarin bilingual Teacher Jackie Chu is known for going out of her way to create nurturing, inclusive environments.

Teacher Anita Lam praises her innovation, noting the handmade Pokémon measurement activities Jackie created to boost student engagement. Anita also highlights Jackie’s contributions to planning school-wide activities for Lunar New Year and the Lantern Festival, which “foster cultural awareness and curiosity not only in her classroom, but throughout the entire school.”

Jackie’s affability and support extend beyond the classroom; families also recognize Jackie’s “profound” influence. Assistant Principal Angus Hossack says, “Parents trust that their children are being well-prepared for both the world of work and lifelong learning under Jackie’s guidance.”

Parent Cherry Yuen shares how Jackie’s thoughtful efforts have helped her daughter—who has selective mutism—gain confidence in communication. Jackie’s “ability to create a warm and welcoming environment has given her the confidence to participate in ways we never thought possible. The day she recited Chinese dialogue in front of the entire class was a milestone I will forever cherish,” Cherry recalls.

Through her commitment to the school’s Chinese dance team, Jackie actively promotes Chinese culture in the community. She goes out of her way to find performance opportunities for the group, which allows the school to share Chinese culture with pride.

Jackie knows that small moments can make a big difference. In Anita’s words, “Whether it is by sharing encouraging words or a snack, I know Jackie is always there to support me and our class.” She is an invaluable member of the Parkallen team.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Julie Jackie, George P. Nicholson School

Julie Jackie is an extraordinary Teacher whose impact extends well beyond the classroom. Her dedication, passion and commitment to students at George P. Nicholson School have earned her widespread admiration and gratitude from parents and colleagues alike.

Julie fosters a nurturing and inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and empowered. She is a driving force behind unique teaching and learning methods, such as hosting themed picnics inspired by literature and cultural potlucks that celebrate the diversity of the school community. Parent Starlayne Kim says, “She has gone above and beyond to foster a nurturing and enriching learning environment for all students.”

Beyond academics, Julie demonstrates genuine care and concern for her students’ well-being. She provides support and guidance, particularly for those facing emotional challenges, earning the trust and appreciation of parents.

Julie’s commitment to enriching the school community is further evident in her leadership of extracurricular activities, including a thriving coding club and a yearly coding arcade where students get to showcase games they’ve programmed. These initiatives inspire students, foster collaboration and promote a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Parent Claire Jarock says that what sets Julie apart is her “remarkable ability to connect with her students on a personal level, and to provide them with the support and encouragement they need to thrive.”

Karen Chung, Jasper Place School

Karen Chung is an exemplary educator and valued member of the Jasper Place School community. She consistently gives her all and is dedicated to both students and colleagues. Her commitment to fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment is evident in her various roles and contributions.

As a science Teacher, Karen creates a classroom where students feel safe, respected and empowered to succeed. She tailors her instruction to meet diverse learning styles, provides ample support and resources, and actively seeks student feedback to continuously improve her teaching. Her passion for education and genuine care for student well-being make her a beloved teacher and mentor.

Beyond the classroom, Karen’s impact is widespread. As Curriculum Coordinator, she expertly manages the school’s Academic Support Centre (ACCESS) program, providing crucial academic resources and tutoring services to students seeking extra support. Her organizational skills and flexibility help make the program a success. Furthermore, Karen’s leadership extends to her roles as badminton coach and graduation coordinator. She dedicates countless hours to these endeavours, fostering teamwork, celebrating student achievements, and ensuring smooth and memorable events.

Karen’s colleagues and students admire her work ethic, positive attitude and willingness to embrace new challenges. She is a true team player, always ready to help others and contribute to a positive school environment. In the words of Joseph Chang, who has had the unique experience of being both a student and later a colleague, coaching alongside Karen, “I see first-hand the impact of the connections she makes with the kids. It has been a privilege working with and learning from Karen.”

Kendra Dryer, Grovenor School

When parents talk about Teacher Kendra Dryer, a few words come to mind right away: kind, loving and Charlie. That last one might stick out a bit, but Charlie the classroom dog—a service dog trained in the Pets Assisting with Student Success (PAWSS) program—is just one of many ways Kendra shows love and kindness for students. In the words of parent Carolyn Parkes, “While Charlie may capture one’s attention initially, what is truly revealed through this classroom pet are the underlying pedagogical values that Mrs. Dryer holds—student success is more readily achieved when a classroom feels supportive, safe and accepting, and students know they belong.”

Kendra’s reputation as an amazing, caring teacher is so well known that Grovenor students look forward to Grade 3 because they want to be in her classroom. Parents talk about how Kendra shows great care for each individual student and tailors her lessons to each of their needs. She is especially well known for using her love of Harry Potter to grow a love of reading in students. Parent Bernie Olsson describes how his daughter “who did not like reading and was behind in her reading level gained a love for reading and moved past her reading level because of Kendra.”

On top of everything she does in the classroom, Kendra leads Grovenor’s Kindness Club. She leads by example, showing kindness to everyone she encounters throughout the day and proving how small acts of kindness can lead to greater happiness and better learning outcomes for students.

Kim Malayko, M.E. LaZerte School

Kim Malayko is a dedicated and inspiring educator who has had a significant impact on the lives of countless students and colleagues at Edmonton Public Schools.

Her passion for teaching physics and her commitment to student success have earned her the admiration and respect of many.

Former student Basma Hussain says, “Mrs. Malayko is one who I, along with numerous other students, will admire and appreciate for the rest of our lives. She is exceedingly supportive and reliable, enriching the lives of all her students.”

Keiron Street, another former student, says “Mrs. Malayko [is] more than just a teacher; she [is] a mentor, a guide and a source of inspiration. Her exceptional dedication to the IB program and her genuine care for her students have left a lasting impact on many of us at M.E. LaZerte. Her influence has not only helped to shape our academic achievements but also our personal growth, making our high school experience truly special.”

Fellow Teacher Thom Stahlke highlights that Kim “is known for her collaborative spirit and her willingness to go above and beyond to support fellow educators.” Her commitment to fostering a positive and supportive work environment has created a strong sense of camaraderie among the teaching staff.

“What sets Kim apart the most is her unwavering compassion and empathy. She is known for reaching out to those in need, offering a kind word or a listening ear. Her passion for teaching and her genuine love for people are evident in everything she does. Kim is not only a lifelong learner herself, but she also inspires a love of learning in those around her,” says Thom.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Lindsey Kemp, Queen Elizabeth School

Teacher Lindsey Kemp is a powerhouse of energy and enthusiasm, making her a true inspiration to students and colleagues alike. Her dedication to music education at Queen Elizabeth School is undeniable, and her impact extends far beyond the classroom.

From leading multiple bands and choirs to spearheading school events like graduation, Lindsey's tireless efforts are felt throughout the entire school community. "Lindsey embodies the qualities of a visionary educator and leader whose passion for music and unwavering dedication to her students have left an indelible mark on the community. Her ability to cultivate talent, build cohesive teams and advocate for the arts is a testament to her exceptional leadership," says Robin Richardson, Department Head.

Lindsey's commitment goes beyond teaching notes and rhythms. She creates a nurturing and inclusive environment where all students feel welcome, regardless of their experience or skill level. Her "Music Fam" fosters a sense of belonging and provides opportunities that many students wouldn't have otherwise, like performing with professional musicians or even a rock band!

Her dedication extends beyond Queen Elizabeth School. Lindsey actively participates in professional development, sharing her expertise with other educators and advocating for music education at conferences and workshops. She has also collaborated with world-renowned composers to create original pieces for her students.

Lindsey's passion for music is contagious. Fellow Teacher Tanya Buhlman says, "To [Lindsey] it isn't teaching—it is sharing a passion and love of a language not many can understand."

Maxine Hackett, Jasper Place School

Curriculum Coordinator Maxine Hackett is a dedicated educator who has had a significant impact on the lives of students and colleagues at Jasper Place School. Her commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment has helped transform the school culture.

As a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion, Maxine has played a pivotal role in establishing and supporting various student organizations, including the Black Students Association and the Muslim Students Association. Her guidance and mentorship have empowered students to embrace their cultural identities and become leaders within their community.

Maxine's dedication to student success extends beyond the classroom. She has worked to secure funding and resources for student initiatives, such as the Black Youth Leadership Program. Her support and encouragement have inspired students to pursue their passions and achieve their goals.

Assistant Principal Cheryl Boos notes, "Maxine has not only guided us, but has also walked with us, sharing her own personal experiences to help us along our journey." Her ability to create a safe and inclusive space for students to discuss sensitive topics and share their experiences has fostered a sense of belonging and understanding.

Maxine's impact on the school community is undeniable. Her efforts have not only enriched the lives of students but have also inspired colleagues to become more culturally aware and sensitive. She is a true champion for diversity and inclusion, and her contributions to Jasper Place School will be felt for years to come.

Naveed Chaudhry, M.E. LaZerte School

Assistant Department Head Naveed Chaudhry is a dedicated educator who has made a significant difference in the lives of countless students and colleagues. His commitment to student success and his ability to build strong relationships with students and families are truly inspiring.

Bryan Radmanovich, a former colleague and administrator, notes, “Naveed is a definite asset to Edmonton Public Schools, as his reputation is stellar amongst his peers and senior administration. He has the innate ability to connect with all students from all backgrounds.” His empathy, compassion and genuine care for students have created a positive and supportive learning environment. Naveed’s dedication to improving students’ well-being is evident in his willingness to go above and beyond to provide support and guidance.

Student Raistlan Uhl shares, “Mr. Chaudhry is a phenomenal listener, he gives great advice on how to deal with situations, and he is a great soundboard for ideas when I need advice.” Naveed’s ability to connect with students on a personal level has created a lasting impact, fostering trust and respect.

M.E. LaZerte School Principal George Hoyt says, “Naveed is without hesitation one of the finest teachers, administrators and individuals I have had the opportunity to work with. He is an amazing human being. I am fortunate to work with him and most importantly learn from him. Or, as he would say, ‘learn with him’.” Naveed’s leadership skills, coupled with his passion for education, have made him a valued asset to the school community.

Paige Garn, Svend Hansen School

Educational Assistant Paige Garn at Svend Hansen School is a shining example of dedication and innovation in supporting students with complex communication needs. This past year, Paige demonstrated exceptional work with a student diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

Paige’s commitment to the student went far beyond daily tasks. When she found there were limitations to the high-tech communication the student was using, Paige took the initiative to develop alternative methods. She created a low-tech replica, fostering peer interaction and building the student’s confidence in expressing themselves. This dedication paid off when the high-tech device was reintroduced.

According to Teacher Steven Inch, “Paige remained positive, humorous and kind during this time.”

Paige’s impact extends beyond the classroom. Occupational Therapist Laura Gilligan notes her “willingness not only to take on the role of modelling for the student, but also to take on the role of editing some of the vocabulary, managing the technology and encouraging the student to use the device.” Her dedication to collaboration with colleagues helped the student receive holistic support.

Speech Language Pathologist J. River Wilson highlighted Paige’s ability to celebrate “small wins” and find joy in the student’s progress. “Her joy was infectious, motivating me to do better and fight harder for all my students.”

Throughout the year, Paige meticulously documented the student’s progress, demonstrating the effectiveness of the communication device. Her detailed records were instrumental in securing long-term access to this crucial tool.

Paige’s dedication, innovative spirit and collaborative approach have transformed a student’s communication journey. She is a true champion for student success.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Robert D'Amours, Belvedere School

Technology and Information Management Technical Analyst Robert D'Amours is making a big difference at Belvedere School. His contributions have significantly enhanced the learning environment for both students and staff.

Principal Ronali Ferguson and Assistant Principal Laura Scott note, Robert is “actively involved in our school community, helping out in whatever capacity he can.” His willingness to help, whether it’s troubleshooting technology issues or providing support to staff, has made him an indispensable asset.

Robert’s passion and technical expertise is truly impressive. He has a deep understanding of technology and software systems, and is always eager to share his knowledge with others. His ability to anticipate and resolve technical issues proactively has significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the school.

Beyond tech skills, Robert has an exceptional ability to work with others. He builds strong relationships with staff members, creating a positive and supportive work environment. His friendly demeanour and willingness to help have made him a beloved member of the school community.

Teacher Gregory Toogood says, “Robert is a truly remarkable individual who consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty.” His dedication, expertise and positive attitude have made a significant impact on Belvedere School.

“The comfort and relief of knowing that Robert can fix any problem, explain it in technology-friendly language and have it completed by the end of the school day is priceless,” says Teacher Jill Yacey-Greco.

Rola Aljamal, Dickinsfield School

Rola Aljamal is a dedicated Educational Assistant whose outstanding work, unwavering support and exceptional contributions is often noticed by her colleagues at Dickinsfield School.

Rola provides support to English as an additional language (EAL) learners, and demonstrates a deep understanding of the needs of students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Principal Chelsea Erdmann says, “Rola’s ability to create a welcoming, caring and safe environment for EAL students is one of her greatest strengths.”

