

A Message from George



I am thrilled to share some highlights from February, a month filled with meaningful events and initiatives.

**Black History Month: Celebrating Diversity and Resilience** Throughout February, we commemorated Black History Month, honoring the remarkable contributions of Black individuals to our society. Our centres and schools organized various activities, including guest speakers, art exhibitions, and classroom discussions. Let us continue to promote inclusivity and honour the richness of our diverse community.

**Pink Shirt Day: Taking a Stand Against Bullying** on February 28th, a number of our schools and centres celebrated Pink Shirt Day, a powerful day devoted to anti-bullying awareness. Students and staff wore pink shirts to symbolize their commitment to kindness, empathy, and respect.

In this issue of the Gazette, you will read about many other initiatives that occurred during the month of February.

*The Western Québec School Board is committed to fostering lifelong learners who actively contribute to society and are well prepared for the future.* This is the mission statement of our school board, and I am proud to say that the Gazette shows living evidence of the commitment our staff have to fulfilling this mission.

I send wishes to all our students, staff, and parents for a restful March Break...it sounds like the weather is going to be uncharacteristically pleasant for this time of year (for those of us who are not going away!).

Take good care, g



2024 You Shine Gala! Awards for Outstanding WQSB Employees *Coming Soon!* PG. 2.



Student Ava Mussnug showcases her art at Hadley Jr. PWHS Photo by, Laura D'Alessandro

Laura D'Alessandro

Black History Month  
Across the WQSB

Feature Article

Teaching students about our Canadian Black history builds on their awareness, critical thinking skills, empathy, and is key in preventing history from repeating itself.

Schools and centres across the WQSB have been active throughout the month engaging in learning about Black history by involving students in activities that promote and recognize contributions from the Black community.

Some of the high schools in the Western Québec School Board have created committees for Black students to meet and exchange ideas, discuss issues affecting them and plan events that promote cultural awareness among their peers.

This article shines a light on two Black Student Alliance (BSA) groups, one at Symmes/D'Arcy McGee and the other at Hadley/Philemon Wright. The BSAs along with the dedicated staff who lead them, play a big role in organizing Black History Month events throughout the year and special initiatives in February.

At Symmes Jr/D'Arcy McGee High School, the school BSA organized Spirit Week, from February 20<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>. At Hadley Jr./Philemon Wright High School, the school celebrated BHM by hosting the biggest Black Culture Festival they have ever had! During the festival at Hadley, there were five stations set-up in the school for the festival with different activities.

Special thanks to Principal Tara Laine and the BSA at Symmes Jr./D'Arcy McGee High School, as well as to Kassandra Johnson and the BSA at Hadley Jr./Philemon Wright High School for providing the information for this article.

[Full Story](#)

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Amy Curry

# Educational Spotlight

## Growing skills and confidence with tech tools at Poltimore Elementary School

Capitalizing on a technology grant that was spearheaded by Principal Melanie Hogan, staff and students at Poltimore Elementary School are engaging with coding, robotics and circuitry across the curriculum at all grade levels.

The grant funds have allowed release time for teachers to develop their understanding, confidence, and facility with a variety of tech tools. WQSB Educational Technology Consultants Stuart Gray and Lisa Diner have supported professional learning for Poltimore teachers, creating staff experts with Makey Makey, Minecraft for Education, robotics, and coding. In turn, these staff experts share their learning with colleagues, increasing capacity within the school team. Students are engaged with technology in meaningful ways that are integrated into the Math, Science, English Language Arts, French and History curriculums—with many opportunities for collaboration between teachers and students as their skills develop.

Over the past month, Cycle 2 and 3 students have

been busy building circuits and showcasing their knowledge of prominent Black Canadians. Teacher Amy Whiting planned an engaging research project that married technology and research skills to create interactive informational posters based on their findings, using Makey Makey technology.

Students are enjoying the opportunity to use technology frequently and within meaningful contexts to support learning, as well as engaging with these tools extra-curricularly. Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Davis has been hosting a weekly coding club during lunch hour that sees older students teaching younger students block coding.

