



# **DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

**Belong | Achieve | Reconcile | Lead | Inspire**

**Committed to the success of every student**



A faint, stylized background illustration featuring a turtle with a shell divided into yellow, red, and white segments, and a sun with a yellow face and wavy lines representing rays.

## **Land Acknowledgment**

Lakehead District School Board is located on the traditional territory of the Ojibwe people of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. We acknowledge all of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit who reside in this territory and across our Nation; we are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation and respect for all Canadians.

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## Message from the Director

Dear Families, Staff, and Community Members,

I am delighted to present the Lakehead Public Schools Director's Annual Report 2023. As the Director of Education, it is both an honour and a privilege to reflect on the progress and achievements that our Board has made in pursuit of our mission to be committed to the success of every student.

To align with our Strategic Plan pillar of Belong, schools continued to provide a safe, welcoming, equitable, accessible, and inclusive learning and working environments that reflect the diversity of our community. Events were held to celebrate students, families, and staff in inclusion of various ethnic and religious backgrounds, including, as examples, Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute's Iftar evening, the French Immersion program's Carnaval d'hiver, and the honouring of Black History Month Board-wide. Schools also prioritized welcoming environments by providing equitable opportunities for students of all socio-economic backgrounds and by promoting inclusion. All three secondary schools and several elementary schools hosted Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) committees to provide opportunities for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities to come together in a safe environment. GSAs focus on supporting one another, raising awareness about the issues faced by queer and trans people, and challenging discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.. These clubs and events are successful in helping students feel accepted, valued, and appreciated in their schools.

The year 2023 presented many student and staff successes in the Strategic Plan area of Achieve. The Board focussed on providing programs and supports that provide opportunities for student-centred growth and development so that every student can achieve high levels of personal and academic excellence. Lakehead Public Schools has made significant strides towards implementing important recommendations from the Right to Read report, specifically in the areas of reading in the early years, with a specific focus on students with learning disabilities. Intervention strategies have also been implemented at both elementary and secondary to support students with decoding reading comprehension. Our progress with the Right to Read report to date aligns with both the recommendations of the Ontario Human Rights Commission report as well as information and indicators from the Ministry of Education. The Board has also begun a strategic focus on math by assigning a Superintendent of Education Responsible for Mathematics Achievement and math coaches to work in classrooms with students and teachers to improve math outcomes for students. The first set of Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results has demonstrated improvement in math, reading and writing. We look forward to continued implementation this upcoming year.

In this Annual Report, you will learn how our schools and departments incorporated reconciliation into all aspects of Lakehead Public Schools. We are guided by the Indigenous Education Framework and the four principles of relationality, relevancy, respect, and responsibility. Together with community Elders, leaders, Knowledge Keepers and Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, we incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, celebrate and share Indigenous knowledge, culture, and traditions with all students and staff. Lakehead Public Schools also offers specialized programs such as the Four Directions Program