Teacher Dana Simmons says Rola has been an invaluable asset to her classroom over the past two years, supporting not only EAL learners, but also Strategies classes, the Connections program and other students requiring individualized assistance. Beyond her work with students, Rola is instrumental in bridging communication gaps with families, serving as a cultural liaison for Arabic families and helping them navigate the school system. She also helps maintain the school library, managing resources and helping students find the materials they need.

“In her multifaceted role at our school, Rola wears many hats with grace and expertise,” says Dana.

Rola’s commitment to professional development is also noteworthy, according to Assistant Principal Regena Mitzel, as she actively seeks out workshops and training to enhance her skills: “Her eagerness to learn and implement new strategies is a testament to her dedication to continuous improvement and excellence in her role.”

Ruth Bowman-Kilback, John D. Bracco School

Ruth Bowman-Kilback is an exemplary Educational Assistant who makes John D. Bracco School a better place for students and staff alike.

Teacher Carrie Bissoon says Ruth's commitment shines particularly in the Connections program, where "she is a constant source of support helping the students make those essential connections within the school community vital to their growth and development."

"Ruth consistently creates a positive and nurturing environment that fosters student growth and learning," adds Curriculum Coordinator Tyler Sorochan. "Her patience, understanding and skill in handling complex situations have significantly contributed to the success of our students."

Ruth's initiatives with Connections students, such as organizing poppy sales for Remembrance Day and managing the concession stand during events, not only fosters leadership among students, but also helps them develop essential life skills.

Beyond the classroom, Ruth is actively involved in the Breakfast Club, school lunch program, school store and more. "Ruth's commitment to the well-being of our students is evident in her meticulous attention to detail and her proactive approach to addressing any issues that arise," says Tyler.

She also frequently volunteers to put up bulletin boards, organize visual displays and distribute posters for events. "While other staff get involved in these activities, Ruth is a constant," says Carrie. "When she is able to include students in this work, she does so with patience and encouragement."

"Ruth exemplifies the highest standards of excellence in educational assistance, and her impact extends far beyond the confines of a classroom or school," says Administrative Assistant Amber Tremblay.

Shelley Kofluk, Alex Janvier School

Shelley Kofluk is described as hardworking, professional and selfless in her role as Assistant Principal at Alex Janvier School.

With a proven track record from her time at Westlawn School, her appointment at Alex Janvier was "an easy call and bringing her on board was easily one of the best decisions I made in those first few months," says Principal Robert Smilanich, noting: "Shelley is probably the hardest worker I have ever met and routinely astonishes me with her capacity for getting things done."

Shelley is also described by her colleagues as collaborative, compassionate, kind, honest, fair, respectful and calm under pressure, as well as someone with a strong work ethic, and great relationship and communication skills. Her focus on wellness is also commended.

"She ensures her staff feel welcome, appreciated and heard," says Curriculum Coordinator Brett Ludwig. "She spends considerable time talking with students, and approaches conduct with an empathetic and educational approach. Many students and staff rely on Shelley's wisdom and thoughtful advice to manage life's obstacles and opportunities."

Shelley's leadership extends beyond her work with students and colleagues, as she excels in engaging and guiding parents and families as well. This was especially evident during conversations around a new playground project, according to Michelle Cooke, parent and Acting Treasurer of the Parent Council.

"Shelley's natural ability to lead, combined with her commitment to thinking outside the box, makes her an invaluable asset to Alex Janvier School," says Michelle.

"Her contributions have significantly enriched our school environment and positively impacted many lives."

Recognition of Service *continued*

Tina Newell, LaPerle School

Tina Newell is a cherished member of the LaPerle School community, and has been for more than 12 years. In addition to being a parent of former students and a devoted volunteer, Tina is also a compassionate lunchroom aide at the school.

“Tina actively engages in various initiatives, and supports both staff and students, demonstrating her deep-rooted passion for fostering a vibrant and inclusive school community,” says Teacher Tracy Freund.

The relationships she builds with students is remarkable, says Tracy, adding, “Many look forward to seeing her as their lunch supervisor, knowing that she is more than just a figure in the lunchroom, she is a trusted adult who connects with them on a personal level. Students cheer and get excited to see her after breaks, often running up to catch up with her regularly.”

Tina embodies the spirit of community involvement, serving in multiple capacities, and tackling various tasks with enthusiasm and care. She actively engages in organizing the Scholastic Book Fair and supporting the school library, demonstrating remarkable flexibility and nurturing interactions with students. She also helps transform the gymnasium for events and hangs artwork to celebrate student creativity.

“Whether she is offering a comforting presence during lunchtime or engaging students in conversations, her presence is felt deeply and appreciated by all,” says Principal Jodean Gagne, adding, “In fact, we often reflect on how we couldn’t do what we do without her.”

Tina’s daughters, who attended LaPerle, have embraced her example and are volunteering as well.

“Her kindness, dedication and generosity have helped create a school environment that we can all be proud of,” says Administrative Assistant Jean Evans.

Wendy Westren, Elder Dr. Francis Whiskeyjack School

Wendy Westren was the first staff member hired at Elder Dr. Francis Whiskeyjack School after Tammy Tchir was named Principal. As Office Administrator at the new school, Tammy says Wendy “has been an invaluable asset ... and her contributions have played a significant role in our success.”

Wendy took charge of a number of tasks involved in setting up the school, including managing administrative processes, liaising with multiple Division departments, overseeing logistical aspects of establishing a new school, welcoming various staff groups into the building and more.

“Her proactive approach in addressing challenges, coupled with her adept problem-solving skills, significantly contributed to the school’s successful opening and in its continued smooth operation,” says Tammy.

Lisa Hockley, Project Manager with Integrated Infrastructure Services, says it was a pleasure working with Wendy: “Her hardworking and energetic nature created a positive working environment, which is reflected in the beauty of the school.”

“She has displayed a genuine passion for creating a supportive and enriching environment for students, while tackling challenges head-on and finding innovative solutions to problems that arose,” adds Lisa. “Her relentless commitment was evident as we managed tight timelines and coordinated with various stakeholders on site over the summer.”

Colleagues commend Wendy’s dedication, professionalism and commitment, along with her organizational skills, leadership and work ethic.

“Her contributions have not only laid a strong foundation for our school, but have also positively impacted the broader community we serve,” says Assistant Principal Lisa Beebe.

Wisam Yousef, Lauderdale School

Educational Assistant Wisam Yousef’s colleagues at Lauderdale School say she “redefines what it means to go above and beyond.” Not only does Wisam demonstrate exceptional skill in the classroom, but she also plays a vital role in supporting newcomer and English as an Additional Language students.

Principal Alicia Brownson and Assistant Principal Lyndsey Smyth emphasize Wisam’s “extraordinary ability to connect with and support newcomer families,” adding that she often goes out of her way to provide support, translating important information and fostering a welcoming environment where families feel understood and valued.

Wisam’s contributions reach far beyond the classroom. Teacher Rand Jurf shares that Wisam supports students through behavioural challenges and serves as a trusted confidante to students in need. Her compassion extends to families as well—offering advice, a listening ear and connection to resources. Rand adds that Wisam is a “pillar of strength” at the school, praising her selflessness and resilience.

Teacher Katie Hasenbank recognizes Wisam for the inclusive environment she creates, where students feel valued and understood. As Katie highlights, “Through tailored support and encouragement, Mrs. Ajaleh helps students navigate the challenges of language acquisition, enabling them to thrive academically and socially.”

Wisam’s efforts ensure that each student feels empowered to succeed.

Wisam also plays a vital role in enhancing school culture. From organizing extracurricular activities, after-school programs and events, to creating meticulous displays and bulletin boards, her dedication fosters a sense of school pride, belonging and connection. She is an irreplaceable part of the Lauderdale School family whose commitment has profoundly impacted students, families and staff.

Recognition of Service *continued*

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Bridget Herity, Lauderdale School

Bridget Herity is a dedicated and compassionate Bus Driver for Lauderdale School's Interactions program. She has consistently demonstrated excellence in her role, building strong connections with students, staff and families. Bridget's patience, warmth and skill in using regulation strategies—such as seating plans, co-regulation and individualized support—means students arrive at school prepared for their day.

"Bus rides can be dysregulating for many students; however, Bridget has helped our students to remain calm, and make it safely to school daily," says Teacher Kristen Sigman.

Commitment to student success extends beyond the regular school day for Bridget. She volunteers her time for field trips, ensuring students are supported as they explore activities around the city. "She engages with the students and ensures that they are safe on the bus and in community settings," adds Kristen.

Southland Operation Supervisor Pat Nickerson greatly appreciates Bridget's punctuality and consistent presence, which creates a steady, dependable environment for students. Pat highlights that Bridget is reliable, trustworthy and a pleasure to work with.

Bridget also maintains close communication with families, ensuring that students' unique needs are met each day. Teacher Brad Hwang commends how Bridget handles difficult situations, saying, "She is quick to park the bus and assist so that students can be safe and regulated for the rest of the trip."

Bridget's kind and welcoming nature has made her an invaluable member of the Lauderdale School team. As Brad concludes: "She demonstrates what an Interactions bus driver should strive to be."

Charu Brintnell, Riverdale School

Charu Brintnell has positively shaped the Riverdale School community through her leadership, creativity and tireless dedication. As School Council Chair, Charu commits countless hours to organizing events, spearheading fundraisers and transforming the school's environment with her artistic talents. Teacher Kendra Hufnagel highlights how Charu's "beautiful bulletin board displays and hand-sewn banners transform the hallways of our school into true works of art," creating a welcoming atmosphere for students.

Charu's leadership extends to major school events. From barbecues and community meals to the school's centennial anniversary—which brought together alumni and families to celebrate the school's rich history—Charu's efforts make every event memorable. "Her organizational skills and attention to detail have ensured that every event runs smoothly and successfully," notes Teacher April Kirk, who praises Charu's positivity and infectious sense of humour.

In addition to event planning, Charu is an advocate for enriching student experiences. She is a driving force behind fundraising efforts, such as casinos and hot lunches, helping secure funding for technology and library supplies. Her initiative helps enhance "the highest quality of education for our Riverdale students," expresses Teacher Kaitlyn Carwell.

Beyond her council role, Charu volunteers in classrooms, assists on field trips and maintains close relationships with students, staff and families. "Her ability to bring people together, and her enthusiastic approach, have inspired others to get involved and contribute to the school's success," adds April.

Charu is a beloved and indispensable figure in the school community. Her creativity, commitment and leadership have transformed Riverdale School, leaving a lasting impact on both its spaces and spirit.

Darren Hodson and therapy dog Vinny, Balwin School

Darren Hodson and his therapy dog, Vinny, are essential members of the Balwin School community, bringing joy, empathy and meaningful interactions to students and staff alike. Their regular presence in the school has cultivated lasting relationships, making each of their visits a highly anticipated event. “Darren and Vinny truly light up our hallways and our lives,” reflect Balwin School staff, capturing the duo’s impact on the school environment.

Vinny’s story of resilience—having lost his hearing as a puppy—serves as both an inspiration and a lesson in inclusion. Students are captivated by the sign language Darren uses with Vinny and embrace the opportunity to learn those signs themselves. As noted by the school’s Interactions team, “Vinny’s impact and relationship with students who communicate differently is incredibly profound.” His calm demeanour helps students develop empathy and social skills, with many students finding comfort and emotional regulation in his presence.

Darren’s thoughtful approach strengthens these connections. Whether greeting students by name or remembering small details about their lives, Darren ensures that every student feels seen and valued.

“It’s Darren who is seeking out the students who may need a little more love and attention,” Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad observes, highlighting his quiet dedication. Darren allows Vinny to shine, never taking credit for the magic they create together.

Through their visits, Darren and Vinny have become symbols of kindness and connection at Balwin School. They uplift the community, helping students manage challenges, build friendships and feel part of something special. Their presence, as one student puts it, “makes everyone’s day.”

Hayder Abed, Queen Elizabeth School

Hayder Abed is a dedicated Settlement Practitioner with the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA) and the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, whose work with newcomer students and families at Queen Elizabeth School has had an extraordinary impact.

His efforts go far beyond the expected, fostering a sense of belonging and achievement in students who often face significant barriers. As Teacher Sarah Jane Lees shares, “Conversations with Hayder have been some of my most important professional development and made me a better person.” Hayder’s commitment is reflected in the transformative changes he brings to students, particularly through the Newcomers Orientation Week program, where he trains student leaders who, under his mentorship, gain confidence and thrive both academically and socially.

Hayder’s ability to connect on a deeper level with students and families, while addressing their cultural and academic needs, is a hallmark of his work. Department Head Anna Cairo says, “The way he approaches each situation, student and staff is truly remarkable. His skill is truly an art.” His fluency in multiple languages and his vast network of community connections helps students receive the support they need.

