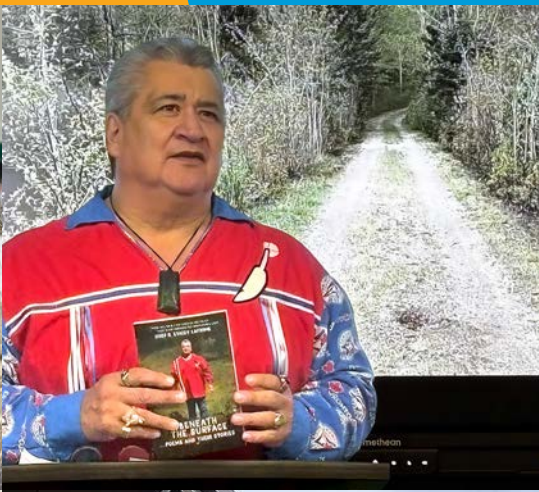




# Summer - Fall 2025

# Director of Education Highlights

June | September | October | November



# Introduction

**E**very day, I am inspired by the incredible work across the Grand Erie District School Board. With a vision to learn, lead, and inspire, we see innovative learning experiences, student achievements, staff excellence and community partnerships shaping the future of education.

As we support more than 28,000 students across 58 elementary and 14 secondary schools, Grand Erie focuses on building a culture of learning, well-being, and belonging for all. This is made possible by a dedicated team of more than 3,700 educators and support staff, whose commitment to student success is at the heart of everything we do.

Each month, I share a Director's Report with the Board of Trustees, highlighting the progress, successes, and milestones shaping Grand Erie. We thank students, families and staff for sharing their incredible work and accomplishments with us. We will bring those stories together, offering a window into the classroom, into this publication and share with the Grand Erie community in the Fall, Winter and Spring.

I invite you to explore this edition and celebrate the many ways Grand Erie schools and students are growing, innovating, and thriving.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

## **Dr. JoAnna Roberto, PhD**

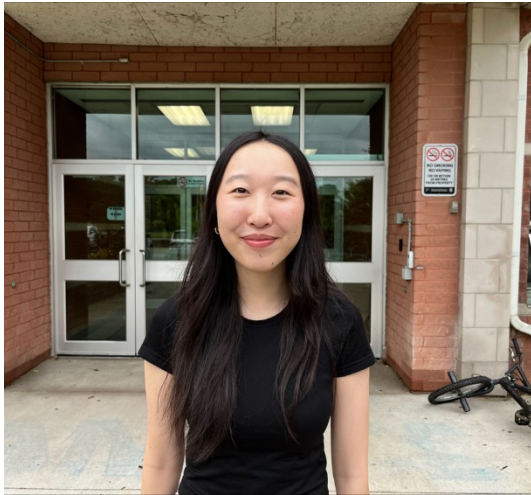
Director of Education-CEO and Secretary of the Board  
Grand Erie District School Board



# June 2025



# June 2025



## Scholarship Winners

Not one but two Grand Erie students are recipients of Schulich Leader scholarships, valued at an incredible \$100,000. Judy Gao, a Grade 12 student at McKinnon Park Secondary School, and Jack Gillespie, a Grade 12 student at North Park Collegiate and Vocational School, are two of only 50 students across the country to be awarded the scholarship, in recognition of outstanding achievement in science, technology and math, and with a goal of empowering the next generation of innovators. Judy will be attending Western University and Jack is heading to McMaster in the fall.

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## Champion Teacher

This summer, Grand Erie launched a new camp for young women eager to dive into all things technology. From August 11 to 15, InnovateHER marked a week of empowerment, creativity and mentorship, as young women uncovered technological solutions to real-world problems. The week culminated in a showcase of learners' future-ready projects.

# June 2025



## Special Olympics at West Lynn

The Special Olympics is coming to the region this summer, and to turn up the excitement levels, the Ontario chapter's school program visited West Lynn Public School recently. The program focuses on social inclusion and creating positive school environments for students with and without intellectual disabilities, offering sports training, competitions, leadership opportunities and school-wide engagement activities



## Ministry Visit

In June, Grand Erie welcomed the Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Education, for a firsthand look at the PROSE (Police Resource Outreach Supporting Education) program in action at North Park Collegiate and Vocational School. Minister Calandra participated in a co-taught lesson focused on modern policing. All modules are aligned with the Ontario curriculum and delivered collaboratively between educators and officers.

