

## A Message from George



**Dear WQSB Staff,**

Having worked in our school board for several years, I often meet former students. I thoroughly enjoy this, as it offers me the opportunity to not only hear about what they have done since leaving high school, but also, in almost all cases, witness how they have become successful and happy with what they are doing career wise.

Such an occasion occurred last weekend, during which time the former student, now a grown adult with a family spoke admiringly about the impact that staff members had on them while at school.

It was so nice to hear the former student reminisce about their challenges and how these were supported by teachers, support staff, professionals, and administrators. They spoke about the school secretary who made phone calls in the morning to make certain they came to school...the math teacher who refused to give in until the student understood a specific concept...the guidance counsellor who assisted with selection for post-secondary studies...the technician who listened when they needed a listener.

I vowed to reach to each of the individuals the former student spoke of and share what they had said to me about the impact the individuals had on them. I share this story with all of you however, as I believe that we often do not realize the impact that the smallest gestures have on our students. We work in an organization that manufactures small gestures on a daily basis, often without realizing it.

I thank you all individually and as a group for the time and effort you take with our students, and I do sincerely hope that you have the opportunity to bump into them years later so that they may tell you firsthand how you made a difference in their lives.

Take good care,



## Laura D'Alessandro Cultural Festival at Hadley Junior/Philemon Wright High School



Cultural diversity across the Western Québec School Board is a strength that schools and centres greatly value, take pride in and celebrate throughout the school year in many creative ways. Fresh initiatives and events are always in the works as both staff members and students think of new approaches to educate, celebrate and open minds.

Last year at Hadley Junior/Philemon Wright High School, student life animator Mario Cuglietta was approached by two students with the idea of hosting a cultural festival. Immediately, Mr. Cuglietta thought this was a great initiative and planning took off shortly thereafter.

This April, the school hosted its 2nd Cultural Festival with great success. Participants proudly showcased cultures from Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, Poland and Africa. There were also tables hosted by the student-led Bear Lodge as well as the Congo and the Muslim student alliances. There was also a special LGBTQ+ table with a long banner for both staff and students to write their answer to the question, “What is an ally?”

The Muslim Student Alliance (MSA), dedicated to educating the school community and leading numerous activities to effect change in society, was also a popular table for visitors...

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

Spotlight		
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Sofia Ferreira

Earth Day

On Earth Day, the kindergarten students at Onslow set out on an exciting nature adventure into the forest behind their school. Equipped with their brand-new adventure bags filled with magnifying glasses, monoculars, and bug catchers, the young explorers eagerly investigated the wonders of the woods.



As they wandered beneath the trees, they collected pine needles, spruce needles, leaves, sticks, and pinecones, carefully choosing natural treasures for their Earth Day art project.

Back in the classroom, they transformed their findings into a beautiful masterpiece that celebrated the earth and all its natural beauty.



Carolynne Ball

A Harmonious Victory in the Heart of Toronto

The D' Arcy McGee Senior Concert Band recently earned a Silver Standard at the prestigious North American Heritage Music Festival in Toronto, a remarkable achievement showcasing their talent and hard work.



Additionally, Grade 10 student Dimitri Tofan was honored with the Outstanding Achievement Award for the entire festival, recognizing his exceptional skill and dedication.

During the festival, the band had the rare opportunity to collaborate with esteemed professors from the University of Toronto, the University of Texas, and the University of Alberta, all under the direction of Ms Carolynne Ball.

This experience allowed the students to refine their skill, participate in inspiring workshops, and perform at a world-class level.

Julia Horner

Connection Through Inclusion



Connection Through Inclusion is a new initiative that Eardley is hosting for children with special needs. This initiative includes students from Eardley, South Hull, Lord Aylmer and PETES.

Facilitated by parent-volunteer Ryan Sullivan, the children and their families take part in various physical activities and games. This initiative gives both the participating children and their families a chance to connect and build community.

Earley is hoping to spread the word and get even more families involved.