Assistant Principal Jennifer Jo Kennedy underscores the far-reaching impact of Hayder’s contributions: “Hayder’s leadership within the SWIS program has been instrumental in bridging gaps between families and the school by fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.” Hayder’s work is a testament to his unwavering dedication, making him a cornerstone of his community.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Kyle Jhamandas, Bessie Nichols School

Kyle Jhamandas is a dedicated volunteer who has made a significant impact on the Bessie Nichols School community. His commitment to student athletes and his passion for sports have made him an invaluable asset to the school's athletics program.

As a coach for the soccer and basketball teams, Kyle has demonstrated exceptional dedication and leadership. He works hard to give student athletes a positive and enriching experience, both on and off the field. His willingness to share his knowledge and expertise has helped countless students develop skills and confidence.

Teacher Samantha St. Louis highlights Kyle's "passion, professionalism and knowledge" as a coach. She also emphasizes his commitment to the well-being of the players, noting that he "teaches the students just as much about life as he does about sports."

Kyle's impact extends beyond coaching. He is actively involved in various school events and initiatives, demonstrating his commitment to the broader school community. His positive attitude and willingness to help have made him a beloved figure among students, staff and parents alike.

Teacher and Co-Athletic Director Steven Ainsley says Kyle is known for his dedication and professionalism. "Kyle is impressively able to balance his volunteer coaching commitments at our school with a busy work schedule."

Kyle creates a supportive and inclusive environment where students can learn and grow both as athletes and as individuals. His dedication to fostering positive relationships with students and his ability to inspire them to reach their full potential are truly commendable.

Linda Almoued, Lorelei School

Linda Almoued is a dedicated and compassionate individual who has had a significant impact on the Lorelei School community. Her commitment to student well-being and her positive influence on the school environment have earned her the respect and admiration of colleagues, students and families.

As a breakfast program coordinator and Lunchroom Supervisor, Linda works hard to make sure students are well-cared for. She ensures that students start their day with a nutritious meal and a warm welcome. "She consistently approaches her role with a remarkable level of kindness, enthusiasm and compassion," says Assistant Principal Averil Pukalo.

Linda's language skills have also been invaluable to the school. Her ability to communicate with Arabic-speaking families has strengthened the school's connection with the community and fostered a sense of belonging among students.

Principal Michelle Korchinski says, "Linda's commitment to the school is evident in the small, meaningful ways she contributes, from helping out staff to offering support to students and families."

Her positive attitude and willingness to help have made her a beloved member of the school community. "Linda embodies the spirit of our school community. Her unwavering commitment to student safety, her proactive engagement with our students, and her efforts to support families reflect the core values we strive to uphold," say Teachers Lauren Ackerman and Ben Workman.

Lyle Cruise, L.Y. Cairns School

Lyle Cruise is a dedicated and passionate volunteer who has had a significant impact on the students and staff at L.Y. Cairns School. With 39 years of teaching experience, Lyle continues to demonstrate his commitment to education even after retirement. For the past seven years, he has volunteered two days a week in the school's automotive and welding programs, in addition to managing his personal farm and actively participating in Skills Canada competitions.

His exceptional work ethic and willingness to share his vast technical knowledge have greatly benefited students, particularly those with specialized needs. "Lyle's presence is always noted and appreciated by our students," Curriculum Coordinator Vaughn Saik states, underscoring the hands-on approach that has become a hallmark of Lyle's teaching style. Teacher Kennedy Rodrigues notes, "Lyle drives well over an hour each way in the winter to even get here," highlighting his remarkable dedication.

In addition to his work at the school, Lyle actively promotes skilled trades and serves as a role model to students. According to Principal Errol Johnson, "Lyle goes above and beyond, offering hands-on instruction and sharing his wealth of knowledge about maintaining and repairing vehicles."

Lyle's tireless efforts, enthusiasm and commitment to student development have made a lasting impact on both the school and the broader community. He continues to inspire students, staff and colleagues through his dedication to education and the trades.

Mike Dufresne, Balwin School

Mike Dufresne is an exceptional coach and advocate who has a wide-reaching impact on the Balwin School community, particularly through the FreePlay program. As the lead coach of FreePlay for over two years, he has fostered an environment that promotes inclusivity, teamwork and personal growth. His approach to learning through sport has helped countless children develop confidence, empathy and leadership skills. Parents Karl Reid and Nicole Renaud say, "Mike has shown an unwavering commitment to inclusion and family support," which has helped students, regardless of their abilities, feel welcome and valued in the program.

Mike's dedication extends beyond the playing field, as he works closely with school staff to create a seamless experience for students. According to Principal Carolyn Mathew, "Mike is a consistent, trustworthy and steadfast presence at our school each afternoon." His calm demeanour and thoughtful approach help students feel safe and supported, allowing them to try new things and cheer each other on.

Furthermore, Mike's genuine investment in the lives of students is evident in the way he builds lasting connections. Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad says, "He goes the extra mile to form and foster those relationships in our building." Whether it's sending teachers photos of students at field trips or greeting children by name, Mike's passion for his work and community shines through. His leadership continues to transform lives, and he is widely loved and respected for his contributions.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Peter Wright, for service to Eastglen, Harry Ainlay and M.E. LaZerte schools

Peter Wright, affectionately called Coach Peter, has become an integral member of Edmonton's athletic community through his years of dedicated work with student athletes. Peter has supported numerous schools, enriching the lives of countless students through his work in track and field and cross country programs. His influence extends far beyond the sports field, creating a positive and lasting impact on entire school communities.

Known for his kindness and patience, Peter's efforts extend beyond athletic training. He fosters personal growth and resilience in athletes, focusing on building confidence, discipline and a sense of self-worth. He actively supports athletes from various diverse backgrounds, ensuring all are equipped with what they need to succeed—from proper running shoes to opportunities for competitive events.

During Peter's time at Eastglen School, his consistency and dedication helped grow participation on school teams from eight students to 50 over the past three years. Eastglen Athletic Director Seanne Stillar notes Peter has an ability to create a nurturing environment where every athlete can thrive: "Students immediately feel welcomed and valued in Peter's presence."

"He understands the importance of contributing outside of the classroom and how doing so affects a school environment," adds M.E. LaZerte Principal George Hoyt, who first crossed paths with Peter when he was at Eastglen School.

Teacher Craig Harle, Track and Field and Cross Country Coach at Harry Ainlay School, says Peter's impact will be felt for years to come.

"In my 30 years of coaching, Peter stands out as the finest example of a caring coach that any athlete could have," says Craig. "His genuine investment in the well-being and success of each student is unparalleled, making him not only a mentor in sports but also a guiding force in their personal lives. Edmonton Public Schools is very lucky that Peter Wright has willingly given so much to our district and its student athletes."

Sherlynn Cruise, Hillview School

Sherlynn Cruise is a devoted parent and an invaluable member of the Hillview School community, and has been for more than a decade. During those 10 years, Sherlynn's commitment has extended from her own children to all students at Hillview, and reaches far beyond her involvement in the School Council and Parents' Association.

"Sherlynn's contributions are diverse and impactful," says Teacher Sharon Massie, noting she "plays a vital role in our school's daily operations."

Many mornings, Sherlynn is the first face students see as she greets them with a warm smile and nutritious snacks from the Hillview Breakfast Cart, helping children start their day on a positive note. Beyond her involvement in shopping for, preparing and serving breakfast options, Sherlynn volunteers in the school library, offers support for classroom activities and field trips, and helps organize key events such as Fall Soup Day, the Family Dance and Grade 6 Farewell.

"Sherlynn is the type of volunteer who can see a need in the school community and then develop a plan to fill the gap," says Principal Karen Steinhauer, adding that "our school community benefits from her contributions each and every day."

Along with her volunteer efforts, Sherlynn strives to learn the names of each and every student, has built relationships with all staff, and meets and involves other families in the work of the school council.

"Her positivity and infectious energy have become a staple in the Hillview School community," says Trustee Saadiq Sumar. "And the room seems to brighten as soon as she walks in."

Simranjit Kharal, Svend Hansen School

Simranjit Kharal is a dedicated volunteer coach who has had a significant impact on the lives of student athletes at Svend Hansen School. His passion for basketball and his commitment to mentoring young people have made him a valuable member of the school community.

As a coach, Simranjit demonstrates exceptional leadership and a strong work ethic. He is always well prepared and dedicated to helping players improve their skills. Student Jobanjot Pandher says, “Simran’s coaching methods have impacted our skills since the beginning of the season. Improvement was a main factor in the season, and as a coach, he made it known that hard work and dedication to the sport would mean that our season would be amazing.”

Beyond his coaching duties, Simranjit serves as a positive role model for the players. He fosters a supportive and inclusive environment where young athletes can learn and grow both on and off the court. Principal Christina Jones says, “Simran is a very mature, gifted and talented leader who is dedicated to his family, team and community.”

Simranjit’s commitment to basketball extends beyond his role as a coach. He actively seeks opportunities to improve his skills and knowledge, attending coaching clinics and workshops. This dedication to continuous learning allows him to provide the best possible instruction to his players. Assistant Principal and fellow coach Darrell Paquette says, “He sees challenges as opportunities to grow and develop resiliency.”

“Coach Simran isn’t just a coach to us, he’s a brother,” says Jobanjot.

Teri Arndt, Aldergrove School

Teri Arndt is a true gem at Aldergrove School, dedicating over 25 years of her time and energy to support the school community. Her roots at the school run deep, going back to her own school days.

As a dedicated volunteer, Teri has consistently gone above and beyond to support teachers, staff and students. She is known for providing support in a variety of ways such as: photocopying and laminating, printing charts and posters, and volunteering on school field trips. Principal Dao Haddad says, “Teri is someone you enjoy having around as she is a gentle soul with an awesome sense of humour.”

Teri’s dedication to the school is evident in her willingness to help in any way possible. She has a positive attitude and a can-do spirit, always ready to lend a hand. Her contributions have made a significant difference in the daily operations of the school and have created a more positive and supportive learning environment for all.

Administrative Assistant Linda Renner highlights Teri’s reliability and commitment, “Teri is a loyal and deeply committed member of our Aldergrove family. Teri comes in every morning without fail.” Her consistent presence and willingness to support the school community have made her an integral part of the team.

“We are so grateful to continue having such a dedicated, wonderful and giving person as part of our school community. She is a remarkable woman who truly exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism,” say Teachers Joyce Sneddon and Susen Fischer.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Vida Mercer, L.Y. Cairns School

Vida Mercer is an extraordinary individual whose dedication to education has had a profound impact on the L.Y. Cairns School community. Her decades of service, both as a teacher and a volunteer, have left an enduring legacy.

As a teacher, Vida was known for her passion and ability to connect with students on a deep level. She created a warm and supportive learning environment where students felt valued and encouraged. Her colleagues, like Assistant Principal Barbara Cameron, have praised her for her wealth of knowledge and ability to make learning engaging and fun. “Vida has a terrific sense of humour, is kind and patient, and has the ability to make people feel valued and included,” says Barbara.

Even after retiring, Vida’s commitment to L.Y. Cairns has remained unwavering. She continues to volunteer, sharing her expertise and passion with students and staff. Her contributions to the horticulture program, including preparing poinsettias and organizing the annual plant sale, have enriched the school community.

Principal Errol Johnson says, “Vida works well with our diverse student population. Her interest and passion for students with special needs has been particularly beneficial to our students.”

Vida’s impact extends beyond the classroom. She has been a mentor to countless students and staff, offering guidance, support and encouragement. Her positive attitude and dedication have inspired others to strive for excellence.

Vida is a true inspiration. Her commitment to education, her passion for teaching and her dedication to L.Y. Cairns makes her a truly special member of the community.

Recognition of Teams

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

STAFF

Administrative Team, Johnny Bright School

The members of this team are Jacqueline Baker, Andy Connelly and Kathleen Marzolf.

The administrative team at Johnny Bright School is a dynamic and dedicated group of leaders who have had a significant impact on their school community. Their collaborative approach, commitment to excellence and support for staff, students and families have created a positive and thriving learning environment.

Teacher Natasha Danyluik says, “This team cares for the staff with calmness and patience. When staff have questions or need help, one of them is always available with their open door policy.” Their approachable nature has fostered a strong sense of community within the school.

“Our administrative team works collaboratively to ensure that our school is the hub of the community. They challenge all staff to be the best that we can be with a kind and caring disposition. They work to create a space where everyone feels comfortable and valued,” says Administrative Assistant Patricia Peddle.

The administrative team has also demonstrated a strong commitment to professional development and supporting staff in their roles. They provide opportunities for staff to learn and grow, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. “They plan professional learning to support our diverse staff. They are responsive to staff learning needs,” Natasha says.

Moreover, the team’s dedication to creating a positive and inclusive school climate is evident in their interactions with students and families. The school’s custodial team says, “The administrative team, as individuals and collectively, demonstrate a caring, respectful and responsible professionalism that makes Johnny Bright one of the best schools in the Division.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Aldergrove CARE Classroom Team, Hospital School Campuses

The members of this team are Beth deVries, Ryan Duggan, Tricia Giles-Wang, Melanie Hay, Harley Howat, Luiza Klebek, Karl Merrit, Shelley Ryan, Samantha Straub and Tara Wood.