# June 2025



## Project SEARCH in Haldimand

Grand Erie's Project SEARCH is thrilled to have a community partner in Haldimand County; the collaboration brings together an all-star team, including Haldimand War Memorial Hospital, to open doors for students through workplace experience. It is the third Project SEARCH site in Grand Erie, now operating in each county.



## OPSOA Honours NACL

In recognition of Project SEARCH and other important community contributions, the Norfolk Association for Community Living is the recipient of the OPSOA President's Leadership award. NACL offers residential services, community participation supports and employment services, and Project SEARCH aims to ensure students leave secondary school with the skills and abilities to gain employment in an integrated setting in their home communities. The award was presented by Superintendent Liana Thompson, who has seen firsthand what a difference the programming makes.

# June 2025



## Breaking Ground on West Elgin Expansion

In June, future West Elgin Public School students dug their shovels into the ground to celebrate the start of significant renovations at the school. The groundbreaking event brought together students, staff members, community partners, elected officials and learners' family members.

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## Leaders Mentoring Leaders

Congratulations to the staff members who recently completed the Lead GEDSB program. The series of sessions is open to Grand Erie staff from any employee group interested in exploring the concepts of leadership. It aims to support participants as they identify leadership within themselves, their current roles in relation to the system, and to explore leadership opportunities both personally and professionally.

# June 2025



## Celebrating Belonging

In vibrant celebrations of diversity and inclusion, Grand Erie schools and departments hosted events to kick off Pride Month. Oakland-Scotland Public School students and staff got the scoop on kindness with an ice cream party, including rainbow sprinkles, to show that community is built by everyone.



## Pride in the Park

At Mohawk Park in Brantford, Grand Erie once again took part in the annual Pride in the Park festivities. Hosted by Brantford Pride, the focus is on mobilizing around issues affecting the 2SLGBTQ+ community, while holding space to celebrate and honour the 2SLGBTQ+ community throughout Pride Month and every day.

# June 2025



## NTS DramaFest

Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School hosted this year's National Theatre School Drama Fest district showcase, facing off against Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School, Paris District High School, McKinnon Park Secondary School, Cayuga Secondary School and Waterford District High School. BCI's 'Mountain Man' and McKinnon Park's 'No Horse Town' were selected for the Outstanding Show awards, and advanced to the south regionals in Windsor, where both schools secured awards of Excellence and Merit.



## MPP Visit to Innovation Hub

In June, Haldimand-Norfolk MPP Bobbi-Ann Brady visited the Innovation Hub. The visit was an opportunity to show off all the learning opportunities at the Hub including demos on animation, button-making, 3D printing, drone flying and augmented reality.

# June 2025



## BCI Rugby Champs

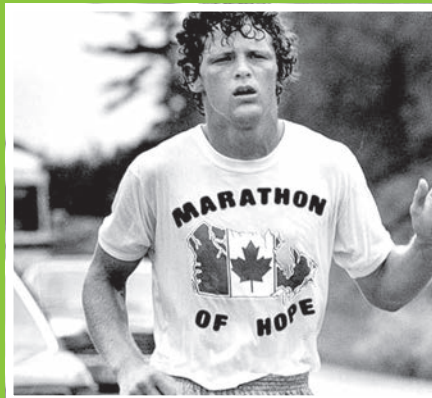
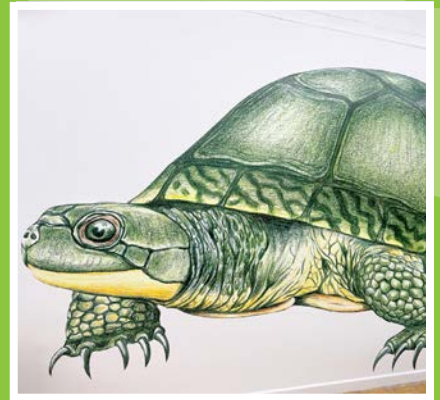
Playing at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations AAA championship in Aurora earlier this month, BCI defeated Peterborough's Adam Scott Collegiate in the gold-medal game, prevailing on penalties. It's the fifth time the Mustangs are OFSAA gold in rugby; previous titles were captured in 1995, 2001, 2008 and 2013.