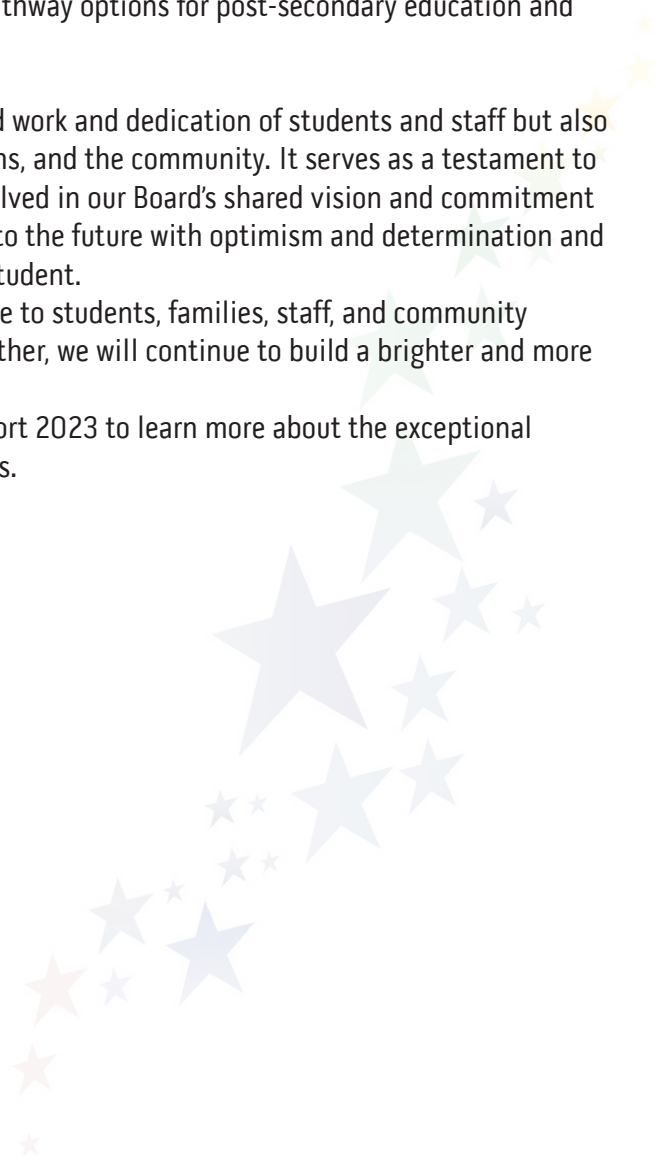
and the KZ Lodges. We are also committed to Indigenous language revitalization and offer language programs in many of our schools and offer supports for our language teachers. I am pleased to lead alongside the Senior Administration Team and school-based leaders as we work to continuously excel in our commitment to deliver the best educational experiences possible. This past year, we dedicated resources to provide professional development opportunities to staff that support the priorities of the Strategic Plan. In addition, the Office of Human Rights and Equity Advisor has worked diligently with members of Lakehead Public Schools to champion the rights of all students, staff, families, and community members. Presentations on gender identity, anti-Black racism, privilege, anti-oppression, and culturally responsive approaches have been provided to various staff this year. We have also focussed on future leadership growth and development so that the Board is well situated for the future. The ability to Inspire students and provide them with opportunities to explore the possibilities and pathways beyond graduation is an important part of student success. Schools hosted a variety of special guests and events to showcase pathway options for post-secondary education and the trades.

This annual report reflects not only the hard work and dedication of students and staff but also the unwavering support of parents, guardians, and the community. It serves as a testament to the collective commitment of all those involved in our Board's shared vision and commitment to excellence. As we move forward, we look to the future with optimism and determination and remain committed to the success of every student.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to students, families, staff, and community partners for their unwavering support. Together, we will continue to build a brighter and more inclusive future.

I invite you to look through the Annual Report 2023 to learn more about the exceptional accomplishments of our school communities.

Sincerely,  
Sherri-Lynne Pharand  
Director of Education



## Message from the Chair

In 2023 it is very fitting to celebrate Lakehead Public Schools and the many wonderful achievements and activities that happen within our schools and our whole LPS family. This was the first year of a new Board of Trustees with our new Director of Education, Sherri-Lynne Pharand, leading us out of the last of the pandemic. We welcomed AJ Keene as the Superintendent of Education Responsible for Mathematics Achievement. We also welcomed Superintendent Heather Harris as the new Superintendent of Education. Trustees are proud of the work that the senior team does and know that their positive impact is felt in the schools.

At LPS we are proud of what we stand for – our Strategic Plan guides our vision to support equity of outcomes for students. First on our list of values is Inclusion. Belong is one of our pillars. To belong we must provide a safe, welcoming, equitable, and inclusive environment that reflects the diversity of our community.

Trustees have been to school pow wows and cultural learning events with Elders and Knowledge Keepers and keep informed through reports from Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee. We marvel at the tremendous work that educators and partners do in our schools to advance cultural knowledge, teach Ojibwe, and integrate Indigenous learning throughout the curriculum and school environments.

I am particularly proud of students and staff in ensuring that we have Gender Sexuality Alliance committees at our secondary schools and even at some of our elementary schools.

In these difficult times schools do provide safe, accessible, and respectful environments, particularly for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff. Pride month was beautifully celebrated in many schools and classrooms, with Progress Pride flags flying proudly.

Inclusion is felt by celebrating different cultures, such as Ramadan with an after-school breaking of the fast at Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute with community members, parents, students, and staff. Recently at Nor'wester View Public School students shared their Japanese heritage with their classmates. Celebrating diversity makes us stronger and more accepting.

Our athletes continually strive for their best and participate in sports events throughout the year. Congratulations to the Hammar skjold High School Vikings Senior Football team on their championship this year! Congratulations to all LPS athletes.

