

Edmonton Public Schools'
DIVISION RECOGNITION
2024-25

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



Program

Message from Board of Trustees

Board Chair Saadiq Sumar

Message from Event Co-Sponsor

Scotiabank

Recognition of Service

Recognition of Teams

Recognition of Merit

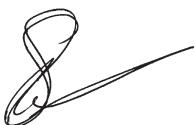
Message from the Board of Trustees

For more than 20 years, we have celebrated and been inspired by students, parents, community members and staff who make exceptional contributions to our school communities. Today is about recognizing you: the people who help make Edmonton Public Schools a strong, supportive and student-centred place for young people to learn and grow.

You are being honoured as someone whose commitment to public education truly makes a difference. Your efforts—whether in a school, in administrative support, as a devoted parent, or as an engaged community partner—are the essential building blocks of student success. The creativity, commitment and leadership you bring to every day leave a lasting impact on students, families and colleagues.

Each story shared here—big or small—is a reminder of how much can be achieved when people lead with curiosity, care and generosity. Someone thought of you when they heard the words: outstanding, accomplishments, contributions, achievements, quality service, commitment, commendable, innovative, creative and inspiring. You are part of a legacy of people who believe in the power of education to change lives and strengthen communities.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for your dedication and congratulations on this well-earned recognition.



Saadiq Sumar
Board Chair

Message from Event Co-Sponsor **Scotiabank**

At Scotiabank we help people and communities access opportunities to thrive—on their own terms. We are committed to working together to remove barriers to advancement and increase access to opportunities, so that we can help create a more inclusive and resilient world for everyone.

We are proud to sponsor the Edmonton Public Schools' Division Recognition Program for over 20 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. Thank you for your dedication to ensuring our future leaders have the necessary skills and resources they need to support their success.

Brian O'Neill
Director, National Accounts
Scotiabank Commercial Banking

Landon Feser
Associate Director, Transaction Banking
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

Nic Dela Cruz, Aldergrove School

Nicanor (Nic) Dela Cruz, Head Custodian at Aldergrove School, sets a welcoming and safe tone for students and staff every day. Known for his humility, kindness and unwavering work ethic, Nic starts his day by preparing the building and grounds for when students, families and staff arrive, ensuring all walkways are clear and the facility is pristine and welcoming.

Nic is recognized for his responsiveness and commitment to the school community. When asked for assistance, he is quick to help, with Administrative Assistant Linda Renner noting that he always says, “I’m on my way,” without hesitation.

Students are especially drawn to Nic, often seeking him out for help or a chance to visit. Principal Dao Haddad highlights this special connection: “Students love going to Mr. Nic’s office.” This affection is visible at school gatherings, where Nic presents the coveted Golden Garbage Can award to loud cheers. “Nic is an incredible human,” Dao says.

Nic ensures Aldergrove is not only safe and clean, but a joyous place to learn and work, embodying the spirit of service within the Division. “He is the very heartbeat of our community,” says Assistant Principal Bonnie Clydesdale.

Prince Kunnathanickal Gopalakrishna, Aldergrove School

Educational Assistant Prince Kunnathanickal Gopalakrishna is an indispensable member of the team who serves Aldergrove School with unwavering dedication. He works across all grades to support students with diverse and complex needs.

Prince is a respected staff member known for his ability to connect with every student. Principal Dao Haddad calls him an “Aldergrove gem,” noting that “Prince is very deserving of this service award because he can do so many things well.” He is often seen dancing with the kids and caring for them “like his own,” bringing a sense of calm and joy to every classroom he enters.

His warm personality and positive outlook puts students at ease. “I have witnessed Mr. Prince handle some very tense, difficult situations with students where he remains calm and collected, which in turn reflects upon the students in a positive way,” says Administrative Assistant Toben Warmerdam.

His genuine passion and positive attitude are contagious. Assistant Principal Bonnie Clydesdale emphasizes Prince’s unique ability to connect. “You can almost always see a student giving him a big hug or a high five in the hallways.” Prince’s commitment, flexibility and kindness truly embody the spirit of an outstanding educational assistant.

Corey Whaley, Argyll Centre

Corey Whaley, Career and Technology Studies (CTS) Teacher, is known as an innovative teacher and mentor among students and staff.

His courses in communications technology, design and computer science set a high standard for instructional excellence. Corey's material is well-organized, accessible and continually adapted to support diverse learners in the fast-changing world of technology. Assistant Principal Lindsay Inglis praises his passion and dedication to student-centred teaching. "He continually adapts and creates his teaching materials to best suit his diverse student needs." This commitment to continual change and growth makes him an invaluable asset at Argyll.

Corey's impact extends beyond his classroom as a trusted mentor and collaborator for colleagues. "His knowledge in the subjects he has taught is filled with years of experience and depth," says Teacher Lance Lindoff. "I always look to him for guidance. It is such a privilege to work beside him in this program."

He elevates the practice of many educators across the Division through his knowledge, guidance and openness. "Through his leadership and willingness to support others, Corey has contributed to a stronger culture of collaboration, innovation and digital learning," says Curtis Ogorodiuk, Department Head.

Jodie Marling, Bannerman School

For the past 18 years, Jodie Marling, Administrative Assistant "Extraordinaire," has been the heart of Bannerman School and a true pillar within the Division. Jodie knows every student and family by name, forging lasting relationships built on genuine kindness and care.

"Her contributions extend far beyond the front office—she has become an anchor for families, colleagues and leaders alike," says Principal Tara Kushnir.

Skilled in managing the administrative needs of the school with remarkable excellence, accuracy and efficiency, Jodie is also an invaluable resource in times of transition, providing consistent support through numerous tasks, programs and Division processes. Her quiet leadership and selfless commitment ensure teachers and administrators are able to focus on student success.

Jodie's professional contributions extend across the Division, where she is renowned as a trusted mentor.

She patiently supports and trains new administrative assistants and acts as a confident lifeline across the Division. Her depth of knowledge and reliable can-do attitude make her the indispensable, go-to person for countless colleagues, including Principals Damian Wilkinson at Overlanders, Crystal Sinclair at Delton and Debbie Petkau at Jan Reimer.

"She is a mentor, a connector, a problem-solver and a friend to all," says Principal Crystal Sinclair. Principal Kushnir says she is "deeply grateful for the combination of generosity, professionalism, compassion and genuine commitment to seeing people succeed that defines our 'Mrs. Marling.'"

Recognition of Service *continued*

Erin Corbett, Bisset School

Erin Corbett is an Educational Assistant whose unique background as a Licensed Practical Nurse and remarkable compassion made her an outstanding member of the Bisset School team last year. Working with a student who is new to the country and with complex needs, Erin approaches every challenge with intuition and skill, helping to develop the student's educational path from the ground up.

Her tireless efforts focus on ensuring the student is fully integrated and respected within the school community, managing their physical, emotional and educational needs while always protecting their dignity. Teacher Jodi Mackie notes that Erin's work "has already changed the life of a child who's had a challenging start to life."

Erin's aptitude for implementing specialized strategies, such as the Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display (PODD) communication system, is exceptional. Her focus on consistent support has resulted in significant change for the student she works with. Speech-Language Pathology Consultants J. River Wilson and Janet Beaudin say that Erin "skillfully [weaves] communication modeling and opportunities into every aspect of [the student's] school day."

Erin demonstrates a powerful blend of professionalism and empathy, as Teacher Laura Gilligan states when speaking about Erin's work with complex needs: "Her willingness to presume potential, her patience and consistency, and her encouragement...result in high levels of change and ongoing potential."

Stephen Rinn, Centre High Campus

Stephen Rinn, Student Support Liaison at Centre High Campus, exemplifies outstanding service to students and staff. He is always working to create a safe, equitable and supportive environment in the school community.

Stephen's quiet, effective leadership is marked by his unwavering commitment to removing barriers for students. He plays a key role in the InREACH program, often serving as the vital first connection for students who need academic support. Assistant Principal Liz Befus notes that Stephen has a unique ability to connect with students: "His energy for making everything accessible and awesome for students is amazing."

"Service to students and staff truly underlies all that Stephen does," says InREACH Lead Teacher Grace Dykstra. "Over his time at Centre High Campus, Stephen has created and been involved in almost every student group in one way or another, with the underlying goal of students serving students."

He is a driving force behind multiple initiatives, including the CHAMPS peer tutoring program and the establishment of the SafeWalk program, ensuring students have a "tangible sense of safety and support," according to Teacher Monica Chahal.

Whether organizing the popular games club for community building or co-leading anti-racism initiatives to foster an inclusive school culture, Stephen's service reflects his desire for students to thrive. His service leaves an indelible mark on Centre High Campus, making it a more hopeful, engaged and equitable learning space.

Rhonda Soderstrom, Constable Daniel Woodall School

Educational Assistant Rhonda Soderstrom has been sharing her outstanding knowledge and abilities for 30 years. At Constable Daniel Woodall School, she is recognized for her professionalism, dedication and the profound impact she's had working with children in Kindergarten.

Teacher Deb Christensen has had Rhonda's support in her classroom over the past five years, and notes that she not only supports students but also her colleagues and the broader school community: "Whether it is creating engaging learning opportunities, modeling empathy or providing unwavering support, Rhonda is an incredible asset to our Division."

"Her work is a testament to the highest standards of our profession," adds Principal Leanne Moncrieff

Rhonda prioritizes relationships above all else, especially with students navigating trauma or complex needs. She approaches challenges with calmness, consistency and creativity. She has devoted herself to learning to ensure students can build trust, self-regulation skills and successfully transition from Kindergarten to Grade 1. She is an exceptional, neuro-affirming partner to the classroom teacher, proactively anticipating needs and helping to create an incredibly effective learning environment.

Parent Pheadra Carey, a Social Worker Consultant with Specialized Learning Supports, says Rhonda "is the very definition of an exceptional human being, and she deserves to be honoured for the life-changing difference she has made in the lives of many children."

Raelene Ronald, Dunluce School

Raelene Ronald is a Kindergarten Teacher recognized by her colleagues as one the kindest, most understanding people they know. Teacher Hayley Friedly shares how glad she is to have been partnered with Raelene during her first year with Edmonton Public Schools, saying "Raelene takes the definition of kindness to a whole new level. She will do anything for any of us on the staff."

Teacher Kathy Han Foo shares a similar sentiment, saying Raelene "lifts up those around her and enhances public education not through grand gestures, but through a thousand small, selfless acts every single day." She continues, "Raelene is a pillar of service within our school community. Even in her busiest moments, she takes time to check in with others, spreading kindness and fostering a strong sense of community within our halls."

The kindness for which Raelene is known is matched only by her dedication to students. She is known for forging a deep connection with students and fostering a sense of trust, care and confidence. Fellow teacher, Nicole Watts, notes that, as a Kindergarten Teacher, "Raelene introduces the children to their first school experience, and in doing so, makes them fall in love with learning."