## Brant County Top Athlete

Paris District High School's Trudeau Gulati has been named the Ed O'Leary Memorial Award winner as Brant County's top male student athlete. The Grade 12 student has picked up several sports over his secondary school career, excelling at tennis, and balancing sports with leadership activities; he was prime minister of the school council and editor-in-chief of the yearbook.

# September 2025



# September 2025



## Summer in Grand Erie: Camp SAIL

With a focus on literacy, numeracy and fun, Camp SAIL once again offered students in grades 2 to 4 the opportunity to take part in Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) this past July. A special visit from Brantford Fire Services was especially memorable, providing the chance to learn important lessons in fire safety while also checking out the very cool fire truck and equipment.



## Summer in Grand Erie: InnovateHER

This summer, Grand Erie launched a new camp for young women eager to dive into all things technology. From August 11 to 15, InnovateHER marked a week of empowerment, creativity and mentorship, as young women uncovered technological solutions to real-world problems. The week culminated in a showcase of learners' future-ready projects.

# September 2025



## Lieutenant Governor of Ontario Visit

In July, the County of Brant welcomed the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable Edith Dumont. After meeting with county officials, the Lieutenant Governor met with students from Paris District High School. From there, they attended the opening ceremonies of the Special Olympics in Brantford.

## A Grand Return

Tuesday, September 2 was a beautiful day for a Grand Return. Across the district, schools opened the doors to learning and inspiration, welcoming new and familiar faces, and setting the tone for a positive year ahead. At Paris District High School, and all secondary schools in Grand Erie, senior students took the lead in creating welcoming, inclusive spaces for Grade 9 students making the leap to secondary.



# September 2025



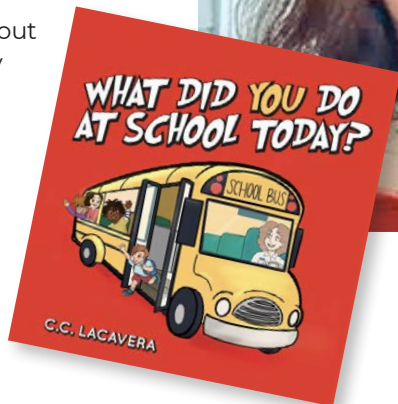
## Grand River Public School Opens Doors

Construction wrapped up at Grand River Public School in Caledonia this summer, in time to welcome learners for September 2.

## What Did You Do at School Today?

Starting school for the first time is one of the most significant milestones for children and their families. This year, we are pleased to feature the picture book *What Did You Do at School Today?* by author C.C. Lacavera.

Inspired by her own son, Lacavera set out to capture the everyday magic of early school experiences.



# September 2025

## Connecting West Brant to BCI

We're pleased to share news of a partnership with Brantford Transit that will provide learners and families in West Brant with additional options this school year. It's a pilot project aiming to enhance connectivity between BCI and West Brant by providing free transit passes to BCI Grade 9 students who reside within 3.2 kilometers of the school, and do not qualify for regular school transportation. We hope to see this partnership expand in the years to come.



