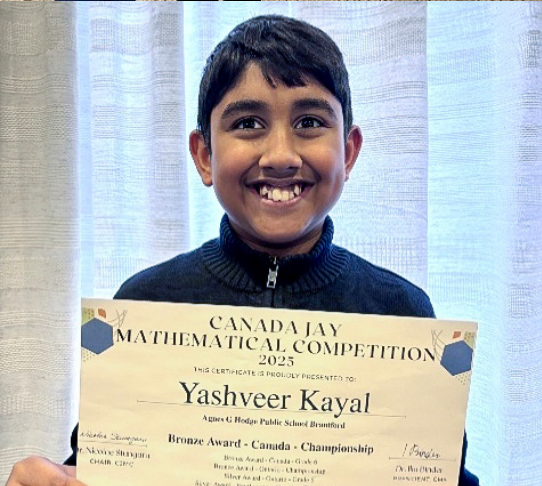
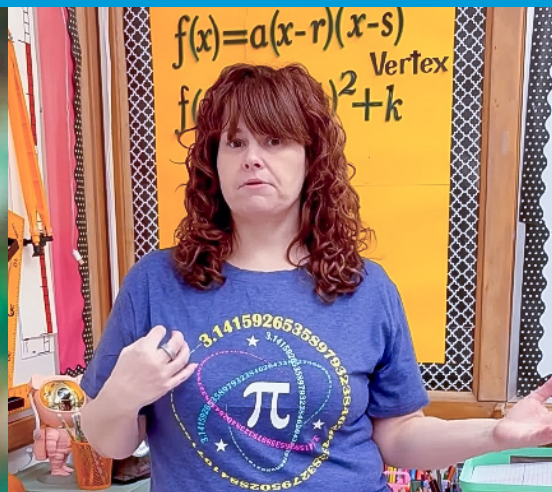
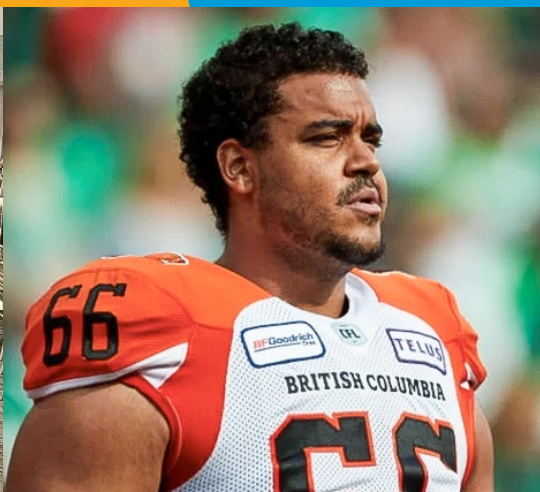




2025-26

Director of Education Highlights

December | January | February | March



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 - CEO, Ph.D

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



December 2025



December 2025

PROSE Program Recognized

On December 16, Norfolk County Council recognized the PROSE program for the difference it has made in schools across the region through a commitment to mentorship, education, and community engagement, helping to create a safer and more supportive environment for students. Constable Andrew Gamble from Norfolk County OPP and Dr. JoAnna Roberto, Grand Erie's Director of Education, accepted the award on behalf of the partnership which earned the 2025 Ontario Justice Education Network Chief Justices' Award for building trust between students and police across Brantford, Norfolk, Brant and Haldimand.



North Park Brings Joyful Sound to Elementary Schools

The North Park Collegiate and Vocational School's band continued the tradition of spreading holiday joy through music, playing at elementary feeder schools in December. The performances help bridge the transition from elementary to secondary school by inspiring younger learners through music and showing them the fun that awaits through the popular extracurricular activity that has given North Park a reputation for creativity and excellence.

December 2025



Kicking off the Holidays with a Friendly Competition

Prior to the holidays, Waterford District High School and Delhi District Secondary School headed to the arena for the annual students-versus-teachers hockey games. This year, despite valiant efforts by the student teams, the teacher teams from both schools were victorious.

January 2026



January 2026

Student Trustee Elections Underway

Student Trustee Prabhsidak Singh recently shared his experience with fellow learners interested in representing student voice at the boardroom table. Elections will soon be underway to elect the next Student Trustee representing students from the North region of Grand Erie as Singh prepares for post-secondary.