Recognition of Service *continued*

Jennifer Green, Grovenor School

Grovenor School Music Teacher Jennifer Green “has an extraordinary gift for developing and inspiring students through music,” says Principal Robyn Fagarasanu. “Her contributions enrich our school culture, empower students across all grades and strengthen our connection to the community in many ways.”

Jennifer is known for her kind, supportive approach. Her teaching incorporates a variety of instruments (like the ukulele and djembe) and fun, interactive musical games that make learning joyful and safe for student expression. She has cultivated a vibrant and inclusive music program where students of all ages and abilities are encouraged to explore their talents.

Jennifer’s passion is most evident in her signature initiative: the after-school Fiddle Program. She not only dedicates her time to teaching this popular club but actively seeks external resources, partnering with professional musicians and securing subsidies from the Wild Rose Old Tyme Fiddlers’ Association. This effort makes the program accessible and provides students with invaluable opportunities for external performances, camps and community “jam sessions.”

She also leads the Choir Club and organizes memorable school-wide events, like the Old Time Dance, which strengthens school culture and builds student confidence, pride and a deep sense of belonging. “I have seen the incredible impact she has had on my daughter and our entire school community,” says parent Mihaela Danciu.

Caitlyn Kjorlien, Hazeldean School

Caitlyn Kjorlien, Teacher in the Pre-Kindergarten program at Hazeldean School, is recognized for her dedication, compassionate leadership and strong advocacy for the school community.

Starting her career as the school’s music teacher, her transition to Pre-Kindergarten highlights her adaptability and commitment to early learners, whom she greets daily with a big smile and extra enthusiasm. She works hard to build connections in her classroom, reducing the anxieties families feel facing their child’s first school experience. She incorporates her strong musical ability into her teaching, singing and playing the ukulele during circle time.

Caitlyn consistently goes the extra mile to support her colleagues and foster a positive, collaborative environment. The Educational Assistant Team notes that Caitlyn “designs and makes shirts to show her appreciation” for her co-workers and arranges out-of-school events to strengthen the team. Staff have described her as sunshine in human form.

Her colleagues view her as a vital source of guidance and support. Teacher April Bourque says, “She is a strong advocate for support and resources that are needed to help with students’ success.” Furthermore, her welcoming nature ensures that new staff members immediately feel connected. New Teacher Olivia Boyington notes that Caitlyn “has not only helped me with ideas for how I can set up my classroom... she has also helped with suggestions for challenging behaviour.” Caitlyn is truly one of a kind, bringing light, warmth and genuine care to every aspect of the school.

Abby Lemoignan, Hazeldean School

Abby Lemoignan, Interactions Teacher at Hazeldean School, is recognized for her profound commitment to creating a safe, engaging and neurodiversity-affirming learning environment. Her dedication to student betterment is unparalleled, as she continuously seeks innovative strategies and resources to support every student.

She has become an invaluable asset through her expertise with neurodiverse learners. Assistant Principal John Fedor notes that Abby “possesses an exceptional talent for connecting with her students and creating an environment where they not only feel safe but are empowered to learn and grow.”

Abby’s commitment extends into her collaborative practice with colleagues and specialists. She skillfully tailors her approach to meet diverse student needs, focusing on emotional, social and sensory challenges in addition to academics. Occupational Therapy Consultant Julie Russell says Abby “is an expert co-regulator to both her students and teammates; they thrive in her sturdy and humble presence.”

From a literacy and communication standpoint, Abby’s work is outstanding. Speech-Language Pathologist Lindsay Hegstrom highlights her practice, stating, “She consistently models the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), always wearing her AAC device and ensuring her students have access to robust communication opportunities throughout the day.” Abby embodies true leadership, making a lasting impact on her students, their families and the entire Hazeldean School community.

Cindy Pulfer, Hazeldean School

Cindy Pulfer has the unique distinction of having been a student, parent and finally, Educational Assistant at Hazeldean. Her ties to the school, students and community are deep and evident in her work and life.

Cindy puts her time and talent into every space, from vibrant art on the walls to serene plant walls and bulletin boards. “Cindy’s contributions are not just decorative, but are foundational in creating a space that nurtures both the intellectual and emotional growth of the children,” says Principal Shannon Mah.

In the Pre-Kindergarten program, Cindy is a source of unwavering patience and support for both students and colleagues. Allisa Ritchie, Educational Assistant, speaks to her profound impact: “She has a special way of making the whole school feel welcoming and fun, from the thoughtful planning she puts into school-wide activities to the beautiful spaces she created for both students and staff.”

Cindy’s collaborative spirit and willingness to adapt are highly valued by her colleagues. “I do not recall a day when Cindy ever said ‘no’ to any of the ideas or suggestions that the classroom team came up with,” says Teacher Heather Nekolaichuk. “Cindy has an energy that the children gravitate towards and she is always there to provide the patience, support and care that her job requires.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Allan Deck, Jasper Place School

Allan Deck is recognized for his profound impact as an English Language Arts (ELA) Teacher and Department Head at Jasper Place School, embodying excellence in teaching, mentorship and lifelong professional growth. He is tirelessly dedicated to his craft, which allows him to foster a highly creative and supportive environment for students and colleagues.

Allan consistently designs specialty courses and reinterprets curriculum, modelling a growth mindset that inspires others to follow his lead. Zack Taffesse, Teacher and Co-Department Head of Humanities, notes that he is “one of the most creative, experimental and innovative educators I’ve ever had the pleasure of working with.” He is also a crucial mentor, seamlessly integrating new educators into a complex school environment. Teacher Craig Daniel, emphasizes this role, stating that Allan’s generosity and wit provide students “the security they need to grow and develop in their chosen profession.”

Allan’s influence extends directly to student success and passion. Former student Shevaun Grundy credits him with her decision to enter the field of education, describing his unique ability to engage with students. “He has a certain way of teaching things, of getting the students involved without them even realizing.” Allan’s legacy is defined by his selfless service and uncanny ability to elevate the standards of teaching for all of those around him.

Eric Munoz, Jasper Place School

Eric Munoz is a Physical Education Teacher who is passionate about school spirit and pride.

In 2018, Eric initiated the Rowdy Rebels fan club to unite students across all interests in support of Jasper Place athletic teams. What began small has grown into an incredible force of school spirit, with hundreds of students signing up each year. The Rowdy Rebels are now an integral part of the school’s identity, bringing energy to events like the school’s REB Invitational Basketball Tournament.

With his infectious energy and meticulous organization skills, Eric co-ordinates cheers, collaborates with the Rebel Thunder Drumline and selects student captains to lead the group. “Teams from across Canada and the United States have expressed admiration for the Rowdy Rebels, wishing they could replicate such an enthusiastic and unified fan base at their own schools,” says Lauren Green, Athletic Director and Teacher. “...the Rowdy Rebels provide a significant ‘home field advantage’ for our athletes.”

Ronny Stocklin-Sagi, a former student, says Eric’s dedication “sets an example for all of us, creating an environment where students feel encouraged and motivated to succeed.”

Parent Pat Gerhardt notes, “It has been amazing to see the pride and culture change in the school.” Eric has engaged both students and staff in a shared sense of pride, tradition and camaraderie that continues to grow stronger each year.

Kaylie Nyboer, Kensington School

Assistant Principal Kaylie Nyboer is described by her colleagues as a quiet yet mighty force. She consistently puts the needs of students and staff at the forefront of every decision, ensuring the school is a safe and supportive place to learn, work and grow.

Every year, Kaylie secures funding for nutritious snacks and food literacy through Power Full Kids. “Because of her hard work, no child is left out—she makes certain that every single student is taken care of,” says Teacher Jasna Relvas. Her positive impact is felt immediately upon entering spaces like the school library, where Kaylie has created a functional yet welcoming and inspiring hub for students.

She dedicates countless hours to supporting staff development and building strong relationships with families. “She is an active and engaged leader who works closely with staff to provide guidance and support in planning and implementing initiatives,” says Principal Shauna Shore.

As a former teacher in the Interactions program, Kaylie is particularly skilled at understanding student learning needs, mentoring staff and partnering with parents in pursuit of shared goals. Curriculum Co-ordinator Colleen Roux notes, “She works tirelessly to ensure every student has access to meaningful learning opportunities, and she models a deep understanding of how to support diverse learners.”

Erin Yaschuk, L.Y. Cairns School

Erin Yaschuk is a Teacher and Curriculum Co-ordinator committed to student success and real-world readiness.

In her work with students with intellectual disabilities, she champions practical experience by leading a work experience program, securing suitable work and transportation for every student. “These initiatives provide invaluable opportunities for students to build practical employability skills and develop resumes, significantly enhancing their prospects for successful transitions post-graduation,” says Teacher Lauren Dryer. With a warm energy and sense of purpose, Erin is dedicated to giving students opportunities to thrive both inside and outside of the classroom.

Erin generously gives her time to co-ordinate field trips, plan school-wide events, host weekly clubs and actively support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. She creates a safe, supportive environment where children feel seen, heard and valued. “It’s no surprise that students thrive under Erin’s guidance and parents feel confident knowing their children are in such capable, caring hands,” says Administrative Assistant Deb Day.

With creativity and care, Erin helps prepare students for the future by providing a listening ear as well as practical guidance and invaluable experience. Assistant Principal Vaughn Saik states, “Erin is a quiet force behind many of our school’s best moments, and her impact is felt by students and staff alike.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Janelle Pinkoski, Laurier Heights School

Teacher Janelle Pinkoski brings a thoughtful and patient presence to her classroom and school.

Janelle prioritizes building relationships with both students and families, ensuring they are valued members of the learning team. Her approach to teaching is both organized and creative, with a wide variety of cross-curricular and hands-on learning opportunities. “She takes the time to truly know each of her students, their strengths, interests and unique challenges, and uses that insight to shape how she teaches and interacts with them,” says parent Nicole Schultz.

Parents recognize and appreciate her ability to provide meaningful, individualized student support. “Janelle recognized my daughter’s academic strengths and enthusiasm early in the school year and would regularly provide her with enrichment opportunities,” says parent Robyn Ferguson.

Janelle is committed to building a positive classroom environment where students thrive emotionally and academically. “Whether introducing a new concept, guiding collaborative activities, or integrating hands-on learning experiences, she makes learning relevant and exciting,” says parent Jen McCormack. “Her students are not only learning foundational skills, they are developing critical thinking, curiosity and resilience that will serve them well beyond Grade 2.”

Janelle is an exceptional educator whose experience, compassion and professionalism bring distinction to her school.

Kaylee Farrell, Lynnwood School

Kaylee Farrell is a Teacher at Lynnwood School, celebrated for her ability to create an inclusive classroom where every student feels seen and capable. Most recently, she taught a split grade class and seamlessly met the needs of both advanced learners and those with complex learning profiles. Kaylee’s teaching is defined by her individualized support and high expectations, which help students reach their full potential.