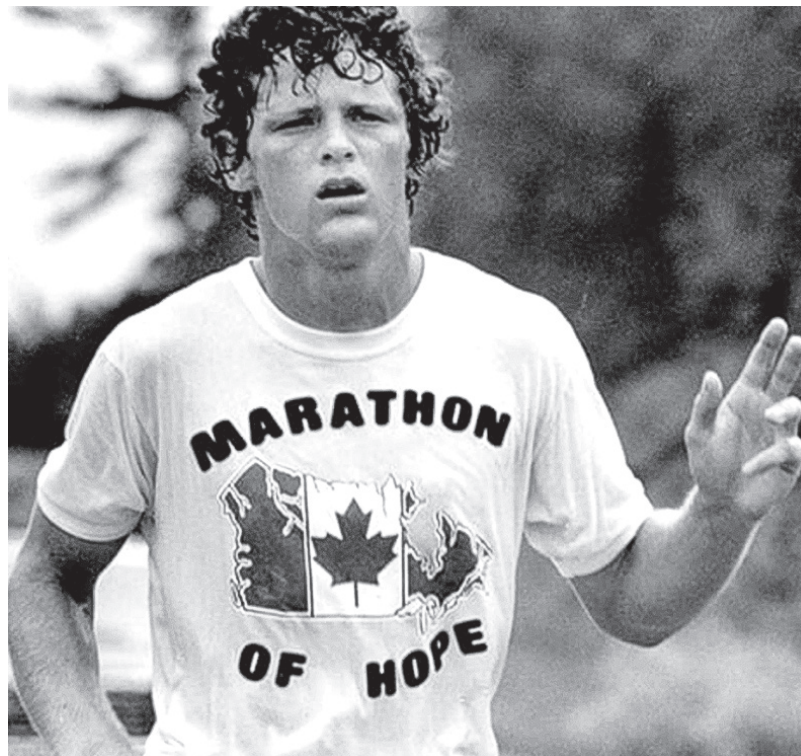
## A New Movement at North Park

The Grade 9 experience at North Park just got more active! A partnership with the Gretzky Sports Centre is offering free memberships for all Grade 9 students. Conveniently located next door to the school, this is a chance for learners to dive into fitness, try something new and enjoy everything the Gretzky Centre has to offer – all at no cost. Physical activity supports well-being, so we hope to see this pilot project roll out wider soon.

# September 2025

## Grand Erie Schools Join Marathon of Hope

Schools and communities across Canada will promote the 45th anniversary of Terry's Marathon of Hope. The Terry Fox Foundation has launched the "Finish It" campaign, reminding us that Terry never stopped believing in his dream—and now it's up to us to carry it across the finish line. On September 25, Grand Erie schools will once again come together to walk, run, and reflect on the legacy Terry leaves behind.



## From Raiders to Gryphons

Three former student athletes from Delhi District Secondary School are now proudly donning Guelph Gryphons jerseys. Thanks to a dedicated team of coaches, a tenacious group of students and a first-class football program, small towns are making a big impact in post-secondary athletics.

# September 2025

## Brant County Sports Hall of Fame

Two Grand Erie alum are included among the inductees in this year's Brant County Sports Hall of Fame. Jack Tolhurst, who is being inducted as a builder, attended what was then St. George Public School in the 1930s. Andy Stryker, being inducted as an athlete, attended Paris Central, North Ward School, and Paris District High School in the 1970s.



***Special  
Olympics***  
*Ontario*

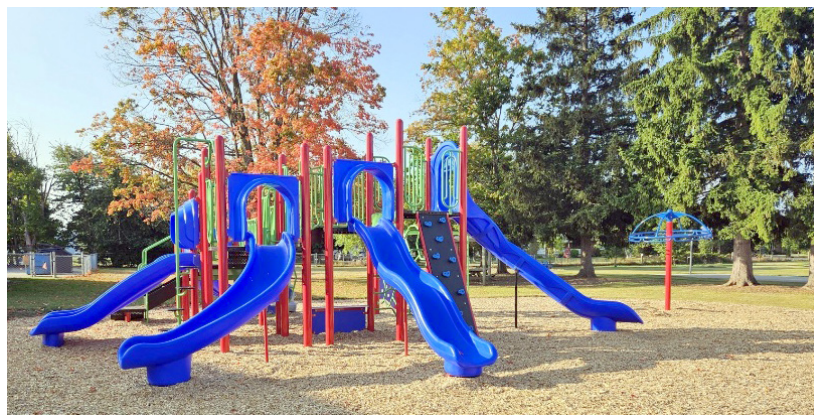
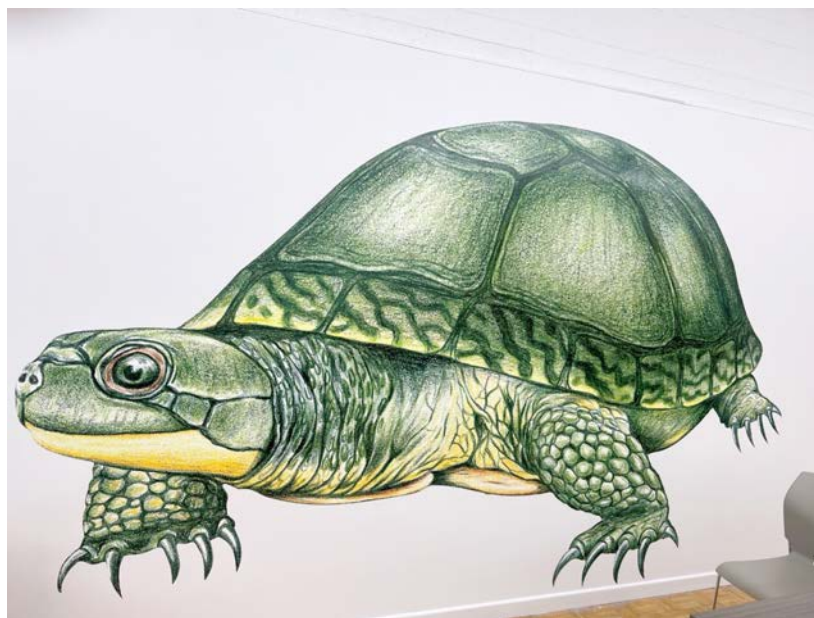
## Empowering Inclusion

