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**EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
AWARD RECIPIENTS**

Teaching Excellence Awards

Kari Goethe, Swan Valley Regional Secondary School, Swan Valley School Division

Goethe is the resources and environmental management teacher at Swan Valley Regional Secondary School, offering courses ranging from forest, fisheries and wildlife management to geographical information systems. She promotes hands-on and real-world learning opportunities by inviting students to investigate problems and develop solutions that inspire them. Because Swan Valley's remote location can make the cost of field trips prohibitive, Goethe obtained a Class 2 driver's licence to reduce the cost of field trips by driving the bus herself. She includes up to eight field trips in a semester to places such as Oak Hammock Marsh, Duck Mountain Interpretive Centre, local mills and the University College of the North. Goethe also coaches the school's Envirothon team, an extracurricular program for the study of environmental topics that incorporates field experts. She is passionate about the rich learning opportunities provided by regional and provincial competitions, such as GenAG and Caring for our Watershed. She helps students prepare for and travel to competitions as far away as Churchill and Iowa. For students who are unable to fit one of her courses in their timetables, she offers to structure the course for independent learning. Goethe's infectious enthusiasm, encouraging attitude and commitment to student learning and well-being have made a great impact on students and staff.

Kyle Prevost, Birtle Collegiate, Park West School Division

Prevost introduced the world of business to students at Birtle Collegiate. He developed a school-initiated personal finance course and promotes financial literacy among youth through a wide array of business courses. He also founded a student-run business club and provides guidance to students for several successful student-run businesses. Through Prevost's coaching and hard work, teams from the business club have been successful at the Saskatchewan Business Teachers Association Case Competitions and Manitoba High School New Ventures competitions. He is the driving force behind the creation of the Manitoba High School Case Competition, bringing school teams from across the province to Brandon to highlight youth entrepreneurship and personal finance skills. As a published author and expert on youth and financial literacy, Prevost is an in-demand speaker and a source of information for media outlets such as *Money Sense*, *The Globe and Mail* and CBC. In addition, Prevost has been credited with rebuilding the school's basketball program, which had been defunct for six years including raising funds for equipment and developing a provincially competitive team. Prevost is an exceptionally well-rounded educator, student mentor and colleague. His passion, enthusiasm and dedication to student success motivates students to reach their full potential and become the financially literate leaders of tomorrow.

Arda Thomson, Balmoral Hall School

Thomson's kindergarten classroom is a marvel to behold – her five-year-old students engage in scientific inquiry by building a density column, experimenting with a wind tunnel to learn about flight, and planting and comparing the germination of tomato seeds to those that have been aboard the International Space Station. Thomson is driven by her love of teaching, the innate curiosity and enthusiasm of young children, and by her own commitment to teaching STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) to early-years students.

Thomson's dynamic approach includes a daily 'Show and Teach', where students research and present on STEM topics of their choice, and 'Monday Motivators', where students learn about inspiring female role models such as Nellie McClung and Rosa Parks. By incorporating the arts with STEM, Thomson has developed the STEAM Champs program, where students delve deeper into the lives and contributions of women in STEM fields. She co-ordinates multi-grade early-years activities, such as the annual STEAM festival and the Science Club. Students learn the importance of individuality and of evaluating their own choices. Thomson is an inspiration to her colleagues and school community. She has helped develop confident, curious and globally aware young girls and possibly, future scientists.

Outstanding New Teacher Award

Nicole Chernecki, Brooklands School, St. James-Assiniboia School Division

Although Chernecki is a new teacher, she amazes seasoned colleagues by her effective use of teaching strategies in her Grade 2 and 3 classroom. She engages students in active learning through compelling resources, offering differentiated learning centres, diverse seating and an excellent classroom library. Chernecki incorporates oral, visual and tactile components to address the emotional, physical and academic needs of her students. She is apt at assessing individual needs and learning styles in order to develop unique educational experiences.