Her impact often extends beyond academics to transform a student’s entire school experience. Parent Aref Yeung writes that Ms. Kaylee was “the teacher that our Katie needed at the time she needed it most,” noting that her guidance helped their daughter develop “a confidence in her own abilities” after transitioning schools. Kaylee fosters this growth by designing meaningful and engaging learning opportunities.

Students recognize her excellent teaching as well. Katie Yeung, a student at Lynnwood School, praises Kaylee’s approach to challenging subjects, stating, “I have never believed that I was good at math until this year. Ms. Kaylee taught and showed me a different perspective on math and completely changed my mindset.”

Furthermore, Kaylee is recognized as being flexible and creative. Assistant Principal Marlene de Graaf says Kaylee’s ability to remain “adaptable and flexible in her teaching approach...demonstrates creativity and resourcefulness in designing meaningful learning opportunities in a truly inclusive environment.”

Sherry Leitch, McLeod School

Sherry Leitch is a cornerstone of the McLeod School community, where she has served as an Educational Assistant for over two decades. Her journey, which began as a dedicated parent volunteer, is a testament to her deep commitment to students and staff. She demonstrates an unwavering dedication to supporting students, fostering an inclusive and nurturing learning environment for all children. Sherry's approach to classroom support is invaluable to her colleagues. As Teachers Jennifer Hinch and Janell Hurlburt say, "Sherry helps students shine, and we, as teachers, provide learning opportunities and experiences we could never have without her presence."

Beyond the classroom, Sherry's natural leadership and artistic talents enhance the entire school culture. She is the staff's go-to person for creating themed displays for school events and elaborate backdrops for school concerts. According to Acting Assistant Principal Paul Flowers, "Her creativity and drive to do what is best for the school community shines in all that she does."

Sherry consistently takes initiative, identifying needs and proactively implementing solutions. Former Acting Principal Naveed Chaudhry notes that her proactive approach and ability to anticipate needs are "invaluable assets to our team." Sherry embodies dedication, positive influence and the spirit of service, making McLeod School a better place every day.

Priya Khan, Meyokumin School

Assistant Principal Priya Khan is a transformational leader at Meyokumin School who inspires both colleagues and families within the diverse school community. Priya is recognized for her dedication to enhancing all the school's programs—Cogito, Regular and Punjabi language—by building strong community partnerships and innovative resources.

Priya serves as an indispensable support to the Cogito alternative program, where her vision and guidance have helped strengthen the program, attracting more than 400 people to the school's open house. As Grade 3 Teacher Melanie Kabarchuk says, "Students, school staff, and school families and guardians all connect with her and have strong, trusting relationships." That's because of Priya's "innate ability to listen with empathy."

Priya takes a personalized approach to student and family success that helps students not only succeed, but also thrive. When Harmanderbir Sidhu's son started the Cogito program, the family felt unsure how to guide his academic path. Priya served as a mentor, offering guidance and encouragement. "Ms. Khan provided thoughtful, unbiased advice, carefully considering his strengths and aspirations," says Harmanderbir. "Her insight helped us make an informed decision, alleviating our concerns and setting him on a path to continued success."

Priya's leadership also fosters a supportive environment for staff. She helped create and implement professional learning opportunities around diversity and inclusion, and established a staff wellness room.

Grade 6 parent Kunal Mirpuri says Priya's work "has elevated the Cogito program to a standard of excellence for Meyokumin School, and her legacy will be felt for many years to come."

Recognition of Service *continued*

Jenny Penrose, Ormsby School

Jenny Penrose, an exceptional Educational Assistant at Ormsby School, is a truly transformative presence. She has profoundly impacted students, staff and the entire school community. Her commitment and ability to connect with every child are legendary.

As parent Josh Guenther shares, “Regardless of the circumstance, we have always been on the receiving end of her incredible smile and positive attitude.” Jenny possesses a “rare gift in understanding, empathizing with and championing” the unique needs of all students, including neurodiverse learners.

Beyond her direct support, Jenny is the driving force behind the Breakfast Club, transforming it into a vibrant hub with her “creative culinary creations that encourage even the pickiest eaters to have a healthy breakfast,” says Principal Rhonda Sader. Assistant Principal Alana Eaton notes, “Sometimes, I think the students go to breakfast as much to have a visit with Miss Jenny as they do to eat.”

Jenny also leads the Naturescape program, where she cultivates a love for learning and environmental stewardship. Her proactive approach and ability to anticipate needs make her an invaluable leader among her colleagues. She consistently elevates the standard of support across the school. Jenny truly is a “bright light” that impacts every student at Ormsby School.

Anita Lam, Parkallen School

Teacher Anita Lam is known by colleagues, students and parents as a calm, creative and supportive presence in the school.

Anita plays a vital role in organizing and leading initiatives for both staff and students. “She takes an innovative and project-based approach to teaching while actively involving parents in the learning process through student showcases held throughout the year,” says Principal Tracy Tucker from S. Bruce Smith School.

In the classroom, Anita brings a creative and inspiring spirit to her teaching style, generating project ideas and working with students to plan and execute them. “One highlight was her Grade 3 ‘Toy Showcase,’ where students designed their own toys and presented them to other classes and parents,” says Teacher Jackie Chu. “Her students adore her.”

She is a mentor for student teachers, and is actively involved in planning professional development for staff. When called upon, she willingly supports colleagues with patience, encouragement and practical advice. Assistant Principal Angus Hossack says, “She successfully led a school-wide book study on anti-racism, which directly advanced the Edmonton Public Schools Strategic Plan priority to advance action towards anti-racism and reconciliation.”

Erin Matteucci, Riverbend School

Erin Matteucci, Success Coach at Riverbend School, is known for exemplary, student-centred dedication. Erin has become a trusted advocate and mentor, strengthening the school's climate, culture and community by ensuring students feel supported not just as learners but as individuals.

This work is especially vital in junior high, says Principal Dan Beharry, adding:

“Erin provides the steady guidance and encouragement students need during these formative years, helping them build resilience, confidence and a sense of belonging.”

A core contribution of Erin's service is the creation and leadership of multiple specialized support clubs that respond directly to student needs. These include the Mindfulness Club for stress reduction, the Social Club for building positive peer interactions and coping strategies, and the Self-Esteem Team that empowers students through leadership and service projects.

Erin is consistently present in the hallways, developing meaningful connections with students, and ensuring their voices and best interests are always heard. Erin has also presented at staff meetings and parent advisory committees, equipping not only students but also staff and families with tools needed for students' long-term success. “This level of dedication truly sets Erin apart. Erin's energy and enthusiasm are contagious and inspiring,” says Assistant Principal Fraser Holt.

Teacher Angie Weishaupt says Erin “truly exemplifies the three pillars of Riverbend School: Character, Ability and Citizenship,” and the impact is evident.

Blythe Evans, Technology and Information Management

Consultant Blythe Evans from Technology and Information Management is recognized for her exceptional leadership and technical expertise in implementing the Vretta Digital Assessment Platform. When the province introduced this new platform, her work ensured a seamless transition to digital provincial exams across the Division, directly supporting the strategic goal of outstanding learning opportunities for all students. Blythe served as the essential link between educational needs and complex technical execution, a role described by Manager Patrick Miller as the “cornerstone of this project's success.”

Blythe's ability to foster strong, collaborative partnerships with stakeholders, including Alberta Education and school-based staff, was critical. She expertly translated complex information, co-ordinating rigorous testing and user training. Her remarkable adaptability was highlighted by the way she managed complicated training schedules to accommodate every participant. As Supervisor Aaron Muller notes, unexpected changes to the training schedule required her to “swiftly pivot, rescheduling sessions and tailoring additional online offerings.” Despite these challenges, she ensured every participant was fully prepared. Former Managing Director Terry Korte adds that her precise leadership of this “complex, multi-stakeholder project with such precision and grace” exemplifies the qualities the Division strives for.

Blythe's dedication to preparation and problem-solving guarantees stability and success for students' digital futures. Terry says, “Blythe Evans' initiative, dedication and profound impact on the Vretta project exemplify the qualities we strive for in our Division.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Elaine Foote, Victoria School

Elaine Foote, Office Administrator at Victoria School of the Arts, is appreciated for many skills, including her ability to create an environment that is efficient, vibrant, safe and organized.

Elaine possesses a gift for navigating school processes and Division policies, ensuring all systems—from student records to event planning—run with seamless precision. “Her proactive approach and meticulous attention to detail ensure that our systems run smoothly, allowing teachers and other staff to focus on what matters most: our students,” says Principal Stacy Fysh.

What truly sets Elaine apart is the human-centred approach she brings to her expertise. She is praised for her genuine kindness, compassion and welcoming presence, ensuring every student and family feels heard and supported. “Her daily commitment to clarity and care profoundly impacts our entire school community,” says Assistant Principal Joanne Lowry.

Furthermore, her unique ability to use her sense of humour is a vital professional tool, diffusing tension and bringing a daily sense of calm and perspective to colleagues. This, combined with acting as a supportive mentor who willingly shares her deep knowledge with new and seasoned staff members alike, reflects Elaine’s unwavering dedication to the well-being of the entire community.

“(Elaine’s) daily work and energy make our school a better place,” says Assistant Principal Rick Oldring.

Jade Avery, W.P. Wagner School

Jade Avery, Interactions Teacher at W.P. Wagner School, stands out as a highly effective and inspiring educator who’s had a transformative impact on both students and colleagues. Her classroom is a space where respect, curiosity and genuine learning thrive. She consistently adapts lessons and teaching strategies with incredible skill and patience to ensure every student feels supported and empowered.

Jade’s dedication extends far beyond curriculum delivery. She is an active mentor, an advocate for families and an integral part of the school’s supportive structure. As an observer of her work, Inclusive Education Department Head Julie Mehler notes, “Jade is among the most dedicated, compassionate and effective educators I have had the privilege to know.” She sees the full potential in every child, leading to true progress—academically, behaviourally and emotionally—for students.

Furthermore, she is a vital collaborator within the Inclusive Learning team. Assistant Principal Craig Michaud says, “She consistently fosters a sense of belonging and care,” whether helping colleagues with classroom programming or organizing community outings. Jade’s passion, organizational ability and belief in her students make her an outstanding role model who directly strengthens public education.

Janis Stauffer, W.P. Wagner School

Janis Stauffer, Business Manager at W.P. Wagner School, is appreciated for her selfless dedication, consistent leadership and human-centred approach to school operations.

According to the Leadership Team, Janis is an integral part of the administration, providing a steady, even-keeled presence that helps to keep the entire school “afloat” with resilience and clarity, even during challenging times.

Janis ensures the seamless execution of logistics, from essential supplies and finances to successful school events, demonstrating remarkable professionalism and efficiency. Her proactive, forward-thinking problem-solving means that things run smoothly without disruption. Her office is a known safe and welcoming space for staff, students and families.

According to the Support Staff Team, “Janis is the foundation of our workplace.” She manages countless details, fosters team unity, sets an example of teamwork, and never hesitates to step in and assist.