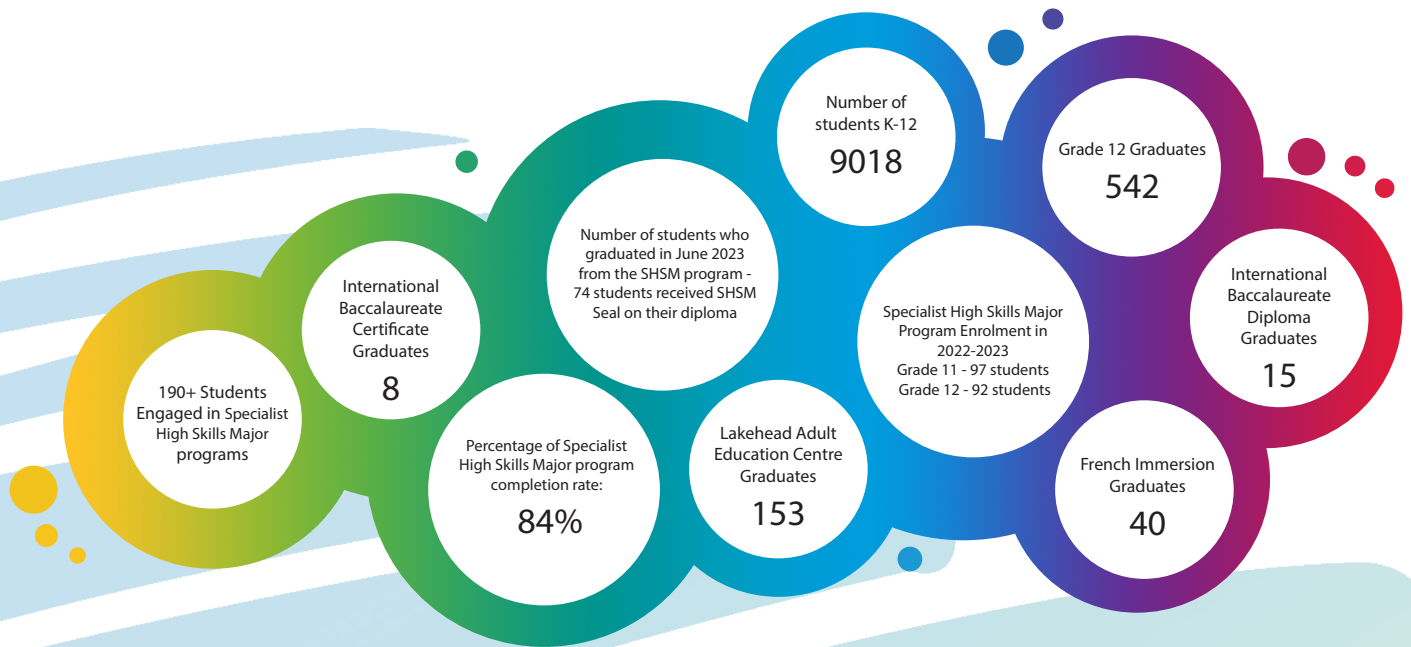
Our long-standing golf tournament that raises money for the Lakehead Public Schools Foundation became the Bruce Nugent Memorial Golf Tournament to honour the work and dedication that Bruce gave to that event and to Lakehead Public Schools.

On behalf of all trustees, I would like to recognize and celebrate the work each of you do for students and LPS; every person is important! You are integral to what our main purpose is – the well-being and achievement of students.

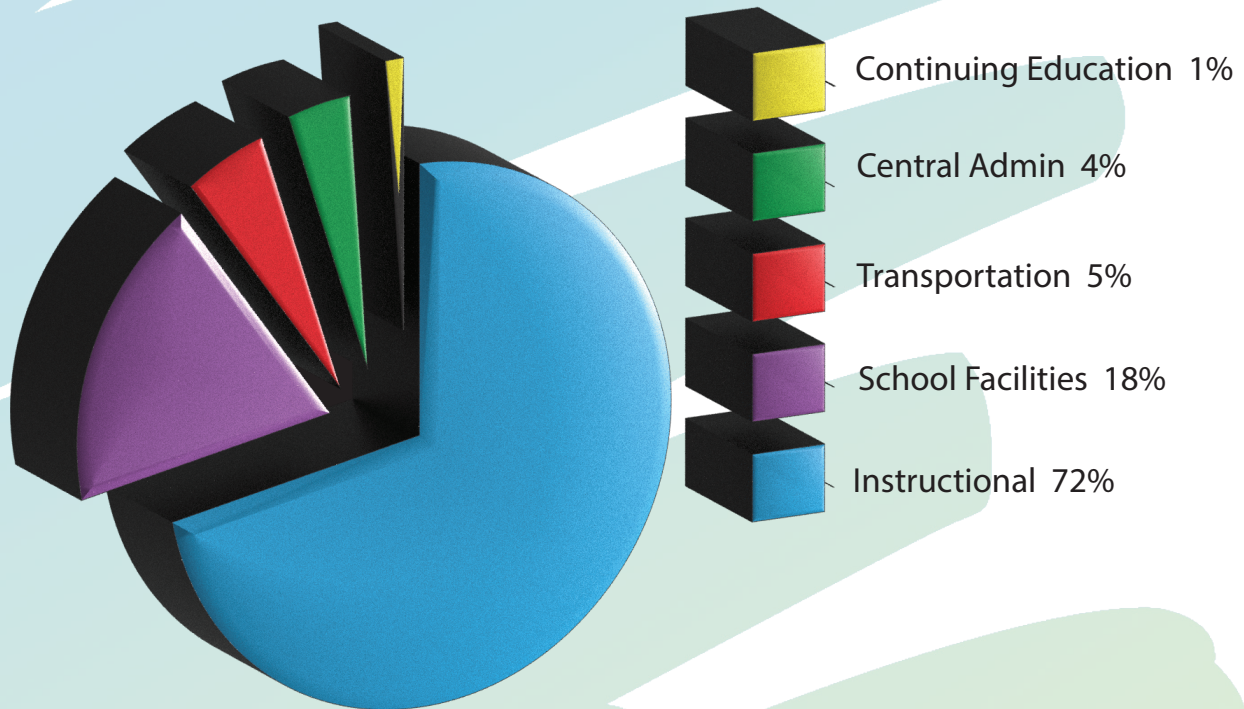
Miigwetch, thank you! Celebrate the work you do – it is seen and appreciated!