Along with the school's resource teacher, she proactively creates individualized learning plans and ensures that she and the educational assistants implement them. Chernecki developed an entertaining and innovative writing exercise where students correspond with her pet dog, providing a non-threatening audience for reluctant writers. She has cultivated a learning community that is welcoming and safe for everyone. She models and inspires language and behaviour that is positive, encouraging and respectful to students, colleagues and families.

Chernecki assists with after-hours events, such as the True North Hockey Program, participates in a divisional professional learning community, and co-ordinates art displays at school and divisional events. Relentless in her quest to engage every learner, Chernecki has earned recognition for her commitment to professional excellence and for the important role she plays in the school community.

Outstanding Team Collaboration Award

Mark Schmidtke, Greg Speiser, and Tera Woodyard, Nelson McIntyre Collegiate, Louis Riel School Division

Schmidtke, Speiser and Woodyard came together to revolutionize how math is taught at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate. Concerned by low success rates and student frustration in math courses, the trio have worked over the past five years to create a flexible approach that allows students to develop numeracy skills at their own pace, while helping them build confidence. Although all three educators teach math, they all bring specific expertise and passion to the collaboration: Schmidtke in interdisciplinary learning, Speiser in sciences and working with reluctant learners, and Woodyard in the flipped-classroom approach. The team created a self-paced program driven by screencast lessons, mastery checks and frequent one-on-one conferences that provide immediate and individualized feedback. Through this approach and use of technology, students can access and review new learning online at any time and place. Class time is used to complete collaborative problem-solving activities, do individual work, practice or review math skills using technology, or take a mastery check. The team created a math lounge where students can drop in throughout the day for additional support. The impact of this program has been impressive, with higher rates of student success, above-average achievement in provincial tests and a greater proportion of students opting for higher-level math courses. These results are a wonderful testament to Schmidtke, Speiser and Woodyard's hard work and ingenuity.

Outstanding School Leader Award

Renae Hildebrand, Border Valley Elementary School, Garden Valley School Division

As principal of Border Valley Elementary School, Hildebrand sought to radically change school culture, and successfully mobilized staff and the school community to embrace her vision. Together, they implemented the Leader in Me program, a comprehensive school improvement model. This led to a dramatic change in mindset and empowered staff to take on leadership roles, work more collaboratively and seek creative ways to overcome barriers. Over 20 student leadership groups have been created, such as recycling, composting, helping early years students and assisting with technology groups. She also established a Girls' Time Out group to help deal with bullying and build self-esteem. Not only did these initiatives increase student leadership skills, they also improved student academic achievement and addressed behavioural challenges. To strengthen school and community engagement, Hildebrand enabled the Advisory Council for School Leadership and the Parent Advisory Council to have meaningful involvement in school planning and data analyses related to school initiatives and achievement. School-community projects include playground upgrades, landscape improvements and the development of a farm program. Hildebrand also initiated the student-run Leadership Day, attended by business, community and political leaders. This annual event includes speeches, musical performances and a showcase of leadership roles. She is a dynamic and exceptional school leader, and has been asked to lead the soon-to-open Pine Ridge Elementary School.

Premier's Award for Excellence in Education

Ian Smith, Pembina Trails Alternative High School, Pembina Trails School Division

In 2016, Smith became part of the inaugural teaching staff at Pembina Trails Alternative High School for at-risk students. He was integral to the development of the school's programming and in fostering a culture of inclusion, compassion and hope. Smith demonstrates an outstanding ability to determine student needs and develop personalized plans that engage young people in academic, co-curricular and vocational activities. He views students as 'at-potential' rather than 'at-risk'. He established a music creation space with instruments, a soundboard and software, and co-ordinates regular trips to the University of Manitoba for students to participate in bike workshops and conferences related to Truth and Reconciliation. In Smith's English and humanities classes, students can engage in project-based learning. A student interested in fitness might do a novel study on health while doing a practicum at a fitness club, or a grieving student might create a photo collage with captions. Smith has changed the course of many students' lives. One student who suffered from debilitating anxiety published a book of poetry and artwork, presented at WE Day, and is now an educational assistant and advocate for mental health. Smith is a teacher who creates conditions for young people to make transformative steps along their journeys to emotional, cognitive and academic well-being.