Head Custodian Nykco Celiz says Janis’ ability to foster a supportive and respectful work environment is what truly sets her apart: “In addition to her professional strengths, Janis is a kind and approachable leader who listens, understands and genuinely cares about her colleagues. She leads by example, never hesitating to step in and help when needed, regardless of the task at hand. Her humility and reliability have earned her the respect and trust of everyone who works with her.”

Heida Arnason, Windsor Park School

Windsor Park School Music Teacher Heida Arnason is a creative visionary who enhances the school experience by inspiring students to discover their voices, both musically and personally. She is celebrated for her exceptional musicianship as she plays, sings and composes alongside students, instilling a profound love for the arts.

Heida’s passion is most visible in her elaborate, annual winter concert productions—original works that she writes, stages and directs. “Students begin singing in the hallway before even entering her classroom, excited to learn and grow,” says Grade 4 Teacher Alexandra Stewart. “She shares her expertise in a way that is engaging and inspiring, nurturing in our students not only musical skills, but also confidence and a sense of joy.”

Heida’s guidance helps children learn confidence and discipline. Maryam Razavy, on behalf of the Windsor Park School Parent Council, says “Heida has an extraordinary way of knowing how each child can shine, and shine they do.”

Beyond the music room, Heida dedicates her time to students and the school, volunteering regularly to support events and field trips, supporting students’ literacy development and social-emotional development. Former Grade 5 Teacher Maggie Fezekas says, “She meets students where they are, finding ways to help them shine and build confidence in themselves. Her students know they are deeply cared for, and they turn to her for encouragement, guidance and support.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Bilan Ahmed, Balwin School

Bilan Ahmed is a Settlement Practitioner from the Edmonton Immigrant Settlement Association and a devoted community partner of Balwin School. She is an invaluable bridge-builder, whose dedication strengthens the fabric of the entire school.

Bilan is an indispensable and unparalleled resource for staff, students and families alike. She supports families by navigating required documents and accessing critical external resources, and cultivates deep cultural understanding, actively building connections between staff and families. She also helps make learning successful in the classroom, evidenced by her creation of a treasured Somali picture dictionary to help teachers communicate key words with students who are learning English.

“Acting as a bridge between home and school, she helps parents feel welcomed, understood and confident by offering translation, guidance and encouragement,” says Teacher Kyla Gyte. “Because of her efforts, families are more connected, students feel a stronger sense of belonging and our school has become a warmer, more inclusive place.”

“Her cultural sensitivity, genuine interactions and direct connection with people are truly unmatched,” adds Educational Assistant Colleen Matheson.

Bilan is highly sought after, with parents, students and coworkers frequently lining up for her guidance and support. Her presence is described as infectious and a “warm hug” for the school by Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad: “Bilan isn’t at Balwin every day, but when she is, we all know it.”

Monita Chapman, Harry Ainlay

Monita Chapman stands as cornerstones of generosity, volunteerism and community spirit within the Harry Ainlay School community. She consistently makes a meaningful difference and embodies the true spirit of service. Her contributions are both impactful and heartfelt, ranging from supporting school events to mentoring youth.

Monita’s selfless dedication is most evident in her commitment to student well-being. She generously donates and stocks the in-school food bank, helping give students access to essential resources and supplies. Dean Carter, Assistant Principal, summarizes her impact by noting, “Her selfless dedication is evident in her actions, which have enriched the lives of our students and staff.”

Monita’s care extends beyond material donations; she actively advocates for student leadership. As Department Head of Student Life Jamie Johansen states, Monita “is the kind of parent who quietly asks, ‘How can I help?’”

Monita continually encourages young people to take on responsibility, find their voice and take pride in their school and community. She has devoted time to mentoring youth for the last 12 years through initiatives like Lemonade Stand Day.

Monita’s efforts enrich the lives of both students and staff. Davina Welsh, School Counsellor, summarizes the impact, saying her “generosity and willingness to serve not only address immediate needs but also inspire others to contribute in meaningful ways.”

Tammy Ramirez, Kim Hung School

Tammy Ramirez, a dedicated parent volunteer at Kim Hung School, is a true champion for the students, staff and entire school community. She selflessly donates her time to create enriching opportunities for students and provides invaluable assistance to teachers.

Grade 4 Teacher Zach Agate highlights her impact, noting that during the weekly Pokémon games group, “working with her was a wonderful experience as she immersed herself into the group, helping students play games, solve conflicts, and build social and communication skills in a fun, positive setting.”

Tammy’s commitment extends beyond structured activities. Teacher Stephanie Krebs praises her as “a wonderful and helpful volunteer,” specifically citing her generous assistance on a Grade 9 camping trip where her “warm presence and willingness to help wherever needed made the trip flow smoother.” Grade 5 Teacher Sean Brooks commends Tammy for her instrumental role in establishing the school’s Drama Club, stating that she “worked and advocated strongly for the creation of this program.”

Tammy’s efforts in organizing hot lunch programs, volunteering for field trips and assisting in the library consistently showcase her positive attitude and deep care for all students at Kim Hung School.

Jennifer McCallum, LaPerle School

Jennifer McCallum is an exceptional parent volunteer and dedicated Lunchroom Supervisor who serves as an essential member of the LaPerle School community. Her strong commitment, kindness and flexibility shine through in her daily support for students and the school.

Drawing on her background in science and agriculture, Jennifer leads the Garden Club and tends to the school’s naturescape. “She teaches students about nature and plants with patience and warmth,” says Curriculum Co-ordinator and Teacher Jennifer Robinson. She also “customizes information to align with each grade’s science curriculum,” Robinson says.

Jennifer is proactive in lifting the load for others and often anticipates needs before they are voiced. When the lost-and-found collection became overwhelming, she didn’t hesitate to take charge. She takes on time-consuming projects without being asked. “What truly sets Jennifer apart is her willingness to step in wherever she is needed and her nurturing approach with students,” says Assistant Principal Amanda Marshall. “Her tireless work has made a profound and positive impact on students’ lives and our school culture.”

Principal Jodean Gagne notes that Jennifer is a “constant and reliable presence” who offers help with projects large and small. “We often reflect on how we couldn’t do what we do without her,” Gagne says. Jennifer’s work in the school and larger community, along with her generous spirit and genuine care, have an immense and positive impact on everyone at LaPerle School.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Fabienne Javadlii, Sweet Grass School

Fabienne Javadlii is an indispensable and enduring force within the Sweet Grass School community, consistently demonstrating unparalleled dedication to students, staff and families.

Fabienne's commitment has spanned over eight years, beginning when her children attended the school and continuing long after. Nicki Gardner, a Grade 6 Teacher, highlights Fabienne's constant support: "She fills the kids' buckets by helping them and creating positive relationships."

Fabienne is a long-serving member of both the School Council and Parent Association, a reliable presence at school events and a weekly volunteer in the library. Kerri Moriyama, Acting for Principal, notes, "She brings her love of reading to each interaction with students and staff." She's known for creating a welcoming environment where student helpers develop a sense of leadership.

Principal Vanessa LeCaine emphasizes that Fabienne "fully embraces that our school is a community and goes above and beyond to help make everyone who comes here feel welcome and included." Fabienne's compassionate spirit is evident in her quiet efforts, such as preparing lunches for students in need, and her unflappable nature during unexpected events. The Sweet Grass community thrives in part because of her generous spirit and support.

David Gurnett, Wîhkwêntôwin School

David Gurnett, affectionately known as "Mr. G," is an invaluable community volunteer at Wîhkwêntôwin School whose selfless service, compassion and expertise profoundly impact student growth.

A retired Occupational Therapist, David volunteers at the school two to five mornings a week, dedicating his time to support primary students, particularly those requiring help with fine motor skills, printing and literacy. He is integral to the school team, always arriving with personalized resources and materials.

He consistently applies personalized methods to address the diverse needs of learners effectively. Using his extensive knowledge, he develops unique and engaging aids, including customized name printing handbooks and sensory bins. Teacher Dawn M. Fowlie notes that he "arrives with ideas, materials and organizational structures that aim to make a difference in our work with learners."

Beyond the technical gains, his patient and supportive presence fosters meaningful conversation and confidence, particularly for students learning English as an additional language. David's commitment extends beyond academics; he embodies a spirit of sincere service. Teacher and Literacy Lead Kate Kozakiewicz highlights this characteristic, stating, "Rather than demanding recognition, his answer was a genuine offer to serve, based entirely on the community's desire for his presence." He helps students build not just skills, but confidence. Parent Katie Pinisetti observes the emotional impact firsthand: "He didn't just help my child write better—he helped him believe in his abilities."

Recognition of Teams

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

STAFF

Balwin School Specialized Learning Supports Team

The Specialized Learning Supports Team at Balwin School—Occupational Therapy Consultant Kristie Garber and Speech Language Pathologist Consultant Sandra Stone—create a culture of confidence among educators in the school community. Affectionately called the “dream team,” Kristie and Sandra support students directly, and skillfully empower teachers who support the Division’s most vulnerable students.

Using their extensive and specialized knowledge, Kristie and Sandra are collaborative and make sure the educators they’re working with feel supported and valued. “Their support is something that will stay with me for my entire career,” says Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad.

Kristie and Sandra are masters in tailoring strategies for students with diverse needs, offering continuous support that allows them to see the profound growth their students show year after year. “During their visits, students were always excited to see them,” says Teacher Jasmine Derkach. “They all wanted to work with them, play games and demonstrate their skills.”

The team’s commitment is evident in their ability to uplift and inspire staff. “Through teamwork, they bridge the gap between teachers and students, ensuring that learning environments are inclusive, supportive and effective,” says Teacher Benjamin Alstad. “They consistently empower teachers with practical strategies and encouragement, inspiring staff to feel confident, capable and valued.” Kristie and Sandra truly embody the spirit of collaborative service, profoundly impacting the Balwin community.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Educational Assistants Team, Belmead School

The Educational Assistants (EA) Team at Belmead School is known as being a centrepiece of the school community. The team members are Sun Ahn, Carol Alderson, Teara Armstrong, Idalia Avalos, Pam Fong, Alyssa Frandsen, Tiowa (Marika) Hastings-Norman, Megan Mendez, Ana Navarro, Ruth Rodriguez and Hulya Tan.

Their commitment to collaboration and working within a student's complex learning needs set a powerful example. "I am constantly inspired by the way they balance patience with perseverance, and how they never lose sight of what is best for each child," says Teacher Shauna Gant. They are skilled at adapting learning strategies, modifying materials and ensuring students reach their full academic and social potential.

The team creates an environment where every student and family feels valued, heard and understood. "I am so grateful to work with such a fabulous team of individuals, they have shaped my teaching practice in the best way possible," says Teacher Jillian Tyrell.

Their support is crucial in providing stability and creating a sense of belonging that allows students to flourish. Teacher Sheila Aaldyk appreciates their ability to work together with teachers and students toward a common goal: "They support the teachers on a daily basis, whether it be guiding Interactions students with their learning, caring for their daily physical and sensory needs or supporting the tasks and necessary preparations for our multi-need classrooms."