Ginger Howell

## Onslow Circles of Care Community Gatherings

The classroom community gatherings, organized by Onslow Elementary School teachers and principal Cathy Nugent, with support from a grant through the Connexions program was a hit amongst participating parents.

In the months of October, December and January, parents and teachers of the K4/K5, grade 1/2, and grade 2/3 classes gathered on three evenings at the school to share a meal and experience “A Day in the Life” of classroom activities. Teachers and students led the parents through a diverse range of experiences, from morning circle time to lively singing (and even jigging), to Robotics lessons, French circle time and crafts.

There was even a winter wonderland outing, which involved visiting the school yard snow sculptures, followed by a magical promenade in the dark in the forest behind the school.

“We wanted parents to join their children in some fun-filled learning at school,” shared grade 2/3 teacher, Louise Barette. “Parents got to experience our morning routine, just like the kids do it,” added the grade 1/2 teacher, Selina Gervais. Kindergarten French teacher Ginger Howell was delightfully surprised by the amount of laughter and joking that accompanied the circle time. “I knew our French lesson was enjoyable for the children but throw a few parents into the mix and it was downright funny. I appreciated getting to know them and spending time doing a fun activity together.”



In February, guest speaker Nathalie Gagnon presented on the topic of “Navigating Big Emotions with Children” to Onslow teachers and parents. She spoke about the importance of connection, co-regulation and well-being. Both teachers and parents asked questions, shared experiences and spoke about the powerful benefits of gratitude.

Everyone became peers in the collective effort to support the children and each other to be their best selves.



The goal of this project was to foster relationships between parents, between parents and teachers and to strengthen bonds between parents and children. “I enjoyed meeting the parents of the children in my daughter’s class.

She is very social but some of her friends are new to the area, and I don’t know the parents,” shared one parent. Principal Cathy Nugent saw it as an opportunity to renew home and school ties that had been strong before Covid.

Reflecting on the evenings of activities, Ms. Nugent said, “The radiant pride on our students’ faces will remain etched in our memories. Parents expressed immense joy in returning to witness their children’s accomplishments, while our dedicated teachers invested their hearts into the event, transforming it from a simple school gathering into a heartfelt reunion of family and community. It was more than an event—it was an opportunity for families to learn alongside their children and see firsthand the growth happening in our classrooms.”

Feelings of inclusion, belonging, being known, respected and cared for are all wonderful outcomes of connecting with community.

We would like to thank the Connexions project for the funding to make the Circles of Care Community Gatherings possible.

Amanda Drury

## St. Michael’s Students Explore Economics and Indigenous Teachings in Ottawa

A group of 27 Secondary 3 students from St. Michael’s High School recently visited the Bank of Canada Museum in Ottawa for an engaging, hands-on workshop surrounding inflation and the economy. During the workshop, students even had to problem solve their way through unprecedented 100% inflation!

After the workshop, the group took time to explore the area around Parliament Hill, taking in the historic landmarks and snapping creative photos that reflect the Seven Grandfather Teachings—Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth. These teachings have been a central part of their English curriculum this term.





Nancy Peterson  
**A Busy Start to Spring at the PCEC**



April has been a busy month for the students at the Pontiac Continuing Education Centre. They started the month by celebrating Spring with our “Spring Fling”. Staff and students spent the afternoon at the local sugar shack at Pine Lodge.

Everyone got to enjoy a BBQ lunch followed by maple taffy and ice cream. While at Pine Lodge students learnt about the maple syrup making process and got to go on a wagon ride around the property to see all the taps.

The next two activities were based on the important skill of getting a job. Students participated in a workshop on job interviews organized by the Carrefour Jeunesse, and it was a follow-up workshop to an earlier one on resume writing.

The workshop allowed students to practice answering those ‘tricky’ interview questions and the interviewer, a local businessperson, gave immediate feedback to their answers. Shortly after this workshop, students were able to put their new-found interview skills to use by participating in a virtual job fair.



