

# Gazette



Friday 31st January, 2025  
Issue 11

The Western Québec School Board is committed to developing lifelong learners who actively contribute to society and are well prepared for the future.

**Our Students, Our Community, Our Future!**

## A Message from George



### Dear Staff,

As we continue our journey through this academic year, I want to take a moment to emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion within our school community. Our commitment to fostering an environment where every student and staff member feels valued and respected is paramount.

I have learned that diversity is not just about recognizing our differences but celebrating them. It is through our varied backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives that we enrich our learning experiences and grow as a community. Inclusion means ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully and feel a sense of belonging.

This month, I encourage you to reflect on how we can further promote these values in our daily interactions and teaching practices. Consider incorporating diverse voices and perspectives into your curriculum, creating inclusive classroom environments, and engaging in open dialogues about equity and respect.

We are proud of the initiatives already in place, such as our cultural awareness programs and inclusive education strategies. However, there is always more we can do. Let us continue to support one another, learn from each other, and strive to create a school environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and appreciated.

Thank you for your dedication to making our schools a welcoming place for all. Together, we can build a community that truly reflects the diverse and inclusive world we aspire to be.

Laura D'Alessandro

## Meet Kelly Butler, Physical Education Teacher at Chelsea Elementary



The Western Québec School Board benefits from highly competent, highly trained and dedicated teachers throughout its 31 schools and centres. In each, are experienced veteran educators who have been with the board for several decades and who model high expectations for their students and for themselves.

Meet Kelly Butler, a Physical Education teacher at Chelsea Elementary School. Ms. Butler (or Ms. B, as the students call her) joined the WQSB in 2002 as a consultant in the new Guidance-oriented Approach to Learning (GOAL) that was being implemented across the province that year.

She was a highly respected consultant with a strong work ethic, enthusiasm and tons of positive energy. That position evolved and saw Ms. Butler implementing other projects including POP (Personal Orientation Project), Mini U, and some Phys. Ed. Initiatives, notably, the elementary Track and Field tournament.

Her educational background is impressive, with a BSc (Hon.) in Sport and Exercise Science from Northumbria University in Newcastle UK, as well as a Post-graduate Certificate in Education with a focus on Physical Education from Durham University in the UK.

She holds numerous coaching qualifications in soccer, gymnastics, tennis, netball, field hockey, basketball, cricket, swimming, dance and group fitness activities such as spinning, Pilates, step, personal training and aqua aerobics. Ms. Butler is passionate about active and healthy living.

[Click to read the full article!](#)

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## Hadley/Philemon Perform Chicago!



Hadley / Philemon Wright's musical, "Chicago" was a huge success! The show ran from December 12th – 14th at Heritage College CEGEP, and it was truly spectacular.

Our students displayed incredible talent, hard work, and shared such powerful emotions with us in the auditorium.

Congratulations to our amazing directors, Meridith Daley and Maria MacLean! Their leadership, hard work, and dedication made the production unforgettable. A big thank you as well to Tracey Ludmer and Catia Valela for all their support in making this production such a success.

Great work, team! Now, please take some well-deserved rest and recharge. You all earned it!

Frankie Vermette

## Citizenship Club at PETES



On Saturday December 3rd, staff at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School (PETES) organized a Winter Market and pancake breakfast. It was very successful. The Citizenship Club, overseen by Chelsea O'Brien, raised over \$1000!

At the event, students and parents sold premade items and crafts. The PETES Performance Group presented beautiful holiday songs in the centre of our market, bringing joy to all! Later this year, the Citizenship Club is heading to St. John's Newfoundland, and we can't wait to hear all about the adventures and memories when they return.

THE EQUITY

## Pontiac High School's New Bleachers



The high school's gymnasium is now home to a brand-new set of bright red bleachers, installed in December after a many-year fundraising effort organized by school staff.

The new benches, which will host high school sports fans, proud parents and cheering friends for years to come, were officially inaugurated at a ribbon-cutting ceremony organized by the school's leadership class during the annual Christmas Classic volleyball tournament on Dec. 16.

"They're not just a physical upgrade to our gym; they represent the growth, energy, and spirit of our entire school community," said leadership student Jaycie Hodgins, who emceed the event with fellow classmate Allie Benoit.

"These bleachers will enhance everything we do here—athletic events, assemblies, internal activities, regional sporting leagues, and all the other student life events that bring us together. Our gym is now more equipped than ever to host the excitement and energy that makes Panther Nation so special," Hodgins told the crowd.

