

A Message from George



Dear Staff,

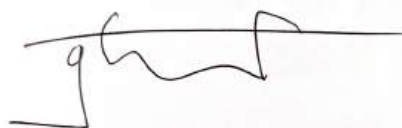
March always arrives with a feeling of hope as winter's grip begins to loosen, and the days grow longer as we transition into Spring. March break gives us an opportunity to replenish our energy, and for those partaking in Ramadan, a month to conserve it, delving deep into prayer. March is also celebratory, as we elevate and appreciate all women as well as have a toast in honour of our Irish heritage.

We also celebrate and observe World Down Syndrome Day and International Transgender Day of Visibility, with our dedicated staff members educating students on not just the importance of diversity and inclusion, but on how much more enriching our experience at our schools and centres is with it.

I hope March was good to you and as we enter April, I am proud of the efforts put in at WQSB schools and centres to educate and celebrate Autism Awareness and Acceptance month. Our goal is to move beyond acceptance by providing support, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for success to all students on the autism spectrum within the WQSB.

Wishing you all a successful and lively April.

Sincerely,



Leona Lalonde

World Down Syndrome Day Celebration at Dr. S.E. McDowell



'Today we celebrated our two homies with an extra chromie and "Rocked our Socks" for Elly and Karsen.

We would like to thank Elly's parents for their generosity in giving extra socks to the staff and students who had forgotten, as well as for giving every staff member a little bag of DS swag and a DS bookmark to every child in the school to help educate them on kindness and how it's okay to be different.

Please remember, in a world where you can be anything, be KIND!'



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PETES team effort

PETES Community Congratulates Principal David McFall

David McFall received a surprising email during the March break that he had been nominated and awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal which recognizes the remarkable commitment and contributions of Canadians who are dedicated to their community. His name was submitted by a local Hull-Aylmer resident.

Mr. McFall was selected to receive this medal in recognition of his significant impact and dedication to the community. Created in honour of His Majesty King Charles III, this medal symbolizes the historic link between the Crown and Canadians who are actively committed to the well-being of our society.

The award is given to those who made a significant contribution to Canada or to a particular province, territory, region, or community of Canada, or who have made an outstanding achievement abroad that brings credit to Canada.

It embodies essential values such as leadership, generosity, and altruism, highlighting those who, through their actions, strengthen our community and inspire future generations. These qualities are evident in the work he does at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School where he approaches every task with vision and passion.

Earlier this week, David McFall received his medal from the Speaker of the House of Commons, Greg Fergus, at a reception in the West Block of Parliament. Mr. McFall has been the principal at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary since the fall of 2009. During his time at PETES, he has continued to view and see education through a new lens.

Mr. McFall is always looking for innovative and alternative ways with his staff to improve the overall student success. The staff and students at PETES are so proud of Mr. McFall's accomplishment and we are very fortunate to have a leader who cares so deeply about the staff, students, and community.

On behalf of his colleagues and community, we want to congratulate Mr. McFall on this well-deserved recognition. Thank you for your continued dedication and contribution to our school, community, and the Western Quebec School Board.



Stéphanie Frigon

GVS' Anti-Racism Week

During Anti-Racism Week 2025, our school participated in several impactful activities to promote unity and understanding.

Creative posters were made, showcasing powerful messages of inclusivity and respect. The week also featured a captivating hoop dance performance, which celebrated cultural diversity through the art of movement.



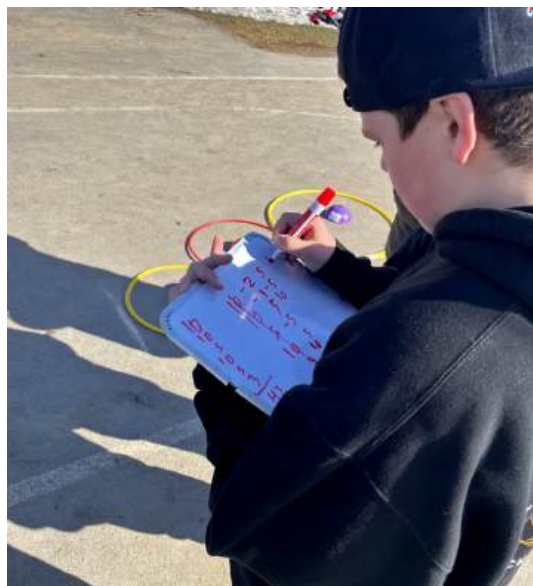
Students took part in the Gabriel Commanda Walk, a meaningful event that honored Indigenous heritage and raised awareness about racism.