Rooted in unity and respect, and embodying the true team spirit, this team is the heart and soul of Belmead School.

Crestwood Athletics Team, Crestwood School

The teachers at Crestwood School are committed to building a thriving and inclusive athletic program that extends far beyond the classroom. The Athletics Team includes Amy Bouvier, Megan Duggan, Phil Girgis, Maria Hansen, Matt Lee, Tammy Lee, Lawrence Martinez, Madison Masterson, Danni Pleckash, Brett Richards, Pam Schenk, Munvir Virk, Karen Willis and Ashley Young.

This team's support creates a strong sense of community and school spirit. As parent Tanis Bryson emphasizes, "The time, attention, care and enthusiasm that the teachers contribute is exceptional." These educators dedicate countless hours to coaching, mentoring and supporting student athletes, often spending early mornings, evenings and weekends at practices, games and tournaments.

Teacher Nell Gardner highlights their dual impact: "In the classroom, these educators consistently demonstrate instructional excellence...on the field, in the gym or on the sidelines, they serve as role models instilling discipline, teamwork, perseverance and integrity." Their efforts introduce students to new sports, build strong character, leadership and collaboration, and support mental health.

Parent Jeff Bryson commends their commitment to athletics and to introducing students to various types of sports, from badminton to cross-country running. "This exceptional level of commitment to coaching has Crestwood School competing for athletic city championships with much larger schools," he says.

This team's profound influence extends beyond athletic achievements, opening doors for students and building confidence that lasts a lifetime.

Graduation Commencement Team, various high schools

The Graduation Commencement Team is recognized for their visionary and collaborative efforts to successfully unify graduation ceremonies for thousands of students across four high schools.

The final comprehensive event blended the traditions of four school cultures into a seamless, shared experience, thanks to the members of the team—Alexandra Chang, Karen Chung and Susan Meunier from Jasper Place School; Lindsay Babiuk, Alicia Chasse and Darla Hennig from Dr. Anne Anderson School; Danny Jeffery and Shandelle Reeves from Lillian Osborne School; and Stephanie Chow, Susan Gale, Yanick Jean-Proulx and Jamie Johansen from Harry Ainlay School.

“Co-ordinating a single graduation is no small feat,” says Principal Mike Morison of Lillian Osborne School. “Bringing together four distinct school communities—each with its own culture, traditions and expectations—requires exceptional commitment.”

Their extraordinary teamwork was tested when, with less than a week before the event, the original venue became unavailable. This immense challenge required the entire celebration to pivot almost overnight to host the event at the Expo Centre. The team handled the crisis with an “extraordinary level of teamwork, problem-solving and grace under pressure,” says Dr. Anne Anderson’s former Acting for Principal Daniel Card.

Working around the clock, the committee rebuilt the entire event plan to make sure the ceremony and gala unfolded flawlessly. Their collective efforts created a phenomenal celebration where students, parents and staff were completely unaware of the hours of behind-the-scenes work. “The new venue was transformed into a beautiful and functional space, and the celebration was a resounding success and one of the best in recent memory,” says Jasper Place Principal Kim Backs. Families enjoyed an exceptional experience during this important life milestone thanks to the team’s resilience.

M.E. LaZerte Culinary Arts Team

The M.E. LaZerte Culinary Arts Team, consisting of Joeland Lumba (JoJo), Patricia Pawluk and Vipin Yadav, is the heart of the school’s culinary community. This exceptional team operates The Canoe student café and Milton’s, the school’s main cafeteria. The team is celebrated not only for their expertise but for their positive impact on the school culture.

The team’s dedication to mentorship is clear through their daily actions. Melanie Chan, Culinary Arts Teacher, notes that the team “quietly works behind the scenes to ensure our students and events succeed, and their efforts ripple throughout our entire school community.” Patricia Pawluk, who arrives early to prepare baked goods, consistently models accountability, while Chef Vipin Yadav shares professional expertise with patience and high expectations. JoJo Lumba manages the café with warmth, guiding students to develop responsibility and collaboration.

Beyond the kitchen, the team fosters a supportive environment. Amber Krause, Career and Technology Studies Department Head, says “this team understands that their work goes beyond food service—they help create a supportive, caring learning environment where students feel safe and valued.”

Their approachability makes them trusted figures. Assistant Principal Michelle Sabourin attests to their dedication, saying, “They truly understand that a nourished mind and body are essential for effective learning.”

The members of the M.E. LaZerte Culinary Arts Team are pillars of the school community, nurturing success one meal and one student interaction at a time.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Custodial Team, Mount Pleasant

The Mount Pleasant School Custodial Team, Sid Bartolome and Rodel Farinas, create an atmosphere of warmth and safety for the entire school community. They consistently exceed expectations, maintaining an environment that is clean, warm and welcoming. Teacher Shannon Leblanc observes that they “are both cherished members of our Mount Pleasant family who consistently enrich the lives of those around them.”

Rodel and Sid contribute to a positive school culture through their keen attention to detail and their friendly demeanour. “Whether it’s lending a helping hand, extending a warm greeting to a student or colleague, or simply sharing a kind word, their positive attitudes brighten everyone’s day,” says Teacher Shannon LeBlanc.

Their profound impact is felt daily by staff, students and community partners alike. Farzana Esmail Moledina, YMCA Program Director, says “The custodians are always approachable, supportive and responsive, whether we have maintenance needs or general questions.”

This team embodies the spirit of teamwork and dedication, ensuring Mount Pleasant School is a safe, clean and welcome place for all. Grade 6 student Logan Chan praises them for their “outstanding job keeping the school shiny, clean and safe for students” and for their kindness and ability to connect: “I can without a doubt tell you that our custodians, Mr. Farinas and Mr. Bartolome, have true hearts and will kindly help any student that is in need.”

Autism Support Team, Specialized Learning Supports

The Specialized Learning Supports’ Autism Support Team (AST) is recognized for its transformative impact on capacity building across the Division, ensuring respectful and effective educational experiences for autistic students.

The expansive team includes Tracey Allan, Nancy Brown, Tori Clegg, Roberta Faith-Schmidt, Danielle Ford, Joni Karch, Karen Khurshed, Christie Ladouceur, Sally Lobb, Laura MacKinnon, Angie Monette, Tessa Morris, Ashley Nutter, Alison Owens, Sheldon Schmidt and Wilma Wiebe. Together, they partner with schools to implement neuro-affirming, evidence-based practices.

Rather than simply “doing for” schools, they coach, co-teach and model best practices directly in classrooms. Director Dave Bennell affirms, “The Autism Support Team is uniquely positioned to support communication development, literacy and numeracy instruction...and sensory-informed accommodations.”

The team is praised for strengthening instructional practice and confidence. Specialized Learning Supports Supervisor Billie Jo Scott states that by focusing on coaching and modeling, the team “helps to create sustainable systems of support that empower” classroom teams. Their comprehensive work ensures that educators are equipped to meet complex learning and behavioural needs.

Assistant Principal Kerri Boyle, writing on behalf of the S. Bruce Smith Interactions team, highlights the team’s support during challenging times, noting they “stepped up without hesitation” to provide essential classroom support. She also notes that “most importantly, the members of the Autism Support Team have become safe and trusted adults within our classroom community. Their consistent presence, empathetic approach and genuine care have fostered an environment where students feel understood, respected and secure.”

The AST’s collaborative and dedicated efforts enhance professional practice, ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive in a respected and supportive learning environment.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Trainers, Specialized Learning Supports

The Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI) Training team is committed to creating a culture of safety, well-being and compassion across the Division. The team includes Timothy Baier, Jaime Clark, Sabrena Code, Ian Crichton, Jennifer Fedor, Patricia Friedlaender, Shannon Gilson, Taylor Horn, Danielle Kaplan, Joni Karch, Vicki Kish, Carla Kozak, Gwendolyn McCormick, Kaylie Nyboer, Megan Paran, Kelly Pumphrey, Darcy Rogusky, Theresa Rojas, Tracy Russell, Sheldon Schmidt, Danielle Sinnette, Heather Smith, Vin Stocking, Lindsay Syrota, Sylvia Szeles, Jennifer Taylor, Sarah Tyler, Karen Wikkerink and William Yuen.

Every day, they equip staff with critical skills in de-escalation and crisis management, enabling them to handle challenging situations safely and with confidence. Their skill in teaching and mentoring crisis intervention with staff has made a remarkable difference, directly contributing to the care and safety of students and staff throughout the Division. “Their training has directly led to a measurable reduction in incidents requiring physical intervention, creating a safer environment for both staff and those we serve,” states Dave Bennell, Director, Specialized Learning Supports.

Alexis Renwick, Supervisor, Specialized Learning Supports, recognizes the team’s contribution to the safety and security of students. “Through their cooperative efforts, this group has made remarkable contributions that have directly improved the well-being of our students, educators and their families,” she says.

Through their tireless efforts and exemplary service, this team has built a stronger, more resilient and compassionate organization. “Not only are they flexible and reliable team players, but they also bring a professional demeanour to every situation, ensuring the needs of students, educators and families are met with care and efficiency,” says Neelam Boora, Supervisor, Specialized Learning Supports.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Speech Language Pathologists, Specialized Learning Supports

The Speech Language Pathologists Team is a highly skilled team of more than 60 staff members. They support schools by providing targeted programming for students with complex communication needs, ensuring equal access to education.

The team includes Kristin Baker, Lauren Baugh, Janet Beaudin, Charlene Chamberlain, Carla Ciciarelli, Tori Clegg, Cyndal Coppens, Kayti Cosgrave, Christina Cumbria, Kasturi Datta, Alicia Dean, Jenny Du, Lisa Elias, Rebecca Epp, Roberta Faith-Schmidt, Barbara Gerlach, Beryl Giffen, Kelly Goldford, Lorene Gooding, Krista Greidanus, Meagan Hamilton, Sarah Hansen, Selena Hansen, Lindsay Hegstrom, Semina Hepburn, Jennifer Herbert, Lisa Hocine, Farah Jaffer, Lisa Kalis, Sharon Kapoor Cardinal, Evan Keith, Brianna Lam, Miranda Lane, MaryLee Lester, Sally Lobb, Anita Maxwell, Jennifer McKercher Rott, Kathleen (Kacy) Moran, Charlene Mun, Jamie Nisbet, Ashley Nutter, Christina O'Dell, Beth Orabi, Regan Petrosky, Lindsay Pisarevski, Romy Pistotnik, Joanne (Joey) Porter, Kate Robertson, Niladri Roy Choudhury, Brittany Russell, Angela Seitz, Rebecca Smith, Carolyn Sparrow, Sandra Stone, Lillian Tse, Yasemin Tulpar, Gail Wacko, Marnie Walliser, Sharon Willms, Clayton Wilson, River Wilson and Natalie Yeung.