The Power of Books to Inspire Ideas

After reading the novel *Fly Boy*, set during World War II, Grade 6 students at St. George-German School decided to share the joy of the holiday season by taking part in Operation Santa Claus. The initiative, led by the Canadian Armed Forces Morale and Welfare Services, distributes care packages to soldiers stationed around the world. Thanks to the Grade 6 class and the Student Leadership Team, the effort became a whole-school fundraiser, surpassing its original goal, raising \$750. The initiative culminated with a special Zoom call with a soldier who'd received a care package.

January 2026

Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs Triumphant at Business Competition

McKinnon Park Secondary School and Cayuga Secondary School students participated in the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) business competition at Brock University. Through applied learning and real-life insight, the program introduces high school students to a variety of concepts in marketing, finance, hospitality and management, building the foundation for post-secondary studies and future career paths.



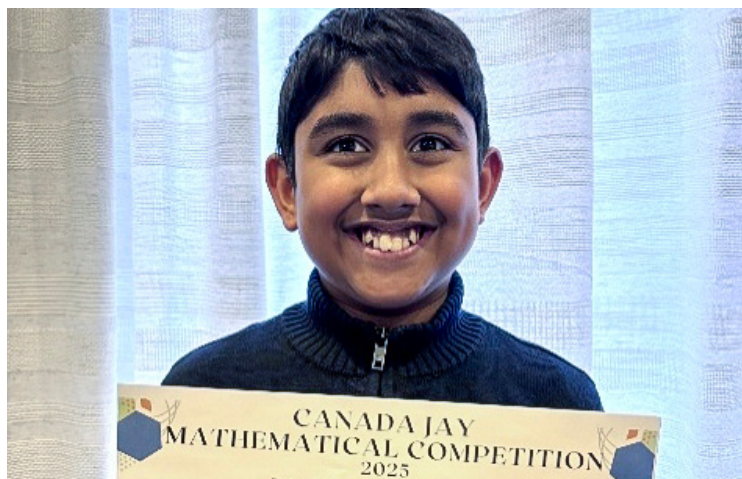
Dropping the Puck on Kindergarten Registration

The youngest learners at Princess Elizabeth Public School had an exciting visitor recently. Bruiser, the mascot for the OHL's Brantford Bulldogs, came by the school to film a spot promoting Kindergarten registration. Students brought their energy to the video, airing during games this winter. Check out the video [here](#).

January 2026

Russell Reid Student Rocks Math Competition

Last month, Yahsveer Kayal, a Grade 6 student from Russell Reid Public School, received the bronze medal in the Canadian Jay Mathematics Competition, hosted by the Canadian Mathematical Society. The honour follows a string of national and regional achievements for Yahsveer, who loves taking part in the problem-solving competitions.



Innovation Hub Boosts Learning and Engagement

Since opening its doors in November 2024, the results are clear: the Innovation Hub, located at North Park Institute and Vocational School, is increasing motivation and confidence in STEAM learning, and increasing skill development across disciplines. Check out the full update on page 14 of the Board report.

January 2026

Building Global Connections

Nine students from Japan are honorary Mustangs this semester, taking part in an international study program that's brought them to Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School. The program provides international students with the opportunity to study at Brantford secondary schools, both long and short-term.



Leading the Way

Grand Erie's LEAD program continues, inviting staff members to the three-part series offering mentorship, coaching and collaborative learning meant to enhance personal and professional leadership development. Aligned with the Ontario Leadership Framework, Grand Erie is committed to fostering leadership that enhances student achievement, promotes equity and builds positive learning environments.

First Cohort Graduates from Cybersecurity Pathway

North Park Collegiate and Vocational School is celebrating a milestone as the first cohort of students has completed a new Cybersecurity Pathway. Four students in grades 9 and 11 completed six one-hour sessions focused on cryptography fundamentals and practical cybersecurity tools. The new pathway was launched in the fall as part of Grand Erie's broader STEAM initiatives through the Innovation Hub.



January 2026

Relay for Life Grows in Grand Erie

In 2025, commitments from Grand Erie schools raised an incredible \$63,503 for Relay for Life, in support of the Canadian Cancer Society. Students at Cayuga Secondary

School and Dunnville Secondary School each organized Relay for Life youth events to generate the impressive total. Relay for Life is a movement that inspires students to unite and create change, and thanks to support from educators and school leaders, it funds vital research and care.