Sofia Ferreira

Onslow Elementary School Celebrates International Math Day with Fun and Learning

On March 14th, Onslow Elementary School came together in a vibrant display of teamwork and enthusiasm to celebrate International Math Day, a day dedicated to promoting the joy of mathematics. The school organized two exciting math-themed activities that not only engaged students but also helped them see the fun side of math.



The first activity was a giant board game that took over the school's gymnasium.

The game was designed to get students moving while testing their math skills. Participants worked in teams, with each group navigating the oversized board by answering grade-appropriate math questions.

Each correct answer earned their team points, encouraging friendly competition and collaboration.



The older students took on the responsibility of reading questions to the younger students, allowing the younger ones to answer the questions on their own.

This created an atmosphere of mentorship and learning, as students of different ages came together to help each other. The second activity moved the action outdoors.

In this game, students threw bean bags into targets, each one marked with a different value, such as "+10" or "-1."

The goal was to reach a specific number, and the students had to strategize and make decisions about where to aim their throws in order to achieve that target. It was a lively, hands-on way for the students to practice addition and subtraction, all while enjoying some fresh air.

Ashley Maher-Costello

GTS Thunderbird Armwrestling

March 8th and 9th a portion of the GTS Thunderbird Armwrestling team attended the first ever World Junior Qualifier in Ottawa, ON. The team was comprised of a total of 6 athletes, who managed to bring home 2 gold, 6 silver, 4 Bronze. GTS also had an athlete win an award for good sportsmanship. As a team they ended up in 2nd place out of 22 teams that were in attendance.

This was the first tournament for all the athletes on the team, they have been preparing for this since the beginning of the year.

The GTS Thunderbirds are now in preparations for the Provincial Armwrestling



In addition to these activities, Onslow Elementary was thrilled to welcome two special guests to further enhance the Math Day celebrations. Jeff Harvey, one of the board math consultants, spent time with students in their classrooms, engaging them in math games that helped reinforce their skills in a fun and interactive way.

Meanwhile, Larissa Sansom, one of the school board's English language arts consultants visited classes to read math-themed books, helping to inspire a deeper connection to mathematics through storytelling. Their visits helped promote the importance of math both inside and outside the classroom, encouraging students to see math as an exciting and essential part of everyday life.



The celebration of International Math Day was more than just a day of fun—it was a meaningful opportunity for Onslow Elementary School to showcase how math can be both educational and entertaining.

Through teamwork, friendly competition, and hands-on activities, students experienced the excitement of mathematics in a whole new way. The entire school community came together to embrace the importance of math in our everyday lives, making this event a memorable one for all involved.

As Onslow Elementary continues to nurture a love for learning, it's clear that the spirit of collaboration and creativity is alive and well in the hearts of its students. Whether inside the classroom or out in the playground, math is an adventure that everyone can enjoy.



Championships that will take place April 18-20, 2025 in St-Hyacinthe, QC.

Congratulations to our GTS Thunderbirds!

Liora Richler

The WQCC's Health, Wellness and Resource Fair

Every two years, the Western Quebec Career Centre organizes a Health, Wellness and Resource fair to provide its students as well as the local community with an opportunity to learn about community partners and resources in the region.

This year on March 25th, our fair welcomed over 17 community partners including massage therapists from MassOterra, CISSSO, 811, Aire Ouverte, the Western Quebec Literacy Council and the Gatineau Friendship Centre. The fair also showcased the board's drug awareness resource counsellor Erika Tomkinson and our licensed practical nursing students, who spoke about the overall effects of smoking on one's health, the importance of handwashing as well as had a station on healthy eating, which included how sugar affects one's health.