The Aldergrove CARE Classroom team exemplifies the transformative power of education in addressing the diverse needs of students facing mental health challenges. Their dedication, collaborative spirit and commitment to family involvement create a nurturing and inclusive environment to help every student feel valued, loved, cared for and heard.

Their innovative approach has yielded remarkable results, empowering students to thrive academically and personally. Parent Heather Manweiller says, “We are forever grateful for my son’s time at Aldergrove. The Aldergrove team’s approach to nurturing students empowers them to change their lives and the lives of those around them for the better.”

The team’s commitment to individualized support is evident in their meticulous attention to each student. Parents Sherri Beauchamp and Carol Scheibel say, “The team at Aldergrove went above and beyond and it was their communication and incredible attention to detail that has helped us better understand our son and how we can support him even more at school and in life.”

Beyond their direct work with students, the team’s impact extends to the broader school community. They provide valuable training and support to staff, helping to create a more inclusive and understanding school culture. By sharing their expertise and best practices, they empower families and educators to better support the mental health needs of all students.

LaPerle School Principal Jodean Gagne notes how the CARE classroom has helped students at her school. “Through their unwavering dedication, they have significantly contributed to the enhancement of public education by addressing the critical mental health needs of our students.”

AMA School Patrol, Victoria School

The members of this team are Elaine Jenkins and Erica Peterson.

Teacher Erica Peterson and parent Elaine Jenkins know morning traffic is hectic around Victoria School. Recognizing a gap in safety and an opportunity, the two worked with students to develop and run the school's Alberta Motor Association safety patrol program. The program enhances student safety and fosters leadership, teamwork and personal growth in students who volunteer as patrollers.

As the program's teacher liaison, Erica co-ordinates training sessions about traffic safety and teaches students how to communicate clearly and with confidence. "Everyday, morning and afternoon, you can hear their confident voices shout: Point! Pause! Proceed!" says Rustam Sardarli, Curriculum Coordinator. "Students who start quiet and reserved quickly find their voice." These student patrollers often become leaders and mentors for younger students who want to become more involved.

Elaine Jenkins, parent, manages the daily operations of the patrol with precision and care. She developed an effective reward system and easy-to-read schedules that keep students motivated and organized. "Elaine's calm and patient demeanour make her an exceptional role model for the children," says Elaine Foote, Office Administrator. She is able to identify risk in the moment and use it as a teaching opportunity, offering practical and personal guidance to student patrollers.

Assistant Principal Elizabeth Ward commends their community leadership and the program's impact on student well-being. "This program has made visible our priority on student safety."

This duo has transformed traffic safety at the school, encouraging students to advocate for their own and others' safety. Together, Elaine and Erica have made a lasting impact on both the school and the community.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Anti-Racism Committee, Strathcona School

The members of this team are Rana Abdul-Sater, Sara Cranston, Robert Hempel, Jennifer Hewko, Brody Kalwajtys, Sherwin Kwong, Genevieve Mazzotta, Richard McAdie, Armohom Narayan, Mariah Schroder, Quinton Stotz and Hans Van Ginhoven.

The Strathcona High School Anti-Racism Committee is a dedicated group of staff leading positive change within the school and greater community.

The committee approaches anti-racism and equity as an ongoing process of improvement and seeks out ways to help students, staff and the school community on the journey. “This group has understood from the beginning that this is not about a one size fits all, or a one time fix,” says Narindar Riar, retired school administrator.

The team finds creative ways to engage students and celebrate diversity in the community. “The committee has worked tirelessly to advocate for resources, promote inclusive policies, and enhance the overall learning environment for all students,” says Department Head Linette J. Smith. They organize student sharing circles regularly, giving students the opportunity to have a voice in school decision-making.

A catalyst for improvement, the team has led a revamp of the Student Services area to be more inclusive, and helped to create new staff roles—including an English Language Learners Engagement Coordinator and a Diversity Engagement Coordinator—to support the school’s increasingly diverse student population.

Their initiatives range from cultural celebrations and curated classroom resources to professional development sessions and guidance to support student groups like the Black Student Alliance and JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Council. “Their initiatives have transformed how we organize school events, communicate internally, and interact with one another,” says Jennifer Francis, Department Head of International Languages. As a result, the school now includes equity-focused questions in staff interviews, has updated policies such as the dress code and headwear rules and implemented all-gender physical education classes.

One small action at a time, the committee is inspiring students and staff to create welcoming spaces at school and in their community.

Autism Parent Group, Hazeldean School

The members of this team are John Fedor, Mary Fiakpui, Julie Russell, Shelli Teshima and Sarah Valente

The Hazeldean Autism Parent Group is a collaborative effort. Together, staff use their knowledge and skills to lead monthly meetings with Hazeldean parents whose children have autism. The plan for each meeting is co-constructed by the parents, based on their needs and interests.

Parent Ammaar Tahir speaks of how “these professionals share exceptional strategies to help us manage our children’s challenging behaviours, develop essential life skills and address speech deficiencies.” Ammaar also talks about how many parents in the group welcome it not only as an opportunity for learning how to better support their children, but as a much-needed social outlet with others who understand the unique needs of their families.

Specialized Learning Supports Supervisor, Christie Ladouceur, notes that the group has had a lasting effect beyond the school environment. The parents who are part of the group are now in regular contact with one another, sharing information and resources in a WhatsApp group and arranging sensory-friendly playdates for their children. Christie says, “The staff who founded this group contribute to the enhancement of public education as they coordinate social advocacy and connection activities for their families, highlighting the importance of parental involvement in the educational process and demonstrating how schools can be inclusive and supportive environments for all families.

“This initiative,” Christie continues, “has set a precedent that can inspire other schools to implement similar programs.”

Central Units Responding to Emergent Events

The members of this team include the Infrastructure (Planning, Integrated Infrastructure Services, Property Management, Programs and Student Accommodation, Security, Distribution Centre, Student Transportation), Communications, Technology and Information Management, Risk Management and Occupational Health and Safety central decision units.

The collective efforts of various central units within the Division have been exemplary in supporting schools during emergencies. From managing fires and floods to addressing logistical challenges, these teams have demonstrated remarkable co-ordination, professionalism and resilience. Their seamless communication and ability to execute complex responses under pressure have provided critical support to both students and staff, supporting continuity in education and maintaining a safe environment.

In one instance, Dr. Anne Anderson School faced a nearby fire. Acting Principal Daniel Card expressed gratitude for the Division’s efficient response, noting that “we were able to open our school for our community ... without missing a beat.” Security, Infrastructure, and Division Support Services worked tirelessly with school and community safety at top of mind.

Similarly, after a significant flood at Harry Ainlay High School, central teams responded quickly to mitigate damage and establish temporary learning spaces. Principal Camille Loken emphasized that the teams’ “incredible support allowed [the] school community to move forward with as little interruption as possible,” despite the flood’s impact on facilities.

Despite unique and sometimes unexpected challenges, these central units exemplify dedication and commitment. Their teamwork and shared expertise help minimize disruption to instruction, reinforcing a culture of resilience and support throughout the Division. As Managing Director of Infrastructure Chris Wright highlights, their “unwavering support ... makes them truly deserving of recognition.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Custodial Team, Lillian Osborne School

The members of this team are Eduardo Espiritu, Rolando Espiritu, Mark Estrada, Keith MacInnis, Chris Palangdan, Sam Palangdan, Jaena Vega and Anabell Vila.

As a team, this group of professionals is well respected throughout the school community for their dedication to keeping the school clean, safe and comfortable for students and fellow staff.

Assistant Principal Danny Jeffery notes that visitors to Lillian Osborne often comment on how clean the school is. His colleague and fellow Assistant Principal Will Robertson notes that the work of the custodial team contributes to the school culture “by exemplifying what it means to work diligently, collaboratively and with pride.”

The custodial team does more than just keep the school in an orderly state. Rolando and the team have also supported students needing work experience hours, providing them with work opportunities, patience and mentorship.

Of course, their work doesn't end when students leave the school. They work before and after the school day to make sure everything is ready when students arrive. They also work throughout the summer, dedicated to “preparing the school for the upcoming year, making sure every corner of the building is ready for a fresh start,” according to Assistant Principal Darlene Scammell.

But, in the words of Darlene, “What truly sets this team apart is their respect and care for the students. They make time to get to know the students personally, engaging in conversations, building relationships and creating a sense of belonging.”

Custodial Team, Ross Sheppard School

The members of this team are Anselmo Dela Cruz, Grace Espanola, Berhane Ghebrekirstos, Solomon Ghebreslassie, Yvonne Labrado, Darrell Lastiwka, Precilina Osio, Brenda Ritchie, Howard Rubis, Shawn Schuler, Milagros Sugul, Selmawit Tekle, Precy Villaveza and Nazret Weldetnsae.

Not only does the custodial team at Ross Sheppard School consistently demonstrate an unwavering commitment to a clean, safe and welcoming space for the entire school community, they manage routine maintenance and respond swiftly to unexpected challenges, such as urgent repairs or setting up for large events.

“Their collective effort ensures that all areas of the school, from classrooms to common areas, are maintained to the highest level of cleanliness and safety,” says Assistant Principal Laurie Ingram-Dabgotra. “These efforts are often behind the scenes, but their impact is felt daily by everyone who interacts with our facilities.”

Office Administrator Lisa Hutskal acknowledges the team's dependability during school events, noting their proactive and practical approach. “They take pride in their work and are always willing to step up, embodying the spirit of teamwork and community,” Lisa says. “Their efforts do not go unnoticed, and play a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging among students, staff and families.”

The custodial team's unwavering commitment, teamwork and care are integral to making Ross Sheppard not just a school, but a community. Principal Rick Stanley commends the team for not only ensuring the 220,000 square foot school is well kept, but for coordinating tasks seamlessly, maintaining strong attention to detail, and interacting positively with staff and students.

“What custodial team continually gets a standing ovation at school-wide assemblies?” he says, adding: “We are filled with gratitude that we have such an engaging and committed team.”

Educational Assistant Team, Alex Janvier School

The members of this team are Rochelle Aquino, Donna Brodeur, Bonnie Cherniwchan, Melanie Eldon, Miranda Farrell, Daya Fruhbrot, Johanna Haney, Cameryn Hrycun, Megan Hrycun, Lise Layton, Dawn McPartland, Zaireen Mehnaaz, Joan Newman, Renee Pelletier, Jason Pilisko, Dominique Schultenkamper and Letty Tacata.

The educational assistants at Alex Janvier School exemplify dedication, compassion and professionalism in supporting students with diverse needs. Their collaborative efforts span both the Individualized Support Program (ISP) and Interactions classrooms, profoundly impacting students and the school community as a whole.

The ISP team demonstrates an extraordinary ability to balance medical and educational needs for students with specialized medical needs. “Their ability to balance medical care with educational support is crucial in helping each student achieve their full potential,” says Teacher Hannah Bowie. Each member of this team brings unique strengths, whether it’s excelling in adaptive technology, specializing in behaviour management or fostering meaningful relationships with students and families.

Meanwhile, the Interactions team, including long-time members, provides crucial emotional, social and behavioural support. Assistant Principal Shelley Kofluk says, “Our educational assistant team at Alex Janvier is truly the strongest I’ve seen to date. They consistently go above and beyond, fostering trusting, nurturing and inclusive relationships with the students.” Their shared expertise and compassion have created a safe space where students feel empowered to grow and succeed.

The educational assistants’ adaptability and professionalism extend beyond the classroom, “For many of our past and present students, these educators have been a safe space,” Teacher Sayde Evahnenko shares in gratitude.

Collectively, this team embodies the values of inclusion, equity and collaboration, making them invaluable assets to Alex Janvier School.

Educational Assistant Team, Strathcona School

The members of this team are Mark Cannon, Melody Carter, Tanicka Gardnew, Anika Nicoletti, Logan Power, John Van Valkenburg and Annette Wiest.

The Strathcona School educational assistant team is a vital force within the school, exemplifying dedication and compassion in their support for students. Over the years, they have forged meaningful connections with learners, ensuring that each student feels seen and valued. Teacher Shannon Hart expresses the deep trust placed in the team, saying, “I am sure the school would fall apart without them.”

Their collective efforts nurture an environment where all students, regardless of their needs, can thrive. The team is often compared to superheroes by Assistant Principal Natashya Shewchuk, who says, “This team does incredible work.” Each member brings unique strengths to the table, enhancing the learning experience for those with exceptional needs and fostering inclusion throughout the school community.

Department Head of Student Services, Tracy Gerun highlights the team’s versatility and effectiveness, “I simply can’t imagine how we would function without them.” The educational assistants actively collaborate to navigate challenges, support teachers and advocate for students, embodying a shared commitment to the school’s mission. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, inspiring students to pursue roles in education, continuing the cycle of support and empowerment.