Last but not least, to get everyone in the mood for Easter, the centre organized an Easter egg hunt that involved solving problems, coordination and physical prowess. The Easter bunny was very cunning and some of the eggs proved to be challenging, but eventually there were some ‘winners’ who took home the obligatory chocolate bunny or lamb!

Tracy Hodgson-Drysdale  
**Feeling Grateful at Queen Elizabeth**

Over the past month at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School, we have been working on raising money to support causes close to our hearts. Two charitable causes in particular have changed lives in our community: Enfant Soleil and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.



Enfant Soleil is a charitable foundation that supports the medical community in providing specialized healthcare for children as well as support for families.

One of our students has benefited from this support firsthand, and to show their gratitude, they and their family have raised thousands of dollars for the organization! They asked the school community to join their latest fundraising initiative, so Queen E hosted a pajama day and asked students to donate \$2. As a school with less than 100 students, we are proud to have raised just over \$275!

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada provides care for many Canadians, including Queen E family members and members of our local community. To support this cause, we will participate in Jump Rope for Heart at the end of April.

We have been practicing our jump rope skills all month and we are all healthier for our efforts. Now we are eager to band together as a school and see how close we can get to our goal of raising \$500.



We are fortunate to have wonderful organizations that support life-changing healthcare, and we are forever grateful for the research they do and the lives they change every single day.



Vanessa Turner

Swim to Survive Program at Eardley

This year, Eardley Elementary grade three students took part in the Swim to Survive program. Our physical education teacher, Sherry McCorkell and our Community Development Agent, Vanessa Turner worked hard at making the program come to life. Students from four different classes were given the opportunity to partake in this important and informative program.



Vanessa Turner demonstrates ice safety techniques and strategies

The program aims to prevent drowning as well as help students gain confidence in the water. Students are given four in-class lessons about water safety and are then able to practice those skills at the public pool. Students make the trek on foot from Eardley Elementary to Paul Pelletier Aquatic Centre.

With trained Eardley staff, they hop in the pool in separate groups to practice different skills such as treading water, floating on their back, swimming 50 metres, rolling into deep water and even simulated ice safety!



Sherry McCorkell teaches students several different swimming strokes

Students worked hard at practicing different water safety skills and mustering up the courage to try something new or jump into a pool for the first time! Swim to Survive is a great program funded by the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère l'Enseignement supérieur. Eardley staff are grateful to be in walking distance of the Paul Pelletier Aquatic Centre and plan to take advantage of this program for years to come.



Brad Snooks teaches students how to float in the water

Tasha Ausman and Sophie Olberg

Hadley/Philemon Band achieves silver at the National Capital Music Festival



The Hadley/Philemon Band, directed by Sophie Olberg and Tasha Ausman, participated for the first time in the National Capital Music Festival (Kiwanis). The bands category this year was held at Sacred Heart School in Stittsville, on March 25, 2025. The Kiwanis Festival draws bands from programs around the entire National Capital Region to participate in graded categories and receive feedback from esteemed adjudicators.

The band played Yukiko Nishimura's Blessing Wind and Carol Britten Chambers' Byzantine Dances, reinforcing its commitment to representing women and diverse composers. The band received excellent feedback following the performance in a short workshop from adjudicator Dr. Rebecca Phillips, renowned music pedagogue and Director of Bands at Colorado State University. The Hadley-Philemon band is pleased to have earned a silver in the grade 2 Secondary Bands category and to have represented both Hadley-Philemon Wright Schools and Western Quebec School Board.

The band's upcoming performances include a tour to four elementary schools on April 8-9 and a final concert at St. Joseph's Church in downtown Ottawa on May 5th, 2025. They hope to see you there!



Photos submitted by Kelly Butler  
**Volleyball Tournament at Chelsea Elementary**





Laura D'Alessandro

## The Recognition of Acquired Competencies Service at the WQSB

The Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) is a program provided to offer recognition of prior learning and competencies as a regular service in knowledge, competencies and skills as well as works to bridge any gaps in education or training that may exist. Upon completion, students receive an official diploma from the Ministry of Education in Quebec.



