



Spring
2025-26

Director of Education Highlights

March | April | May



Introduction

Every 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, Ph.D

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



March 2025



March 2025



You Belong Here

The 'You Belong Here' video series continues to provide families and future high school students with a helpful preview of what's to come at secondary schools across the region. Let's take a look at the latest in the series.

Secondary Math Professional Learning

Secondary educators took part in the Grand Erie Math Achievement Action Plan kick-off session, gaining new skills to work with resources including Mathology, structuring content to support diverse learning needs, and using short and long-term strategies effectively with a lens on special education. Educators also heard from Grand Erie's Indigenous Education team which provided Indigenous perspectives on math class to further understanding.



March 2025



Innovation Hub Hosts Hackathon

The Innovation Hub hosted its first Hackathon, inviting secondary students from across the region to pitch and test out ideas. Learners explored topics including robot recycling collection, reverse osmosis water treatment solutions, solar panels that mimic plants, and app development to balance screen time with physical activity and well-being. The participating teams then had an opportunity to take their ideas to the next level with Apple Canada.

Facility Services Professional Learning

Facility Services, along with CUPE 5100, hosted its annual professional learning day. Nearly 200 Facility Services staff including custodians, caretakers, lead hands, maintenance and management staff, gathered at Hagersville Secondary School for a day of learning. Workshops were presented on a variety of topics including asbestos, equipment care, benefits, health and safety, and human resources.



March 2025



Hagersville Secondary School Teacher Inspires Young Learners

The EarlyON program at Hagersville Secondary School got a preview of what awaits them on their educational journeys when science teacher Kenneth Johnson opened his classroom doors. Young learners explored how water mixes with different substances in a series of fun, hands-on experiments. Johnson, who's earned the reputation of 'cool science guy,' says it's never too early to start exploring the sciences, building on young learners' curiosity and interest in the natural world and how it works.

Family Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math Event

The Innovation Hub hosted a special evening event in partnership with Let's Talk Science and McMaster University which saw an attendance of nearly 200 people. The free event for families included engaging, hands-on activities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. Participants took part in activities and games like Build your own Bacteria, Elephant Toothpaste, Food Web Jenga, a STEM Cup Challenge, and Awesome Algorithms. Special thanks to the dedicated staff members involved for their hard work in making this event such a success.



March 2025

Scholarship for Paris District High School Athlete

Madison Burr is taking her hockey skills to the University of Minnesota Duluth next year. The accomplished secondary school athlete received multiple NCAA Division I scholarship offers after playing in several leagues and being named to the national under-18 team. She led the Paris District High School team to the local championship.



Paris District High School Grad Follows Hockey Dream

Dalton Kipp celebrated his second season serving as a linesman with the Ontario Hockey League this past winter. The former student athlete balanced his studies with hockey and volleyball, and coaching the bantam rep team in Paris. He's now skating towards his ultimate goal: officiating for the NHL.

March 2025



Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee Event: Managing Kids and Tech

Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee hosted another session in its speaker series, presenting Alyson Schafer, an internationally acclaimed parenting expert and mental health practitioner, for the workshop, 'Managing Kids and Tech.' Addressing a big issue for families today, the session explored how parents and caregivers can appropriately manage technology to harness the positive value while mitigating the harm. The workshop left families with confidence, tools, and an action plan for healthy technology use in the household.



Incoming Student Trustees Ready to Lead

The student voice was heard as Grand Erie's Student Senate and United Indigenous Student Council made their decisions to select who will represent learners across the district for the 2025-26 school year. Prabhsidak Singh of Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School was elected to represent students from the north region of Grand Erie; Harper Thompson of Simcoe Composite School will represent students in the south region; and Ryleigh Staats of Delhi District Secondary School was elected through a consensus model to represent Indigenous students in Grand Erie.