The team's dedication to improving educational experiences is clear in their innovative use of technology and evidence-based practice. They are committed to continuous professional growth, which directly benefits the students they serve. "Their commitment to learning allows for the best possible practices and shifts in thinking for students with communication needs across the Division," says Stephanie Jansen, Supervisor, Specialized Learning Supports.

The team's work involves extensive collaboration with school staff and families, acting as partners in problem-solving and capacity building. "They built strong relationships by taking the time to listen and understand staff needs and the needs of the students, then offered practical strategies and support that were manageable and never overwhelming," says Isaac MacDonald, Assistant Principal at Dr. Donald Massey.

Minchau Principal Kirstin Johns-Bell describes the team as a pillar of her school. "From week one in Kindergarten, the team is supporting our new students and families to ensure that they begin building communication tools to enable them to achieve personal success in a variety of ways," she says. The team is also known to bring a positive attitude and sense of humour to challenging work and competing demands.

Overall, this team's expertise and dedication elevate the quality of support provided across the Division.

Connections Team, Steinhauer School

The Steinhauer School Connections Team—which is made up of Teachers Rebecca Crouse and Jessica Jhamandas, and Educational Assistants Anne McInnis, Felix Plawski and Lee-Ann Poulton—is nominated for their extraordinary dedication and compassionate professionalism in supporting students with complex and diverse needs.

This team works tirelessly to build a structured, trauma-informed environment where every student feels safe, respected and understood. Rebecca Wood, Assistant Principal, emphasizes the team's daily commitment, noting, “This team rises to that challenge every single day” and “demonstrates a strong commitment to support each student’s academic, emotional and social growth.”

The team is focused on building lasting connections that nurture both academic growth and emotional well-being, consistently demonstrating resilience in their demanding roles. The team’s strength lies in its seamless collaboration, ensuring every student experience is unified. Principal Lori Price-Wagner says, “The Connections Team has cultivated a classroom community grounded in trust, respect and dedication. They give their students the gift of a fresh start each day, intentionally seeking out the positive and celebrating even the smallest victories.”

Through strong collaboration and modeling best practices, they have helped create a supportive culture throughout the school. Krystle Linic, Elementary Music Specialist, observes the student-centred result of this unity: “Their classrooms are a family, where everyone matters, has a voice and everyone belongs.”

The Steinhauer Connections Team embodies the very best of service to students and families in public education.

Student Information, Technology and Information Management

The Student Information Team—consisting of Andy Connelly, Vicki de Haan, Husna Foda, Dale Lochtie, Leena Naji, Leanne Spelman, Clair Sprake and Candace Wang—provides the critical data and expertise essential for the entire Division’s operation. Their work is especially indispensable to the Financial Services department, which relies on their accurate and rapid reporting for budget allocations. The team’s work is also a valuable asset to schools.

The Student Information Team’s dedication shone brightly during the opening of Elder Dr. Francis Whiskeyjack School. Principal Tammy Tchir notes that “the team was instrumental in ensuring a smooth and successful launch for our new high school.” They provided essential information on programming, PowerSchool setup and critical historical student data, helping staff navigate new systems confidently. Najma Kharadi, the school’s Registrar/Student Records Clerk, notes that “the contributions of individual team members went far beyond technical support,” noting that “Leena and Dale consistently provided reassurance, problem-solved and step-by-step guidance. Vicki, Andy and Clair responded promptly and thoroughly whenever challenges arose” and “Husna, Candace and Leanne tirelessly pulled reports and managed data.”

The team is recognized for demonstrating collaboration and accountability. Jeremy Higginbotham, on behalf of the Budget and Funding team, says, “the Student Information team exemplifies the Division Cornerstone Values in all their work. They are amazing team players (Collaboration), the information and data they provide us is always accurate (Accountability and Integrity), and they treat staff who have the pleasure of working with them with dignity and respect (Equity).”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Daytime Custodial Team, Victoria School

Julie Caturas and Paulos Demissie, the daytime custodial duo at Victoria School, are celebrated for their leadership, dedication and commitment to safety. “They are the heart and soul of our school community,” says Assistant Principal Joanne Lowry. “They model what it means to be approachable, dependable and deeply invested in the people around them.”

Every morning, they make sure the school grounds are safe and accessible, diligently clearing snow and sweeping for potential hazards. Principal Stacy Fysh praises their reliable response during emergencies. “Their calm demeanour and resourcefulness under pressure have saved our school from significant disruption and kept our community safe,” Stacy says.

Beyond maintaining a safe physical environment, Julie and Paulos are instrumental in fostering a positive culture. Julie regularly facilitates practical and respected professional development sessions for custodians across the Division, while Paulos supports the school’s smooth operation while the training is in session. Office Administrator Elaine Foote notes, “Their collaborative spirit uplifts not just Victoria School, but the entire custodial network within our Division.”

Their commitment to staff and students extends to social events, where they organize the annual summer staff barbecue and surprise colleagues with their signature karaoke performances. Julie and Paulos “bring heart, humour and humanity to our school,” says Joanne. They are true role models of excellence and service.

W.P. Wagner Custodial Team

The W.P. Wagner Custodial Team is recognized for its exceptional dedication and adaptable service, which profoundly elevates the entire school environment.

This outstanding team includes Abdulwahid Ali, Honorato (Ronnie) Aragon, Crizaldo Aranzaso, Nykco Celiz, Elex Crelencia, Edilberto Lagmay, Sheila MacIvor, Luningning Mendoza, Rem Pun, Shushila Singh and Mary Twagira.

This large team is integral to the smooth functioning of complex areas, from ensuring theatre space is ready for performances, to helping reduce and reuse materials in STEM Design Labs. No matter the task, they consistently rise to logistical challenges. Assistant Principals George Heidt, Atif Jirjee and Craig Michaud observe that, even when faced with unforeseen challenges, “they are quick to pivot and find solutions, always with professionalism and positivity.”

Their commitment extends beyond physical maintenance to fostering a positive school culture. Operations Administrator Janis Stauffer says, “Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of their work is their ‘never say no’ attitude,” whether they are setting up for diplomas or managing the Division’s longest hallway. Their daily interactions also significantly boost staff morale.

The W.P. Wagner Faculty Council highlights this personal connection: “The custodians take a strong interest in having quick chats each day. Laughter is always present as we share anecdotes.” This dedicated team embodies excellence through teamwork, ensuring a meticulously maintained and welcoming atmosphere where the entire community can thrive.

STAFF/COMMUNITY/PARENT

Harry Ainlay Cheer Coaches

The members of this team are Teacher Stephanie Brown (Queen Elizabeth), Administrative Assistant Meghan Staub (Harry Ainlay), and community members Carly Knowles, Jessi Pluim and Ryley Yager.

The coaching staff of the Harry Ainlay Titans Cheer Team is recognized for their tireless devotion to the program and the community. This exceptional team of dedicated leaders has built a legacy recognized locally, nationally and internationally, culminating recently in the 2025 All-Girl and All-Gender National Championship titles. Beyond their exceptional record of podium finishes, the coaches are true champions for the sport, lobbying for its recognition and working relentlessly to make high school cheerleading more inclusive for all students.

“It would be easy to say that the program is a success by just looking at the podium results; nobody has won like they have,” says Principal George Hoyt. “To me, the program is a success because it has grown and keeps growing. The coaches keep adding teams to give more students the opportunities to learn and grow within the values of the program.”

The coaches are admired for their mentorship, creating a safe and supportive environment where athletes learn critical life lessons in accountability, trust and resilience. “I will always look back fondly on my years as a Titan and will carry with me many of the lessons they have instilled in me that extend well beyond the mat,” says alumna Megan Evans.

“They are first class in everything they do, and their impact on our school community is immensely positive,” says Athletic Director Tyler Greenslade. “They are low maintenance and high output—all in the service of kids.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Culinary Arts Cookie-Off Committee, Highlands School

The members of this team are Teachers Elizabeth Alleyne, Fiona Burns, Amy Huddleston and Stephanie Johnson, Educational Assistant Katrina Seidler, and parent volunteers Nickela Anderson, Evelyn Ching, Penny Chu, Kristine Edgington, Jana Frentz, Julianne Gilchrist, Deborah Herwynin, Rachael Tyler, Stephanie Tyler and Jessica Wright.

The Highlands School Culinary Arts Cookie-Off Planning Committee “has demonstrated unwavering dedication, creativity and tireless effort in organizing what has become one of our community’s most cherished annual traditions,” says Assistant Principal Kate Holmlund.

This extraordinary group of staff and parent volunteers successfully reimagined the annual Cookie-Off as a major Kindergarten to Grade 9 community event, fostering unity across the school and strong bonds with local businesses. The multi-faceted event features a professional cookie-baking competition, a live art auction and family friendly activities, generating an unforgettable day of joy and camaraderie.

“More than just a fundraising initiative, the Cookie-Off is a cherished community gathering that strengthens the bond between students, families and local businesses,” says Principal Mary Ann Dobson.

Their meticulous, months-long planning and behind-the-scenes effort led to a record-breaking \$31,000 raised last year. These crucial funds directly support student enrichment programs—including musical theatre, visual arts, dance and athletics—effectively removing financial barriers and enhancing the educational experience for every student.

“I can confidently say that the Cookie-Off Committee’s work is an inspiring example of what can be accomplished when a group of people unite with a shared vision and a commitment to excellence,” says Administrative Assistant Roberta Lukawesky.

Senior Girls Basketball Coaching Team, Strathcona School

The members of this team are Head Coach Kyle Palmer (Strathcona), Assistant Coaches Michelle Maglisceau (Mill Creek), Olivia Palmer (community coach and former alumna) and Samantha Ringrose (community coach and former alumna).

The Strathcona Lords Senior Women’s Basketball program won a provincial championship for the first time in school history—a historic victory built on a foundation of discipline and relentless effort. “This did not come easy and required countless hours of volunteering from this group of coaches,” says Athletic Director and Physical Education Department Head Joshua Spronk. “Meetings, practices, team building, game film, shootarounds, early mornings and scouting were just a few of the things that these coaches did 11 months out of the year.”

“The planning, design, development and implementation of a successful program requires vision, strategy and grit. This coaching staff has embodied all of those qualities,” adds Assistant Principal Richard McAdie. “Their work has left a lasting impact on not only the athletes they’ve coached but also on the wider Strathcona community.”

On top of everything else, Michelle, a former Team Canada player, changed an international flight at her own expense to be with the team for provincials, and Kyle offered vital emotional support and guidance to a player dealing with an injury. “With the win at provincials, Michelle may have shed more tears (of joy) than anyone!” says parent Jane Eaket. She adds that “(Kyle) has displayed a commitment to the team, as well as the individual players like I have never seen in 15 years of my children participating in youth sport.”

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Abbott School Council and Fundraising Society

The members of this team are Cassie Gibbons, Chantelle Heppell, Danielle Heppell, Lindsay Kosterewa and Erin Wandler.