We're delighted to share that this year, Grand Erie and the Special Olympics Ontario are partnering to bring inclusive athletic opportunities to students through two events hosted by secondary schools. First up in October, Cayuga Secondary School is hosting bocce, inviting other secondary schools to send up to three teams to participate. This spring, Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School will be hosting a day of soccer, inviting both traditional and unified teams to take part. We look forward to this partnership offering learners the chance to compete, connect and celebrate inclusion.

# September 2025

## New Location for NATIONS/ New Start

The NATIONS/Newstart program started the school year in its new location at Hagersville Secondary School. Due to construction taking place at Six Nations Polytechnic, the program has made the move to a vibrant school-within-a-school space with its own entrance at the secondary school. The new space is inclusive, well-equipped, focused on students' needs, and based on student input.



## Upgrading Play at Burford District Elementary School

Last week, students, families, staff, community members and donors were invited to the unveiling of Burford District Elementary School's new playground. The incredible community in Burford rallied around the project, raising \$100,000 in record time. Playground equipment offers significant developmental benefits for young learners, including enhanced physical activity, motor skill development and social-emotional growth, while also allowing for challenging play to support healthy development.

# September 2025

## Safety First

Once again, Grand Erie is pleased to support the Children's Safety Village of Brant. Over the years, this charitable foundation has provided thousands of learners with hands-on personal safety training and school safety patroller training.



# October 2025



# October 2025



## Grand River Public School Celebrates Grand Opening

Students, families and staff from the newly opened Grand River Public School were on hand October 6 to cut the ribbon that officially marked the milestone of completion on the major building project many years in the making. Grand River Public School is now home to the Herons – a name chosen by the school community. Through a collaboration with the artist Raymond Skye, a member of the Six Nations of the Grand River, it now has a visual identity rooted in a deep appreciation for the natural world and its teachings.



## You Belong... at a Grand Erie Secondary School

Grand Erie secondary schools offer welcoming environments, myriad opportunities and supportive communities dedicated to helping learners reach their full potential. The secondary team has taken that message on the road this month, connecting with families at regional fairs, and organizing the Grand Pathways events, meant to help those new to secondary plan successful next steps.



# October 2025



## Marking Truth and Reconciliation

Schools across Grand Erie took part in meaningful learning around Truth and Reconciliation Week. Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School hosted its annual Every Child Matters football game, with the Thunderbirds taking on the Delhi Raiders. The game has become a tradition at the school as part of its ongoing commitments to Truth and Reconciliation, with educational programming, cultural connections, and donations through ticket sales directed to the Woodland Cultural Centre. It concluded a week of reflection in Grand Erie and learning opportunities which continue throughout the year.

## Boosting Made-in-Canada Manufacturing

Through a unique program, called Career-Ready with CTMA: Expanding Opportunities, the Canadian Tooling and Machining Association is providing hands-on training in precision metalworking to hundreds of educators at 157 high schools across Ontario. The program also furnishes classrooms with high tech shop-standard milling machinery and tooling. The teachers in turn are confidently training their students – 25,000 of them to date – to program and use the equipment, setting them up for rewarding careers in manufacturing.