March 2025



Centre for Excellence in Action

As Black History Month concluded, the Centre was the site for 'Black Joy,' with the African Caribbean Cultural Club from Walter Gretzky Elementary School and Carnival Spice dance company taking part. The event focused on the strength, creativity, diversity, and resistance that shapes Black communities, and included learners and staff members from École Confederation and James Hillier in the audience. It left the lasting impression that these contributions should be celebrated not just during Black History Month, but every day.

March 2025



Staff Take Part in Para Hockey

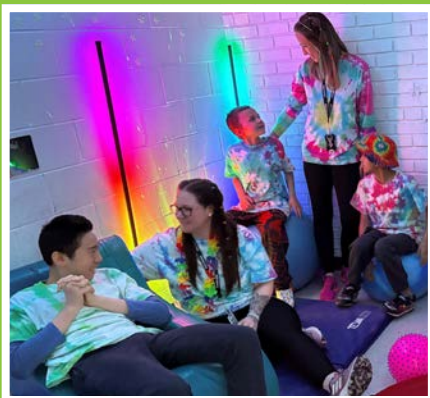
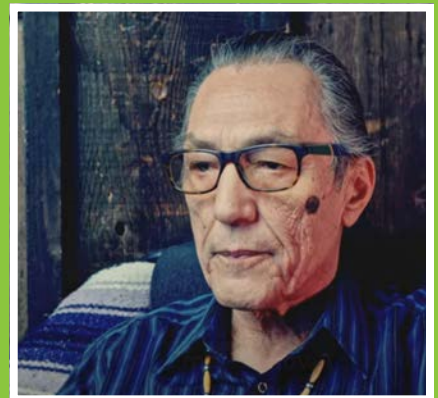
Education staff at Langton Public School had a chance this winter to try out sledge hockey, an adaptive activity that ensures individuals with special needs can take part in Canada's national winter sport. Staff experienced firsthand the physical, strategic and competitive demands of sled hockey, fostering understanding of how to support learners with diverse needs. The event was a partnership with South Coast Special Needs Kids Inc.



Kick-Start to Kindergarten

Kick-Start to Kindergarten was in full swing, with events taking place across the region. The interactive events provided a space for little learners to venture into the world of education for the first time as a sneak-peek of what's to come in their first year of school. The sessions also enabled families to connect with board and community resources, meet other families, and the dedicated staff members who inspire a love of learning.

April 2025



April 2025



You Belong Here

The 'You Belong Here' video series continued to provide families and future high school students with a helpful preview of what's to come at secondary schools across the region, including highlighting opportunities for guidance and support in Grand Erie.

Ontario Skills Competition

Brooke-Lynn Criddle-Brown and Wishv Jitendrakumar Patel, both students at Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School, competed in the Ontario Skills qualifier at Niagara College, placing first and fourth, respectively. Both earned a spot at the provincial Ontario Skills competition.



April 2025



Coding en français

Junior French Immersion classes from across the board took over the Innovation HUB at North Park to show off their skills in coding en français. Their teachers have been participating in a project named “eSTIM de soi en FLS”, which is a play on words combining STEAM and ‘esteem,’ signifying confidence in French through STEAM learning. This project was made possible through a grant from the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association, which provided funding for coding activities and materials in French.

Dunnville Secondary School Art Project

Dunnville Secondary School art students gave back with a unique exhibit at the Wilson MacDonald Memorial School Museum in Selkirk this spring. We Chair-ish You in Haldimand County features repurposed wooden chairs, designed by students to showcase their creative talents. The chairs were featured in an open house and the project garnered local media coverage.



April 2025

LEAD Graduates

Congratulations to the staff members who completed the LEAD program this spring. 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.



Family of Schools Learning

Administrators came together to gain a better understanding of how to support students in using numbers and operations to solve mathematical problems encountered in everyday life. The day was a chance to get hands-on experience and learn from the student perspective, and use that experience to go deeper into the curriculum.