Together, the Strathcona School educational assistants create an atmosphere of trust and belonging, making a profound impact on the lives of students and the broader school community.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Educational Assistant Team, Westminster School

The members of this team are Rebecca Holmes and Linda Penner.

The educational assistant team at Westminster School stands out for their compassion and innovation.

Principal Jon Paul Cooper praises Rebecca's dedication to understanding student behaviours and needs. For one student, she implemented differentiated strategies by recognizing his strong oratory skills, encouraging drama and presentations as part of his learning. Rebecca also supported this student by creating a public service announcement and interactive sensory table for Autism Awareness Day. Assistant Principal Stacey Taylor notes the activities were illuminating for students and staff.

Rebecca also organized the school's first Cultural Diversity Day. Students became more interested in sharing their backgrounds as Rebecca mentored Ukrainian newcomers with a community-building project. Curriculum Coordinator Laura Johnson shares that "students displayed food, pictures, clothing and other cultural items, creating an enriching experience. Rebecca's guidance extended to assisting the organizing students in making and serving nearly 2,000 perogies, demonstrating her commitment and hands-on support."

Known for her work in the Westminster Connections program over the past decade, Linda is admirably described by school administration as a "warm demander" who maintains a calm and firm demeanour. "Linda's kindness and humour are an essential component of our Connections classroom," Teacher Kip Matheson says. Her ability to connect with students, hold them accountable and provide emotional support is admirable.

Jon Paul and Stacey highlight that Linda often works with external agencies in the service of students, "Linda thoroughly engages with the wraparound support teams and collaborates with them in an entirely clear and professional manner. We have relied on her knowledge and expertise when dealing with emergent situations."

Linda and Rebecca greatly enhance the care and service of students at Westminster School; they are held in the highest regard by members of their school community.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Team, Victoria School

The members of this team are Bonnie Dani-Shatat, Joanne Lowry, Rick Oldring, Karina Pitis Krcek and Kathryn Ritter.

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) team at Victoria School of the Arts has made a transformative impact through the development of a comprehensive EAL program. Their collaboration has significantly enhanced the educational experience for students learning the English language, helping students improve their proficiency while fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion. Assistant Principal Elizabeth Ward commends the team's efforts, noting that "their dedication has led to improved speaking, reading and writing abilities for students, enabling them to achieve at their grade level across all subjects."

The team's innovative approach integrates language acquisition with cultural awareness, offering students an inclusive and inviting learning experience. With a focus on using interactive learning strategies, such as technology and cultural integration, they help students learn English, but also gain a deeper understanding of Canadian culture and customs.

Principal Stacy Fysh praises the team's commitment, stating that the program "has created a supportive community where students feel safe to express themselves and take risks in their learning." This positive environment has led to increased student confidence, participation and academic performance.

A hallmark of the team is their collaborative spirit and ability to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners. Wendy Plum, Assistant Principal, highlights their inclusive teaching methods, saying, "Their commitment to using interactive and culturally-relevant materials ensures that lessons are not only informative but also relatable and enjoyable for students."

By consistently seeking professional development opportunities and staying current with the latest EAL teaching methodologies, the team ensures their practices evolve to best support students. Their combined expertise, compassion and dedication make them a valued part of the school community.

Interactions Team, Daly Grove School

The members of this team are Chiara Blackerman, Dee Dee Blackerman, Asha Hassan, Holly Hugman, , Simer Khehra and Manju Pradhan.

The Interactions team at Daly Grove School exemplifies outstanding dedication and teamwork in support of students. This team consistently creates an environment where every child is valued, learning and growing at their own pace.

Their commitment is particularly evident in their response to challenges. As highlighted by Principal Shannon Gilson, "Their unwavering support for one another has been inspiring, as they continuously care for each other and encourage each other to stay positive and proactive, even after particularly difficult days."

The team celebrates every achievement, no matter how small, fostering a nurturing atmosphere where students feel safe to express themselves and take risks. They have a shared belief in the potential of every student, and their cohesive nature and combined efforts are making a lasting impact.

"Their dedication, vision, professionalism and problem-solving skills have not gone unnoticed, and have made a significantly positive impact on each other and the students they get to support every day," says Assistant Principal Keltie Thompson.

"It's inspiring to witness the way that they all uplift the children and provide them with the tools to succeed in their own ways," adds parent Cassandra Cory. "The care, love and unity within this team makes a profound difference in the lives of the children and their families."

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Interactions Team, Victoria School

The members of this team are Arlene Chartrand, Claire Flook, Elaine Foote, Claire Meeker, Rose Nalukwago, Wendy Plum, Justin Potter-MacSwain, Rustam Sardali, Glen Sharp and Elizabeth Ward.

The Interactions team at Victoria School is so dedicated to their work they inspired a song. To quote Assistant Principal Rick Oldring, who submitted his nomination letter in the form of a sea shanty: “Oh gather ‘round and lend an ear, of a team so grand and bold, ye’ll hear.”

What makes this team so grand? They have worked to launch the Interactions program at Victoria School and woven it into the fabric of the school in an inclusive way.

In the words of Principal Stacy Fysh, “Their dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students with diverse needs is truly inspiring ... this team has worked tirelessly to learn and implement the best possible learning strategies for Victoria’s Interactions students.”

Of particular note is an initiative called The Interns, which sees Interactions students pick up jobs around the school. Examples include pencil sharpening, putting up and taking down posters, picking up and dropping off library books, organizing school supplies or collecting late slips from classrooms and returning them to the office. This helps develop essential work skills, and it engages the wider school community, fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Assistant Principal Joanne Lowry sums it up nicely: “Recognizing this outstanding team would honour their hard work and dedication while highlighting the importance of specialized support for students with autism. Their efforts not only transform individual lives but also inspire others to advocate for inclusive education practices.”

Interactions Team, Youngstown School

The members of this team are Evelyn Belter, Clarena Gonzalez, Tracy Klassen, Melody Metcalfe, Joan Ronquillo, Lindsay Willemse and Samantha Wolsegger.

This team established a new Interactions program at Youngstown School in the 2023–24 school year. Led by Teacher Samatha Wolsegger, they created a safe and inclusive learning environment for students with diverse learning needs. Parents and staff alike have praised the team’s ability to work individually with each student to find their strength and engage them to grow and build skills.

“Our son quickly learned that the interaction classroom was a safe place to self-regulate when needed and importantly that he would have their support afterwards, whether it was the remainder of the day in the Interactions room or challenging himself to finish the day in the inclusive classroom,” say parents John Phuong and Tiffanie Yong.

Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) consultants also commend the team for meeting every child where they are at: “The classroom team truly saw the potential in each of their students as learners and got to know each child individually, embracing their strengths and acknowledging challenges.”

The team also advocates for inclusion by providing education and resources to all school staff during Autism Awareness month.

Deep connection and trust, as well as a genuine sense of caring, is at the root of this team. “One of the things that really stands out for me is that at the end of the school year they sent home a binder full of my son’s accomplishments and pictures of every season/holiday/activity that they had done as a class this year,” notes parent Kristen Bailey.

By creating a responsive learning environment, the Youngstown School Interactions team has made a lasting impact on students and families.

Journey to Anti-Racism Teacher Leads, W.P. Wagner Catchment

The members of this team are Angela Bell, Gagandeep Bhambher, Gursharan Bhatti, Tomi Brooks, Selynn Buchanan, Karen Eitzen, Gretchen Fletcher, Lexie Freedman, Charlene Greenwood, Atif Hirjee, Brianna Jones, Carmen McClain, Jenna Resmer, Jaelyn Ryan, Dillon Sabo-Bassett, Karen Sabourin, Tyler Stevenson and Dana Ullrich.

The Journey to Anti-Racism: Year 2 Teacher Leads team, comprised of 18 educators from 10 schools in the W. P. Wagner catchment is dedicated to fostering an inclusive educational environment through comprehensive anti-racism education. Their remarkable efforts span all grade levels, from Kindergarten through Grade 12, and align seamlessly with the Division's priority to advance action towards anti-racism and reconciliation.

Throughout 2023–24, the team developed a rich array of lessons and engaging activities, aiming to support teachers in implementing age-appropriate anti-racism curriculum. They also created and delivered professional learning and whole school symposiums, and encouraged students to teach and learn from one another. Their exceptional work has impacted more than 6,300 students and 400 staff members, and “has set a new standard for collaborative projects, promoting a culture of inclusivity and respect,” says a joint nomination from catchment schools signed by Weinlos Principal Satinder Basra.

Another joint nomination, signed by W.P. Wagner Principal Tim Boan, says student feedback vividly highlights this impact, with one elementary student sharing: “Lots of kids were treating each other nicely, people started to feel good about themselves, people weren't scared to be themselves, we all need to treat others how we want to be treated.”

The team's motto, “Choose empathy, kindness, community,” encapsulates their approach, says another group of catchment principals, including Daly Grove Principal Shannon Gilson.

Journey Towards Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Teams, Esther Starkman, Lillian Osborne and Greenfield schools

The members of this team are Mackenzie Allred, Sharen Chetha, Sunny Choi, Christel Hennig, Amanda Nicholson, Jill Peckitt, Sarah Proctor, Shandelle Reeves, Will Robertson, Soraya Semaine, Alfred Stockwell and David Tran.

The Journey Towards Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff team, comprised of dedicated educators from Esther Starkman, Lillian Osborne and Greenfield schools, has made significant strides in fostering equity, diversity and inclusion within their school communities. Their collaborative efforts have resulted in impactful initiatives that have empowered students and staff alike.

Through a series of student symposiums and workshops, the team has created opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue, build empathy and challenge their own biases. Greenfield School Principal Simon Williams says, “Our students facilitated talking circles to discuss challenges related to inclusion and belonging at recess. This resulted in them creating an EDI recess crew.”

The team's focus on student leadership has been particularly impactful. By empowering students to take on leadership roles and facilitate discussions, they have fostered a sense of agency and ownership among young people. This approach has not only benefited the students involved but has also had a positive ripple effect throughout their schools.

The collaborative nature of the team has been instrumental in their success. By sharing expertise, resources and best practices, they have created a strong network of support and innovation. As Lillian Osborne School Principal Mike Morison states, “The team's ability to collaborate effectively with diverse groups of individuals speaks volumes about their professionalism and adaptability.”

The Journey Towards EDI staff team's dedication to creating inclusive and equitable learning environments is truly commendable. “The legacy of this work has been significant and continues to grow,” says Esther Starkman School Principal Kyril Mueller.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Make-A-Wish Bike-A-Thon Fundraiser Team, Jasper Place School

The members of this team are Matt Burrows, Alexander Lesko and Omid Poonja.

The Jasper Place School community thrives on the dedication and leadership of these three remarkable teachers. They have transformed the annual Bike-A-Thon for Make-A-Wish into a remarkable success, raising over \$1,000,000 since its inception in 2016. Their meticulous planning and unwavering commitment make this event one of the most rewarding experiences at the school, as emphasized by student Ronny Stocklin-Sagi who notes, “our annual Bike-A-Thon would have never been well executed nor possible without Mr. Burrows, Mr. Poonja and Mr. Lesko.”

Their collaboration fosters a spirit of generosity and community engagement. Omid, Matt, and Alexander inspire students and staff alike to join this noble cause. Jen Garden and Kathryn McLean with Make-A-Wish Canada express gratitude for their efforts, and say, “Matt, Omid, and Alex have developed and promoted this event to the point where it is a ‘bucket list’ item for all students to experience.” They create a welcoming environment filled with decorations, karaoke and engaging activities, which encourages participation.

The impact of their work extends beyond fundraising, as they connect students with the stories of children who benefit from the program. Assistant Principal Dusty Freimark reflects, “It’s a heartwarming experience to see our students come together for such a noble cause.” Through their leadership, Omid, Matt and Alexander exemplify the qualities of compassion and community spirit that define Edmonton Public Schools. Their legacy continues to inspire future generations at Jasper Place School.

McWeis Team, Wihkwêntôwin School

The members of this team are Kaela McCoy and Kara Weis.

The duo of Teachers Kaela McCoy and Kara Weis, often referred to as the “McWeis Dream Team” are highly regarded for their exceptional dedication and innovative teaching at Wihkwêntôwin School. Their project-based learning approach engages students in real-world applications, making education both fun and impactful.

Parent Candace Haughian highlights the “Chores for Charity Project,” in which students raised funds for the Edmonton Food Bank, saying, “The children were so excited and proud to be able to make this kind of meaningful and tangible impact on their community.” The project not only enhanced students’ academic skills but also instilled a sense of good citizenship.

The McWeis Team is lauded for their commitment to fostering inclusivity and hands-on learning. Parents Dave Cournoyer and Kyla Fisher share how an accessibility project inspired their son: “[He] now does accessibility audits wherever we go in the city,” demonstrating how deeply these lessons resonate with students. The team’s focus on real-world issues provides students with in-depth learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

Megan Girard, another parent, commends Kaela and Kara for their ability to create a nurturing and inclusive environment where each child feels valued. She recalls how, at the end of the year, her son brought home a poster listing every classmate’s strengths, showing how each child is truly “known and loved for who they are.” Megan praises the McWeis Team for their “culture-shifting work” that will have a long-lasting impact on students, helping children grow into compassionate and confident individuals.