Ellen Chambers,  
Chair

# Statistics at a Glance



## Operating Expenses



# LITERACY

## Literacy

The development of proper literacy skills is essential in a student's academic journey. Lakehead Public Schools provides programs and supports so that every student can **achieve** high levels of personal and academic excellence. In response to the Right to Read Inquiry, Distributive Leadership Forum (DLF) was renewed with a focus on developing an understanding of the five essential components of a structured literacy block. This was a direct recommendation that school boards should incorporate aspects of a comprehensive approach to literacy using evidence-based instruction in all components of the language program. School teams assembled system wide to engage in professional learning around Scarborough's Reading Rope and resources that used the science of reading. As a result, educators across our system developed a collective understanding of the foundational literacy skills necessary to ensure that all children learn to read. Educators began shifting their approach from balanced literacy to evidence-based practice with specific emphasis on word recognition skills (phonics, phonemic awareness, and fluency). Educators adopted new resources to ensure that they were meeting the needs of all learners. DLF will continue into 2024 with a focus on comprehension and writing. A professional education session in the fall featured the importance of explicit and implicit instruction in vocabulary and morphology with new resources to support learning heading into classrooms.



To align our teaching and student practice opportunities, decodable books were ordered and delivered to schools for students in primary grades. These texts feature words that students can decode with phonics skills and range in skills for multiple entry points. All schools received Whole Phonics and Syllasense books to support their reading programs. These books are currently being integrated into instructional practice. In addition, the Program department rolled out the Comprehensive Approach to Structured Literacy Instruction (CASLI). The document is structured with three pillars that are crucial to student achievement in reading: Classroom Community; Assessment; and Planning and Instruction. These pillars become the focus for staff meetings and professional learning communities. Teacher leaders meet to create divisional Week at a Glance templates that address the five critical areas of instruction: phonological and phonemic awareness; phonics and spelling; fluency, vocabulary





and oral language; and comprehension and writing. School leaders will continue to support teachers with the shift to a structured approach to literacy instruction using the CASLI and Week at a Glance documents as supports to show the way.

This year, Program department staff also piloted the Acadience Benchmark Reading



screening tool in eight schools. The data is being used to inform classroom instruction and Tier Two intervention needs. At the completion of the pilot project, the intention is to conduct a large-scale roll out to implement the Acadience Benchmark Reading screening tool in all our elementary schools.

To support students, coach and intervention teachers were placed in targeted schools across the system for literacy skill enhancements. We have been building teacher capacity in Board literacy initiatives, along with providing Tier Two intervention support for targeted classrooms. Progress monitoring will be conducted in 2024 to ensure goals are met.



Lakehead Public Schools provides professional development opportunities that support the priorities of the Strategic Plan, including optional training opportunities and leadership enhancing experiences. In response the Right to Read Inquiry recommendation that school boards have an early reading screening tool for Kindergarten to Grade 2, optional training opportunities were offered to Kindergarten to Grades 2 educators for the Acadience Benchmark Reading assessment with high attendance numbers. Educators continue to be excited for new

# LITERACY



# LITERACY

tools to help them better understand the unique learning needs of each student. They are looking forward to implementing the use of the tool in their classrooms and interpreting the data to meet the needs of all students.

