

Director's Citation Awards

and

Employee Recognition Awards



2024–2025

Message from the Director



It fills me with immense pride and gratitude as we celebrate the outstanding achievements of our staff. The Director's Citation and Employee Recognition Awards, offered annually, provide an opportunity to acknowledge the remarkable contributions of our educators, support staff, and administrators. Nominated by their colleagues, it's evident that these individuals consistently exceed expectations in their support of our students, fellow staff, and school communities.

We are truly fortunate to have such an exceptional team of professionals within our District. Every day, you inspire, innovate, and cultivate teaching and learning environments that empower our students in reaching their fullest potential. Your passion for education and dedication to excellence establishes a benchmark that elevates our entire organization.

To all the award recipients, please accept my sincere congratulations. Thank you for being the driving force behind our shared mission to foster learning, well-being, and social responsibility.

With profound appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pino Buffone". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Pino Buffone

*Director of Education and Secretary of the Board,
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board*

2024-2025 Director's Citation and Employee Recognition Awards

Director's Citation Award

The Director's Citation Award recognizes outstanding and significant staff contributions to the District and its students over an extended period of time, showing a level of imagination, enthusiasm, and professionalism that constitutes a worthy model for others. It is intended to be a recognition of staff by their colleagues, honouring those who are in the midst of their careers.

Employee Recognition Awards

Health and Safety Award

The Health and Safety Award celebrates outstanding and significant contribution by an OCDSB staff member over an extended period of time or a specific singular contribution of significant impact or benefit to health and safety.

Innovation Award

The Innovation Award recognizes noteworthy contributions of an OCDSB staff member or team to the development of innovative concepts, suggestions, actions or process improvements that result in immediate and significant ongoing benefit to the District.

Mentoring Award

The Mentoring Award recognizes the outstanding contributions and support of an OCDSB staff member provided to the Mentoring program that has resulted in having a significant impact in the development of a beginning employee.

Ronald K. Lynch Memorial Award

The Ronald K. Lynch Memorial Award recognizes an outstanding and significant contribution reflecting either a sustained compassionate and dedicated commitment by an OCDSB employee to the success of students with special education needs, or a specific singular contribution of demonstrated benefit to students with special education needs.

Excellence in Equity Award

The Excellence In Equity Award celebrates the outstanding and significant contribution by an OCDSB staff member to serving the District and its students by aligning and integrating equitable and inclusive education principles and practices that value and leverage the diversity of our students and communities in their daily work.

DIRECTOR'S CITATION AWARDS

Glen Balson

Chief Custodian,
Barrhaven Public School

Kristi Fulford

Teacher, Viscount Alexander
Public School

Richard Garrick

Social Emotional Learning Teacher,
Learning Support Services

Kacey George

Educational Assistant,
Canterbury High School

Moheb Hanna

Team Manager, Client Services

Paula Hughton

Teacher-Librarian, Osgoode
Township High School

Caroline (Carey) Kitchen

Frederick Banting Secondary
Alternate Program

Nouha Obagi-Fakhouri

Math Teacher,
Canterbury High School

Planning Department

Chantel Smith

System Principal, Student
Achievement Through Equity
(SATE)

Gillian Walker

Department Head,
Ottawa-Carleton Virtual
Secondary School

THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS HAVE BEEN SELECTED AS FOLLOWS;

EXCELLENCE IN EQUITY AWARD

Caitlin Eden

Learning Support Teacher,
Jack Donohue Public School

HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD

Lisa Simpson

Chief Custodian,
Maplewood Secondary School

INNOVATION AWARD

Bill McMullen

Teacher and Volunteer,
Trillium Elementary School

MENTORING AWARD

Elizabeth Ivany

Teacher, Jack Donohue Public School

RONALD K. LYNCH MEMORIAL AWARD

Victoria Castellano

Teacher, Katimavik
Elementary School

TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE AWARD

James Cleveland

Technology and Trades Coordinator,
Program Services



Award Recipients

Director's Citation Awards

The following pages include the names of recipients along with excerpts of the nominations submitted by their colleagues.