# October 2025

## Breaking ground on Cobblestone Expansion

Construction is underway at Cobblestone Elementary School, adding approximately 18,300 square feet of space to the Paris school to make way for eight new vibrant classrooms with an additional 184 student spaces and a four-room addition providing 64 licensed child-care spaces. In late September, school and board staff, families, students, Trustees and community partners gathered in the gym to escape the rain to celebrate the progress.



## Back in the Winners Circle at Norfolk County Fair

Staff and students at Delhi District Secondary School reclaimed the Young Canada Day title at this year's Norfolk County Fair, breaking a two-year losing streak after more than a decade of wins.



## GEPIC Speaker Series

Co-presented on October 23 by the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee and the Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee, families took in the latest informational speaker series. The virtual event Food as Relationship explored food as a living expression of relationship with land, community and treaty responsibilities. Guest speakers included author James Whetung and community builder Chandra Maracle. Staff and students at Delhi District Secondary School reclaimed the Young Canada Day title at this year's Norfolk County Fair, breaking a two-year losing streak after more than a decade of wins.

# October 2025

## Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope

Students across Grand Erie laced up for Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope this fall, and Paris Central School had its best-ever year, with the community raising \$7,000 for cancer research.



## Brant Food for Thought

This month, Grand Erie celebrated its ongoing partnership with Brant Food for Thought. The virtual programming supports children and youth in school-based nutrition programs with universal access to nutritious food choices during the school day.



## Program Supports Social, Emotional Learning Needs

Thanks to a \$35,000 donation from SC Johnson, the YMCA's Beyond the Bell program provides recreation, academic support, nutritious snacks and opportunities for social connection after school. The program is currently being delivered at Princess Elizabeth Public School in Brantford at no cost to families.



# October 2025

## Special Olympics Empowers Inclusion

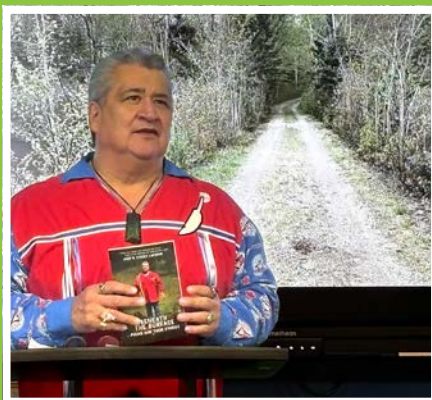
This month, Cayuga Secondary School hosted its first annual Special Olympics bocce tournament. The Special Olympics school programming supports inclusive recreational opportunities for learners.



## Grand Erie Graduations

Learners celebrated secondary-school graduations this month, with ceremonies taking place across the region. Teacher candidates also marked the milestone, with future educators in trades-based courses graduating from Bachelor of Education programs.

# November 2025



# November 2025



## Events Connect Learners to Secondary Opportunities

In late October, Grand Erie hosted its first Grand Pathways events, connecting learners and families to secondary options and possibilities beyond high school. This month, Future Grade 9 Information Nights take place at each secondary school, helping ease the transition from elementary to secondary. High schools are also hosting Grade 8 student visits this month, inviting future secondary students to experience programming and offerings through a variety of hands-on activities.



## Kindergarten Registration Underway for 2026-27

Kindergarten classrooms across Grand Erie are vibrant, engaging and inclusive spaces, and schools are ready to help future learners and families get set as registration opens for next year.

# November 2025



## Conestoga, Grand Erie Celebrate Tollgate Grand Opening

Community partners and supporters joined representatives from Conestoga College and Grand Erie on October 27 at Tollgate Technical Skills Centre (TTSC) in Brantford to mark the official grand opening of the province's first College-Within-a-School program. Through a licensed agreement between Grand Erie and Conestoga, the college is renovating TTSC, incorporating technology and resources to offer an even broader range of programming and hands-on practical training to a growing Brantford/Brant County community.

## Grand Erie Educator Wins Parent's Choice Award

Kay Donnelly, an early childhood educator at River Heights School, is this year's recipient of the Parent's Choice award in the DECE category. The awards are presented annually by Kids Can Fly Brantford Brant.