After centre hours, experienced educators Bonnie McLachlin and Heidi Hall serve as RAC counsellors, along with a team of content experts, providing invaluable guidance and support to students throughout the entire recognition of acquired competencies process.

From the initial stages of assessment to program completion, they serve as key resource persons, ensuring that each student receives the necessary support to succeed. Given the diverse backgrounds of RAC students—including those who have relocated to Québec from other provinces or countries—individualized learning pathways are designed to align with their specific knowledge and skills.

The duration of the RAC process is tailored to each student’s prior work experience and professional competencies. Once an assessment is completed, content experts develop a customized program and placement schedule that accommodates the student’s individual needs and pace. There are no fixed deadlines, allowing students

the flexibility to progress at a rate that suits their personal and professional commitments. This approach ensures that each student receives a structured yet adaptable learning experience that supports their success.

The RAC service is incredibly accessible to individuals in need of having their competencies officially recognized. It gives adults a way to enter the workforce in their field of vocational or technical expertise in an efficient and well-structured way. Due to this, the RAC process at the WQSB has had many successful graduates over the years.



Yifan Liu, a recent RAC graduate, went through the program to obtain her DEP in Accounting so that she could secure a teaching license. Her motivation for completing the RAC process stemmed from her role as a vocational teacher, where she realized she wanted to make teaching in the vocational education sector her lifelong career.

“Throughout the process, my counsellor was incredibly supportive, always maintaining a positive and professional attitude. They were quick to respond to any questions I had and provided clear guidance every step of the way. Their dedication made the experience even more seamless.” With her content expert’s support and guidance, Ms. Liu succeeded in her goal and currently teaches in the Commerce program at the Western Québec Career Centre.

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

Matthew Russell

## Historical Thinking in Practice

In March, WQSB teachers from the first cohort of Historical Thinking in Practice completed their first of two years in the program. The Historical Thinking in Practice PD series consists of 12 days of in-person sessions over 2 years for grade 9 and 10 history teachers and has been developed specifically by the anglophone community to meet the needs of our teachers and students.

The sessions, led by Dr. Cate Duquette and supported by social studies consultants, focus on deepening student engagement and understanding

through the six concepts of Historical Thinking. During the workshops, teachers work on the key understandings of historical thinking, test different hands-on learning activities, and have time to work in teams, building their own lessons using what they have learned.

If you are a grade 9 or 10 history teacher who is interested in participating in cohort 2 and would like more information, please contact Matt Russell, Social Studies Consultant at [mrussell@wqsb.qc.ca](mailto:mrussell@wqsb.qc.ca)





Sarah Kobia

WQSB at Springboards Presents the Hacking Talk Guide - An Inter-Board PDIG Collaboration



At this year’s Springboards Conference at McGill University, WQSB participated in presenting The Hacking Talk Guide, a resource featuring ways to level up your teaching of talk in the ELA secondary classroom!

The creation of this guide was a product of a collaborative inter-board PDIG project involving the work of teachers and consultants across three school boards, notably two of WQSB’s very own incredible ELA teachers, David Millard and Allison McLaughlin, along with ELA consultant Sarah Kobia.

This year’s Springboards presentation celebrated the positive impact this collaborative work has had in shaping the teaching and evaluation practices of what is often deemed a challenging competency to navigate within ELA.

Allison McLaughlin, a grade 8 ELA teacher at Dr. Wilbert Keon offered these reflections on her experience:

“The Hacking Talk PDIG was a phenomenal professional development experience as it gathered PED consultants and teachers across Quebec to collaborate and explore the teaching and learning involved in the Talk Competency. We understand how talk underpins almost all that we do in teaching and learning but what I found most interesting was exploring the skills and strategies for explicitly TEACHING talk.

The concrete supnd learning but what I found most port in the Hacking Talk Guide supports teachers to strategically plan, teach and assess talk in the classroom with more clarity, structure and confidence.”