Erica Tomkinson demonstrates the difference in lung capacity between healthy and unhealthy lungs.

The WQCC was also excited to welcome Connexions, Éducaloi, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi, L'autre chez soi, Jeunesse Idem, West Quebecers, Option Femmes Emploi, Ta voix tes choix and the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec. Our recreational Technician Samantha Nicholls will also be serving up healthy smoothies to students!

A huge thank you to the organizing team: Liora Richler, Samantha Nicholls, Alex Smith and Carley Earwaker, the staff caretakers Ali Assad and Rajae Kadaa who helped set up and clean up after the fair, all the student volunteers and finally the support of the WQCC's director, Damian Curley.

James Price

Buckingham Elementary's "We Choose Respect!" Campaign

Buckingham Elementary School recently hosted Anti-Bullying and Violence Prevention (ABVP) Week, an initiative dedicated to fostering respect, kindness, and inclusivity. From March 17 to 20, students, staff, and families participated in meaningful activities, each highlighting a different aspect of respect.



The week kicked off with a Gumboots African Culture Dance Workshop led by Just Aissi, encouraging diversity and self-expression through movement. Students also took part in Acts of Kindness Bingo, completing small gestures of goodwill, while a Book Read-Aloud on The Science of Kindness reinforced the power of positive interactions.

One of the most memorable events was Wednesday's Friendship Breakfast, where over

300 participants gathered in the gymnasium to share a meal, enjoy live music, and strengthen community connections. The week concluded with the unveiling of the 2024-2025 B.E.S. T-shirt design and a school-wide photo, reinforcing school spirit and unity.

Throughout the week, the theme "We Choose Respect" resonated in every activity. The school emphasized four key areas of respect: Respect for Differences, Respect for Others, Respect for Community, and Respect for Self. The ABVP Committee reminded everyone that respect is an ongoing commitment—one that extends beyond a single week and into daily life. By embracing these values, B.E.S. continues to cultivate a safe and supportive environment where everyone can thrive.

Thank you to everyone who made this week a success! Thank you to our ABVP Committee – Delorean Clark, Andrea Scholar, Tracy Charles, Christina Howard, Mathea Cardinal, & Amy Towle.

Julie Fram-Greig

Wakefield Elementary's Green Project Group

A small but mighty group of Wakefield students, along with the support of several community members, have been working on different environmental projects at the school that are having a great impact. A few years ago, they helped plant a MicroForest in front of the school as part of a goal to green our school and community.

Recently, they were concerned about the outdoor lights on the building stunting the growth of the trees. After presenting their points and research supporting their suggestion, they wrote a letter to the school board asking to have the light turned off and they did- a great example of taking initiative to help the environment! Their next project was a meeting with the mayor of La Peche (photo attached).

M Lamoureux has asked the students to create a chair that will sit in the municipal council chambers as a reminder to those adults who are making decisions to consider student voice. These students are learning to advocate for their world, making an impact one small project at a time!



Erica Tomkinson

Pontiac Girls, D'Arcy and Philemon Boys Play Rugby in South Carolina



After two days of travelling by bus, our hyped up and energized high school athletes not only got to play rugby but had the opportunity to stay with local Mount Pleasant families while visiting. The families went above and beyond to show our athletes South Carolina hospitality, introducing students to different foods, lifestyles, local slang and more.

Game 1 was livestreamed and the athletes could feel their friends and family's support and cheering from afar. This boosted morale and made a big difference! You can watch the boys' game [here](#) and the girls' game [here](#).

Game 2 was all about pushing the limits and working together. The games were a challenge for both teams, but one that the students benefited from. Our athletes were learning as they went, pushing hard, and not giving up; showing no fear. Both matches were tight and had close final scores, showing the fight to win was real.

All four games played were a coaching challenge; everything from playing on turf to the "on-the-fly" instructions and the coaches did not disappoint. The opposing teams were rated number 1 & 2 in the state of South Carolina, requiring strong and supportive coaching and that is exactly what the athletes received. Well done Craig Totten, Nick Mosher, Reece Bastien and Phil Holmes!

Although rugby was the main reason to travel south, the athletes were able to soak in some Charleston culture as well.