Glen Balson

Chief Custodian, Barrhaven Public School

Glen Balson embodies the qualities of an exceptional leader and team member. His organized and proactive approach is remarkable. He consistently goes above and beyond, from arriving early to clear snow after a storm, to making sure tradespeople have everything they need to do the job effectively.

Glen's kindness and caring spirit truly make him special. He makes everyone feel valued and supported, while fostering a positive and welcoming environment. He represents a huge part of the warm, family-like atmosphere at the school. Glen's ability to build strong relationships is a testament to his character. He knows exactly who to call to resolve any issue, and his creative problem-solving skills consistently deliver effective solutions.

Glen goes the extra mile, ensuring the environment is a safe, welcoming and wonderful place to be. He is reliable, often sacrificing his weekends to address urgent needs, and showing unwavering commitment to the school facility and its occupants.



Kristi Fulford

Teacher, Viscount Alexander Public School

Kristi Fulford has cultivated a vibrant atmosphere at Viscount Alexander Public School throughout her 27 years of service. Kristi's creativity and imagination are evident in her impactful Remembrance Day assemblies and her annual wax museum productions, where grade 5-6 students bring different themes to life with dramatic presentations.



Kristi's passion and dedication are apparent daily. She has introduced an annual focus on Black artists for school bulletin boards. She is also the heart of Viscount's sports teams, coaching all sports and single-handedly obtaining equipment and instructional support for the school. She consistently seeks opportunities to get students learning and moving, promoting their physical and academic well-being.

Beyond the classroom and sports field, Kristi leads staff in spirit days and brings lively tunes to the staff room. Her energy transforms the school into a workplace that feels like a home. She takes the time to build connections and makes everyone feel important.

Richard Garrick

**Social Emotional Learning Teacher,
Learning Support Services**

Richard Garrick is a highly valued and respected educator. He is dedicated to fostering student agency, promoting mental health and cultivating a safe and inclusive environment. He understands the importance of creating meaningful connections through curiosity and compassion.



Richard's extensive background in special education, youth and social services, program development and community involvement provides him with a unique understanding of the mental health barriers faced by diverse student populations. Richard volunteers with the Ottawa Police Service as an Auxiliary Officer, leading the Ottawa Cadet Corps Program and participating on their Youth Advisory Committee.

Richard handles complex referrals, provides training and modeling and mentors others. Viewing challenges as learning opportunities, he consistently offers support, assumes duties beyond the expected and seeks additional qualifications to further support schools. Richard's dedication and advocacy inspires staff to consider differentiated approaches in the classroom and develop personal resilience. Richard exemplifies how to look at students through a lens that affirms their identities, strengths and experiences.

Kacey George

Educational Assistant, Canterbury High School

Kacey George has been a bright star at Canterbury High School since 2012, having worked in the Resource Room, Behaviour Intervention Program, Physical Support Program and Student Success Room.

Kacey excels at building strong relationships with students, ensuring they feel seen, cared for, valued and safe. Her ability to connect with often-overlooked students has been particularly impactful. This year, Kacey has played a significant role in literacy development efforts, helping students who face challenges feel a sense of belonging and giving them a safe space to learn and grow.

Known for her unflappable nature, Kacey shows flexibility and resilience when faced with difficult or unpredictable situations. She adeptly de-escalates challenging situations with kindness and warmth. Kacey is always willing to lend a hand, prioritizing students' best interests. She is an excellent role model for students, her fellow Educational Assistants and the entire staff.



Moheb Hanna

Team Manager, Client Services

Moheb Hanna's extensive technical knowledge allows him to navigate complex Information Technology (IT) landscapes with ease. Through his business acumen and vision, Moheb consistently aligns IT strategies with overarching business goals, ensuring that technology serves as a powerful enabler for our educational mission. He has a remarkable ability to guide various teams through the development and follow-through of actionable plans.



