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2020

**Michael A. Strembitsky**

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

*Honouring Student Excellence*

# Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence

## *Honouring Student Excellence*

On June 23, 2020, the Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees had the honour of recognizing 20 outstanding nominees for the Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence.

A gold (\$2,000), silver (\$1,500) and bronze (\$1,000) medal and cash award was awarded to three Grade 12 students who are completing their schooling and who best exemplify:

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

## Michael A. Strembitsky Award Nominees

Tristin Holly  
*Academy at King Edward*

Breanna Rempel  
*Edmonton Christian*

Mackenzie Buchanan  
*M.E. LaZerte*

Sumaya Soufi  
*Ross Sheppard*

Larissa de la Salle  
*amiskwaciy Academy*

Kritika Taparua  
*Harry Ainlay*

Rajan Maghera  
*McNally*

Chiara Concini  
*Strathcona*

Nyah Shem  
*Argyll Centre*

Preetham Baddam  
*J. Percy Page*

Megan Gillespie  
*Millwoods Christian*

Josie Coutain-Segall  
*Victoria*

YiMeng Shen  
*Centre High Campus*

Yosamin Esanullah  
*Jasper Place*

Cindy Liu  
*Old Scona*

Georgia Hidson  
*Vimy Ridge Academy*

Katelyn Lega  
*Eastglen*

Alicia Lin  
*Lillian Osborne*

Hussain Alhussainy  
*Queen Elizabeth*

Cole White  
*W.P. Wagner*

# GOLD Medal



Yosamin Esanullah  
*Jasper Place*

Yosamin is an inspirational leader with a genuine and infectious love of learning, and an overwhelming sense of curiosity and purpose. She faces challenges and adversity head on, and credits her many achievements to her perseverance, commitment and organization. Principal David Morris says, “Yosamin possesses an intellect and deep social conscience that is beyond her years, and while her academics on their own were impressive, her community leadership is remarkable.”

At school, Yosamin was vice president of the Key Club and helped 250 leadership students plan, advertise and execute fundraisers to support global education charities and initiatives like Pencils of Promise, as well as organizing and promoting various volunteer opportunities in the community. This past year, she co-ordinated the annual Helping Hampers program which involved 2,600 students. She was involved with the Social Justice Club and most recently participated in creating social justice art pieces on the sidewalks near her home. Yosamin was also co-president of the Mathletes Club. She trained students at all skill levels to participate in competitions. The success of the competitors can be attributed to her ability to develop creative learning strategies for her peers. Over three years, she was also part of the High School Assessment Networks, and provided insight to administrators into developing more equitable methods of testing and teaching. Yosamin has also taken on numerous volunteer activities with CapitalCare Lynnwood, Edmonton Food Bank and Ronald McDonald House.

Throughout Grades 11 and 12, Yosamin worked as a page at the Alberta Legislature. This experience broadened her perspective and taught her about the relevance of the democratic process. Every Sunday for the past two years, Yosamin has been proud to represent women, and also act as a role model for other women, by participating in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) program. She also worked as a gallery interpreter at the Telus World of Science, where she promoted science and taught hands-on science activities like robot programming.

Last summer, she was selected to participate in the University of Alberta’s Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science & Technology (WISEST) summer research program. She was also the first recipient of the Spirit of Dr. Armour Award, given out through the WISEST program. Yosamin also received a Schulich Leader Scholarship, which is awarded to the most promising STEM students. She was awarded \$100,000 towards pursuing a mechanical engineering degree at the University of British Columbia. She hopes to one day study aerospace engineering and fulfil her dream of becoming an astronaut.

# SILVER Medal



Cindy Liu  
*Old Scona*

Principal Will Deys says, “From academics and athletics, to leadership and volunteerism, Cindy strives to achieve at the highest level in each.” Cindy is a friendly, open and caring person who endeavours to make those around her better too. She was a full International Baccalaureate student and consistently maintained high academic standing while also maintaining high levels of involvement in other areas, both in and out of school.

Cindy says, “Regardless of where I am, I love to ask questions, start candid conversations and create meaningful initiatives.” In Grade 12, she was the chair of the Division’s Student Senate and was a Student Trustee last year. She helped create a website for students to easily access mental health supports, share stories of resilience and post interviews with success coaches and professionals. She co-chaired the division-wide Equal-Tea event last year, which connected female leaders across Edmonton. She was part of Old Scona’s Speech and Debate Society and taught a formal class of 40 Grade 10 students three times a week on topics ranging from debate strategy to public speaking techniques. She was both a mentor and top competitor. She also played on the senior women’s volleyball team throughout high school.

She is the president of two Junior Achievement companies: Bargain, an app she developed to compare commercial store prices, and ProSeed, an environmentally conscious wildflower seed ball company. Cindy also participated in the University of Alberta’s Heritage Youth Researcher Summer Program summer internship, where she helped investigate the molecular mechanism of how the inhibitor Merlin acts as a tumour suppressor protein.

Cindy is a founding member of a global youth-run STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) magazine that aims to improve scientific literacy among youth. The magazine has contributors from 42 countries. She is a member of the Junior Academy of the New York Academy of Sciences, and she won a wildfire prevention challenge where she designed an innovative solution to mitigate ember attacks. She also developed an idling tracking app. Cindy has been accepted to attend Harvard University.

# BRONZE Medal



Chiara Concini  
*Strathcona*

Chiara is a passionate learner who achieved Honours with Distinction throughout high school. She filled her time with a plethora of Advanced Placement (AP) courses and options such as instrumental music, band and French. She worked tirelessly to fill her curiosity, refine her skills and deepen her understanding in diverse fields of knowledge. Principal Hans Van Ginhoven says, “Just as impressive as her achievements is her commitment to learning, her involvement in the school community, and her compelling desire to help others with her skills and knowledge.”

Chiara says, “I have worked to spark change in my community.” She was a member of the student’s union executive and a key leader in the Model United Nations (UN) Club, where she helped organize the club and teach new members the process of debate. She helped prepare the club for two conferences and participated in the national high school Model UN in New York. She was also a senator on Edmonton Public Schools’ Student Senate where she led the committee that organized a symposium to help students explore different options after graduating from high school.

In August of 2017, Chiara started her role as a page at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and moved into the role of a training and development page from 2018 to present. She is also fluent in French and volunteered to give presentations in French to elementary students about the democratic process in Alberta.

Last summer, she participated in the Students on Ice Arctic Expedition. During this expedition, Chiara saw first hand the struggles of northern communities, including melting sea ice, elevated food prices and high suicide rates. This led her to create the shebikes.ca blog, where she writes about her journey, how it impacted her life and what everyone can do to reduce their carbon footprint. In fact, over the past year since the expedition, Chiara committed herself to biking to and from school every day, even on the coldest days; it wasn’t without challenges but she pushed through and stayed committed.

Further showing how well-rounded Chiara is, she has also played flute for 14 years and the tuba for six years. Chiara has been accepted to the Faculté Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta to work towards her baccalauréat ès arts. One day, Chiara would like to be a lawyer who advocates for Inuit communities.