Athletic Achievements Open Doors

McKinnon Park Secondary School students Averie Marciniak-Varhaug and Emmersyn Roy are US-bound next September. Each has accepted scholarship offers to continue to develop their skills in basketball and soccer respectively.

Learning Lacrosse

Students in grades 7 and 8 from Grand River Public School had the chance to learn Canada's national summer sport, visiting the Iroquois Lacrosse Arena as part of a larger partnership connecting learners to this important part of heritage and culture.



January 2026

Partnership Shines Spotlight on the Arts

What began last year as a Community Use of Schools partnership with Brantford theatre group 20 Performing Arts Academy (20 PAA) has evolved into a unique artistic opportunity for BCI students looking to gain experience in stage production. After hosting successful performances last month in the secondary school's auditorium, 20 PAA has extended its thanks to the BCI community, offering in-kind theatre workshops and meaningful opportunities to gain volunteer hours by assisting with productions.



Student Trustees Share Ideas to Move Grand Erie Forward

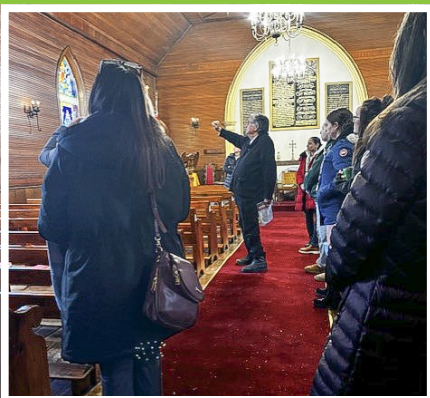
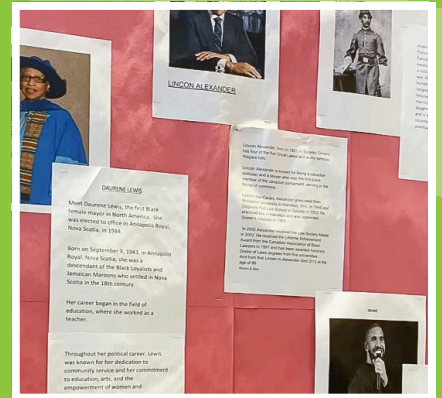
Student Trustees Ryleigh Staats, Harper Thompson and Prabhsidak Singh are leading the way in bringing the student voice to Grand Erie. A recent luncheon allowed them to share ideas and suggestions to move the board forward in its strategic planning and direction.

Community Recognition: Pauline Johnson Alum Receives Order of Canada

Jane Darville, who grew up in Brantford's Eagle Place neighborhood and graduated from Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School, has received the Order of Canada for her groundbreaking work in the healthcare sector. As a founding board member and a past executive director of Toronto's Casey House, a hospice in Toronto for those living with HIV/AIDS, and executive director of Vancouver's Canuck Place Children's Hospice, Darville's leadership is an inspiration to everyone in Grand Erie.



February 2026



February 2026

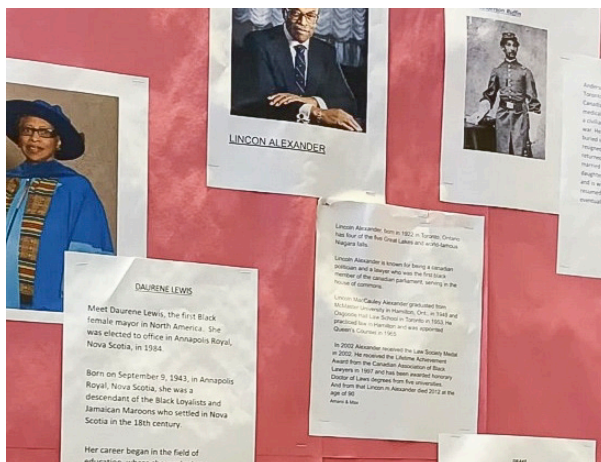
Leading the Way in Anti-Racism Education

Atala Andratis, System Leader for International Education, Equity and MLL, is this year's recipient of the Leadership in Education award, presented by Harmony Movement. The award recognizes individuals in administrative and academic roles who demonstrate exemplary leadership in promoting inclusion and equity in education, and fostering a deep sense of belonging for students and staff alike.