You can find out more about Makey Makey [here](#), or reach out to WQSB consultants Lisa Diner ([ldiner@wqsb.qc.ca](mailto:ldiner@wqsb.qc.ca)) and Stuart Gray ([sgray@wqsb.qc.ca](mailto:sgray@wqsb.qc.ca)) to access their vast array of expertise and support.



Fireworks over the Ottawa River, photo by Laura D'Alessandro

George Singfield

# 2024 You Shine Gala!

## Awards for Outstanding WQSB Employees *Coming Soon!*

Please join us for the You Shine Gala: Awards for Outstanding WQSB Employees, a cherished tradition where we honor the dedication and remarkable contributions of our colleagues. We invite everyone to participate in this celebration by nominating deserving staff members who embody the spirit of excellence that defines *People Make Western Québec*.

Whether it's a teacher who goes above and beyond in the classroom, a custodian who ensures our facilities are safe and welcoming, or an administrative staff member who is

exceptional, we want to recognize them.

Stay tuned after the March break for a Microsoft Forms template to easily submit your nominations. Your dedication to our students and schools is truly appreciated.

Let's come together and make the You Shine Gala in 2024 a memorable celebration of excellence.

Thank you for your commitment and contributions. **g**

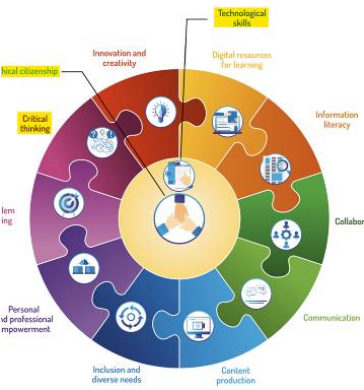
Stuart Gray and Lisa Diner

## Did you know? Education Technology

Did you know... that education technology is now officially one of the thirteen [Professional Competencies for Teachers?](#)

The twelve key elements of this competency are taken directly from the dimensions of the [Digital Competency Framework / Action Plan](#)

Highlighted in yellow are our boardwide EdTech PD focuses for 2023-2024:



Learn more on our site here: [edtech.westernquebec.ca/resources/digital-competency](https://edtech.westernquebec.ca/resources/digital-competency)



Patrick Hall

HR Spotlight  
The New EAP!

Introducing WQSB’s New! Employee Assistance Program offering *ongoing* counseling, work-life balance assistance, and workplace support services.

Whether it's navigating personal relationships, managing stress, tackling parenting challenges, or providing guidance to our leaders through Manager Consultations, Telus Health can help guide our WQSB community.



Employees can easily access the Telus Health One platform via the web at [one.telushealth.com](https://one.telushealth.com) or by calling the EAP Access Centre at 1-833-711-2327, open 24/7.

For more information about the Employee Assistance Program or resources, please reach out to Pat Hall, Coordinator of Human Resources at [phall@wqsb.qc.ca](mailto:phall@wqsb.qc.ca) or visit <https://westernquebec.ca/resources/staff/#eap>



George Singfield and Pascal Proulx

Teacher Appreciation Week

People make Western Québec

Teacher Appreciation Week ran from February 4 to 10 under the theme “Every day, we measure the importance of your role” this year.

George Singfield, Director General & Pascal Proulx, Assistant Director General wrote a letter to staff on behalf of all the employees of the School Board in which they offered their deepest gratitude and respect to the WQSB teachers.

“We’d like to pay tribute to the expertise and commitment of the teachers of the Western Québec School Board. You play a fundamental role in inspiring and encouraging young people to realize their dreams.”



“Let’s celebrate our passionate and committed teachers, who work to ensure the educational success of students in our schools and centers, and to shape the Québec of tomorrow.” [Full Story](#)

Erin Millar

Book List

The Lunar New Year



With wishes for abundance and prosperity, the library team would like to offer this latest list of books and resources for Lunar New Year. [Book List Here](#).

While we now commonly refer to this time as “Lunar New Year,” it is important to remember that such a generalization can lead to the erasure of some distinct cultural practices and traditions. We’ve organized this list by country, to highlight and celebrate those differences, and have also included some online resources you can use to learn more about the Asian communities who celebrate Lunar New Year.