Visits to historically rich areas such as the downtown core, Patriots Point Naval, the Maritime Museum, Bull Dog ghost tours and Middleton Place (plantation). They were also able to squeeze in two visits to the beach to soak in the sun.

The time that it takes to organize, plan and arrange this type of cross border trip is incredible. On behalf of all the athletes, the families who hosted, the chaperones and our bus driver Dan, we recognize and appreciate ALL the efforts and sacrifices. Thank you!



Larissa Sansom

WQSB Teachers Reflect on the 2025 Reading for the Love of It Conference

The Reading for the Love of It (RFTLOI) conference, a highly anticipated annual event hosted by the East York-Scarborough Reading Association, once again provided an incredible opportunity for educators to deepen their understanding of literacy instruction. This year, 19 teachers and professionals from the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) attended, continuing a trend of increased participation over the past decade. As interest in the conference grows, more and more WQSB educators are recognizing the value of this professional development experience and the wealth of inspiration it brings.



The 2025 conference featured an impressive lineup of keynote speakers:

- **Emmanuel Jal:** A former child soldier from South Sudan, Emmanuel Jal shared his transformative journey from conflict to peace, offering insights into resilience and purpose. His message resonated deeply with attendees, inspiring many to reflect on the power of education and empathy.
- **Mélanie Watt:** Renowned for her children's books, including the "Scaredy Squirrel" series, Mélanie Watt discussed her creative process and the inspiration behind her beloved characters. Her session captivated educators, providing fresh perspectives on engaging young readers.
- **Zarqa Nawaz:** Creator of "Little Mosque on the Prairie," Zarqa Nawaz shared her experiences growing up as a Muslim in Canada and her journey as an artist. Her talk highlighted the importance of diverse narratives in literature and media.
- **Niigaan Sinclair:** A prominent Indigenous scholar and writer, Niigaan Sinclair addressed the significance of Indigenous voices in literature and education, challenging educators to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching practices.
- **Brian Selznick:** An author and Caldecott Medal winning illustrator, renowned for his illustrations of children's books and writing of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, *Wonderstruck*, and *The Houdini Box*, just to name a few, highlighted his unique journey as an author and illustrator celebrating inventive storytelling and the power of books to bring us together.

These keynote sessions, along with over 70 unique workshops, provided attendees with a wealth of knowledge and practical strategies to enhance their literacy programs

Teacher favourites did not disappoint this year - renowned experts such as Jennifer Seravallo, Penny Kittle, and Adrienne Gear led sessions on everything from promoting a love of literature to building essential reading and writing skills. These thoughtful leaders provided practical tools and fresh perspectives, equipping attendees with new ideas to bring back to their classrooms. The energy in the rooms was palpable, and attendees walked away with a toolbox of new ideas to implement in their own classrooms.

According to Janet Bagshaw of Golden Valley School, "Attending the Reading for the Love of It Conference has long been a highlight of my professional development. Every time that I attend, I come away with new knowledge, strategies, insights and resources that I am able to immediately apply to my practice and share with colleagues. The opportunity to continue to learn about teaching literacy across the curriculum and beyond is invaluable."

For S. Guthrie of Chelsea Elementary School, the conference continues to be a source of both inspiration and practical learning: "Every year, I'm reminded why so many people are drawn to RFTLOI. No matter how many times I go, I always walk away with something new—whether it's a fresh idea, a different way of thinking, or just a good dose of inspiration. And honestly, some of the best takeaways or 'nuggets' come from the sessions I least expect. It's proof that there's always something to learn every year!"

Lisa Silver from Golden Valley School echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing how the conference reignites her passion for teaching: "I love the RFTLOI conference. It's such a rich learning experience and I appreciate how the conference explores all the ways reading connects to teaching. It reinvigorates my love of teaching ELA, and I always come back excited to try new things with my students."

Beyond the sessions themselves, the sense of community among the WQSB attendees was a highlight of the event. Alexandra Woloschuk of Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School expressed how the shared experience of learning and

connecting with colleagues helped deepen their sense of collaboration: “It is with appreciation a group of WQSB staff was able to attend the literacy conference, Reading For The Love Of It.