Moheb fosters a collaborative and supportive environment, actively listening to team members and empowering them to excel. He champions continuous learning, encouraging his team to stay informed on the latest technological advancements. He also promotes knowledge-sharing and teamwork, recognizing that collective expertise drives innovation.

Known for his data-driven and timely decisions, Moheb leverages information effectively to make informed choices, ensuring that projects remain on track and resources are optimized. His dedication to operational excellence, coupled with his ability to inspire and lead, make him an invaluable asset to the District.

Paula Hughson

Teacher-Librarian, Osgoode Township High School

Paula Hughson has transformed the library into a vibrant hub at Osgoode Township High School. She optimized the space by creating clearer sight lines, adding comfortable furniture and setting up a warm beverage station for students. Paula relocated the board games club to the library and welcomed students to eat their lunches there. She also updated the library's resources, replacing dated materials with newer, more relevant ones.



By positioning her desk centrally, Paula has ensured that she is readily available to help students find the materials they need. She has also acquired Chromebooks for student use and encouraged staff to use the library for events, including guest speakers, presentations and cultural celebrations.

Paula eagerly shares her expertise through newsletters, bulletins, staff meetings and classes on topics such as academic integrity and research techniques. Her friendly, kind and humorous approach fosters a caring atmosphere, and her willingness to share her knowledge is a testament to her professionalism and dedication.

Caroline (Carey) Kitchen

Frederick Banting Secondary Alternate Program

For 27 years, Carey has dedicated herself to improving the world, one student, one classroom and one school at a time. She shows an unwavering commitment to helping students succeed and overcome obstacles. Carey helps staff think outside the box and create academic plans that take students' unique circumstances into account.



In a year-end address, Carey took the time to name every graduate and highlight something unique and positive about them. Her focus on human connection nurtures student potential, leaving a lasting impact. Recently, a parent from 20 years ago wrote to thank her for believing in her son, now a success in his field.

Carey works tirelessly to ensure the school continually progresses, empowering staff to make positive changes and adapting programs to foster a strong sense of community. She demonstrates kindness towards the parent community and cares deeply about students. Carey always sees and states students' strengths, seeking to create meaningful change for students who face challenges in their lives.

Nouha Obagi-Fakhouri

Math Teacher, Canterbury High School

Nouha Obagi-Fakhouri is the heart of the math department, embodying enthusiasm and an unwavering commitment to student success. Her passion for mathematics inspires both students and colleagues through innovative teaching methods and a dynamic approach. She strives to make a lasting impact, whether by leading engaging lessons or fostering a supportive classroom environment.



Nouha demonstrates an unwavering commitment to quality education. She brings her whole self to school and exemplifies the qualities of a “warm demander” – expecting excellence and going the extra mile to help students achieve their potential. When the new destreamed math curriculum was adopted in 2021, Nouha was the first to volunteer to teach the course, and she has been a regular presenter at the Math Subject Council PD Day, sharing her expertise and teaching strategies.

Nouha plays a crucial role in shaping the school culture, bringing positivity, collaboration and a deep caring for both students and staff. Her professionalism and leadership demonstrate the power of dedication and her love for education.

Planning Department

Led by General Manager, Karyn Ostafichuk, the Planning Department's staff consistently shows care, commitment, determination and diligence. The Elementary Program Review was a significant undertaking, demanding thorough



data analysis, extensive consultation and integration of complex information to develop thoughtful recommendations. The Planning Department displayed extraordinary commitment and expertise, playing a crucial role in shaping the future of elementary education in the District.

Developing multiple comprehensive attendance boundaries, grade configurations and transition plans required meticulous attention to detail and a deep understanding of the school system's interdependencies. The planners synthesized feedback, ensuring that diverse perspectives were considered. They developed detailed reports, which communicated the complexity and rationale behind the recommendations. The planners actively responded to feedback received throughout the consultation process, adapting plans and developing revisions to address concerns.