And of course, don’t forget to check out the Research tab on the [Virtual Library](#)!

May this year of the **Wood Dragon** usher in opportunity, good fortune, and good health.

Happy Reading!

Laura D’Alessandro

Vocational Enrichment  
For Elementary Students



Director Damian Curley of the Western Québec Career Centre (WQCC) and Principal Julia Horner of Eardley Elementary School have been working together since 2018 to provide experiences for elementary students to discover new ways of learning.

To truly thrive in vocational trades, students should be curious, creative, and have academic proficiency. “Vocational training has a part to play in exposing children to different skills and new ways of learning abstract concepts,” Mr. Curley shares.

This year, the WQCC aims to reveal new experiences to the students that become the building blocks for future learning experiences. [Full Story](#)

Laura D’Alessandro

Ice Safety & Rescue  
Outdoor Learning

Learning outdoors provides students with a refreshing change of scenery, boosts motivation, and opens a whole set of invaluable skills that cannot be practiced indoors.

Québec, “La belle province”, provides many of our schools and centers with easy access to breathtaking nature where students can expand their knowledge.

At St. Michael’s High School, located in Low Québec, Grade 11 students devote one full day out of their 9-day schedule to Sports and Recreation.



St. Michael’s High School teacher, Matt Orlando and Grade 11 students during Ice Safety and Rescue.

This past January, for the first time, the school added a two-day Ice Safety and Rescue certification course.

This course was offered by [Boreal River Rescue](#), with facilitators Danny Peled and Ryan Brown-Tasse, as well as with St. Michael’s teacher, Matt Orlando, who runs the Sports and Recreation program. [Full Story](#)

Happy V-Day!  
Staff Posts

Our schools across the board came alive in the spirit of Valentine's Day!

From heartwarming friendship breakfasts to cozy PJ days, students and staff joined in the celebrations within our educational community.



Thank you to all who participated and contributed to making Valentine's Day for our students a memorable and heart-filled occasion across the board!

*Stories can be found on WQSB Facebook pages and WQSB individual school websites.*



Sarah Kobia

ELA Reading Strategies  
Book Club Spotlight

The Power of Creating Practical Teen Toolkits for Reading

There is no doubt that top of mind for many educators is enabling the reading success of the students who walk through their classroom doors every day.

In a post-pandemic era, we are watching students across grade levels encounter challenges in a variety of different ways when it comes to reading.