Throughout engaging and informative workshops, we were able to listen to well-known authors and educators sharing their expertise. The best part was the camaraderie amongst WQSB staff. We came away invigorated with new ideas and strategies eager to spread within our schools.”

As WQSB’s attendance at RFTLOI has steadily increased over the past 10 years, it is clear that the conference has become an essential part of the district’s commitment to professional growth and literacy development. Teachers who attended this year’s event returned to their classrooms with a renewed sense of purpose and fresh ideas to inspire their students.

For those who haven’t yet attended, the Reading for the Love of It conference is an opportunity that educators won’t want to miss. Consider joining next year’s event and be part of this exciting, inspiring experience. Whether you’re looking to refresh your teaching strategies or simply connect with like-minded educators, RFTLOI offers something for everyone.



Jeff Harvey

From Memorization to Mastery: A Focus on Math Fact Fluency

We all know someone who struggles with math. Not because they don’t understand the approach, but because they struggle with fluency of math facts.

“My teacher never taught me the 13 times tables!” Wouldn’t it be better to hear a student say, “Let me see... I know 8×10 is 80, and 8×3 is 24. So, 8×13 must be $80 + 24$, which is 104! I figured it out!”

What is Math Fact Fluency?

The above example is math fluency. It isn’t about memorization—it’s about having a repertoire of efficient strategies to solve the fact you are given. Doubling, using benchmarks, and recognizing partner facts are just a few examples of useful strategies. When students focus on strategic thinking, accuracy and speed naturally improve over time and with practice.

At the WQSB, we are committed to developing fact fluency in both classrooms and professional learning communities. Last year, all Grade 4 math teachers participated in a two-day workshop to explore this approach and apply it in their classrooms.

This year, Grade 3 teachers engaged in two full-day sessions, where they explored fact fluency, worked with the Fact Tactics program, and tested engaging games and tasks for their students.

Above: Jody Schindel and Bridget Fournier from Greater Gatineau smiling while discussing applying the program in their classrooms.

Melissa Russell, a participating Lord Aylmer teacher and leader in this initiative, shared her experience “This approach has been successful in my class because



students keep linking new facts to those they know. They are doing this with their own strategies, which helps them build understanding. Instead of just remembering facts, they actually know them. This is well worth the investment. It takes some time, but you’ll see results”

If you are curious about how math fact fluency is being developed in our classrooms, talk to a Grade 3 or 4 math teacher—they will be able to tell you about their learning and the strategies they are using with students.



Erin Millar

April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day

This month we celebrate the growing list of books from Autistic authors and creators, and books about the Autistic experience; those written as mirrors, as well as those that serve as windows. A short but sweet list this month, to add to the much longer list from last year – which you can find [here](#).

- *A Rainbow in Your Cloud* by Amina Mucciolo
- *A Kid's Book About Autism*, by Justin P. Flood and David Flood
- *Bitsy Bat, Team Star* by Kaz Windness
- *BAT and the Business of Ferrets* by Elana K. Arnold
- *About the Boy* by Leah Nicole Whitcomb
- *The Autistic Teen Girl's School Survival Guide* by Gracie Barlow
- *Canadian Celebrations series: Autism Acceptance Month* by Olivia Saunders

And, coming later this year:

- *The Girl in the Walls* by Meg Eden Kuyatt
- *Go-Man, Champion of Earth* by Hamish Steele
- *The Young Person's Guide to Autistic Burnout* by Viv Dawes



Lee Randall

Virtual Library Spotlight : World Almanac

World Almanac is an online multimedia encyclopedia and comes in two versions: World Almanac Kids (for elementary) and World Almanac secondary.

Students can search for specific subjects or browse by topic. All articles have read-to-me functionality as well as the ability to print, email, and save articles. Access outside of school requires special log-in credentials: username: wqsb ; password: wqsb1



Lisa Diner & Stuart Gray

Did You Know?



Our WQSB EdTech website contains lots more than just resources on the hardware and software used across the board?