The McWeis Team exemplifies excellence in teaching, consistently going above and beyond to create positive and impactful learning experiences for the school community.

New Leadership Development Competency Project Team, Centre for Education

The members of this team are Clarice Anderson, Anna Batchelor, Sandy Boyce, Funmi Chris-Oberiko, Lee Hodgkinson, Jill Kwasniewski, Elizabeth Shen, Carol Van Kuppeveld and Katie Woodfine.

The New Leadership Development Competency Project Team “has had a significant positive impact on our Division, and is helping advance our goals of becoming an anti-racist organization,” says Instructional Supports Managing Director Sunita Sas.

The new competency (Works Toward Anti-Racism, Reconciliation, and Equity) was developed within the Leadership Development Framework. It’s a forward-thinking initiative designed to support all staff in their professional growth, helping them intentionally engage with anti-racism and equity in their roles, as well as cultivate a safe and inclusive environment for students and staff alike.

“The team’s deep commitment to ensuring that all staff are supported in their leadership learning journey is greatly appreciated,” says Chief Human Resources Officer Angela Anderson.

Diversity championed anti-racism, reconciliation and equity principles throughout the development process; First Nations, Métis, & Inuit Education provided invaluable guidance; Communications crafted clear and compelling messaging that resonates with staff; and Human Resources integrated the new competency into the framework. The team collaborated extensively, seeking feedback from the Anti-Racism and Equity Principal Committee, Staff Advisory Committee and HR Principal Committee.

“Their combined expertise, insights and tireless efforts have ensured that this framework is not only comprehensive and impactful, but also culturally sensitive and relevant to the diverse needs of our staff,” says Communications Managing Director Carrie Rosa.

Office Admin Support Team, McNally School

The members of this team are Sara Chappel, Colleen McLeod and Sarah Lehman.

The administrative team at McNally School exemplifies dedication, teamwork and commitment to a welcoming environment. Parents, staff and visitors alike have felt the positive impact of this team’s warm and helpful approach. They set the tone upon entering the school. “Whether it’s a student struggling to find their way, a parent seeking information, or a teacher needing assistance, they approach every interaction with empathy and a reassuring smile,” says Davey Thompson, Curriculum Coordinator of Comprehensive School Health.

Their role extends far beyond the front desk. These three individuals work together seamlessly to balance many competing priorities with ease and professionalism.

“This team balances a staggering number of responsibilities with grace and calm professionalism,” says Principal Krista Mulder. Their professionalism and work ethic make for a smooth school day, allowing the focus to remain on learning and growth.

Beyond their everyday duties, they are eager to participate in and help plan school and community events. They bring creative ideas and energy to these celebrations and events, contributing to the overall school culture.

Most notably, the office team is a consistent, supportive presence in the daily lives of students, building strong connections with them. “They know the students by name, take time to listen to their concerns, and always offer words of encouragement,” says Kelly Underschultz, Teacher and parent. This connection helps students feel seen and supported at school. They are the kind and capable faces of McNally School.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

School Family Liaison (SFL) Cohort, Specialized Learning Supports

The members of this team are Kristi Berger, Isabelle Boisvert, Shelley Carew, Angie Collins, Brooke Ghostkeeper, Aneza Hajiabdi, Lavon Hildebrandt, Taylor Levsen, Louise Phillips, Carrie Rachuk and Charmaine Sobool.

The School Family Liaison (SFL) cohort connects families to critical resources. With compassion and thoughtfulness, they help families navigate the health care system and access parenting supports and funding. “The SFL team’s tireless efforts have been invaluable in guiding families through processes such as arranging medical appointments, finding family doctors, managing tertiary medical referrals and assessments, and completing Family Support for Children with Disabilities applications,” say Principal Auriana Burns and Assistant Principal Twyla Armagost.

In the process, they become a trusted connection and reliable source of knowledge and empowerment for many families. “We have personally witnessed parents’ profound sense of relief and connection when they encounter an ally who speaks their native language, visibly relaxing, expressing gratitude and feeling safe to be vulnerable as they communicate their needs and concerns without language barriers,” say Assistant Principals Alina Engstrom and Cathy Weinberger.

They are known for their ability to support each other, sharing resources and collaborating on complex situations and solutions, and offering professional learning for school staff. “Through their collaborative efforts, they have built strong, lasting relationships that continue to support the well-being of students and their families.” say Lori Anne Ledda and Neelam Boora, Supervisors, Specialized Learning Supports. “It is their unwavering dedication and ability to uplift others that truly sets them apart.”

Specialized Learning Supports Supervisors, SLS

The members of this team are Neelam Boora, Ross Ehalt, Chris Harris, Stephanie Jansen, Christie Ladouceur, Lori Anne Ledda, Alexis Renwick, Maureen Roszell, Billie Jo Scott and Elizabeth Shen.

The Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) supervisors are an exemplary team whose commitment to collaboration, equity and student success is felt across the entire Division. Their work helps students, particularly those with complex and unique learning needs, have access to the support they deserve.

One of the key responsibilities of this team is facilitating the multi-disciplinary teams that assist schools, providing targeted and specialized support to meet students’ diverse needs. As Dave Bennell, Director of Specialized Learning Supports, emphasizes, “By bridging the gap between student needs and educational resources, the supervisors have enhanced the overall learning experience across the Division.” This highlights the team’s essential role in creating inclusive learning environments.

Former Principal Linda Derksen provides a powerful example of the team’s dedication, recalling how they collaborated to support a student’s transition from the CASA mental health classroom back to their community school. “Our [SLS] supervisor worked with consultants, the school and the family to ensure the student had the support they needed,” Linda says, also highlighting the team’s commitment to open communication, collaboration and problem solving.

The team’s dedication to fostering professional growth and innovation is another key factor in their success. Marla Pawluik, Reading Specialist with SLS, notes, “The supervisor team initiates and facilitates conversations within SLS around innovative practices and professional learning opportunities,” which directly benefits both staff and students. Their advocacy for comprehensive literacy and numeracy initiatives has been crucial in supporting students with complex needs.

Through their leadership, collaboration and evidence-based practices, the Specialized Learning Supports supervisors have created lasting, positive change in the Division. Their work reflects the core values of Edmonton Public Schools.

Specialized Learning Supports Team, Norwood School

The members of this team are Ross Ehalt, Vicki Kish, Christina O'Dell and Rebecca VanBoven.

The Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) team is valued highly by Norwood School staff for their dedication and commitment to providing support and resources for students with complex needs. Members of the team go out of their way to do everything they can for the students and staff at Norwood. They often call the school to share ideas or make special trips to drop off equipment for students or even just to check-in on a challenging situation.

Teacher Courtney Walker notes the team has “consistently made time to meet with me to discuss a range of strategies and supports that I can implement in the classroom to meet the various learning needs of my students.” This can range from providing niche resources to meet a particular need or innovative ideas that can be used to engage and empower every learner.

In addition to working with individual staff and students, the team was instrumental in the development of a sensory room at the school, which has proven to be an invaluable resource for helping students with specialized learning needs. Their collaborative approach, including working alongside teachers in classrooms, modeling strategies and attending transition meetings, helps every student receive tailored support. As Assistant Principal Sandra MacRae says, “They have made special trips to drop off a piece of equipment, share a resource, or simply check in when we have called about a challenge.”

In all their work, the SLS team demonstrates a rare combination of professional expertise and personal dedication. In the words of Principal Maureen Matthews, “I can’t imagine how I would do my job without this team; they are an integral part of the Norwood School community.”

STEM Teaching Team, W.P. Wagner School

The members of this team are Melanie Bye-Kuefler, Lindsay Carmichael, Derek Christensen, Jason Eliuk, Marie Freiha, Chris Gifford, Rebecca Marcus, George Heidt, Stephanie Hofmeyer, Jen Holoien, Karly Kulpa, Emma Manning, Kyle McCormack, Craig Michaud, Tannis Morgan, Dillon Sabo-Bassett, Cathi Tilley and Greg Sweeney.

The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) teaching team at W.P. Wagner School exemplifies excellence through their innovative approach to education, fostering a learning environment that emphasizes collaboration, creativity and empathy. Since the program’s launch in 2022–23, the team has worked tirelessly to design hands-on, interdisciplinary learning experiences that inspire students to pursue their passions. Their efforts have reshaped education at the school and beyond, with students and staff alike recognizing their significant impact.

A testament to their dedication, students describe the program as transformative. “This team has worked together to make something truly remarkable, and they have changed education into something that so many of us enjoy,” say students Payton Pascuzzo and Noah Cruise. The STEM teachers at W.P. Wagner have redefined assessment practices, grading students not just on outcomes but on the learning journey, promoting resilience and creativity.

The program’s personalized guidance has also empowered students to connect STEM principles to their own interests. “The teachers have re-shaped the way students view their world with a scientific and empathetic lens,” observe Doug and Christina Woodbridge, parents of a STEM student. Their son, Benjamin, used his love for music to develop innovative projects such as an acoustic levitator.

Beyond the classroom, the team encourages leadership by engaging students in outreach programs with junior high schools, sparking excitement for STEM learning. Curriculum Coordinator Karen Sabourin says. “They encourage deep, creative, and critical thinking, providing students with the freedom to make personal and authentic connections.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Strathcona Technology Team, Technology and Information Management

The members of this team are Yvan Goudreau and Michael Miller.

Together, Michael and Yvan exemplify dedication and innovation, providing assistance to staff and students with patience and positivity. “Their ability to help us problem-solve in times of stressful situations has proved extremely valuable. They are always present to lend a helping hand and have such a positive attitude,” says Nathalie Reye-Donovan, Office Administrator.

Students and staff don’t hesitate to approach Michael and Yvan, knowing they will share their expert advice and support with generosity and kindness. “They have been extremely patient, supportive and continue to provide me with enough tech knowledge for me to ease into my position and to be ‘tech helpful’ to others,” says Amy Madsen, Library Technician. “They have made me feel a part of their dynamic IT team at Strathcona.”

Michael and Yvan also excel at foreseeing issues and being proactive, regularly upgrading systems and ensuring the school has the best and most updated technology. Their involvement in training, school events and examination support has helped both students and staff to thrive. “Their contributions extend far beyond just tech support. They are deeply invested in the success and well-being of the entire school, and their presence is felt in every classroom, every event and every interaction,” says Kelly Reiersen, Assistant Principal.

Their combination of knowledge, responsiveness and positive energy make Michael and Yvan invaluable to Strathcona High School and Edmonton Public Schools as a whole.

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Playground Committee, Kensington School

The members of this team are Erin Johnson, Michelle Kurulok, Louise Kurulok, Monica Marchand and Natalie Werbitski.

Through their dedication to creating an inclusive and accessible playground where all children can thrive, the Kensington Playground Committee has made a remarkable and lasting impact on the Kensington School community. This dedicated group of volunteers raised more than \$500,000 through a combination of grant writing and creative fundraising initiatives. Principal Shauna Shore highlights their exceptional contributions, noting, “Their unwavering commitment to enhancing our school environment has resulted in the creation of a new inclusive playground that truly benefits all students. This project stands as a testament to what can be achieved when a community comes together with a shared vision.”

The committee’s vision extended far beyond constructing a standard playground. Their focus on inclusivity meant it was a priority for all students to access and enjoy the space. The school’s Interactions team emphasizes the importance of this design: “They created an environment that will foster learning, development and social connections for all our students. Their efforts have transformed an underutilized space into an area where children of all abilities and backgrounds can engage, explore and grow together.” The playground features sensory-friendly areas, wheelchair-accessible equipment, communication boards for non-verbal students and innovative play structures.

The Kensington Playground Committee’s work is deeply appreciated. The Flaber family expresses heartfelt gratitude, saying, “The school has been without a park for over half a century, and their help has brought this much-needed addition to our school.”

The new playground provides a space for relaxation, play and social interaction, and its impact on the well-being of students and families will be felt for generations to come.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Parent Support Association, Calder School

The members of this team are Sidney Beer, Cheryl Brooks, Cassandra Carr, Leslie Carrie, Pam Gray, Nora Haymour, Rawda Jroush, Cheryl Ogilvie, Ru'a Ramahi, Rhonda Stirrat, Cassandra Walbourne and Rebecca Way.

The Calder Parent Support Association is an indispensable pillar of the Calder School community. This dedicated group of parents, many of whom no longer have children at the school, recently achieved their long-standing vision of building a new playground.

The playground project is particularly meaningful because of its focus on inclusivity. Assistant Principal Rana Shawar highlights the importance of this space, where children of all abilities can play and grow together. "The creation of a space where all children—regardless of their abilities—can play, learn and grow together speaks volumes about the commitment to fostering an environment of acceptance, understanding and joy," she states. The playground initiative, along with the parent association's ongoing presence at school events and fundraising efforts, strengthens the bonds within the community by encouraging unity and shared experiences.