April 2025

Bite of Brant

The annual Bite of Brant program attracted nearly a thousand Grade 5 students to the Burford Fairgrounds over two days to learn about agriculture and its importance in the community. Students gained an understanding of the farm-to-table journey our food makes and left with an appreciation of the abundance of production coming from Brant County to feed the province.



Paris District High School Badminton Champ

Fynnley Kitchen didn't let a broken foot get in the way of securing a badminton championship. In April, the Grade 9 student competed and won the Athletic Association of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk's junior girls singles title.



Valley Heights Secondary School Athlete Headed to OHL

Ontario Hockey League franchise the Sarnia Sting made Valley Heights Secondary School student Brenner Lammens its first pick – fourth overall – in the league's Priority Selection Draft. It's a goal Lammens has been working toward for years, balancing his academics with the travelling lifestyle of hockey competition.



April 2025

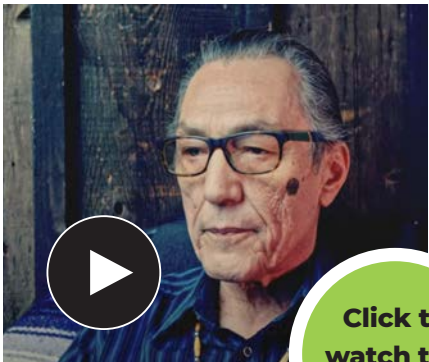


Valley Heights Bears Back on the Field

The school has been building its capacity the last few years and plans to rejoin the Athletic Association of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk with a keen group of players and coaches, and support from the community driving momentum. Reviving the long and proud history of football at the school is a significant win already.

Earth Week in Grand Erie

Earth Week offered the chance to acknowledge the deep connections we share with the land, water and all living beings. To invite schools to reflect on these connections, Teyhahenteh Miller, a respected Mohawk voice in our community, shared aspects of the Thanksgiving Address/Ohentoh Kariwahtekwen in a special Earth Week message. This message situates the importance of environmental stewardship, community connection and gratitude for creation, fostered in our schools during Earth Week through a variety of activities and learning.

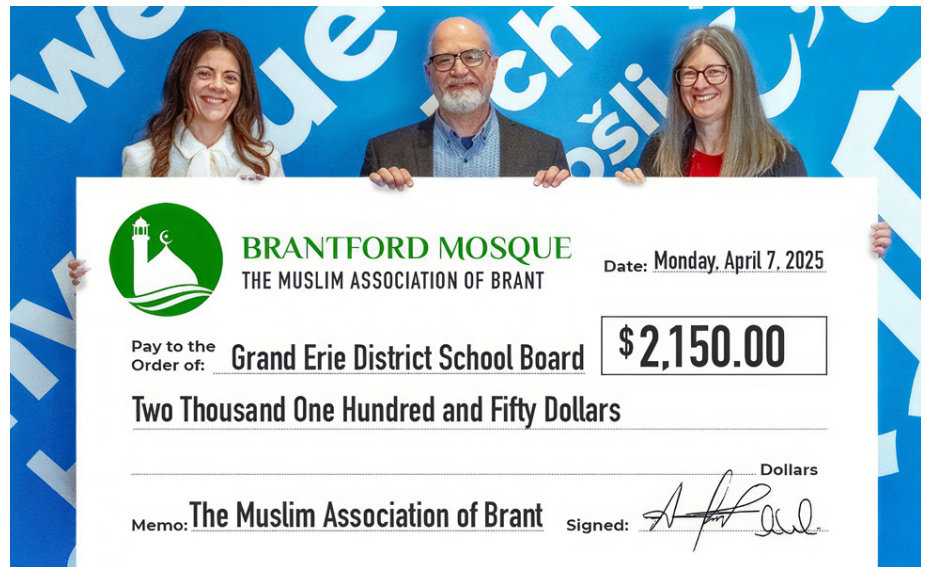


Click to
watch the
video

April 2025

Muslim Association of Brantford

Naser Hamed, president of the Muslim Association of Brantford, presented Grand Erie with a donation of \$2,150. The annual donation funds the Mohammed El-Farram award, presented to graduating students across Grand Erie who exemplify and advocate for equity and inclusion both at school and in the community.