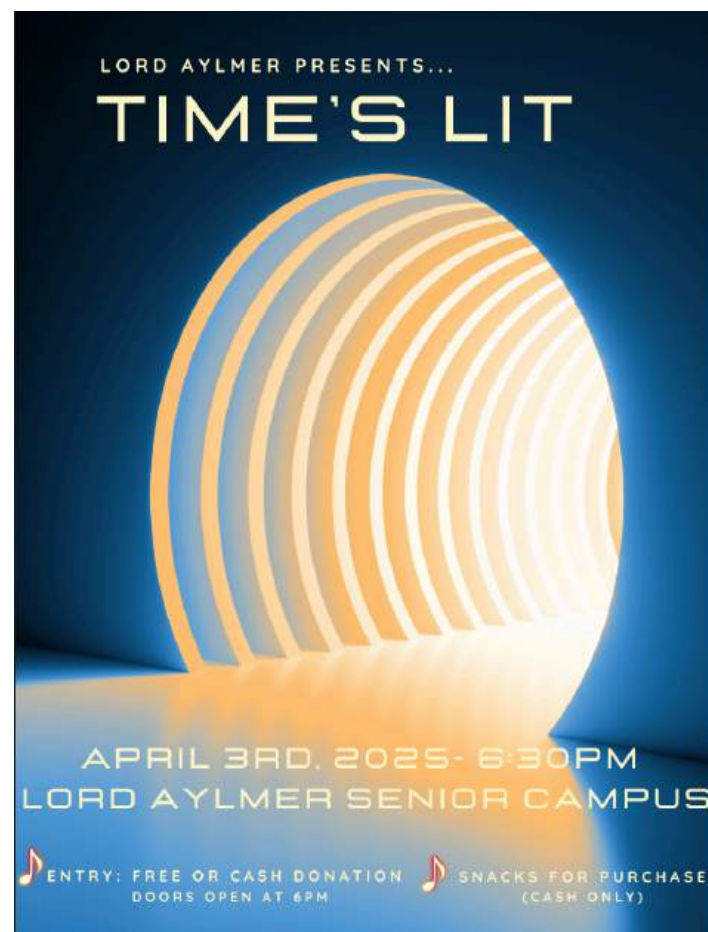
You can view recordings of all online PD sessions that have taken place this year in the PD section of [our homepage](#).

You can also see a live view of our calendar availability and book times that work for you for professional learning or to address technology questions you may have. This can also be done for your cycle team, department, PLC's, full staff, or also for workshops during class time with your students: edtech.westernquebec.ca/services

As always, please feel free to reach out to your EdTech Consultants, [Lisa Diner](#) and [Stuart Gray](#), with any questions you have.

Coming Up at Lord Aylmer...

Open to the public!
Join L.A. for an evening of
dramatics, fun and laughter!



Coming up at Eardley Elementary...



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Found in the WQSB Time Capsule...



This little girl, seen here enjoying the riverside of her childhood home in Shawinigan, has always been a nature lover. and continues planning regular weekend hikes with friends. Fluently bilingual, she is a proud product of the English school system in Québec. She is a cat-lover, a fanatic fan of the New Kids on the Block, and immerses herself in anything related to federal politics, once campaigning step-by-step, with the 20 Prime Minister of Canada.

She began her career with the WQSB, as an attendant at PETES in August 2008. By March, she was hired in the tax department at the board office and moved to support the General Directorate in 2017. She is action-oriented, more than a little excited about document formatting, highly competent and has a great sense of humour. She is very involved in all aspects of the organization, actively participating in Destination Imagination, social committee, United Way, OHS, and is the local president of AQCS. She is a perfect example of dedication, lifelong learning, service and a valuable member of the WQSB team.

THANK YOU

We extend our gratitude to our contributors this month

George Singfield, Ashley Maher-Costello, Erica Tomkinson, Erin Millar, Oulissati Bérénice Elvira Salia, Fatima Sow, James Price, Julie Fram-Greig, Jeff Harvey, Krystal Boutin, Larissa Sansom, Laura D'Alessandro, Liora Richler, Lisa Diner, PETES team, Sofia Ferreira, Stephanie Frigon, Stuart Gray and Sunglee Randall.

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



Gazette created by Fatima Sow & Laura D'Alessandro