Optional training opportunities were offered for educators in Grades 1 and 2 on a program called the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Foundations. UFLI Foundations is an explicit and systematic program that teaches students the foundational skills necessary for proficient reading. It follows a carefully developed scope and sequence designed to ensure that students systematically acquire each skill needed and learn to apply each skill with automaticity and confidence. The program is designed to be used for core instruction in the primary grades or for intervention with struggling students in any grade. UFLI Foundations aligns with the Language Foundation Continuum in the Ontario Curriculum 2023. Teachers attended the optional training in large numbers and were eager to explore the resource. The training provided them with the scaffolding and confidence necessary to make the shift to restructuring their literacy program, and as a result, more students are receiving explicit and systematic phonics instruction. Next steps include offering potential training opportunities for Grade 3 and 4 teachers to use UFLI Foundations as a Tier Two classroom intervention.

At the secondary level, many accomplishments were made in the past year. We provided professional development for all educational staff, as well as Board trustees, on effective vocabulary instruction and supports for students of all levels in building reading skills. Support was provided to classrooms using Lexia, a digital personalized and interactive structured literacy program, to ensure educators could derive the most benefits possible from the program. Additionally, we implemented targeted support for students preparing for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), with a specific focus on those identified as at risk, providing them with more concentrated assistance from the literacy coach. We also introduced a section of ELS20 (Literacy Skills: Reading and Writing) in each of the Secondary Schools. Lastly, we concentrated efforts on developing a skills-based Grade 9 English program and adding three Grade 7 to 10 destreaming coaches with Literacy as part of their portfolio. As a result of these activities, we have seen an improvement in OSSLT results, and increased teacher proficiency in utilizing technology tools and employing effective teaching strategies to support literacy skills in all students. In addition, Grade 9 English and ELS20 teachers are using common assessments to guide student-centered program planning. Our next steps in secondary literacy include: launching the Grade 7 to 10 literacy-based lesson study where teachers collaborate to plan and deliver lessons with a focus on explicit literacy instruction; implementing a more targeted approach to literacy support from the literacy coach to further address the specific needs of students requiring more focused literacy assistance; and conducting a reading assessment for all Grade 9 students to precisely identify and plan interventions based on individual student needs.

## Numeracy

In 2023, to align with the Strategic Plan pillar of **Achieve**, a superintendent of education was appointed to the specialized role of Superintendent of Education Responsible for Mathematics Achievement for the purpose of allowing the Board to advance the delivery of mathematics in schools. Since the onset of the new position, the mathematics lead has initiated key actions to lead the Board toward success in its goal of increased mathematics results in students.



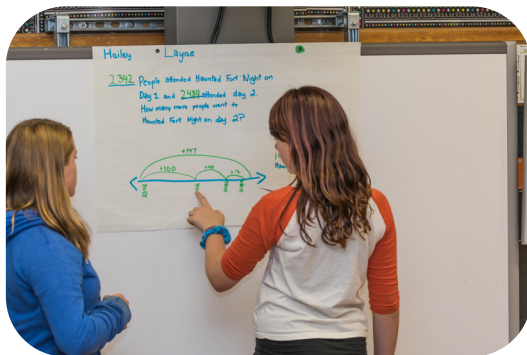
To foster effective numeracy interventions to meet the needs of every student, the Board purchased a district license of a digital math tool and promoted it through training and coaching support. The tool, called Knowledgehook, allows for teachers to provide diagnostic assessments that results in more responsive and precise teaching. Thus far, usage data shows teachers are using the tool and survey data has indicated that teachers

feel their teaching is more precise and responsive.

Under the guidance of the Strategic Plan's pillar of **Lead**, professional development opportunities that support the priorities of the Strategic Plan have been offered to teachers. Focused training has taken place for teachers in Grades 3, 6, 7, and 8 in the use of diagnostic assessments, high impact instructional strategies, and collaborative problem solving. This training will lead to continued increased scores in EQAO assessments in Grades 3 and 6.



To further support student learning in mathematics, the board hired six mathematics coaches to support Ministry-identified priority schools. These coaches work with teachers and students in Grades 3 and 6 and support increasing teacher content knowledge and instructional practice, as well as working with small groups of students. In addition, The Board provided support to Grade 9 mathematics teachers with a mathematics coach (department chair) in all three secondary schools whose responsibilities and



intended results are similar to the abovementioned mathematics coaches. EQAO results cannot be compared to previous years, but two of three schools have scored above the Ontario provincial average and as a Board we are close to provincial average. Overall, the impact of math coaches has been positive and is evident in increased EQAO scores and feedback from teachers and administrators.