Leadership teacher Matt Greer said school staff identified the need for new bleachers about two years ago and put together a fundraiser proposal.

Over the two years, the school received close to \$60,000 in donations from school alumni and the wider Pontiac community.

PHS principal Terry Burns said financial support from the Western Quebec School Board helped the school install the needed electrical system and the fixtures that attach the retractable bleachers to the wall.

"But it's the community that are the big heroes in this project," he said.



Sofia Ferreira

## Onslow Elementary Students Go Cross-country Skiing

At Onslow Elementary School, students from K4 to Grade 6 had an exciting opportunity to get outside and learn cross-country skiing, thanks to the generous support of the organization *Ski à l'école Outaouais*.

It provided the school with a loan of skis, free of charge for the week. Onslow students were able to embrace the winter season while developing new skills.

The vision of *Ski à l'école Outaouais* is to prioritize outdoor experiences that connect us with healthy lifestyle habits, promote active mobility reflexes, and highlight the many benefits of being in nature during winter.

This initiative has made a huge impact on our students, who loved the chance to be active outdoors while learning something new. A big thank you to *Ski à l'école Outaouais* for making this unforgettable experience possible!



Sarah Lavoie

## Symmes D'Arcy Centre Spotlight

Symmes D'Arcy Centre is a place where individual differences are respected, and kindness is valued. It is a well-structured environment with a high-level of expectation that focuses on functional academics, social participation, autonomy and building LifeSkills.

The Centre provides a holistic education that teaches students to embrace their own unique strengths and abilities. The team of educators are Barb Fitzgerald, Laurie Souliere, Shaun Toohey, and Sarah Nichol. They work hard to ensure that every student reaches their full potential.

Through meaningful integrations, students are provided opportunities to explore their interests. Students who have the capacity and desire to integrate in outside mainstream classes are supported and encouraged to do so.

Despite any challenges and with varying expectations, students are taught the skills necessary to attend autonomously and to be able to participate fully. The team teaches the students how to manage and regulate in various environments. Currently, there are senior students who are integrated in Citizenship and History, Art, Drama, and Physical Education.

In addition to the academic integrations, the centre's staff members encourage students to access activities that strengthen their connection to the Symmes D'Arcy community and beyond. For example, some access and attend school clubs including student council meetings and the D'Arcy Choir.

Student ambassadors are called upon occasionally to do morning announcements for the school. Students are encouraged to participate in a variety of school activities such as school dances and field trips.

Recently, the school was involved in a food drive in which food donations were collected. The Centre students understood the importance of community and collected the most food donations per capita across the school! For their amazing efforts, they have been rewarded with a pizza party.

The Centre's dedicated staff strongly believes in providing students with opportunities to experience the world around them. Coming up on February 7th, the staff and students are excited to attend Disney on Ice at the CT centre. We hope they have a fun trip in their suite!

The Symmes D'Arcy Centre's approach and commitment to inclusion is evident. It is a place where differences are celebrated, opportunities are encouraged, and empathy and understanding are of the utmost importance.



Lindsay Woodman

## International Day of Education Activities at Pontiac High School

Blue Monday, a day often marked by the winter blues and stress, fell on Monday January 20th this year. This, in combination with approaching midterms, made the staff members at PHS want to recognize their fabulous students.

On the morning of the big day, all 425+ students at PHS received a personalized positive affirmation note. These notes contained more than just words – they were a heartfelt recognition of the unique strengths and qualities that make each student special at PHS.

Whether a compliment on hard work, a reminder to keep being awesome, or recognition of a student's kindness or talent, the notes were designed to inspire, encourage, and uplift.

With these messages, PHS celebrated the fact that every student brings something amazing to our school community.



Laura D'Alessandro

## The WQCC at Sommet Atypique

On January 21st, the Western Quebec Career Centre (WQCC) participated in Sommet Atypique at Maison du Citoyen in Hull.

The popular event promotes and showcases women in non-traditional trades, and the WQCC were well represented with their guidance counsellor, teachers and female students stationed at their kiosks for Welding, Automobile mechanics and Drafting.



Sommet Atypique's goal is to bring together female experts and host interactive workshops.

This event provides an inspiring platform that breaks professional stereotypes and celebrates the diversity of female talent and skill, highlighting that every woman can leave her mark in all sectors, thus promoting the current evolution of professional standards.