Beyond the playground, the association has also significantly impacted the school's music program. Teacher Jessica Tabadero shares that the instruments purchased by the association "have greatly enriched our program, providing students with the essential tools they need to develop their musical talents." The association's support for field trips and choir workshops further ensures that students have access to enriching experiences.

Principal Sergio Teixeira praises the group's enduring efforts, noting, "They have contributed immensely to our school's success by providing resources such as Chromebooks, musical instruments, library books and physical education equipment." Their generosity has enhanced the learning environment for all students.

Through their extraordinary dedication, tireless advocacy and generous contributions, the Calder Parent Support Association has left an enduring legacy of community spirit and inclusivity.

Parent Association, James Gibbons School

The members of this team are Tiffany Draves, Hadi Fayyad, Tom Garanis, Drew Graham, Jamie Lien, Marianna Nikolaev, Rona Souky and Ben Walkey.

The James Gibbons Parent Association are, in the words of Principal Michael Lam, "A small but highly committed team of parents who work tirelessly to support school initiatives and enhance learning experiences."

The council's major achievement has been the development of a new school playground. Members of the council found new fundraising opportunities with local businesses and secured provincial grant funding to make a new playground a reality.

Raising the funds for the playground and other initiatives took hard work and dedication. In addition to finding new revenue streams and securing grants, the parent association continued to coordinate hot lunch days and bottle drives. They also organized with other parents to work casinos to raise funds. It was a huge endeavour and ultimately involved the entire parent community, led by the parent association.

The first stage of the playground replacement was completed in the fall of 2024 and the team is hard at work on the vision for the second phase.

According to teachers at the school and staff at the YMCA out-of-school care that leases space in the building, the new playground at James Gibbons School was much needed. The old playground had many pieces of equipment that were worn and replacement parts were increasingly hard to find. The new playground is a source of pride for the school community and will serve students and the wider community for many years to come.

The Rio Terrace Education Society, Rio Terrace School

The members of this team are Julia Adams, Catherine Anley, Bess Callard, Tamara Clark, Krista Dejager, Jill Gainer, Ed Jay, Adriana Martinez, Jill Oliver, Isabelle Paulsen, Rachelle Roberts, Stephanie Schive, Lynda Sham, Barb Sheehan, Karissa Shulko, Christine Simader and Angela Vanderveld.

Together, the Rio Terrace Education Society led the school community through the many stages of getting a new playground built, a project spanning several years. Principal Andrew Lummis says, “The dedication and perseverance demonstrated by the society over the years make them truly deserving of recognition. The journey to bring this playground to fruition was anything but easy, involving meticulous fundraising, strategic planning and extensive coordination.”

According to French Immersion Teacher Josie Smith, “The creation of the playground was a monumental task that spanned several years. The society undertook extensive fundraising initiatives, coordinated with various stakeholders and meticulously planned every aspect of the project.”

This work was highly collaborative and, under the guidance of the society, involved parents, students and staff from Rio Terrace School. Assistant Principal Wendy Malanchen notes that “the successful completion of this project has fostered a strong sense of community within our school. The collective effort required to bring the playground to fruition has united students, parents and staff, creating a shared sense of pride and accomplishment.”

Staff at the school have noticed the transformative effect the playground has had on students, with Andrew stating that it “provides a safe and stimulating environment where children can play, engage in physical activity, develop their social skills and foster creativity.”

The new Rio Terrace School playground is a source of pride for the community and a testament to what can be achieved through collective effort, shared goals and a committed group of leaders.

School Council, Meadowlark Christian School

The members of this team are Roberta Coulson, Andrea Dreger, Diana Fox, Courtney Hammond, Katie Kerr, Jillian Lang, Paige Reimer, Amanda Scheel and Nikki Steinkampf.

The members of the Meadowlark Christian School Council, according to Teacher Shyann Ethier, “selflessly work to provide the highest levels of loving, personal and practical support that they can.” This seems to sum up how people feel about the council.

Whether they are organizing, managing and staffing the annual book fair, working with students to create amazing Lego structures or simply greeting staff and students with a smile at the main entrance, the Meadowlark Christian School Council is dedicated to making sure every member of the school community feels welcomed and cared for.

Council members also took their welcoming attitude out into the community with an initiative called the “Love our Neighbour Project”. This involved teams of parents visiting the school’s neighbours and delivering small gifts and thank-you cards. This group also provided yarn so students could weave hearts onto the school fence as another way of showing love to their neighbours.

The council is instrumental to building a sense of community within the school. They run hot lunches, teacher and staff appreciation days and theme days. They also hosted a creative meet-and-greet event for parents to get together and paint a canvas on a Saturday afternoon. That afternoon was filled with joy and helped further cement the sense of community the Meadowlark Christian School Council has nurtured so well.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

School Council and Riverdale Educational Society (REFS), Riverdale School

The members of this team are Teresa Bradley, Charu Brintnell, Stephanie Brown Yoshisaka, Michael Johnstone, Susan Johnstone, Jacqueline Koval, Ryan Petaske, Lyndsey Plante, Taryn Ready, Sandi Schaefer and Melissa Thesen.

The Riverdale School Council and Riverdale Education Fundraising Society (REFS) is foundational in building and maintaining an amazing spirit of community at Riverdale School.

To list all of the things the school council and REFS do for the school community would take pages. A few of the highlights, shared by the staff and parents, include: fundraising to ensure the school has a Chromebook for each student, fundraising for new musical instruments and repairing and maintaining existing instruments and hosting annual school barbecues, winter concerts and year-end fun days. The high point for the 2023–24 school year, however, was their planning of Riverdale School's centennial celebration.

The council began planning the event a year in advance. They raised funds, made plans and contacted alumni students, staff and principals from decades past. According to Teacher Brian Ha, guests "who were well-versed in school centennial events mentioned Riverdale's as the best centennial event they had ever seen."

It seems that hardly a day goes by without the school council doing something big or small to enhance the school community. Principal Karen Teague says they, "continually go above and beyond to ensure that students, staff and families have access to exceptional resources, opportunities and a supportive environment that promotes academic and personal growth while fostering a strong sense of community."

School Council, Rutherford School

The members of this team are Braya Archibald, Lindsay Batke, Jessica Carr, Bene Garmier, Nathan Goisnard, Kayla Psarros, Erin Raudebaugh, Nicola Tupas and Rebecca Yeo.

The commitment of the Rutherford School Council "has enriched our school environment in remarkable ways," says Teacher Krysta Florence.

Members of the council tirelessly organize various events, including Sports Day, Winter Carnaval, the Ice Cream Social and school dances, fostering a deep sense of belonging among students and families. They also help make essential resources readily available, holding bottle drives, silent auctions and more to enable access to field trips, and literacy and numeracy supports. The council even provides hot lunches for students, while fundraising efforts have led to a Packed Lunch Club, supplemental snack program and monthly food hamper boxes for families in need in the school community.

"They unfailingly bring a spirit of 'How can we work together?' that inspires everyone to support our students," says Principal Marnie White. "The council participates in helping plan our yearly calendar of events, helping shape what opportunities we can create together. Regular communication between staff and council helps us maintain productive momentum throughout the year."

On top of everything else, the council is currently planning the fundraising required to replace the school's aging playground equipment, which will happen over the course of years.

"This selfless dedication to the greater good is emblematic of the spirit of the council," says Assistant Principal Scott Kelly, adding, "It is very clear to me that this amazing team of committed people have gone above and beyond all expectations."

STUDENT

Armour Recruits Coaches, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School

The members of this team are Sukhmani Bhatti, Lexis Chan, Erin Demas and Daniela Pazuengo.

The Armour Recruits program at Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School has made a remarkable impact on student engagement and confidence, especially among young female athletes. The program was spearheaded by Erin, Daniela, Lexis and Sukhmani, who are now in high school, as a way to increase younger girls' interest in sports.

After running as a pilot in 2022–23, there were 60 participants in the first full year of the program in 2023–24. The result was an increase in the number of teams of Grades 4–6 girls, as well as the number of junior high students brought on as coaches.

Athletic Director Dylan Grayson has noticed the significant difference: “Our school was able to field a female soccer team for the first time in our school's existence. Our volleyball and basketball tryout numbers have doubled, leading to further success of the teams during their seasons. Our Recruits numbers have nearly doubled, and the excitement among elementary girls is at an all-time high.”

Of course, the initiative not only enhances athletic skills, but also builds lasting friendships and confidence among participants.

Parent Dylan Mohammed emphasizes the benefits for his daughter: “I see the Armour Recruits program as an amazing outlet for the younger kids, and a great way for them to socialize, communicate, exercise and spark up new friendships, feelings of camaraderie, and many important life experiences and skills for the future.”

Jared Teare, a parent to two daughters in the program says, “I personally appreciate the flexibility of the program, and the safe and comfortable environment that it gives these girls, so they can discover a talent for or fall in love with a sport that might have been intimidating to get into otherwise.”

Muslim Students' Association, M.E. LaZerte School

The members of this team are Mariam Bangura, Lujain Bashir, Zakariya Elladen, Mohammad Hajar and Asma Mahat.

The Muslim Students' Association (MSA) at M.E. LaZerte School is a beacon of leadership and community spirit, poised to make a lasting positive impact.

The MSA aims to create a supportive environment for Muslim students, while fostering understanding of Islamic values among peers. The MSA learned from other Muslim student clubs in the city and beyond, and this early groundwork laid a strong foundation for what has become a vital support system within the school.

The MSA is recognized for promoting mutual respect and learning, as well as liaising between the Muslim student body and school staff to work collaboratively to address key questions about sensitive issues such as religious accommodations, which are navigated with respect, patience and wisdom. The club also successfully organizes various events, including educational workshops and cultural celebrations, and hosts regular weekly events, such as lunch gatherings, after school meetups and Friday prayers.

“In addition to their organizational capabilities, the MSA's founders are exemplary role models of leadership and community service. Their efforts reflect a commendable commitment to enhancing campus life and fostering a sense of belonging for all students,” says Assistant Principal Michelle Sabourin.

The MSA also met with students and staff at Queen Elizabeth School last year, collaborating on a summit that brought together students from 10 Division high schools. “Their hard work and positive approach to building community is an example for all student organizations,” says Queen Elizabeth Student Leadership Department Head Linda Shawar.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Student-led Anti-Racism Initiative, McKernan School

The members of this team are Ayanna Alora, Michal Shpilkerman and Everleigh Taylor.

The Student-led Anti-Racism Initiative is a group of Grade 8 students led by Ayanna, Everleigh and Michal.

The team and their work are a powerful example of student leadership and dedication to inclusivity. A notable project, the Discussion Café, is a weekly discussion space for meaningful conversations about racism, recognizing and addressing microaggressions, and celebrating diversity.

Each café has a pre-determined topic and is facilitated by the students. Students talk to many groups to make sure the topics are relevant. “They proactively sought feedback from a broad range of stakeholders, including fellow students, teachers, administrators and even the parent association to keep the café topics engaging,” says Teacher Caitlin Perry. “This safe and welcoming space has provided an invaluable opportunity for students to share their perspectives, learn from one another, and cultivate empathy and understanding,” says Teacher Courtney Albrecht.

Brynn Hartlen and Edyn Fast, students who regularly attend the Discussion Cafés, are strong supporters. “It has made more people comfortable with discussing anti-racism, being aware of common issues and allowing them to discuss those they have noticed.”

Ayanna, Everleigh and Michal stand out for their vision and organization, guiding efforts such as the Heritage Celebration, an event that celebrates the school’s rich cultural diversity by sharing food and traditions. “Their efforts have been instrumental in fostering a school environment that values diversity and actively combats racism in all its forms,” says Teacher Shaun Adamson.

By cultivating understanding and advocating for inclusivity, the students have set a lasting example for their peers and future students. “These projects are serving the current needs of students to see themselves and their own backgrounds and perspectives in the school, but more importantly to set the foundation for future McKernan students and leaders to continue a path to allyship,” says Principal Scott Horton.

STUDENT AND STAFF

Student Leadership Team, J. Percy Page School

The members of this team are Chelsea Cortez, Trishna Dhinsa, Ella Lafrance, Carmen Neale, Tuyet-Nhu Tran, Thalia Steeves and Caiya Ylagan.

Under the leadership of Teachers Carmen Neale and Chelsea Cortez, along with a highly dedicated Student Leadership team, J. Percy Page High School's 2023 Bikeathon raised an astounding \$65,000 for the Edmonton Food Bank. This far surpassed the initial target and set a new fundraising record for the event. The initiative brought together more than 300 students who cycled for 24 hours to raise funds and awareness about food insecurity in Edmonton.

The bikeathon demonstrated exceptional teamwork, resilience and a commitment to civic responsibility, as noted by Principal Martin Fechner: "They went above and beyond to create a fun and inclusive atmosphere, arranging games, activities and comfortable rest areas to keep participants energized throughout the 24-hour event."