# EARLY YEARS

## Early Years

Lakehead Public Schools enjoys welcoming new students to the classroom in Kindergarten and strives to provide them with the most welcoming learning environments possible. The early years is a time of discovery and new experiences, and the perfect time for children to learn that Lakehead Public Schools classrooms are safe spaces that induce the feeling of **belonging**.

The Early Years department leads the development of the annual Kindergarten registration campaign. In January 2023, our Welcome to Kindergarten event brought together community partners and families to learn about services that are in place for three- and four-year-old children. The parents and guardians gained an understanding of programs, resources, and team members that may be part of their child's educational experience. The event was well attended by new and returning families and we are pleased to announce that we welcomed excellent Kindergarten registration numbers for the 2023-2024 school year.



The Early Years department began considering the development of a Kindergarten continuum of learning to support growth in learning in the frames of Belonging and Contributing, Self-Regulation and Well-being, and Problem Solving and Innovation. The department is currently reviewing and selecting resources to support the implementation of structured literacy in Kindergarten and developing a document titled Lakehead Public Schools Key Messaging Kindergarten. This document outlines the Kindergarten program for educators, administrators, caregivers, and the community. It includes information about educator partnerships, literacy, math, play, inquiry, and routines as they apply to Kindergarten programming. Next steps include planning and delivering professional development

and training for Kindergarten educators in this area, building capacity, and developing the Kindergarten continuum of learning.

This year, the Early Years department provided training and implementation of resources and programming to support structured literacy in Kindergarten classrooms, including Jolly Phonics, Heggerty, and Handwriting Without Tears. Literacy assessments took place in Kindergarten classrooms and interventions were completed to provide each student with the learning strategy they require. Programs were made available to students and implemented across the system with improved growth in student learning. The Early Years department will continue to train,





# EARLY YEARS

coach, and support educators to maintain a balance in classrooms between explicit structured literacy and literacy learning through inquiry and play.

Community partners play a key role in helping to provide Year One and Year Two Kindergarten students with the services they need to learn and thrive in an educational environment. Our Strategic Plan pillar Inspire guides us to foster community partnerships to enhance the students' learning experience. Our partnership with the Speech and Language Team at George Jeffery Children's Centre has been central in developing a new service model for delivering pre-reading screens and interventions. We have improved delivery of pre-reading screens by sharing responsibilities between classroom educators and the George Jeffery Children's Centre Speech and Language Team, and we have improved the delivery of pre-reading in small group learning. We are pleased to continue to work in partnership with George Jeffery Children's Centre and many other organizations to further improve delivery of services.



## First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education

Lakehead Public Schools embodies the principle that Indigenous education is for all peoples and commits to the adoption of an **Indigenous Education Framework**. The Framework prioritizes the incorporation of Indigenous education throughout our Board and is embodied throughout all facets of the Strategic Plan. All our Strategic Plan pillars, in particular **Reconcile**, guide our goals and actions in providing the best possible education for Indigenous students and all students.

This past year, the First Nation, Métis and Inuit education team expanded Indigenous education support staff roles by hiring a principal of Indigenous education, a First Nations, Métis and Inuit student success resource teacher, and a fourth graduation coach. The First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education team participated in a professional development session titled Embedding Indigenous Perspectives alongside 74 Grade 4 to 8 teachers and administrators. Resources to support classroom learning were distributed to all schools, including Take Action for Reconciliation, Speaking Our Truths, and the Siha Tooskin Knows series. To increase the knowledge of staff around Indigenous history, cultures, and perspectives, we offered staff Indigenous learning opportunities including sessions on Missing and



Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People and Orange Shirt Day beading workshop. In schools, hundreds of fascinating and engaging Indigenous cultural and traditional activities took place to deepen students' and staff's knowledge and connection to the land. Examples included school pow wows, feasts, and welcoming guests such as Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

The Board also developed a First Nations, Métis and Inuit education learning continuum. This continuum encompassed various activities, including: Grade 5 classes from 12 schools participating in a learning exercise using the Indigenous Peoples Floor Map during Treaties Recognition Week; Grade 6 system book club reading *The Barren Grounds* by Cree author David A. Robertson; Grade 2 classes participating in Bear Witness Day; Grade 8 students attending pow wows at secondary schools; nine Grade 4 classes attending National Indigenous Peoples Day education day; and virtual storytelling and art sessions with Isaac Murdoch during Indigenous Peoples History Month.