In an innovative way, Sommet Atypique offers women the opportunity to see, touch and experience non-traditional professions first-hand.

The WQCC's kiosks were a hit, with a steady stream of high school students from the region showing interest, asking questions and trying out the welding simulator throughout the day.

There was also a great turnout of employers, educational institutions and government agencies in attendance.



Emma Montgomery & James Price

## The Power of Clubs During Unstructured Time at Buckingham Elementary

Staff members in our schools and centres across the WQSB recognize that the educational experience or learning and socialization does not only take place in a classroom setting. The team at Buckingham Elementary School (BES) has instituted many new and exciting clubs this year during unstructured time at recess. Among the student favourites are the Bakers Delight Club, Dance Club, Forest Club, Eco Club, Yoga, and of course, Destination Imagination.

“Our goal at Buckingham Elementary is to nurture the whole child,” BES principal James Price adds. “While academic achievement is important, so is fostering creativity, resilience, and a sense of responsibility toward the community and the environment. These clubs support that mission beautifully.” Most recently, a new music club was launched, drawing more than 60 students—over a quarter of the school’s population across multiple age levels.

At BES, there is a strong focus on teaching mindfulness, student health, earth stewardship, development of imagination, healthy expression, joy and connection. The clubs implement these in a variety of ways. For example, the Bakers Delight Club teaches students about healthy alternative baking ingredients, moving away from refined sugars and the misconception that food only comes in a box. The activities teach children to cook and bake from scratch using recipes that introduce ingredients such as cane sugar, farm-fresh eggs, organic flour, and butter instead of margarine.

The Forest Club along with the school’s participation in this year’s Destination Imagination competition, is providing students the opportunity to explore alternative ways of playing, creating, skill building and working as a team.

The yoga club has become a big hit with students as well. Students practice mindful breathing, body awareness, relaxation techniques, chanting, and mantras. Students leave with a positive affirmation to carry with them throughout the week. Staff members love seeing students engaged in meditation and leaving the sessions feeling uplifted and full of positivity.

Principal James Price expresses his appreciation for the dedicated program leaders. “Emma has done a fantastic job of making these clubs a staple of our school culture,” he says. “Their focus extends beyond participation—it nurtures students’ minds, bodies, and spirits, all of which play a vital role in building self-esteem and fostering positive behaviour within the school.” Support staff attendant Presley Roos and teacher Delorean Clark have also joined in these initiatives to help maintain a manageable staff-to-student ratio, ensuring a positive and engaging learning experience.



Great projects have come out of Eco-Club; a space that teaches students about different environmental impacts we are facing today as a society. The club gives them the energy to generate passion and to work on solutions for the planet. In the works is the Buckingham Elementary’s “Zero-waste Initiative,” which will motivate students to be mindful about possible alternatives to the garbage produced at lunch time.

One club in particular has had a positive impact on the girls, with respect to social dynamics and creating a sense of belonging and self-esteem. Once a week, girls in cycle 3 meet for a girls’ circle. The staff who are involved have created a safe space for students where they learn to navigate social dynamics and how to feel empowered and confident in themselves.

At Buckingham Elementary, over 100 students—more than half of the school’s population—are involved in at least one club. This high level of participation has had a significant impact, enhancing students’ overall happiness, strengthening their connection to the school, and even improving attendance for some who may have otherwise struggled.

Extra-curricular activities are made possible at BES and across the Western Québec School Board thanks to dedicated employees who identify needs and are willing to give their time to the pursuit of a more enriching and holistic educational experience for their students.

The WQSB wishes to thank all those involved in creating such opportunities for students at Buckingham and throughout the board.

HR Team

## New Fast-Track Programs for Non-Qualified Teachers

Concordia University is now offering the first fast-track programs in English that provide credit eligible for reimbursement by the Ministry of Education. These programs are designed to help non-qualified teachers with tolerances gain certification:

1. Graduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) - [details here](#)
2. Graduate Certificate in Teaching in Preschool and Elementary Education - [details here](#)

Visit the links above or contact HR for more details. A presentation by the architects of the program will be made available February 2025.



Board Art Recognition Committee

## CALL FOR STUDENT ART!

Highlight your student's artistic talents by submitting their art to the board to be used in recognition activities, the website and board displays.