New School Community, New School Name

After renovations, West Elgin Public School will welcome learners from West Lynn Public School and Elgin Avenue. The Simcoe-based radio station MyFM and its news supplement Norfolk Today got in on the action, asking West Lynn students their thoughts on what would make an ideal name. Aria Crouch, Keira Kourieh, Adam Atkinson and Emraan Nacino stepped up to offer their suggestions on air.



April 2025

Autism Awareness Month

To mark the occasion, the New Visions Autism class at James Hillier Public School made tie-dye T-shirts as colourful as the school's Snoezelen room. Educators at the school created an atmosphere where every student feels valued and supported, celebrating a commitment to understanding and embracing diversity every day.



Iftar Celebration at Walter Gretzky

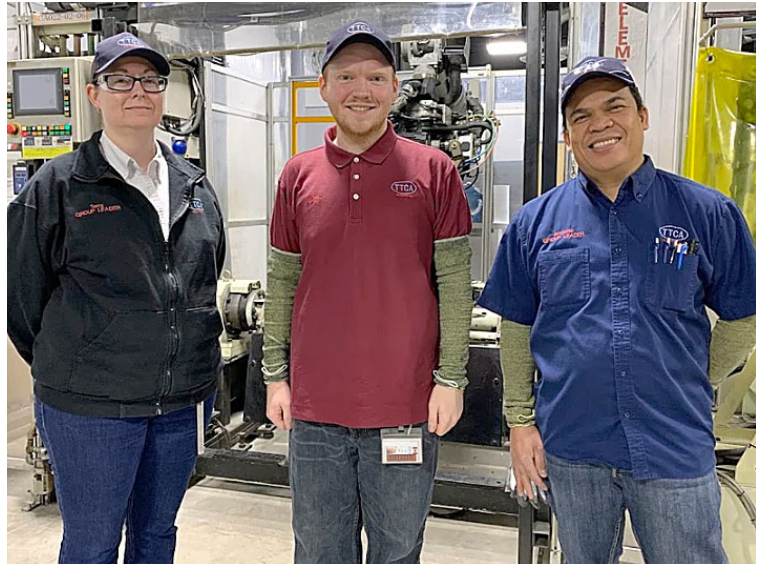
Walter Gretzky Elementary School hosted an Iftar celebration, inviting learners and families to come together for the evening fast-breaking meal. It was an opportunity to learn from each other, with activities centered around Ramadan, while creating welcoming, inclusive spaces where students and families see themselves reflected in their school community.



April 2025

Project SEARCH Success

Norfolk General Hospital partnered with Grand Erie and the Norfolk Association for Community Living to join Project SEARCH, a nationwide school-to-work training program where students with special needs in the final year of high school receive first-hand, work-related skills. It's having a hugely positive impact, building a strong community along with work-related skills. Alex Long, pictured here, is one of several students who's recently made the transition from school to workplace.



Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association Honours NACL

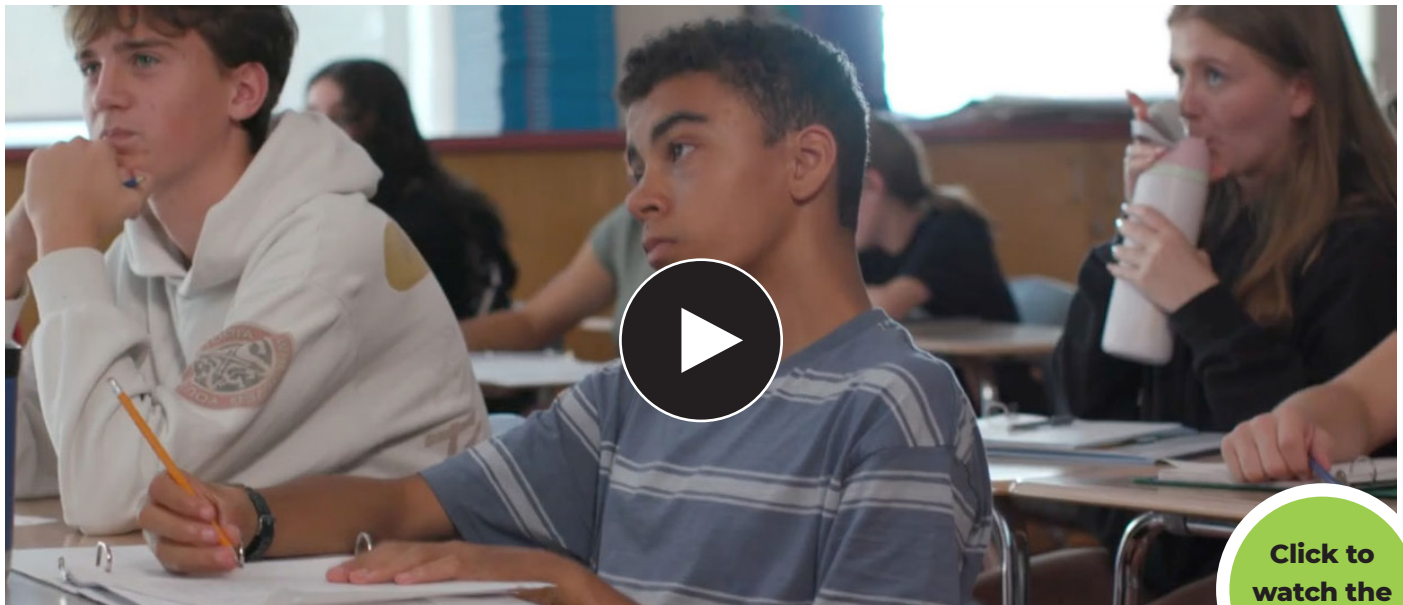
In recognition of Project SEARCH and other important community contributions, the Norfolk Association for Community Living was the recipient of the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association President's Leadership award. Norfolk Association for Community Living offers residential services, respite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



May 2025



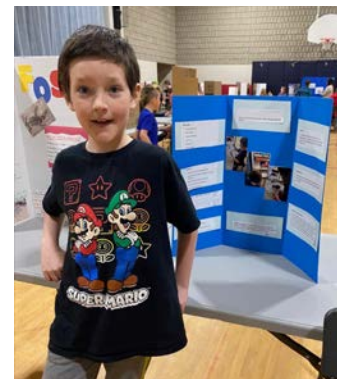
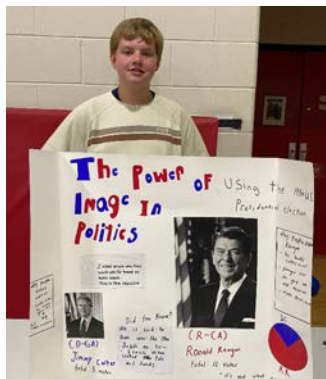
May 2025



Click to
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You Belong Here

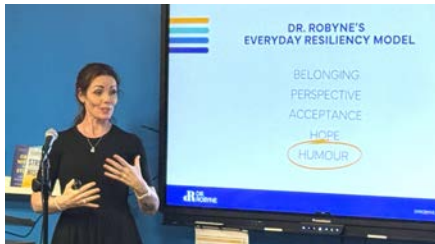
The 'You Belong Here' video series continues to provide families and future high school students with a helpful preview of what's to come at secondary schools across the region. This edition highlights French language opportunities in Grand Erie.



Education Week

Education Week provided the opportunity to celebrate student achievement and teaching excellence. Brier Park Public School kicked off the week by hosting a science fair with more than 100 participants from Grades 4 to 8, followed by a Friends and Family Open House.