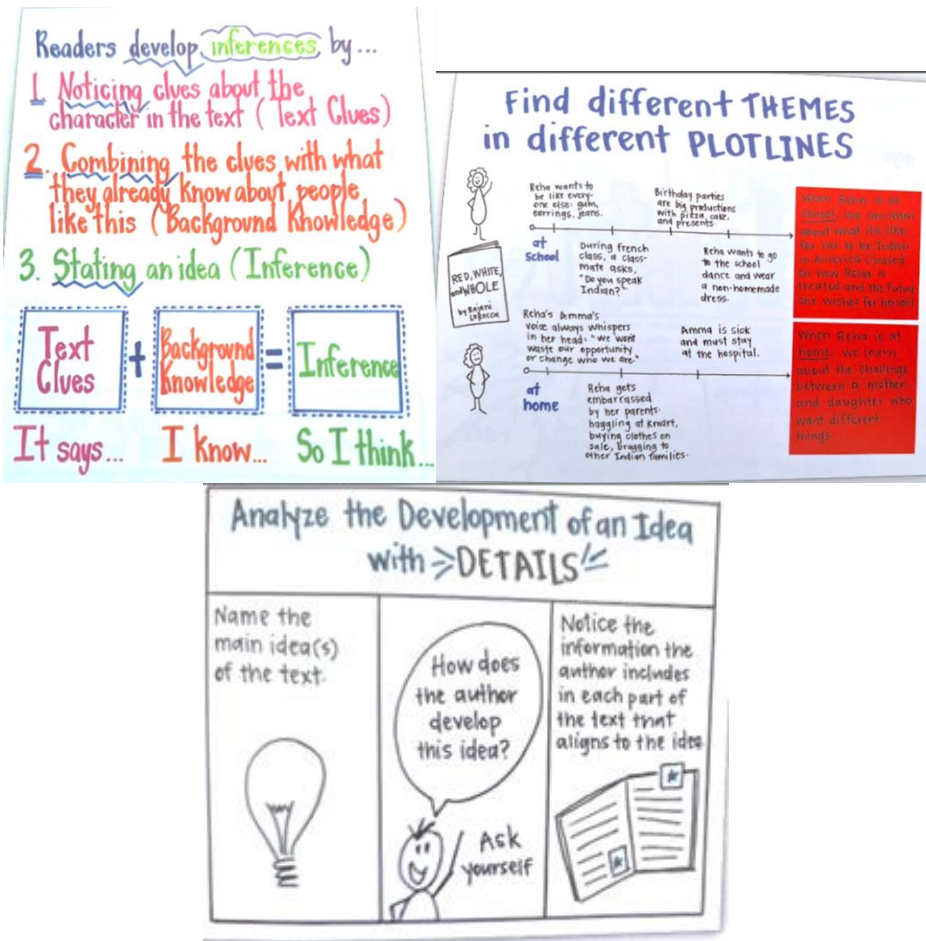
This year a group of grades 7, 8 & 9 educators have come together to transparently reflect on this reality and keenly tackle a text that offers a plethora of ready-to-use reading strategies. Jennifer Serravallo’s Reading Strategy Book 2.0 offers over 300 different strategies that are applicable across cycles. This book club has jumped into exploring targeted approaches, specific to the needs of the students in front of them, and the members are excited about trying these out in their classrooms.

**Here’s the best part:** collaborative discussion! Book club members compare notes, discuss what’s working and what’s not and consider ways to build engagement, while also assessing where the gaps are for some of our intermediate aged struggling readers.

When it comes to working with teen readers, we often have to consider what parts and pieces of reading instruction need to be a focus.

Perhaps what is so transformative about this text is that it builds reading skills that cross all subject areas, creating a toolkit that is accessible to students outside of ELA. Giving students strategies that can be applied to any reading material helps them come to understand the transferrable nature of the skills they are building, and this pays off in dividends as they become more dialed into what they are learning everywhere they go!

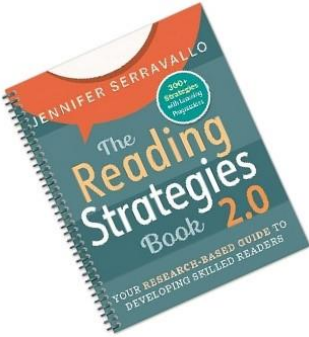
Building an accessible and practical toolkit means that students reflect on what strategies work best for them and know they can apply these in a variety of other contexts.



“This book club, and the work of Jennifer Serravallo reminds us of the reading and instructional strategies that can really integrate thinking, make valuable connections, and get students analyzing and consolidating understanding of text in a variety of ways. I love the reminder of 'story mapping.' I used this years ago as an Instructional Strategy from the work of Barrie Bennett and the WQSB. I brought it back with my Sec II students and it was a really fun and creative way for students to read, summarize a text, and talk through the ideas and organization of the map. Being a part of a professional book club that discusses instructional strategies and high-level teaching practice is such a wonderful reminder of the impact we have as educators to inspire and engage our students.”

-Alison McLaughlin, a SEC II teacher at Dr. Wilbert Keon

Special recognition goes to the incredible educators who are taking strategies off the pages of this book club text and integrating them into their everyday teaching practices this year!



Laura D’Alessandro

Pink Shirt Day  
At G. Théberge School



At G. Théberge School, located in beautiful Témiscaming, students have been busy creating Pink Shirt Day decorations during the month of February.

Pink Shirt Day began in 2007 at a school in Berwick, Nova Scotia, when two senior students took a stand against homophobic bullying after a fellow student was harassed and threatened for wearing pink.



