



# Director's Report

March and 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-Vankerrebroeck 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.



## 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.



## Kickstart to Kindergarten

School and board staff along with community partners came together for 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.

## 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.



## Workplace Planning Highlights SHSM



Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie's Employer Engagement Series recently featured an episode interviewing Grand Erie's Phil Cline to discuss the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program, and the unique value it brings to the local business community. The SHSM program allows high school students to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma while focusing their learning on a specific economic sector. Check out the video [here](#).

### 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.



### 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.

### IGNITE Assistive Technology Grant

The IGNITE Assistive Technology Grant will provide two \$1,000 grants for graduating students who have used SEA to access assistive technology after graduation to amplify independence and remove systematic barriers. The grant supports a successful transition to apprenticeship, college, university, community settings, or employment, with a continuation of the assistive technological tools that have helped drive success.

### 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.



Photo caption: Genevieve Wey, left, and Alwynn Wells

### 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.





## 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 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.

# All the World's a Stage at Dramafest



Photo caption: 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)

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.

## 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.



# 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.



## Math Messaging Adds Up

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



# 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.



## Women in the Trades

Young women from grades 7 and 8 rolled up their sleeves and picked up tools at Paris District High School in March, as the school hosted its second annual Women in Trades workshop. The goal of the evening was to encourage young women to consider pathways in the skilled trades at a pivotal stage in their education. In Grades 7 and 8, students begin thinking about course selections and potential career directions in secondary school.

# 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.



## 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.