The Abbott School Council and Fundraising Society are an exceptional team whose collaborative vision brings dignity and essential support directly into the school community. Recognizing the critical need among some families to access basic necessities, this dedicated group of parents spearheaded the creation of the Abbott Care Closet. The initiative provides free, discreet access to toiletries, clothing and supplies.

The Care Closet's impact is immediate and profound. Principal Bobbi Whitrow notes that the project "impacts the dignity and self-esteem of our students, removing potential barriers that can affect their presence and engagement." The initiative directly benefits teaching staff, offering a powerful tool to uplift students. Teacher Mary-Ann Stefanich notes the Council's efforts "go so much deeper than providing supplies. They are providing dignity, and that means everything to our students and their families."

The Council's dedication extends beyond initial setup; they continually work to maintain the Care Closet. Assistant Principal Nicole Gusikoski attests that the Care Closet "helps to reinforce Abbott School as a truly safe, welcoming, and caring place."

"When students have access to personal care items, their basic needs are met, fostering a sense of well-being and confidence. This, in turn, allows them to attend school more regularly, focus better in class and participate fully in academic and extracurricular activities without the added burden of self-consciousness or discomfort. By supporting the holistic needs of our students, the Abbott School Council has indirectly, yet powerfully, contributed to a more inclusive, supportive and effective educational environment for all," says Bobbi.

Highlands School Council and Parent Society

The Highlands School Council and Parent Society are a driving force behind the warm and inclusive culture of Highlands School. The team includes Nickela Anderson, Kristine Edgington, Melanie Harmsma, Rachael Tyler, Stephanie Tyler and Laura Svajlenko.

This dedicated team embodies the best of community partnership by fundraising for everything, from athletics equipment and technology upgrades to improved green spaces. Assistant Principal Derrique DeGagné says the team members "make the impossible possible at Highlands." He recognizes the team's ability to dream big, plan well in advance and follow through. Their major volunteer and fundraising efforts, including the annual Meet the Teacher barbecue and the Culinary Arts Cookie-Off, provide vital resources and opportunities for students. Ambitious projects include designing and funding the school's playground. The team is currently planning improvements to the school's outdoor space.

Curriculum Co-ordinator Sara Pickering appreciates the team's dedication to equity and inclusion, "their work amplifies our equity goals by ensuring all students feel seen, valued and supported." Rooted in the idea of representation, the team invested in expanding the library's collection to reflect the diverse lived experiences of students and families.

Principal Mary Ann Dobson praises the group's collaborative spirit. "The work of our School Council and Parent Society is a perfect example of excellence achieved through teamwork," she says. Through their collective vision, dedication and partnership, they enrich the learning experience at Highlands School for every student.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Music Parents Association of LaZerte, M.E. LaZerte

The members of this team are Dennis Cho, Florance P. Cho, Shanda Dugglby-Wenzel, Amanda Gizowski and Estere Westmaas.

The Music Parents Association of LaZerte (MPAL) stands out as an invaluable, long-standing partner that enhances opportunities for every student at M.E. LaZerte School. Their dedication goes beyond financial support, fostering an environment where music and the arts can flourish and remain accessible.

MPAL's work often closes the gap between available resources and student needs. They help provide continuous funding for new instruments and repairs. They also support the audio program, which brings "even more students into arts programs they might not otherwise discover their passion for," according to Music Teacher Matt Sullivan. Their leadership recently transformed a shared space with a new sound and lighting system. As Assistant Principal Jason D. Smith notes, this project "has transformed our shared space into a professional-grade venue where students can showcase their talents."

MPAL also works to create incredible student experiences. Last year, students attended a school trip to Banff, to develop their musical skills and build relationships. MPAL heavily subsidized the trip, allowing students the chance to attend. Student Liam Bruyere directly benefited, stating that with their support, he was "able to learn how to do improvisation for jazz band, work with a musician in a woodwinds clinic and overall have lots of fun. "MPAL's contributions create a strong sense of pride and belonging, leaving a legacy that will "continue to enrich the lives of our students for years to come," says Jason.

Malmo School Council and Parent Association

The members of this team are Ruzena Elchmi, Hind Elmcherqui, Marwa Fikry, Nadia Kashif and Dia Syed.

This small but mighty team consistently rises to the occasion. "Their roles are multifaceted and many of them serve on both the council and the association volunteer boards. Their success is a direct result of respectful and collaborative teamwork," says Assistant Principal Lisa Hauer.

"Their work not only addresses immediate needs but also lays the foundation for long-term growth and success, inspiring both students and staff to strive for excellence and community engagement," says Principal Fatima Dayoub.

Their focus on caring for students shows in everything they do. To help make sure every student has access to nutritious food, the team successfully spearheaded a Healthy Snack Program by securing community sponsors and managed a monthly hot lunch initiative.

They have sponsored school-wide artist-in-residences, sports and literacy programs, organized events like a pancake breakfast and provided hot chocolate during Winter Fun Day. They foster an environment of cultural belonging by making intentional, inclusive gestures, such as distributing more than 300 Arabic goodie bags and Eid treats. Their significant fundraising efforts have enriched the curriculum by funding new Arabic library books, sponsoring a cultural identity writing workshop and fully catering the annual Iftar Night.

The team is also committed to the long-term legacy of Malmo School, with a dedicated member kickstarting the grant application process for a new, safe community playground. "Whether through volunteering, planning or co-ordinating, their efforts have brought the school community together and enhanced the overall school environment," says Teacher Somdatta Maiti.

Minchau School Council and Parent Association (MPAC)

The members of this team are Barb Bartman, Tara Brebner, Chante Harcott, Christine Hunter, Jennifer Pearson and Arissa Thompson.

This is a dedicated group of parents committed to enriching the school community with their tremendous effort and unwavering support. They help provide students with timely learning opportunities by securing funding for experiences like field trips, artist in residences and classroom resources. Principal Kirstin Johns-Bell notes that the group “works tirelessly to fundraise for student programs.” The Council’s dedication extends beyond academics to student well-being, prioritizing food security by providing weekly fresh fruit, breakfast and lunch options.

Their work fosters a strong sense of community and connection. Teacher Jennine Jensen says their support for events like the Welcome Back barbecue and Read-a-Thon “brings us all together and builds a strong sense of community and school pride!” They have also shown their collaborative spirit and commitment to long-term improvement by spearheading a massive project to build a new, inclusive playground on school grounds.

Teacher Samantha Tomte says the Council’s efforts “foster a strong sense of belonging and community within our school, positively impacting everyone they interact with.” The Minchau School Council and Parent Association truly make an incredible difference every day.

Patricia Heights School Council and Fundraising Association

The Patricia Heights School Council (PHSC) and Fundraising Association (PHFA) are honoured for their exceptional dedication and perseverance in launching a permanent, fully accessible outdoor classroom. The team—Erin Chalmers, Anders Halberg, Ashley Jackson, Janet Koshuta, Justin Litun, Julie Russell, Megan VanDewark and Sherry Waroway—devoted thousands of volunteer hours and secured over \$100,000 to fund the legacy project, which will enrich students’ connection to nature and support hands-on learning.

The outdoor classroom’s innovative design features composite log benches, natural stumps, walkways and a nine-metre concrete square inscribed with a circle for medicine wheel learnings. The space supports inclusivity, physical well-being and Indigenous ways of knowing. “There is a concrete walkway from an exit in our school to the outdoor learning space so students using wheelchairs have access,” says Teacher Veronica Fraser.

The PHFA’s dedication was evident in their comprehensive planning and fundraising. They navigated complex infrastructure approvals, integrated traditional medicine plants into the design, and co-ordinated numerous community-building events. Teacher Shannon Brown notes that the finished project “will serve as a hub for environmental learning, cultural enrichment and community engagement.”

Assistant Principal Argiro Kourouniotis says the team’s collective determination has “transformed what once seemed an ambitious dream into an imminent reality.” Their commitment to equity and environmental stewardship will benefit students for generations to come.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Strathcona Theatre Company Parent Volunteers, Strathcona School

The members of this team are Anthony Bayduza, Meagan Clifford, Jolene Milson, Norman Milson, Rachelle Morris, Kym-Marie Newall, Tomas Nilsson, Dave Phillips, Burke Sperling and Carrie Watt.

The dedicated parent volunteers of the Strathcona Theatre Company are deserving of recognition for their truly outstanding commitment to enhancing the school community and student experience. This resolute group selflessly supports Strathcona School's young artists, playing an essential role in the success of major productions.

Their contributions extend far beyond basic help, encompassing everything from logistics to detailed craftwork. As Linette J. Smith, Department Head of Fine and Performing Arts, shares, this group's efforts have been instrumental "from preparing and delivering meals...to constructing intricate set pieces that brought our stories to life on stage." This support ensures students and staff are energized for long rehearsal and show days.

The parents regularly dedicate their valuable time—including five consecutive weekends—to elevate the entire production. Mark Vetsch, Technical Theatre Teacher, notes that their skills are essential to the success of the project, "to reach a level of excellence that otherwise would not have been possible." Moreover, they use their time to mentor students, sharing their knowledge and modelling professional commitment.

Students directly feel the impact of their care. Student Lorenz Nilsson highlights the deep commitment shown behind the scenes. During long days for rehearsals, these parents generously prepared home-cooked meals for close to 100 people. Lorenz emphasizes how their support impacted the community: "To be served a nourishing, nutritious meal...was an act of kindness that will not soon be forgotten." Through their selfless work, this team elevates the students' artistic work, fostering an environment where creativity and excellence flourish.

Strathcona Therapy Dogs, Bugsy and Freyja

Bugsy (the "petable puppy") and Freyja (the "beautiful fur-girl") are honoured for their extraordinary service as therapy dogs, providing unconditional emotional support to the Strathcona High School community. Accompanied by their dedicated handlers, Lisa Estabrook and Kristen Vogt, this canine team offers a vital form of care within Student Services, directly supporting the well-being of hundreds of students and staff. Their consistent presence offers a much-needed emotional anchor.

Their impact is both profound and personal. Department Head of Student Services Tracy Gerun observes how the dogs intuitively connect with those who need them most, noting: "There were many days when I was aware of the challenges a student was facing, and watched their day turn around because of their interactions with these beautiful dogs."

Bugsy and Freyja offer a safe way for students to decompress and reconnect. For some students, their weekly visit becomes the reason they can "get through the day," according to Assistant Principal Natasha Shewchuk. The dogs' visits are restorative, providing a moment of happiness that helps students "become kids again." This is echoed by former student Emery Hessel, who reflects that interacting with the dogs and their handlers "made my week each time." Bugsy and Freyja are true, furry partners in creating a caring and empathetic school culture.

Recognition of Merit

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

STAFF

Shezeleen Kanji, Argyll Centre

Shezeleen Kanji is an outstanding and inspiring Teacher at Argyll Centre, recognized for her ability to foster a safe classroom community and her profound dedication to inclusive education. According to Assistant Principal Barbara Cook, Shezeleen has a “unique ability to connect with her students while fostering a classroom community that is meaningful, valued and safe for all.”