Black History Month Honours Black Brilliance Across Generations

February is Black History Month, and this year's theme honours 30 years of highlighting Black brilliance across generations, highlight the nation builders, visionaries, experiences and legacies of Black communities in Canada. This month, schools are sharing resources and learning to deepen our collective understanding of Black history, systemic barriers that Black communities continue to face, and the positive impact on Canada as a nation.



Innovation Hub Event Invites Families to Explore, Create and play

Families with students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 took part in hands-on event at the Innovation Hub recently, with activities aimed at introducing young students to STEAM learning. The Explore, Create, Play! event included a green-screen photo booth, engineering building stations, a music sound lab and other opportunities to foster curiosity, imagination and a love of learning.



February 2026

GEPIC Event Empowers At-Home Learning

The latest in a speaker series organized by the Grand Erie parent Involvement Committee invited families to hear from Dr. Cathy Marks Krpan presenting *But That Is Not How the Teacher Does It!* The empowering session shared meaningful, stress-free ways to support K to Grade 5 mathematical thinkers at home.



James Hillier Public School students receive Power of the Pen award

For 31 years, the Hamilton Public Library has hosted Power of the Pen, a contest open to students between the ages of 12 – 18 across the region to submit original poetry and short stories. Submissions are judged by a panel for originality, style, general presentation, spelling and grammar. This year, students in grades 7 and 8 at James Hillier Public School took on the challenge en Francais, with Oliver Prang and Oliver Kronwald receiving a first and second prize in their age category for their French language works.



Student Trustees Head to Conference

Student Trustees Prabhsidak Singh, Ryleigh Staats and Harper Thompson, pictured with Superintendent Regan Van Kerrebroeck, headed to a conference recently hosted by the Ontario Student Trustee Association (OSTA-AECO). The OSTA-AECO hosts annual events aimed at building leadership capacity and connections with other student leaders each year.



February 2026

Preserving Truth: The Mohawk Institute as International Site of Conscience

Tim Johnson, president of the Niagara Academy for Indigenous Relations, and Rick Hill, educator of Indigenous culture and histories, histories, joined system leaders to share the project they co-lead a project team to facilitate the monumental task of transforming the Mohawk Institute into a permanent visitor experience. The session explored the curation and development of the Woodland Cultural Centre's newest exhibition, learning how the team navigated the deep history of Canada's Indian residential school policies to create a space that honours survivors while educating the public on the institutional legacy.



Mohawk Chapel Tours Invite Staff to Learn, Reflect and Connect

Throughout the school year, Grand Erie is hosting professional development opportunities at St. Paul's H. M. Royal Chapel of the Mohawk, as part of a half-day session led by Six Nations Tourism. The session provides a unique chance to connect with the National History Site, and supports site-based learning to broader themes including treaties, the role of the church in colonization, and the ongoing contributions of the Haudenosaunee people.



February 2026

Donation Warms up Lakewood's Winter Carnival

The Port Dover Tim Horton's franchise made Lakewood Elementary School's annual winter carnival sweet with a hot chocolate donation treat.



Kickstart Events Underway

Kickstart to Kindergarten, an annual series of regional, interactive events to help families with little learners prepare for successful starts to school, are underway across Grand Erie. Kickstart to Kindergarten aims to connect families with educators and resources in preparation for the milestone.



STEAM Exploration for Littlest Learners

On January 29, Kindergarten to Grade 3 families were welcomed at the Innovation Hub for a night of STEAM exploration! From the green-screen Photo Booth to little-engineer building stations and the music sound lab, students and families explored, created and played together. Thanks to everyone who joined us for an evening celebrating curiosity, imagination, and joyful learning!