The team's dedication was essential to the development of several recommendations. Their efforts have resulted in a well-considered plan that aims to enhance program quality, accessibility and equity for all elementary students. Their invaluable contributions will have a lasting positive impact on our school communities.

Chantel Smith

System Principal, Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE)

Chantel Smith has tirelessly devoted 25 years to the achievement and well-being of the students, educators, families and communities in the OCDSB as a teacher, coach, mentor, Vice-Principal and Principal. She brings an impressive depth of knowledge, experience, continual learning and leadership to the District and beyond.



Chantel has spent nearly four years passionately leading the Student Achievement Through Equity Inquiry. Her tenacity and commitment to high expectations has culminated in programming that shows us all what is possible. At the core of her work, Chantel believes all students can succeed through the warmth and high expectations communicated in a learning partnership. She provides concrete and practical solutions for educators and principals to reflect and evolve their practices.

Chantel recognizes the power of partnering with families in a child's education. She helps to bridge the gap between families and schools through community-connected events, parent focus groups and ongoing training programs. Chantel leads by example, bringing people together to lift up all children in the District.

Gillian Walker

Department Head, Ottawa-Carleton
Virtual Secondary School

Gillian Walker embodies supportive leadership through her outstanding contributions. A 20-year veteran educator with the OCDSB, Gillian is a self-starter with a passion for innovation, implementing initiatives that greatly benefit students and colleagues.

Gillian readily adopts new trends and shares her experiences, fostering collaboration and confidence within the school community. She has been instrumental in developing modern technological practices at the school. Never one to shy away from challenges, she is a strong advocate for equity, leading initiatives that have positively impacted diverse student populations.

Gillian's extensive leadership experience includes serving as a department head at multiple schools, overseeing areas such as French, Technology and Arts, among others. Before joining the OCDSB, Gillian taught in the UK, proudly representing her Scottish heritage. Her leadership helps shape a school culture that is safe, dynamic and inspiring.





Award Recipients

Employee Recognition Awards

The following pages include the names of recipients along with excerpts of the nominations submitted by their colleagues.

EXCELLENCE IN EQUITY AWARD

Caitlin Eden

Learning Support Teacher, Jack Donohue Public School

Caitlin Eden has dedicated her career to ensuring students feel heard, seen and valued. A cornerstone of Caitlin's efforts is the Ambassadors Club, where junior students take the lead in presenting information and promoting understanding of diverse cultures, religions and beliefs.

Caitlin has expanded the club's role beyond presentations, empowering students to update school spaces, contribute to lesson planning and engage in leadership opportunities. This work fosters a sense of pride in their heritage. Students develop and deliver presentations, make announcements, create interactive bulletin boards and raise awareness within the school community.

A champion of diversity and multiculturalism, Caitlin integrates these values into daily life at the school. She is highly respected by students, staff and parents for her commitment to action, implementing change and ensuring all students are valued. Her approach, grounded in education, active listening, kindness and openness, allows students to thrive. Caitlin embodies equity as a principle in her words and actions.



HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD

Lisa Simpson

Chief Custodian, Maplewood Secondary School

Lisa Simpson consistently delivers outstanding service and support, with a primary focus on the health and safety of staff and students. Her role involves diligent monitoring of the school site, including careful inspection of work by contractors.

Lisa excels at identifying and addressing potential hazards, acting swiftly to communicate with the relevant personnel in the OCDSB Facilities Department and ensure prompt resolution. She takes a proactive approach to ensuring student and staff well-being, and she responds without delay to any issues raised in inspection reports.

Beyond her technical skills and diligence, Lisa is known for her positive and caring demeanour. She cultivates trust and collaboration, fostering strong relationships within the school community. Throughout the process of opening Maplewood Secondary School, Lisa consistently responded to every situation with a smile, demonstrating her unwavering commitment to a positive atmosphere. She made an exceptional impact on the health and safety of staff and students during the crucial opening phase of Maplewood Secondary School.