As a humanities, Indigenous studies and social studies teacher, she is a true innovator who continually adapts her teaching to suit diverse student needs and achieves impressive results on standardized tests. She also led a revamp of an Indigenous studies course, consulting with numerous community partners to ensure appropriate delivery and demonstrate her dedication to being a good Treaty partner and furthering Truth and Reconciliation.

“Despite teaching exclusively in an online environment, Shezeleen has been able to build meaningful relationships with her students,” says David Wasmuth, Department Head of Humanities.

Shezeleen’s excellence extends to her colleagues. Barbara says, “She is a highly collaborative member of the teaching staff, consistently sharing resources, effective strategies and fresh ideas.”

Beyond the curriculum, Shezeleen actively supports students by running the Argyll Muslim Student Association and spearheading field trips, ensuring her impact is felt inside and outside the classroom. Assistant Principal Thomas Reikie says, “Her passion is contagious.”

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Ravneet Maan, Balwin School

Ravneet Maan is known for her exceptional leadership and dedication at Balwin School, as a Teacher and now Curriculum Co-ordinator.

Ravneet's impact is profound in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Her guidance has not only elevated teaching practices but has led to measurable improvements in student achievement, creating consistency. "Through tireless support of both students and staff, Ravneet has driven meaningful growth in foundational learning from Kindergarten through Grade 9," says Teacher Kim Friesen.

As a dedicated and inspiring educator, Ravneet consistently implements innovative pedagogical strategies, making complex concepts accessible and engaging. Her commitment to improvement is evident in her significant work on the Equity Achievement Project (EAP).

Ravneet is an exemplary role model and mentor who challenges her colleagues while always providing a safe and supportive environment. Her willingness to pivot and adapt to whatever the community needs—from leading projects to teaching different grades—makes her an invaluable asset, whose dedication directly translates into higher academic achievement and a boost in student confidence.

"I have enjoyed working with Ravneet as she consistently pushes her boundaries as a teacher, and is always open to trying new methods and challenges," says Teacher Julie Moberg. Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad adds, "She connects with everyone in the building in an authentic way, making them feel like they matter."

Denice Gubersky, Dovercourt School

Denice Gubersky is celebrated as the heart of Dovercourt School, where her exceptional dedication as a long-time Grade 6 Teacher profoundly shapes students' lives.

She consistently provides a safe, nurturing environment where students are "seen and valued," according to Kim Kozmak, Administrative Assistant. Denice is recognized for her natural teaching talent and the "unending efforts" that help instill core values in every child.

Denice has a unique gift for preparing students for the critical transition into junior high. Teacher Jared Burton emphasizes that she "doesn't just teach them curriculum, as she also gives them confidence, resilience and the sense of readiness they need to move forward successfully."

Her influence extends beyond academics. She inspires a sense of self-respect, work ethic and critical learning skills. Parent Dianne King notes that her family "experienced first-hand the unending efforts and natural teaching talents of Denice Gubersky and she was a pillar of values for all three children." Her positive energy and commitment make her a mentor and role model whose impact lasts long after students leave her classroom.

The enduring bonds Denice forms are a testament to her influence, as past students regularly return seeking her wisdom and affection. Her dedication is constant; she is "consistently the first to arrive and last to leave, using extra hours for research and innovative lesson planning," says Kim Kozmak. Denice is a role model whose kindness, infectious laughter and constant support uplift the entire Dovercourt community.

Powell Jones, Harry Ainlay School

Powell Jones, Department Head of Technology, is a teacher and innovator whose work seamlessly integrates technology, data and a commitment to educational equity that elevates the quality of education at Harry Ainlay School. Powell goes beyond providing tech support—he proactively creates high-impact learning tools and solutions for staff and students. “He possesses a rare combination of technical expertise and pedagogical foresight,” says Assistant Principal Dean Zuberbuhler. “Powell has been an invaluable source of support for the entire school community.”

Powell is an expert in data analysis, compiling intricate reports on curricular outcomes that staff can use to continually refine their instructional strategies. “This powerful quantitative mode of informing teaching compels one to challenge his or her own cherished practices if the data tells another story,” says Teacher Rob Martens.

Powell is committed to educational equity and makes sure every student has access to the technology and digital learning tools they need. Powell works hard “to ensure that technology is an asset, not a barrier, to learning,” says Teacher Stephanie Chow. “His work is crucial in our ongoing efforts to personalize learning and improve the educational experience for all of our students.”

Powell’s visionary approach extends beyond the classroom; when the school had to undergo a major renovation, Powell met with architects and electricians to make sure that technology was seamlessly installed and integrated in the new spaces. “Powell has always been willing to do the extra things that make a school memorable to students,” says Rob. Powell’s tireless work ethic and commitment to educational excellence make him an indispensable asset to the school community.

Glenda Viney, L.Y. Cairns School

Glenda Viney is a Teacher at L.Y. Cairns School whose 35-year commitment to students has most recently focused on supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit education. Since arriving at L.Y. Cairns, she has driven lasting cultural change by fostering a deeply inclusive and culturally rich environment for students, families and staff. Her leadership is rooted in authenticity, vulnerability and a commitment to justice.

Glenda’s impact is visible through sustainable initiatives she has founded, including the Annual Round Dance, Indigenous Games Day and her leadership of the Indigenous Committee. Teacher Victoria Stusiaq highlights this work, noting that Glenda “created a safe space for cultural practice that modeled a profound respect for Indigenous traditions.” Glenda’s efforts go beyond the curriculum, transforming the school’s identity and helping all members understand their role as Treaty people.

Principal Errol Johnson notes that Glenda has done all of this “while teaching full-time to some of the most vulnerable students in our Division.” She excels at building community and highlighting student strengths. Teacher Mark Edey summarizes her lasting influence: “Because of her, our school has become a more inclusive, respectful and welcoming place for First Nations students, families and staff. Her impact cannot be overstated.”

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Marlene Svendgaard, M.E. LaZerte School

Marlene Svendgaard is an exemplary educator and leader who has fundamentally transformed the learning experience for high school students facing challenges in mathematics.

As the Mathematics Department Head at M.E. LaZerte School, she identified a critical need for students repeating Math 10C and proactively created a specialized program to support their success. This initiative reflects Marlene's deep understanding of curriculum and her unwavering belief in student capacity.

Her innovative approach involves redesigning and differentiating the course to offer multiple pathways for success, and a tailored learning environment that addresses both academic needs and emotional concerns. Mathematics Teacher Shannon Sinclair says, "Her approach ensures that all learners—regardless of their starting point—have the tools, strategies and support needed to thrive in mathematics." This program is a powerful solution that has led to remarkable improvements in student confidence and academic outcomes.

Marlene's leadership style is deeply collaborative and student-centred. She fosters an environment where high expectations are matched by encouragement. Rabia El Didi, Mathematics Teacher, highlights this compassion, noting that Marlene's dedication makes students "feel welcomed and cared for in a course that they often felt forgotten or isolated."

This innovation is a testament to her commitment. Jason D. Smith, Assistant Principal, commends her for her ability "to identify a need and proactively create a solution that has a profound impact." Marlene Svendgaard is a mentor, leader and a true advocate for every student.

Emily Ng-Lai, Malcolm Tweddle School

Emily Ng-Lai is a beacon of compassion, innovation and dedication at Malcolm Tweddle School, where she serves as both the Music Teacher and a Grade 5 Cogito Teacher. Colleagues frequently celebrate her for her consistent efforts to enrich the school community and ensure every student has the chance to thrive.

Emily is noted for her ability to create engaging, student-centred learning experiences. Asra Khan and Rose Ozcan, Grade 6 Teachers, state that her "endless compassion allows her students to thrive both academically and personally." Her commitment to the arts is infectious, with her choir program becoming a safe space where students, including those developing their academic skills, build confidence.

Her impact extends far beyond the classroom through countless hours dedicated to extracurriculars. Michelle Gray, a Grade 4 Cogito Teacher, praises Emily's ability to help students "discover their strengths, build confidence and shine on stage."

Additionally, Emily is an invaluable colleague, demonstrating exceptional teamwork and mentorship for new teachers. Shalini Manesh, a Grade 5/6 Teacher, summarizes this dedication, noting that Emily "never hesitates to step in and support staff and students wherever she is needed, always doing so with a smile on her face."

She is a professional and passionate educator making a positive daily impact on students' lives.

Wanas Radwan, Strategic Division Supports

Policy Research Consultant Wanas Radwan exemplifies excellence and shows an unwavering commitment to anti-racism and equity initiatives across the Division. She approaches the complex work of reviewing and revising Board policies with careful thought and tremendous responsibility. “Wanas is a remarkable collaborator and an inspiring team member,” says Managing Director of Strategic Division Supports, Nancy Petersen. “She doesn’t just complete her tasks; she actively contributes to the collective success, always seeking to understand how her work can best support the team’s goals.”

Wanas consistently brings her extensive teaching experience and academic background in educational policy to her role, making sure governance work is “aligned with legislation, reflective of community needs and rooted in what is best for students,” according to Research Consultant Corbett Artym and Data Analyst Erin Faught. Wanas also supports the Student Senate, guiding student leaders and helping them “understand and influence the systems that shape their educational experiences,” say Corbett and Erin.

Supervisors praise Wanas’ remarkable resilience and perseverance in navigating challenges. It has been a “cornerstone of our team’s stability,” says Christine Simmons, Manager of Strategic Division Supports.

Her integrity, commitment to others and clear perspective make her a truly exceptional leader, says Director of Board and Superintendent Relations, Kelsey Duebel. “She has a talent for bringing her teaching experience, academic background, personal experiences and knowledge to her role, while also bringing a level of technical skill and expertise that is unmatched.”

Monica Dear, Virginia Park and York schools

Music Specialist Monica Dear is recognized for her ability to build community and inspire students and educators through her relentless pursuit of music education excellence. Monica consistently uses innovative instruction, providing musical education with tremendous joy. “I have seen firsthand how her love of music creates connection and community both within our local schools and our local neighbourhoods,” says Janis Irwin, MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Monica’s passion extends beyond the classroom. She is the founder and leader of the Highlands Ukulele Gang, performing at local events like the annual Highlandia festival. “Monica takes the time to teach our songs to her students during school time, and then lends out ukuleles so that the students can come and perform for an audience in the middle of their weekend,” says Charlotte Rollans, a member of Monica’s Highlands Ukulele Gang and fellow Teacher. “I love having Monica’s students join us each year because I love to see young people developing ukulele skills, and I love their joy of music.”

A dedicated mentor, Monica actively seeks out opportunities to grow her own skills while also helping her colleagues build capacity. Music Specialist Erin Wright credits Monica’s guidance for reinvigorating her own teaching practice. “Her support has been invaluable to me as a Teacher and as a friend,” Erin says. Monica’s dedication to music is consistently marked by creativity, energy and an exceptional commitment to excellence.

Thank You.

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