February 2026

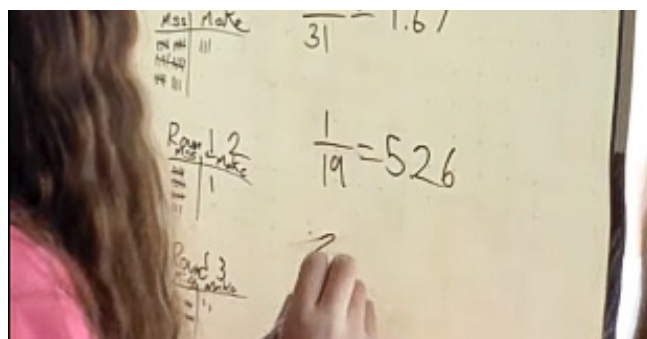
Kickstarting Online Engagement

Grand Erie's Communications team is visiting Kindergarten classrooms across the district to bring to life these vibrant, empowering learning spaces for online audiences. Coinciding with Kickstart to Kindergarten, and supporting the ongoing registration process, the content gives families the information they need and the inspiration to get excited about the milestone of starting school. Check them out on Instagram.



Math Learning on 100th School Day

It may have seemed like a typical Monday morning, but in Grand Erie, the 100th day of school was a chance to connection math concepts to the number 100. At Lynndale Heights students shared a card game with us where they collected data in relation to 100 using fractions, ratios, decimals, percentages and more



Drama Class Levels Up with Board Game Plot Twist

Waterford District High School is changing how students experience the arts. Teacher Jason Mayo has introduced a first-of-its-kind specialized drama course built around Dungeons & Dragons, blending acting, storytelling, teamwork, and creative design into one immersive semester-long experience. The result is a full-credit drama course where students spend the semester developing original characters, creating costumes and props, writing scripts, and performing short scenes inspired by the game.



February 2026



Touchdown, Kindergarten

Oakland-Scotland Public School's Kindergarten class celebrated the Super Bowl in early February with a day full of learning and fun. They learned about football and the rules of the game, made predictions and graphed their thoughts, played football-themed addition and subtraction games and competed in a Super Bowl Bingo tournament.

Art Call Invites Students, Staff to Interpret *Learn Lead Inspire*

Staff and students across the Grand Erie community are invited to interpret the district's core vision – Learn Lead Inspire – and what it means to them through art. Submissions are being accepted for original works in traditional and digital formats that can be displayed throughout the district. The call for works will culminate with an in-person event later this spring.



March & April 2026



Building Blanche E. Williams Public School

Construction continues at the future site of Blanche E. Williams Public School in West Brant. Work is on track for the school to open its doors to learners in September. The building is a joint-use project with the city of Brantford, and will include a public library and recreation centre on the same campus. To prepare for the 2026-27 school year, students, families and staff were invited to complete a survey to select an official school identity.



Travels in Learning and Honouring the Past

Three cadets and Simcoe Composite School students participated in the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ieper, Belgium last month. Grayden Dale-Vankerbroeck laid a wreath on behalf of all Grand Erie students; Holden Kennedy on behalf of their Simcoe branch of the Royal Canadian Army Cadets; and Maddie Mummery on behalf of the Port Dover branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. Staff and students from Simcoe Composite School, Waterford District High School, Valley Heights Secondary School, and Delhi District Secondary School taking part in the overseas trip were very proud to witness the ceremony honouring all missing Commonwealth soldiers with no known grave, including many Canadians.

March & April 2026

McKinnon Park Student Receives Prestigious Undergraduate Award

Annice Adams, a Grade 12 student at McKinnon Park Secondary School, is a recipient of this year's Loran Scholarship, selected from more than 5,400 applicants nationwide. The student leader served as student council prime minister, and was a Connect Crew mentor, a dedicated ringette coach, and community volunteer. The Loran scholarship is one of Canada's most prestigious undergraduate awards, and Adams says stepping outside her comfort zone was a key component to her remarkable achievement.



Community Partnership Amplifies the Arts in Dunnville

Dunnville Secondary Schools' art department has paired with the Minga Cafe and Community Hub in Dunnville for an art show and gallery display. The community partnership provides student artists with insights into creative careers, offering a bridge between academic settings and the world of professional arts.



March & April 2026



Kickstart to Kindergarten

School staff, central staff, and community partners came together to support regional Kickstart to Kindergarten events at Burford District Elementary School, Jarvis Public School, Major Ballachey Public School, Walter Gretzky Elementary School, Thompson Creek Elementary School, and Walsh Public School over the last month. The events provide an early and enthusiastic welcome to our future Grand Erie Kindergarten students and families.