This PDIG project created an open forum for exploring what talk looks like in our classrooms and what kind of explicit teaching is needed to build student talk skills, stamina and enable focused academic conversations.

David Millard, a Grade 8 ELA teacher at Hadley Junior High, thoughtfully captured the process and impact of this initiative: “Over the course of our meetings, we drew upon research, best practices and our own experiences to create a helpful, hands-on document that would be useful for new and experienced teachers alike.

Throughout this process I grew immensely as an educator. I was inspired to try new methods and activities with my students, and reflect on their efficacy. As teachers we preach the merits of learning by doing, of taking risks, and of seeing failure as part of the learning process. Often, though, we also veer away from incorporating this philosophy into our own practice.

The experience of taking part in this PDIG pushed me out of my comfort

zone and into a place that allowed me to improve as a teacher and leader. As we researched new pedagogy and experimented with new strategies in the classroom, we were able to incorporate our findings into the document that we eventually produced.

This is one of the main reasons that I am proud of the Hacking Talk Guide that we developed; it is authentic to real world classroom experiences and built on genuine successes and failures.”

Whether you find yourself teaching secondary ELA or teaching within other subject areas, this guide offers tangible strategies for engaging secondary learners in effective methods of talk, from setting the stage for talk using various seating configurations to trying out a physical goal setting notebook, this guide nails down all aspects of creating an environment that fosters conversations and draws on the latest talk tools.

We invite you to jump on in, take risks alongside us as we work to enable our students to use and see the value of their own voice!

Click [HERE](#) to check out the Hacking Talk Guide

Click [HERE](#) to explore the latest Oracy Resources on Literacy Today.



## Peer-to-Peer Nominations Are In!

This year’s Peer-to-Peer Recognition program has received 108 nominations!

This initiative highlights the outstanding contributions of individuals across our school and center communities. The breakdown of nominees includes:

- 36 Support Staff
- 54 Teachers
- 10 Management Team Members
- 8 Professionals
- 9 from the Adult and Vocational Education Sector

Each nominee was recognized by their colleagues for exemplifying character, professionalism, commitment to student success and well-being, engagement, leadership, and mentorship. They have also demonstrated a deep dedication to equity, diversity, inclusion, and fostering a positive and supportive work environment.

In May, the Director General Roadshow will visit schools and centres to celebrate nominees alongside their peers. Specific dates and details will be communicated through your principals, center directors, and supervisors.

Congratulations to all nominees! You were honoured by heartfelt words from your colleagues that reflect the meaningful impact you make every day.



## Updated Accident and Incident Report Forms

The Employee Accident and Incident Report Forms have recently been updated and are accessible at all schools and centres.



If you experience workplace accident or incident—no matter how minor—please take a moment to complete the form. Reporting helps us maintain a safe and supportive work environment for everyone. Thank you for your cooperation in helping keep our workplaces safe.

## DPR Update



The Dispute Prevention and Resolution (DPR) steering committee at the WQSB has been working hard to take DPR at our board to the next level. After receiving a baseline of training on DPR systems across all employment classifications and representation over the last few years, we are focusing on a local approach that opens the system up to wider practices involving more employees.

Along with those who have been trained over the last two years, we have approximately 20 new facilitators in training. All of this is led by our head educator, Kathlene Vibert, and supported by resolution consultants, Spiralix. We will be sharing more training opportunities in 2025-2026. Please watch this space for our list of new facilitators and other upcoming events as we reaffirm our commitment to DPR.

## Did You Know?

The WQSB partners with Telus Health to offer all employees access to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) — a free, confidential service supporting your mental, physical, social, and financial well-being.

### TELUS Health - WQSB Training Session

#### Program Highlights:

- Available 24/7 in English and French
- Up to 6 hours of support per person, including spouse/common-law partner, dependents living in the same household, and dependents pursuing full-time post-secondary education (up to 25 years of age)
- Benefit from discounts from many popular retailers

To get started, download the TELUS Health One app or visit: [www.one.telushealth.com](http://www.one.telushealth.com) or by calling: 1-833-711-2327.