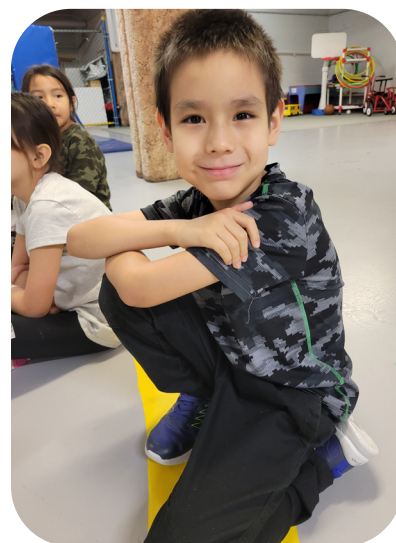
During the last school year, the Board renamed the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee to Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee.



# FNMI EDUCATION

Additionally, we implemented the Anishinaabemowin Revitalization Strategy, consisting of 0.5 release time provided for the language lead to work with Ojibwe language teachers, release time given for second language learners to build fluency, and providing intermediate students with language gathering opportunities. Next steps include having the Anishinaabemowin language specialist continue to support the work and build a mentor-learner program to support student fluency.

In August 2023, the First Nation, Métis and Inuit education team fostered Indigenous student leadership by offering 38 students in the Reach Ahead program with the opportunity to participate in the Mino Bimaadiziwin youth leadership program.



# THE ARTS



## The Arts

At Lakehead Public Schools, we recognize the importance of community partnerships and acknowledge that they foster success for schools. We are fortunate to deliver the Arts curriculum often in partnership with local partners like the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra.

In 2023, schools across our Board had multiple learning opportunities throughout the year to learn and participate in a variety of visual art-based programming with the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. Programming was offered in person as well as virtually.

Our friends at the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra (TBSO) offered several musical programs for students of a variety of age groups. Primary classes were invited to a special musical telling of the novel *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* at Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute. Two concerts were held to accommodate approximately 500 students from across our system. The

TBSO offered our schools a special educational concert called *The Spirit Horse Returns*. Students heard the musical story of an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper as the students are taken through time to meet the mysterious small horses of the deep woods. The explored the diversity of Indigenous cultures, the Canadian prairies, and Northern Ontario. The concert was held at the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium and housed over

1,000 students from several grades across our system. The Link Up program with the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra introduced Grade 4 to 6 students to the orchestra through interactive and flexible Arts curriculum. A total of 46 classes totaling approximately 1,500 students took part in the programming. We look forward to the wonderful things students and staff will experience in the 2023-2024 school year.

Another exceptional musical experience for students was the Big Band Day. This event was an opportunity to rebuild solid instrumental music programs across our system. This was an enrichment opportunity for





# THE ARTS



students who were ready for this type of performance activity. 10-15 students from each participating elementary school formed an all-star group of student musicians who worked diligently to prepare six pieces of music for the big performance at École Elsie MacGill Public School in May. Approximately 75 Grade 8 students from Kingsway Park Public School, Westmount Public School, Algonquin Avenue Public School, École Elsie MacGill Public School,

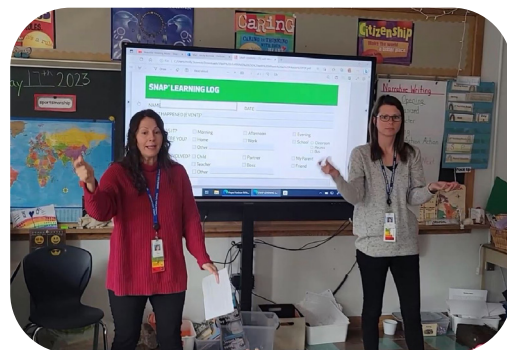
Woodcrest Public School, Five Mile Public School, Vance Chapman Public School, and Norwester View Public School joined with their instrumental music teachers to perform in a collective big band for their families.



## Wellness and Mental Health

Mental health in the curriculum supports the wellness of students. Lakehead Public Schools strives to offer students a comprehensive understanding of mental health through in-class workshops, presentations, and activities led by the Mental Health team and invaluable community partners.

In 2023, collaborations with community partners continued to provide Tier One and Tier Two mental health and substance use programming in schools as well as pathways of services to ensure the right care at the right time for students. Community partners who contributed to the programming included Thunder Bay Counselling Centre and Thunder Bay District Health Unit, and pathways have been developed to ensure a more seamless transition to services with Children's Centre Thunder Bay and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit.