Celebrating Women

At the Celebrating Women gathering on April 7, staff and students from secondary schools across the district came together to recognize the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and girls, and to shed light on efforts to advance gender equity. With the United Nations' theme for International Women's Day of rights, justice and action for all girls and women guiding discussions, learners shared perspectives on leadership, inspiration, connection, and voice.



March & April 2026



Skills Competition Highlights Students' Achievements

Held at Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School this month, the Skills Competition brought together secondary students to showcase their expertise in skilled trades and technologies ranging from culinary arts to robotics. For some, this is an opportunity to compete for a place at the provincial Skills Ontario competition next month.

Grand Erie Leading Forward

Grand Erie is set to renew its strategic plan – Leading Forward – to meaningfully guide and support learners' success over the next four years. The board collected input from students, staff members, and families through a survey, and a recent strategic planning session brought together stakeholders from across the district to put their stamp on this important work.



March & April 2026



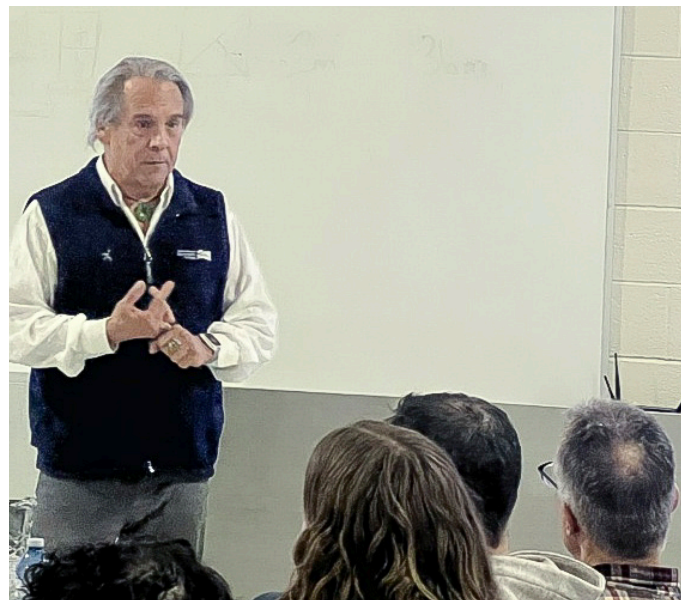
Photo caption:
Genevieve Wey, left,
and Alwynn Wells.

Brantford Swimmers Making Waves

Genevieve Wey, a student at Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School, and Alwynn Wells, a student at Lansdowne-Costain Public School, both made waves in the pool recently, with achievements in artistic swimming and the race circuit, respectively. Earlier this year at a national qualifier in Quebec, Wey placed first in tech solo and second in free solo. Competing in the 400-metre freestyle this winter, Wells broke two-time Olympian Julie Howard's 40-year-old club record in the 10 and under short course category by completing the race in five minutes, 14.02 seconds.

Professional Learning Brings Author to Grand Erie

As part of NBE Professional Learning on February 24, Drew Hayden Taylor livestreamed with Grade 9 to 12 secondary English classes on *The Power of Story: Seeing Ourselves in What We Read*. Drew Hayden Taylor is an award-winning Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) playwright, author, journalist, and filmmaker from Curve Lake First Nation, known for his humorous yet insightful storytelling that explores Indigenous experiences in contemporary Canada.



March & April 2026

Delhi Raiders Duo Ready for University Football Journey

Delhi Secondary School Raiders quarterback/receiver duo of Brady Dowling and Memphis Becker are headed to Graceland University of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics to study and play football next year. The pair helped help lead Delhi District Secondary School to a title in 2024 and an undefeated regular season in 2025.



North Park's Chess Winning Streak

North Park Collegiate and Vocational School Grade 12 student Andrew Song, the undefeated champion in Grades 9, 10 and 11, finally met his match recently during the high school championship at Pauline Johnson Collegiate. Song's winning streak ended in a game against fellow North Park student Ethan Lu.

Paris District Student Heading South

Sydney Kipp had several choices to make about where to attend school next year to study and play softball, ultimately deciding Ursuline College would be her next stop. The Paris resident and Brantford Bobcats player is heading south to Pepper Pike, Ohio, and said she was impressed by the school, the facility and the environment.