Please submit your art selections to your principal/director for their curation. Art submitted to the central office will be professionally photographed and returned to the student with a note of appreciation.

Please label artwork with the student's name, school and classroom teacher. The envelope containing all the art from your school/centre will be dropped off at the front desk at the central office and should be addressed to the RECOGNITION COMMITTEE.



Pascal Proulx

## Hooked on School Days



*Hooked on School Days* will be held from February 10 to 14. This campaign, organized by the Table Éducation Outaouais (TEO) and several partners, will highlight the efforts that lead to success.

Of course, success is not instantaneous, and behind every success lie hours, months and years of effort. We encourage you to take advantage of these days to recognize perseverance in students and the efforts of staff who work hard to make students value school. Let's be proud of the efforts made every day toward this goal. There are many.

**On Thursday February 13**, we invite you to wear green, the official colour of the *Hooked on School Days* campaign. Take photos of your activities and events, and we'll share them in the next edition of the Gazette!

HR Team

## Updated HR Contact List Now Available !



The 2025 HR Contact List has been updated for your convenience.

This comprehensive guide provides all the key HR contacts you may need, ensuring you can quickly connect with the right person for support.

The list is accessible on our website under Resources and Support for Staff: WQSB HR Contacts 2025. [Visit the link](#) to streamline your communications with HR.

HR Team

## TELUS HEALTH Program



TELUS Health blends an accessible user experience and clinical expertise to support the mental, physical and financial wellbeing of people everywhere. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and personalized wellbeing resources can support you and your dependents with issues related to work, life and everything in between.

Whether you have questions about handling stress at work and home, parenting and childcare, managing money or health issues, you can turn to TELUS Health for a confidential service that you can trust.

Questions? Please join us in one of our orientation sessions to learn about all the services offered by TELUS Health.

### Western Quebec School Board employee orientations

First session: [January 22nd at 6pm](#)

Second session: [February 10th at 10am](#)



Sunglee Randall

## Virtual Library Spotlight: Curio

Did you know that you can use Curio to readily find and explore CBC/Radio-Canada content that has been carefully selected for its educational value and is available in teaching-friendly formats?

Curio offers more than 10,000 resources, with content in both English and French.

Curio includes:

- Access to documentaries
- TV/radio shows
- Podcasts
- Archival clips
- Material for every academic level from elementary to university
- Material for every subject
- Teacher guides
- Curio Info and News In Review current affairs
- Channels from the BBC and National Geographic
- New resources every week.



Every week, you can access resources from Curio by logging in with your WQSB email address on the Media tab of the Virtual Library.

Lisa Diner and Stuart Gray

## Did you know?



Lisa and Stuart offer PD sessions for all teachers. There are full day sessions as well as after-school sessions. Their next full day session will be **Monday February 3rd** wherein they will explore LittleBits, Ozobots and Spheros.

**LittleBits** are colourful modular electronic bits. They snap together easily using small magnets allowing students to learn about circuits and electronics in a fun, creative way.

**Ozobots** are little robots that are designed as an introduction to coding. Students use colour combinations to move the Ozobot on a path from one location to another. After colour coding, students can then explore the integrated block coding tool that can connect with the Ozobot by Bluetooth.

**Spheros Bolts** are little transparent spheres that can be programmed to navigate around the classroom.

If Lego is more to your liking, Lisa and Stuart are offering a hands-on session on Wednesday March 26th. This day will have participants explore the newest of Lego's educational tools, namely [Lego Spike Prime](#) and [Lego Spike Essentials](#).

Both Lego kits offer creative STEAM learning for all students, however, the Lego Spike Prime is geared toward Cycle 3+, whereas Lego Spike Essential is designed more for Cycle 1-Cycle 2.

Their after-school sessions are from 3:45pm-4:45pm and are presented using MS Teams, as well as recorded for future access. They take place on:

- **Thursday Feb. 13th** – 🐱 Scratch PD – Next steps (part 2)
- **Wednesday Feb. 19th** – 🐱 Scratch PD - Advanced

If you are interested in participating in the PD, please register on the [Professional Development Registration form](#).



Erin Millar

## Picture Book Biographies for Black History Month

Picture books are for everyone, and there are many reasons I use them in my work as a librarian with every age, K-11. Specifically though, this month I want to sing the praises of the picture book biography and I have compiled a list of titles for Black History Month.