May 2025



Leadership Symposium

The Centre for Excellence was the site of a Leadership symposium open to all Grand Erie staff members. It welcomed Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe as keynote speaker presenting on resilience and stress management. The evening also featured breakout sessions with Dr. Steven Katz, Leroy Hibbert, and Lora Courtois.

Counting Math Achievements

Yashveer Kayal, a Grade 5 student at Agnes G. Hodge Public School, is counting recent achievements stemming from his love of math. Yashveer was recognized with a Mathematician Mosaic award through the University of Waterloo, came in second in Math Kangaroo Canada competition, and most recently, placed first in the Math Caribou competition, Grade 5 category.



May 2025



Days of Significance for May

National School Principals Day proved that we have so much to be proud of in Grand Erie. As the heart of our school communities and in system roles, our principals and vice-principals set learners up for success. **World Education and Support Staff Day** recognized the thousands of education support professionals who make Grand Erie the amazing place it is. Whether they work as the face of Grand Erie or behind the scenes, every role offers a unique contribution to our culture of learning, well-being and belonging. **Speech and Language Pathologist Day** recognized the professionals who help students of all ages communicate confidently and thrive in the classroom and beyond. The efforts of Speech Language Pathologists and Communicative Disorders Assistants guide and support each individual's needs to make a lasting impact on the lives of Grand Erie families. **International Human Resources Day** recognized the dedication of this team in shaping such a large system of employees is impressive and inspiring, building a culture of well-being and belonging where all staff feel included, respected and appreciated.

May 2025

Educator Receives eLearning Honour

Lynn Thomas, Teacher Consultant for eLearning, was honoured by the Ontario eLearning Consortium. Thomas received the Technological Development for eLearning award, recognizing her highly collaborative approach to taking digital tools and making them work most effectively and accessibly for educator and learner success.



Waterford's Intermediate Campus

The wider Grand Erie community recently celebrated the success of the Intermediate Campus at Waterford District High School with an official ribbon cutting. Grade 7 and 8 students from Waterford Public School have moved into an unused wing of Waterford District High School, easing population pressures at the elementary school and allowing intermediate students a valuable experience that eases the transition to secondary school. .

May 2025

Stitching Learning Around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

An artistic display at Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School educated on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, thanks to a hands-on student art project. Educator Mary Peterson and Cultural Mentor Delores Maas helped bring the Indigenous student-led project to life.



Mental Health Week

Mental Health Week had a theme this year of "Unmasking Mental Health." The week encourages us as school communities to recognize the stigmas that still exist, and work toward embracing honesty for a more understanding society.



Waterford Public School Gets Glowing

Mental Health Week at Waterford Public School saw a glow party, with students unleashing creativity and physical activity while learning about mental health and well-being strategies.



May 2025

Riding the Wave of Emotions at Dunnville Secondary School

A collaborative art project at Dunnville Secondary School saw students expressing emotions without words as part of Mental Health Week. The art was arranged in a wave, an idea provided by the student council aligning with the well-being concept of riding the wave of emotions when experiencing intense and complex feelings.



Safety and Health Week

Safety and Health Week in Grand Erie saw a number of initiatives around the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace, at home and in the community. Engagement opportunities included a safety quiz contest open to all staff with winners receiving an outdoor first aid kit, a health-and-safety recertification course held for school site representatives, and a celebration of the hard work and commitment demonstrated by Bellview Public School's health-and-safety team this year.



May 2025

Wellness Out Loud

The third annual Wellness Out Loud event brought together more than 200 student wellness ambassadors from each Grand Erie secondary school and dozens of elementary schools in a collective effort to build strong foundations around mental health and well-being across the board.