March & April 2026

All the World's a Stage at Dramafest

Young actors, directors, and stage crews from seven area secondary schools staged their productions at Brantford Collegiate Institute in late March during the district level competition of the National Theatre School's DramaFest. The three winning productions – Every Day I Wake Up by Waterford District High School; Radium Girls by Cayuga Secondary School; and The Day the Internet Died by McKinnon Park Secondary School – will move on to a regional festival in Hamilton later this month.



Above: Students Emilia Witmer-Petitti, director; Genevieve Wey, festival stage manager, and Mackenzie Langille, production manager, had key roles in the staging of *The Overview*, a play written by teacher Jan St. Denis (right)



Math Messaging Adds Up

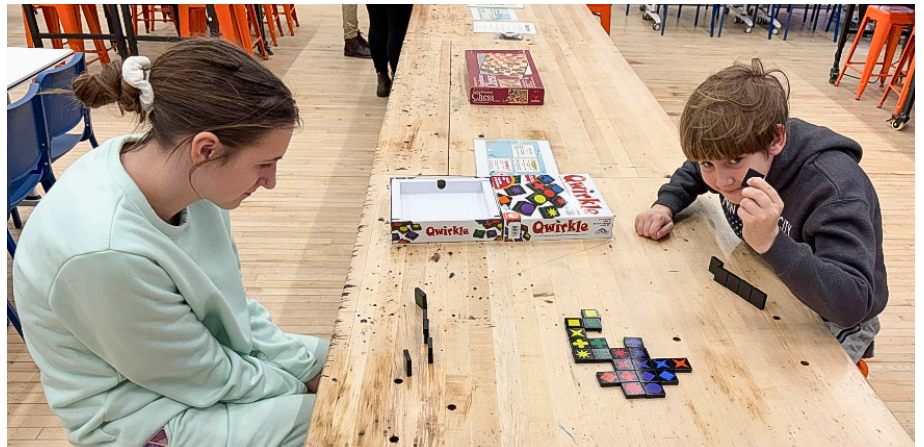
Bellview Public School is using positive messaging around mathematics to empower learners to approach numeracy with confidence.

Former CFL Player Takes Over as Football Coach at Pauline Johnson Collegiate

David Knevel, a Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School graduate and former CFL player, is returning to his alma mattar to take over the top football coaching job. Leaving the role behind is John Macdonald, also a former CFLer, who coached football at the school for the previous 15 years, and is on to his next opportunities in Grand Erie.



March & April 2026



Innovation Hub Boosts Creative Thinking at Family Nights

Students and families came out in March to explore hands-on art stations, experiment with different materials, and express their artistic ideas in a welcoming, workshop-style environment. This event was geared toward elementary schools and highlighted the joy of creating together and showcases how the arts inspire imagination, confidence, and community. A similar event later in March focused on secondary students.

Getting to Know Grand Erie

World Social Work Day

March 18 marked World Social Work Day. Grand Erie's team of social workers connect students and families with vital resources at school and home, and help create environments where everyone feels safe and seen. A question-and-answer with Desiree Smith-Rayoff, one of Grand Erie's caring School Social Workers, was shared to increase overall understanding of this important role.



March & April 2026



School Librarian Day

Grand Erie celebrated School Librarian Day April 4. Grand Erie is proud to work with a variety of professionals who support our libraries including library technicians and teacher librarians. A question-and-answer allowed our communities to learn more about the roles of Library Technicians and Teacher Librarians, and how these champions of learning connect students with the resources, skills, and inspiration they need to thrive.



Educational Assistant Day

April 2 was Educational Assistant (EA) Appreciation Day in Grand Erie, a chance to thank this incredible group of employees for facilitating safe and responsive learning spaces that ensure all students are celebrated just as they are. Emily, an EA at Jarvis Public School, shared insights into the role and how learners inspire her each day.

Coming Up: Education Week

Education Week takes place the first week of May. Join us to celebrate and see Excellence in Motion! On May 4 and 5, Grand Erie is hosting interactive booths and sessions with engaging opportunities for the entire family. Topics include math and literacy, artificial intelligence, mental health and well-being, and much more.



March & April 2026



Eco Engagement

Earlier this month, the Grand River Regional Envirothon Workshop Day saw student teams from both Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School and Delhi District Secondary School in attendance. The Workshop Day was hosted at the University of Waterloo and the Grand Erie teams were two of the twelve from secondary schools across the region participating this year.



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