INNOVATION AWARD

Bill McMullen

Teacher and Volunteer, Trillium Elementary School

Bill McMullen, a dedicated volunteer, has made significant contributions to the OCDSB and its Outdoor Education Centres. He generously shares his time and talents, demonstrating a passion for connecting young people with nature and enhancing their educational experiences. Bill has become invaluable in raising awareness of local biodiversity and improving the learning environment at the MacSkimming and Bill Mason Centres.



Bill's extensive volunteer work includes maintaining bird nesting boxes built by students and preserving the Centres' ecological integrity by removing invasive plant species. He manages trail cameras that capture valuable data and designs interpretive signs that enhance understanding of nature. Beyond these practical efforts, Bill shares his knowledge through engaging presentations, such as a nighttime owl hike for secondary students.

A key aspect of Bill's contribution is his exceptional photography, documenting the biodiversity of the MacSkimming Centre since 2015. Bill donates these stunning visuals to the OCDSB, where they are used in programs, displayed in OCDSB buildings and shared online, inspiring students to connect with the natural world.

MENTORING AWARD

Elizabeth Ivany

Teacher, Jack Donohue Public School

Elizabeth Ivany is recognized as an exceptional educator who cultivates an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. For over a decade, Elizabeth has consistently demonstrated outstanding mentorship through effective collaboration and learning. Her remarkable mentoring abilities have led numerous universities to actively seek her guidance for student teachers.



Elizabeth's mentorship extends beyond traditional teaching skills. While expertly teaching planning and presentation techniques, she also imparts crucial interpersonal skills that may not be typically covered in teacher's college. These include effective communication with parents, strategies for engaging reluctant learners, leading with kindness, addressing the root causes of student behaviour and fostering collaboration with all school staff in both academic and extracurricular areas.

With over 30 years of experience, Elizabeth is considered an ideal mentor for the next generation of educators. Her dedication and exceptional abilities make Elizabeth an invaluable asset to the teaching profession and a true gift to all those she mentors.

RONALD K. LYNCH MEMORIAL AWARD

Victoria Castellano

Teacher, Katimavik Elementary School

Victoria Castellano demonstrates unwavering dedication to students with special education needs, going beyond her required duties. She crafts individualized programs, dedicating personal time to provide structure and a secure environment. This fosters not only academic growth but also crucial skills like regulation, confidence, advocacy and autonomy.



Beyond the classroom, Victoria's commitment extends through numerous extracurricular initiatives. She leads Games Club and Recycling Club, founded the Kids Helping Kids Campaign mitten drive, spearheaded the popcorn program, organized a food drive and procured supplies for a women's shelter. These activities enable students to build relationships and learn social responsibility through active participation.

Victoria's multifaceted contributions and profound dedication make her an invaluable asset. Her consistent efforts ensure that every child leaves as a more capable and well-rounded individual. She serves as an exceptional role model and mentor.

TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE AWARD

James Cleveland

Technology and Trades Coordinator, Program Services

James Cleveland demonstrated exceptional commitment to technology excellence by leading the successful implementation of the Ministry of Education's mandatory technology credit. He meticulously ensured all schools had the necessary technological infrastructure. Beyond logistics, James fostered innovation by integrating new equipment and teaching methods. His support for all teachers, regardless of their technology experience, was crucial in navigating this change.



James' expertise was also key in advising on the design and planning of two new secondary schools, carefully considering the best use of spaces and technologies based on evolving industry needs. He collaborated extensively with central departments to offer support to administrators and teachers in new schools.

James' proactive and innovative mindset has been instrumental in the District's outstanding achievement of the Ministry's mandate. As a humble and supportive leader, his guidance consistently prioritizes students and fosters innovation. His dedication to equitable and effective education has transformed technology integration across the District.



Congratulations!



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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