From the front entrance of G. Théberge School, which proudly dons a Pride flag and an “Every Child Matters” flag all year long, it is clear that the school embraces and celebrates diversity. Among the numerous anti-bullying activities organized at the school this past month, a few stand out due to the unique partnerships that have been created. Frankie Vermette, school life animator, worked with personnel at Témiscaming’s French school to create a ringed anti-bullying garland with students.

G. Théberge’s efforts to create a safe, welcoming, and peaceful environment for its students clearly reflects the values of the Western Québec School Board. [Full Story](#)

Appreciation from  
our Parents

Facebook Post

Not sure if the person is in the group, but just in case.  
I wanted to take a moment to say thanks, my child attended career day last Friday at the welding centre on Frank Robinson. The welding and cutting was a bit too much for him to complete his project.  
So Sean took the time to complete it for him and send along a hand written note.  
My child really appreciate it the item and gesture of the hand written letter.  
Know that he was really touched and so was I to see his face light up when reading your note.



Laura D'Alessandro

The Value of First Aid and CPR Training

Isabelle Reid saves student

Isabelle Reid, an Attendant at Eardley Elementary School, recently saved a student's life by performing the Heimlich Maneuver.



The incident occurred when Ms. Reid was on lunch supervision. The student had a large piece of granola bar fully blocking her windpipe.

After checking that the student was in fact choking, Ms. Reid jumped into action, performing the Heimlich Maneuver twice before the granola bar was dislodged.

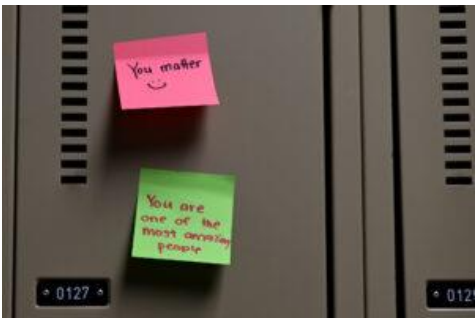
Ms. Reid is certified in First Aid and CPR. This training allowed her to act quickly and calmly in an emergency situation with bravery and composure.

The WQSB commends Isabelle Reid.

Laura D'Alessandro

Week of Kindness Suicide Prevention

The 4<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of February marks Suicide Prevention Week in Québec, and WQSB schools and centres have each had their own unique initiatives and events running throughout the week to raise awareness and to support their students.



At Pontiac High School, Connexions Resource Centre organized a self-care fortune teller. At St. Michael's High School, Suicide Detour Maniwaki visited to do a presentation for the students, and the school's gym hosted a mental health fair. At Hadley Jr./Philemon Wright High School, messages of kindness on sticky notes were placed on lockers to brighten the mood. [Full Story](#)

Amy Curry

Teacher Induction Program (TIP)

Positive Partnerships

Teachers who are new to the Western Québec School Board



Greater Gatineau Elementary photo by Laura D'Alessandro

are a part of the Teacher Induction Program (TIP), a two-year program that is focused on professional growth, mentoring and coaching.

The opportunity to connect with a Mentor-Coach in Year 1 of the TIP ensures that teachers new to WQSB are encouraged and well-supported throughout their first year, having a key colleague to turn to when questions arise, or feedback is needed.

Aaron MacFarlane is in his first year with the WQSB, teaching grade four at Greater Gatineau Elementary School. As part of the Teacher Induction Program, Aaron is working with Mentor-Coach and fellow grade 4 teacher, Sarah Plue. Aaron and Sarah have built a positive partnership, that, as evidenced by their thoughts below is leading to success in both of their classrooms.

Aaron is benefitting from Sarah's extensive experience and expertise at the grade 4 level. She has been able to guide him through challenging units, helps him to anticipate pitfalls and shares resources and lessons to support his work. Aaron also credits Sarah with encouraging him to celebrate big and small successes that he might not take the time to notice without her interest and presence, noting that her support with planning and organization has been integral to his success this year.

Sarah shares that working with Aaron has provided her with the opportunity to reflect on her own practice and curricular choices, in the effort to provide meaningful and timely support. Sarah credits Aaron with inspiring her to use technology more often with her students, as well as leading her to rethink and improve lessons and units that she has been teaching for many years.