# November 2025

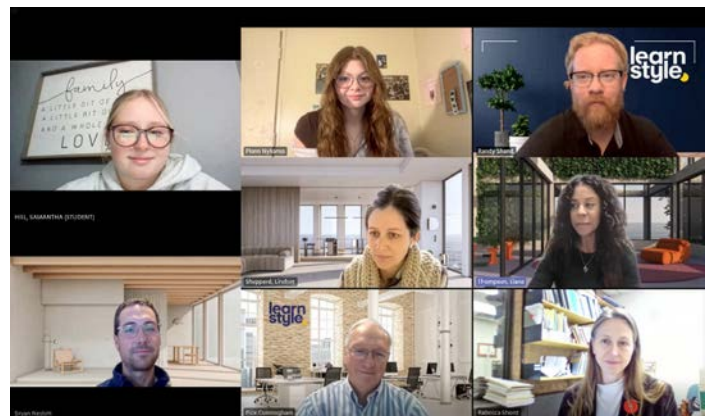


## YMCA Peace Medal Presented to PJ's Indigenous Student Association

Each year, the YMCA Peace Medal is presented to individuals or groups who, without any special resources, demonstrate a commitment to the values of peace. On November 18, Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School's Indigenous Student Association received this year's Peace Medal, youth category, for outstanding efforts fostering cultural sharing and community connection, and commitments to truth and reconciliation.

## Igniting Student Achievement

LearnStyle's Ignite award grants \$1,000 to two inspiring students currently using SEA technological equipment to empower their learning journeys. This year, Samantha Hill and Fiona Nykamp were recognized during a virtual award presentation for not only embracing technology and assistive tools, but in using them to truly ignite their own achievement through creativity, determination and innovation.



# November 2025



## PROSE Writing Team Recognized with OJEN Award

The Police Resource Outreach Supporting Education (PROSE) writing team has been named the 2025 recipient of the Ontario Justice Education Network's (OJEN) Chief Justices' Award in recognition of the success to build trust, understanding, and positive relationships between students, schools, and police.

Also this month, Grand Erie's Communications team was honoured with an Award of Excellence in recognition of the PROSE program, as well as a Coup de Coeur award for a video supporting community building ahead of the opening of Grand River Public School, presented by the Canadian Association of Communicators in Education.



# November 2025



## Words Matter Campaign Launches

The Words Matter campaign recently launched for Brantford/Brant, with high engagement from students and staff. The campaign to take meaningful action against harmful language and identity-based bullying.

## Retirement Dinner Celebrates Staff Contributions

On November 5, Grand Erie celebrated the 2024-25 retirees with a special dinner marking their exemplary contributions to education over their careers. The event was made even more memorable thanks to two talented students from Simcoe Composite School who crafted beautiful floral centrepieces.



## Centre for Excellence Hosts Storytelling Event

The Words Matter campaign recently launched for Brantford/Brant, with high engagement from students and staff. The campaign to take meaningful action against harmful language and identity-based bullying.

# November 2025

## Brier Park Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Brier Park School celebrated its 50th anniversary on November 1, with an afternoon event filled with photos, memorabilia from the past five decades, the opening of a 25-year time capsule and student project presentations. Many Brier Park alum travelled into town to take part in the special occasion.



## North Park Trojans Go Big in Championship Upset

North Park Collegiate and Vocational School's Trojans picked the perfect time to play their best volleyball of the season. The team faced the previously undefeated and top-ranked Paris District High School Panthers for the Athletic Association of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk's senior crown last week.



## BCI Mustangs win AABHN baseball championship

Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School captured the Athletic Association of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk's boys baseball championship in late October, defeating Delhi District Secondary School 10-4. The BCI Mustangs have now won three of the past four baseball championships.



# November 2025

## MPSS Student Returns to Royal

Kylie Searles, a Grade 12 student at McKinnon Park Secondary School, was back in the saddle competing at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair this month. It was Searles's second time competing in the Children's Working Hunter division, and the first following emergency surgery in 2024 for a condition that reduced muscle mobility in her arms and legs.

Photos appearing on this page are credited to the Brantford Expositor and the Haldimand Press





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