Saadiq Sumar, Ward G Trustee, further praised the team, calling their work "a demonstration of what good citizenship can look like," emphasizing the positive impact such dedication has on both the school and the broader community.

Edmonton's Food Bank also expressed their gratitude and admiration for the hard work and creativity of teacher leaders and students. "The students displayed exemplary leadership qualities, from meticulous planning to flawless execution," says Tamisan Bencz-Knight, Manager of Strategic Relationships and Partnerships, Edmonton Food Bank. "Their dedication, work ethic and commitment to their peers and community have set a new standard for excellence."

Their collective actions serve as an inspiring example of how leadership and enthusiasm can rally people together around a good cause.

Recognition of Merit

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

STUDENT

Lillian Halton, Highlands School

Student Lillian Halton is a remarkable leader and advocate for environmental awareness at Highlands School. She has made significant contributions through her role as the founder and leader of the Climate Club.

The club's initiatives—from clothing swaps to climate presentations and creative video announcements—have inspired meaningful conversations and action among students of all ages. "Lily's commitment to these causes extends beyond mere participation; she has invested considerable time and energy into ensuring the success of each initiative," says Assistant Principal Kate Holmlund.

Lillian's leadership and creativity shine at events like the clothing swap, which diverted nearly 350 kilograms of clothing from landfills. "This event was a resounding success, drawing participation from students, staff and families alike," says Kate Wightmore, Climate Club lead Teacher. "It served as a platform for educating attendees about the impacts of fast fashion and waste, while also reinforcing the value of reusing and recycling clothing." Among other initiatives, Lillian has created vibrant and interactive posters, placed around the school, to educate students about biomes and the irreplaceable value of the natural world.

In addition to club initiatives, Lillian represented her school at the Climate West Conference last spring, where she received a standing ovation for her powerful speech on environmental change. "She is a passionate leader who works tirelessly to bring her community together. Her commitment to social justice inspires students and adults alike," shares Adriene Konrad, Teacher and fellow panel member at the conference.

Lillian has built a sense of unity and purpose in her fellow students, inspiring eco-friendly habits and creating a culture of sustainability at Highlands School.

STAFF

AnneLise McCoy, Malmo School

As Administrative Assistant, AnneLise McCoy is the first point of contact for parents and other visitors to Malmo School. She is a welcoming presence who provides accurate information and thoughtful assistance to everyone she speaks to. According to Assistant Principal Lisa Hauer, “AnneLise embodies the qualities of dedication, diligence and drive that greatly enhance our school community.”

AnneLise came to Malmo during a challenging time for the school, but quickly rose to the occasion. Principal Fatima Dayoub says AnneLise handled “the complexity of her role with remarkable grace and professionalism” even during a trying time.

AnneLise handles office matters with unwavering calmness and a welcoming attitude. Her ability to manage high-pressure situations while maintaining order and efficiency is truly exceptional. In the words of Library Technician Katherine Webber, AnneLise put her skills and past experience to good use “to turn our office into a well-organized and much calmer space.”

The pride AnneLise takes in her work is evident to everyone and the kindness and compassion she shows on even the most hectic days has made her a trusted and respected person throughout Malmo School. She has taken time to build relationships with students, staff and parents and treats them like family. Katherine says, “To our students, she isn’t just the ‘lady in the office,’ she is a trusted and safe adult who our students gravitate towards.”

Fatima summarizes things well when she says AnneLise “cares deeply about the success and happiness of the students and works tirelessly to ensure that they have what they need to thrive ... [she is] an indispensable part of our school.”

Crystal Lawrence, Balwin School

Crystal Lawrence, Assistant Principal at Balwin School, has worked tirelessly to create a cross-catchment community of practice for staff groups working in the Interactions program. She wanted to make sure teachers and support staff working in this area had access to high-quality professional learning opportunities.

Crystal worked with staff from across the Division to make this community of practice a reality, resulting in incredibly popular professional learning days. The first half-day session had 85 registrants. By the time of the final session later in the school year the program had expanded to a full day and there were over 200 staff in attendance.

The popularity of these learning sessions was due in large part to Crystal’s efforts. In the words of Principal Carolyn Matthew, “Crystal curated an amazing list of workshops and presenters, including Division teachers with specialization in music education for students with special needs and comprehensive school health.” She also made sure support staff played an important role delivering presentations, honouring their unique and experiential knowledge working with Interactions students.

To quote support staff members Christina Harpe and Erika Reynolds, “Crystal is very passionate about her work, is positive and encouraging, respectful and helps others grow.”

Crystal is highly respected for her dedication to the people she leads. Her impact on others is perhaps best illustrated in words from a feedback form after one of the PD sessions, in which an attendee summarized their appreciation for the learning opportunity by saying simply: “I am proud to be an Interactions teacher with Edmonton Public Schools!”

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Jessica Lamont, Svend Hansen School

Jessica Lamont is a Grade 1 Teacher at Svend Hansen School who is committed to students and building community in her classroom and in the whole school. “What stands out most about Jessica,” according to fellow Teacher Tomi Brooks, “is her wholehearted approach to teaching.” She is known for bringing enthusiasm to everything she does and has created a classroom where each student is valued and cared for.

Teacher Kerri Clarke shares that Jessica “takes the time to understand her students’ individual needs and adapts her teaching methods to ensure that every child in her class has the opportunity to succeed.”

Beyond the classroom, Jessica is a vital member of many school-wide organizing committees. She has lent her efforts to events like Thunder into Reading, March Book Madness, the Terry Fox Run and track and field day. She also facilitates the school’s Remembrance Day assembly and many other major school events.

Jessica’s efforts have helped build a strong sense of community in the school. This is especially evident in her classroom. Principal Christina Jones says, “Students love Jessica and walking into her class it is evident her students are loved and cared for. Jessica’s classrooms are inclusive spaces where all students feel welcome, cared for and a place where learning thrives and is celebrated.”

“In summary,” says Teacher Kerri Clarke, “Jessica is a dedicated, compassionate and highly professional Teacher who has made a significant positive impact on both her students and our school community.”

Katherine Webber, Malmo School

Katherine Webber’s transformative impact at Malmo School shines in every area she touches. Joining Malmo in 2020, Katherine has revolutionized the library into a space described by staff as warm, bright, engaging and an “inviting haven.” Using her background in interior design and her passion for literacy, Katherine created a space described by Assistant Principal Lisa Hauer as “a calm and beautiful environment that draws students in.”

To offer students hands-on STEM learning, Katherine introduced a makerspace and has spearheaded book fairs in English and Arabic to foster a love of reading among students. She curated an impressive collection of bilingual resources that allow students to see themselves and feel a sense of belonging.

Katherine also supports students with autism spectrum disorder as an Educational Assistant. “She is particularly sensitive to emotionally vulnerable students, advocating for their well-being and ensuring they feel supported at every step,” says Principal Fatima Dayoub. “Her openness to feedback and collaboration with staff further demonstrates her commitment to continuous improvement and advocacy for the students.”

Katherine’s dedication to literacy was especially evident during Malmo’s Family Literacy and Game Night, where the school was the venue for the first Arabic book fair in Canada, in collaboration with Yasmeeen, an Arabic publisher. “This event was Katherine’s brain-child and took over a year of planning to achieve and successfully execute,” says Administrative Assistant AnneLise McCoy. Katherine also makes time to apply for grants for whole-school extra-curricular activities and recently organized an artist-in-residence program to bring enriching artistic experiences to students.

With a creative spirit and love of literacy, Katherine inspires both students and staff in the Malmo School community.

Kyla Maertz, Specialized Learning Supports

Kyla Maertz is a remarkable Library Technician whose contributions to the Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) library at Newton have directly benefited staff and students. Her exceptional service and commitment are evident in her meticulous management of the SLS library, which provides vital resources for consultants working with students throughout the Division. “Kyla is our unicorn,” says Christine Harris, Supervisor, Specialized Learning Supports, highlighting Kyla’s unique skill set and dedication.

Her expertise and organization of the SLS library has made it easier for consultants to find what they need for every learner quickly and efficiently, which benefits the students who will use the resources. “Whether managing daily loans, returns or dealing with more complex requests, Ms. Maertz has ensured that circulation services run without disruption, creating a dependable resource hub for SLS staff and Division schools alike,” says Christie Ladouceur, Supervisor, Specialized Learning Supports. “This level of excellence has elevated resources and services available to school staff to support student learning needs.”

Kyla is diligent in culling and reviewing the SLS library resources to ensure consultants and by extension, students have the most up-to-date materials and equipment. She also brings a deep understanding of assistive technology to her role and she has a ready ability to support consultants using the equipment and to troubleshoot issues as they come up.

Beyond her technical skills, Kyla is always keen to contribute to inclusivity in schools. She often provides American Sign Language interpretation, assisting clear communication between students and staff. “One of her strengths I’ve particularly noticed is how she welcomes our questions and our requests and supports them with clear communication and helpful, positive suggestions and ideas,” says Nancy Musica, Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports.

Mark Howerton, L.Y. Cairns School

Mark Howerton serves as the lead Teacher of the Choice For Change (C4C) program at L.Y. Cairns School, where he has transformed the lives of many students over the past three years.

Mark lives and teaches by the belief that every student has the ability to succeed given opportunities to find their strengths.

“Students who leave the program have indicated that they are much better prepared to enter the world of work, have developed a greater ability to self-regulate and make better decisions,” says Assistant Principal Jeff Bone. “Furthermore, the feedback regarding Mark’s work from parents and community partners has been nothing short of glowing.”

Mark’s educational philosophy emphasizes hands-on learning and creativity, incorporating subjects like woodworking, photography and Indigenous art to engage students. “He bases his program around students interests such as construction, environmental studies, science, horticulture, culinary arts and fitness (to name a few) and supports our mission of employability for our students by showing that there are many vocations where they can be successful,” says Principal Errol Johnson.

The program Mark created has been described as life-changing by staff and students. He’s a mentor and role model to students, creating positive relationships and helping them overcome challenges. Mark has implemented initiatives that prepare students for the workforce and even connect them with work experience opportunities, allowing them to see a future career path. “Mr. Howerton always treats me with respect and listens to my ideas. He’s even helped me look for jobs and given me advice,” says former student Colton McCuaig.

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Peter Sicotte, McNally School

Peter Sicotte, Fine Arts Department Head at McNally School, is making a lasting impact on students through the school's revitalized music program.

Under his leadership, McNally's Music program has expanded significantly, now offering six different options and engaging 40 per cent of the student body in the Fine Arts program, a significant increase in recent years. He approached this challenge with creativity, offering more music options and class times for students to ensure everyone had an opportunity to participate.

Peter's versatility as an educator is evident in his ability to weave so many different types of music into his classes, including Indigenous teachings. "He has purchased drums and worked closely with local Elders to learn, receive teachings and share beautiful Indigenous songs," says Ursula Tait, Department Head. "Through this work, Peter has demonstrated his commitment to cultural inclusivity and community engagement."

Peter has established strong relationships with school alumni, arranging learning opportunities that help students see themselves as professional musicians. "He recognizes the importance of mentorship and actively facilitates interactions between students and alumni, offering real-world perspectives on pursuing careers in the arts," says Assistant Principal Jennifer Park.

Exposing students to professional musicians and performances has been an inspiration and source of confidence for students. "Peter has created rich opportunities for students to engage with music beyond the classroom, organizing performances in professional venues and arranging trips that connect students with exceptional professional musicians," says Principal Krista Mulder.

Through hard work and a strong belief in the power of music, Peter has built a thriving arts community at McNally High School.

Sean Bradley, McNally School

Sean Bradley is described as an excellent leader who balances thoughtfulness and creative risk-taking. As Department Head of Career and Technology Studies (CTS), he has spearheaded the establishment of the Business and Innovation alternative program at McNally School.

Sean identified a critical need and student interest in business classes that prioritize real-world learning. "By aligning the curriculum with real-world applications and entrepreneurial opportunities, he has created a platform for our students to thrive," says Principal Krista Mulder.

Sean's commitment is evident in his collaborative spirit. He takes the time to engage with staff, in addition to students, encouraging innovative ideas and mutual support. "He engaged the entire CTS department, turning this initiative into a social enterprise called McNally Makes," says Assistant Principal Mike Taylor. "This comprehensive approach fosters creativity and entrepreneurship among our students, allowing them to explore and develop their business aspirations in a supportive environment."

Sean helps students with practical skills, such as creating a budget and public speaking, and exposes them to real-world entrepreneurial experiences through partnerships with local organizations. "His strategic partnerships with organizations like Edmonton Innovates have opened up authentic learning opportunities that enhance our students' experiences and prepare them for future success," says Assistant Principal Jennifer Park.

This inspiring atmosphere has attracted 135 enthusiastic students, with an additional 60 participating in McNally Makes. Through Sean's visionary leadership, the Business and Innovation program has become synonymous with the school culture and helped students see themselves as successful entrepreneurs.

Thank You.

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