When asked to describe what coaching means to them, Aaron, and Sarah share that "coaching means being there for each other. It means being a supportive teacher, welcoming a new teacher into a staff team, and trying to build the school community that we all want for ourselves, our students, and our families."

For more information about the Teacher Induction Program, or resources related to professional and instructional coaching, reach out to Amy Curry, Coordinator of Induction and Professional Learning Programs ([acurry@wqsb.qc.ca](mailto:acurry@wqsb.qc.ca)).

Scott Cavers

5<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult/Voc Ed Co-ed Volleyball Tournament

A Note to Participants

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to your students and all of you for your enthusiastic participation in the 5th annual Adult/Voc Ed Co-Ed Volleyball Tournament.

The tournament was an incredible event that showcased the spirit of sportsmanship within our community.



We were thrilled to have 10 teams in total, comprising over 110 players, along with numerous supporters and fans, totaling well over 200 people throughout the day.

The energy and excitement were palpable, creating an unforgettable atmosphere.

Congratulations are in order for CDC Vimont (SWLSB), who clinched the first-place title, and New Horizons Sherbrooke (ETSM), deserving runners-up.

Blast from the Past Our Staff through the Years!

We're kicking off a guessing game to celebrate the incredible people who are a part of our community.

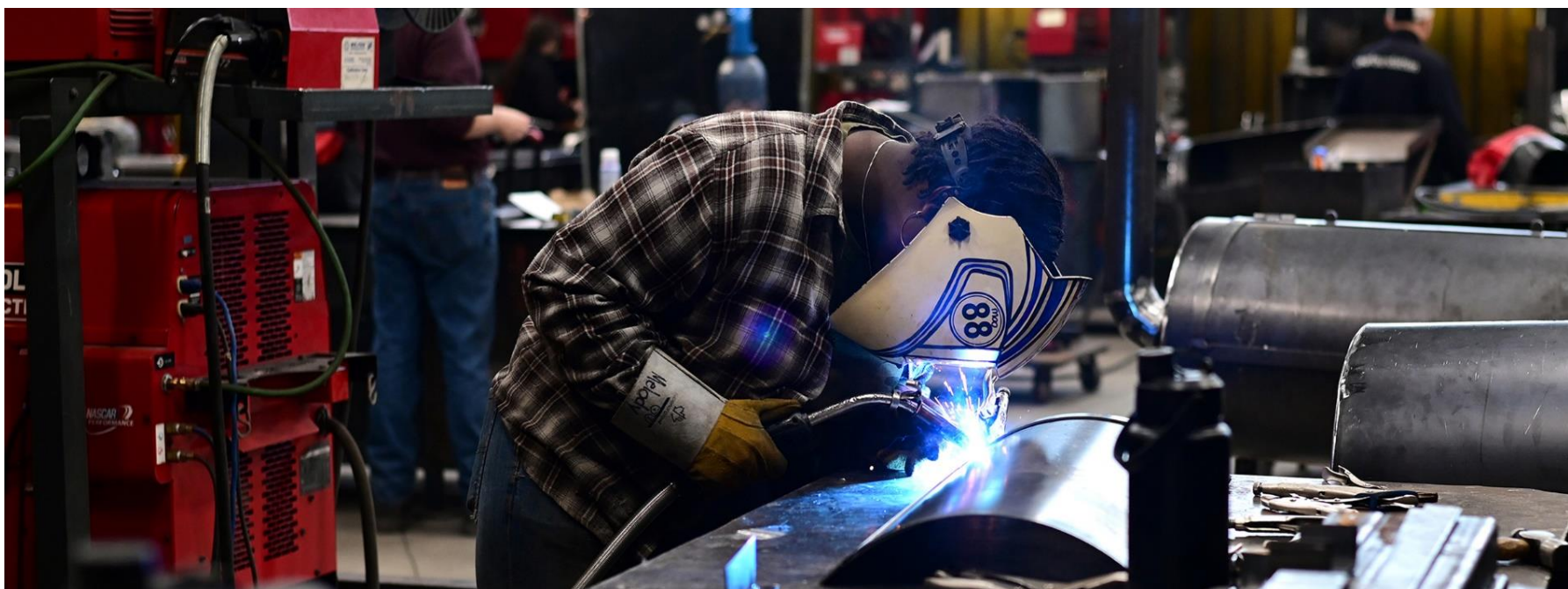


Can you guess who this mystery staff member is?