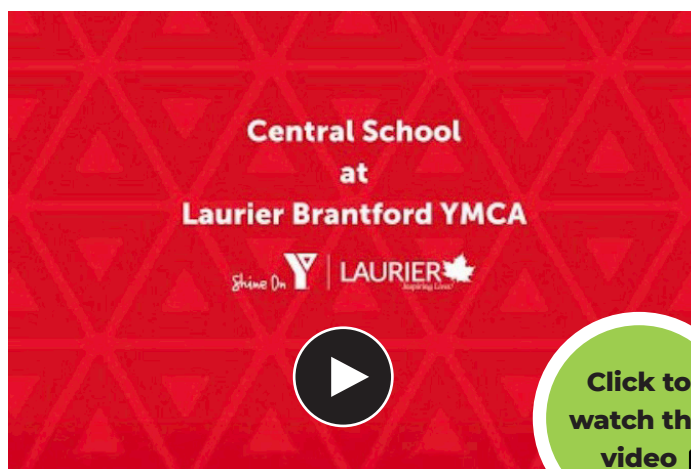
Eco Symposium

Another signature event in Grand Erie, the Eco Symposium brought together students from across the district with a variety of speakers, demonstrations and hands-on activities at the beautiful venue of Campfire Circle in Waterford. The day is an opportunity to engage learners in environmental stewardship and empower them to make a positive impact on their local communities and the planet.

May 2025

Central Public School Visits the YMCA

Last year, the YMCA Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford received \$10,000 from the Brant Community Foundation to support youth access to programs. Partnering with Agnes G. Hodge Public School and Central Public School, students are able to take part in regular visits to the Laurier Brantford YMCA, helping more kids stay active and connected. Check out this video featuring educator Jesse Statten sharing the impact of the YMCA experience.



Blue Devils Regional Lacrosse Champs

McKinnon Park Secondary School's Blue Devils lacrosse team are the Athletic Association of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk champions. The team advanced to the Central Western Ontario Secondary Schools Association championship.

May 2025



One Stop Grad Shop

The One Stop Grad Shop, an annual partnership between King George School and Brantford Police Service, hosted yet another successful event that saw more than 150 students leave with stylish outfits for upcoming graduations. Donations from the community and the dedicated work of event volunteers allows young people to shop for formal dresses, suits, shoes and accessories without the price tags, reducing barriers to inclusion in year-end events.



Rainbow Ball

Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School hosted the Rainbow Ball, the annual inclusive celebration welcoming secondary school students from across Grand Erie. The first Rainbow Ball took place in 2015, and each year the momentum grows, positioning Grand Erie as a provincial leader in equity, inclusion and building safe spaces for learners who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

May 2025



James Hillier Public School is 75

James Hillier Public School hosted an anniversary event to celebrate 75 years. More than 500 family members and graduates from each decade took part in the festivities which included a science fair and the unearthing of a time capsule from 1975.



Youth Excellence Awards

The City of Brantford and the Brantford Youth Council celebrated future leaders through the city's Youth Excellence Awards and Youth Leadership Development program. The program supports high school-aged leaders in planning community-impact projects. Nine Grand Erie students were honoured for their outstanding contributions to well-being, growth, diversity and inclusion, community, leadership and impact.

May 2025

Inspiring Educator

Following another successful Relay for Life fundraising effort by the Cayuga Secondary School community, educator Jonathan Mann, who's taken a leadership role in inspiring students to get involved in important causes, was honoured with a King Charles III Coronation medal.



Project SEARCH Community Connections

In Brantford, Joseph's Lifecare Centre, a host organization for Grand Erie's successful Project SEARCH program, was recently honoured with the 2025 AdvantAge Ontario Community Connections award. The honour recognizes its work as a transformative development initiative designed to prepare young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities for meaningful employment.





Grand Erie District School Board

349 Erie Avenue, Brantford, Ont., N3T 5V3

Telephone: 519-756-6301 | **Toll Free:** 1-888-548-8878 | **Email:** info@granderie.ca | granderie.ca



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