A picture book is a wonderful option for students of all ages, for a variety of reasons: the art is delightful and inspiring and enhances visual literacy, picture books can explore complex subject matter and often offer quite sophisticated vocabulary, and using a picture book in class often opens opportunities and leaves time for some wonderful discussions.

In terms of the biographies, they offer an accessible look at the lives and journeys of folks we may not otherwise hear about; like the man who invented ice cream, or a rodeo star from the early 20th century, or a dressmaker who went blind and became a poet – all of whom you will meet in the list below.

Sometimes these folks don't have longer books written about them, but their stories are meaningful and important just the same.

1. You Gotta Meet Mr. Pierce! The Storied Life of Folk Artist Elijah Pierce, by Chiquita Mullins Lee and Carmella Van Vleet
2. Jackie Ormes Draws the Future: The Remarkable Life of a Pioneering Cartoonist, by Liz Montague
3. Harlem's Little Blackbird, by Renée Watson
4. Call Me Miss Hamilton: One Woman's Case for Equality and Respect, by Carole Boston Weatherford
5. Fighting with Love: The Legacy of John Lewis. By Lesa Cline-Ransome
6. Feed Your Mind: A Story of August Wilson, by Jen Bryant
7. To Boldly Go: How Nichelle Nichols and Star Trek Helped Advance Civil Rights, by Angela Dalton
8. Ice Cream Man: How Augustus Jackson Made a Sweet Treat Better, by Glenda Armand
9. Jimmy's Rhythm & Blues: The Extraordinary Life of James Baldwin, by Michelle Meadows
10. Extraordinary Magic: The Storytelling Life of Virginia Hamilton, by Nina Crews
11. Major Taylor: World Cycling Champion, by Charles R. Smith
12. Ida B. Well Marches for the Vote, by Dinah Johnson
13. Mambo Mucho Mambo! by Dean Robbins
14. Let 'Er Buck! George Fletcher, the People's Champion, by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson
15. A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin, by Jen Bryant
16. Unstoppable John: How John Lewis Got His Library Card – and Helped Change History, by Pat Zietlow Miller
17. Someday is Now: Clara Luper and the 1958 Oklahoma City Sit-Ins, by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich
18. Sugar Hill: Harlem's Historic Neighborhood, by Carole Boston Weatherford
19. Lillian's Right to Vote, by Jonah Winter
20. Nina: Jazz Legend and Civil-Rights Activist,\* by Alice Brière-Haquet
21. Child of the Civil Rights Movement, by Paula Young Shelton
22. Overground Railroad, by Lesa Cline-Ransome
23. Dream a Dress, Dream a Poem: Dressmaker and Poet Myra Viola Wilds, by Nancy Johnson James
24. Struttin' With Some Barbecue: Lil Hardin Armstrong Becomes the First Lady of Jazz, by: Patricia Hruby Powell
25. Go Forth and Tell: The Life of Augusta Baker, Librarian and Master Storyteller, by Breanna J. McDaniel
26. This is My Dream! by Langston Hughes – this one is a beautifully illustrated book of Hughes' poem "Dream Variations" and I just had to include it.

*\*title is available in French*

## Found in the WQSB Time Capsule



This 4-year-old boy from Sherbrooke would eventually set out for a new life in the Outaouais region, working in computer programming and technical support for the WQSB.

An enthusiastic lifelong learner, he continued registering for courses and learning on his own for learning's sake. He has also never been afraid to take on new challenges. When an opportunity emerged in a neighbouring school board, he applied and worked there for several years before returning to us, bringing with him, some new ideas and experiences.

He is known to be a bit of a clean freak and is responsible for the overall safety of our students and employees. He also enjoys making and maintaining connections for our students and teachers to the outside world. A devoted husband and father, in his off time, he enjoys working on building projects with his son such as constructing boats and currently, a cottage.



## GAZETTE EDITIONS

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## THANK YOU

We extend our gratitude to our contributors this month

*George Singfield, Andrea Gage, Claudia Loschmann, Dodie Payne, Emma Montgomery, THE EQUITY, Erin Millar, Fatima Sow, Frankie Vermette, James Price, Laura D'Alessandro, Lindsay Woodman, Lisa Diner, Lisa Kelly, Sarah Lavoie, Sofia Ferreira, Stuart Gray and Sunglee Randall.*

**[Have a WQSB story to share? Reach out to our team!](#)**



*Gazette created by Fatima Sow & Laura D'Alessandro*