Here is a clue: *He is good with numbers. You can find him out in the water, running or rolling on the road.*

Stay tuned for more blasts from the past as we continue to celebrate the amazing individuals who have helped shaped the WQSB!

Head over to our website's [Resources and Support for Staff page](#) to reveal the answer.



Student welding at the Western Québec Career Center (WQCC)

References

In Our Schools Articles

- Pink Shirt Day at G. Thérberge School <https://westernquebec.ca/pink-shirt-day-at-g-theberge-school/>
- Black History Across the WQSB <https://westernquebec.ca/black-history-month-across-the-wqsb/>
- Enrichment Program Introducing Vocational Studies to Elementary Students: The WQCC and Eardley Partnership <https://westernquebec.ca/enrichment-program-introducing-vocational-studies-to-elementary-students-the-wqcc-and-eardley-partnership/>
- Ice Safety and Rescue Certification at St. Michael’s High School <https://westernquebec.ca/ice-safety-and-rescue-certification-at-st-michaels-high-school/>
- Suicide Prevention Week - Week of Kindness and Life at the WQSB <https://westernquebec.ca/suicide-prevention-week-week-of-kindness-and-life-at-the-wqsb/>
- Teacher Appreciation Week <https://westernquebec.ca/teacher-appreciation-week-2/>
- Safeguarding Bus Transportation: WQSB’s Commitment to Bus Safety <https://westernquebec.ca/safeguarding-bus-transportation-wqsbs-commitment-to-bus-safety/>
- Nature Immersion-Kindergarten Program Wins a Canadian Museum of Nature Inspiration Award <https://westernquebec.ca/nature-immersion-kindergarten-program-wins-a-canadian-museum-of-nature-inspiration-award/>
- The Spirit of Giving Across the WQSB <https://westernquebec.ca/the-spirit-of-giving-across-the-wqsb/>
- Orientation Day for Bishop’s University Student-Teachers <https://westernquebec.ca/orientation-day-for-bishops-university-student-teachers/>
- Destination Leadership <https://westernquebec.ca/destination-leadership/>
- The Jim Howard Memorial Football Tournament <https://westernquebec.ca/the-john-howard-memorial-tournament/>
- Dedicated Staff at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School Provide Accessible Halloween Evening for Students <https://westernquebec.ca/dedicated-staff-at-pierre-elliott-trudeau-elementary-school-provide-accessible-halloween-evening-for-students/>

New Staff Articles

- Meet Stephanie Frigon, the New Principal at Golden Valley School! <https://westernquebec.ca/meet-stephanie-frigon-the-new-principal-at-golden-valley-school/>
- Meet Graham Fleming, the New Vice-principal at Greater Gatineau Elementary! <https://westernquebec.ca/meet-graham-fleming-the-new-vice-principal-at-greater-gatineau-elementary/>
- Meet Hannah Patrick, the new Vice-principal at Lord Aylmer Elementary! <https://westernquebec.ca/meet-hannah-patrick-the-new-vice-principal-at-lord-aylmer-elementary/>





Black Student Alliance (BSA) at Symmes Jr./D'Arcy McGee High School

Stay Connected  
G a z e t t e

GET IN TOUCH!

[Reach our Team](#)

LINK TO PAST NEWSLETTERS

[Issue #01 January 2024](#)

THANK YOU!

We extend our gratitude to our contributors this month.

Our thanks go out to (in order of appearance) *George Singfield, Laura D'Alessandro, Amy Curry, Stuart Gray, Lisa Diner, Patrick Hall, Erin Millar, Scott Cavers, Sarah Kobia, Pascal Proulx, Anne Jamer-Michaud, and François Raymond.*

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