Erin Millar

Graphic Novels Are Real Books



Graphic novels are for every reader, at every age. To suggest they are not “real books” is not only reductive, but a deep misunderstanding of the richness of visual storytelling. In terms of diversity of story and character and the benefits these books offer readers, I would argue that they are a necessary component of any library, whether it’s the school library or your classroom library.

Graphic novels help to improve visual literacy and critical thinking, the art allows a deeper understanding and interpretation of the narrative, and they get readers excited to share and talk about reading. Graphic novels often use the same literary devices as prose books, such as symbolism, foreshadowing, and metaphor and have won literary awards.

The myth that reading graphic novels isn’t real reading persists, even alongside the popularity and growth of storytelling in this visual medium, and so I wanted to focus this month’s list on some incredible graphic novels.

Middle Grade – Fiction and Non-Fiction

- Click, by Kayla Miller (book one of a series)
- Twins, by Varian Johnson\*
- Measuring Up, by Lily LaMotte\*
- El Deafo, by Cece Bell (2015 Newbery Honor Book)\*
- Just Roll with It, by Lee Durfie Lavoie
- New Kid, by Jerry Craft (book one of a series, 2020 Newbery Medal Winner,



2020 Coretta Scott King Book Awards Author Award, etc.)\*

- Mexikid: A Graphic Memoir, by Pedro Martín (2024 Newbery Honor Book)
- Living with Viola, by Rosena Fung
- A First Time for Everything, by Dan Santat (National Book Award Winner)
- Cross My Heart and Never Lie, by Nora Dåsnes (Stonewall Book Award

High School – Fiction and Non-Fiction

- A Silent Voice, by Yoshitoki Oima (Manga)\*
- Speak: The Graphic Novel, by Laurie Halse Anderson\*
- If I Go Missing, by Brianna Jonnie with Nahanni Shingoose\*
- Surviving the City, by Tasha Spillett (book one in a series)
- Hey, Kiddo, by Jarrett J. Krosoczka (followed up by Sunshine)
- Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, by Art Spiegelman (Pulitzer Prize Winner)\*
- Hungry Ghost, by Victoria Ying\*
- Huda F Are You? By Huda Fahmy
- The Deep Dark, by Molly Knox Ostertag (2025 Michael L. Printz Honor Book)\*

- The Nameless City, by Faith Erin Hicks (book one in a series)\*

\* indicates the title is also available in French

Lee Randall

Virtual Library Spotlight: Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada

The Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada is a fully bilingual online resource of four separate volumes: Truth and Reconciliation, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. These resources provide Indigenous perspectives shared through maps, artwork, history and culture.



The resource is appropriate for upper elementary and secondary students and does not require any log-in credentials.



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## Found in the WQSB Time Capsule...



This extroverted little girl was born and raised in Montréal and moved to the Outaouais in 1998 when her husband got a job in the area. She continued her education here, attending Cégep first, and after five years at Revenu Québec, went back to school at the Université du Québec en Outaouais.

She started in the education system in 2012, working at the Centre de services scolaire au Coeur-des-Vallées and the Centre de services scolaire des Draveurs. She has a knack for numbers and has been at the WQSB's central office since November 2020.

When she was young, she was so sociable that her mother had to put a sign around her neck that said to not let her in. Though she no longer has to wear a sign around her neck, that sociability remained. She is a welcome sight, often popping into her colleagues' offices with a big smile to say hello.

## THANK YOU

We extend our gratitude to our contributors this month

*George Singfield, Amanda Drury, Carolynne Ball, Claudia Loschmann, Erin Millar, Fatima Sow, Julia Horner, Kelly Butler, Krystal Boutin, Laura D'Alessandro, Matthew Russell, Nancy Peterson, Patrick Hall, Sarah Kobia, Sofia Ferreira, Sophie Olberg, Sunglee Randall, Tasha Ausman, Tracy Hodgson-Drysdale and Vanessa Turner.*

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



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