Our Mental Health department promoted the use of mental health tools developed by School Mental Health Ontario to educators including the Wayfinder which is a digital guide with 10 months of grade specific mental health lessons and activities with easy-to-follow instructions. School administrators have been sharing the link to the Wayfinder with their educators. Interested individuals can access it by visiting <https://smho-smso.ca/wayfinder/>.

Early years Second Step kits were purchased and delivered in September for interested Kindergarten classrooms across our schools with the opportunity for educators to begin delivery at the beginning of the 2023 school year.

The SNAP (Stop Now And Plan) program continued to run in multiple schools and planning is taking place to build capacity and expand within schools. Currently schools are asked to consider training a primary program planner or special education facilitator to become competent in facilitating the program.

The Board is working with School Mental Health Ontario and Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario on a pilot program opportunity to implement the PreVenture program in a Grade 7 classroom. Elementary social workers have been trained in facilitating the program and roll-out is scheduled for January 2024 at Claude E. Garton Public School.



The Mental Health department is preparing and supporting Grade 7 and 8 educators to implement the new Mental Health curriculum modules into their classrooms.

Training has been provided for educators by reviewing the modules and ensuring they understand the connection to the curriculum, are familiar with the online platform, and are comfortable with the content. A regional implementation meeting was held by School Mental Health Ontario for Board Implementation Teams to ensure coaching and supports are in place for the implementation of the modules.



Mental health workers continued to provide in-school mental health care using evidence-based modalities and measurement-based care. Board employed social workers and a child and youth worker contracted through Children's Centre Thunder Bay have been providing individual clinical interventions with students who need it.





# SPECIAL EDUCATION

## Special Education

Lakehead Public Schools prioritizes the creation safe, welcoming, equitable, accessible, and inclusive environments that reflects the diversity of the community, and that encourage students and staff to feel that they **belong**. We support healthy well-being for students and staff and provide for the needs of all learners in all aspects of schooling. Together with families and schools, the Special Education department works to recognize the unique needs of every student and provide them with the opportunities and supports to succeed. In 2023, we completed special education reviews of programs, supports and resources, and have identified goals to improve the special education program, its supports and resources. Next steps include the development and implementation of programs for unmet needs in the system including a Kindergarten program and additional supports for students in Grades 7 to 10.

The Special Education department is pleased to announce it increased appointments for the Collaborative Paediatric Clinic and with the support of a local paediatrician and consulting psychologist, the Lakehead Public Schools Paediatric Clinic is able to provide multi-disciplinary support to students at Lakehead Public Schools and their families. Other successes include holding a conference for all student support professionals Board-wide to show appreciation for staff and provide a learning and networking opportunity. The conference was engaging and targeted training and professional learning for our valued student support professionals.

In the summer, we supported students with special education needs in the Lakehead Public Schools Summer Learning Program. Many students with diverse special education needs were able to attend the summer learning sessions and develop skills academically, socially, and emotionally.





# EQUITY



## Equity

Lakehead Public Schools promotes a welcoming culture for students to express themselves and their identities. Our Strategic Plan goals in the area of **Belong** accentuate the importance of the student voice and providing spaces where students can explore their identity and learn about their school community. In 2023, we conducted policy reviews with a significant focus on human rights and equity to introduce organizational and systemic changes to make the Board more accessible, equitable, and inclusive of all community members. Moving forward, the Board will continue to ensure all policies are reviewed with a human rights focus. The Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor led the demographic and disparity analysis on our first system-wide student census. Results of the disparity analysis are being shared with school leaders and will be published publicly. With the participation success rate of the Student Census, the Board proceeded with the Lakehead Public Schools Workforce Census in June 2023. The data collected from this census was used to inform equity sessions at the August Leadership Days for system staff. Census results will be shared with partner groups over the coming year, and standardized and regular data collection procedures will be developed for future censuses.

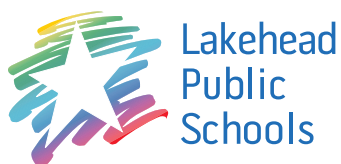
The Strategic Plan pillar **Lead** guides the Board toward providing leadership by addressing anti-racism in our schools and community and by addressing all other forms of systemic oppression. To pursue this goal, the Office of Human Rights and Equity Advisor offered professional learning sessions on human rights and equity to Board office staff, school-based staff, and Northern Ontario Education

Leaders (NOEL) attendees. The session provided greater knowledge of roles and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Board will continue to provide training on the fundamentals of human rights and equity while adapting to situational needs. We also offered the Implicit Bias Training for system leaders in August 2023. Leaders will continue to build on this knowledge and gain further understanding of systemic inequity in the workplace.

In our schools, we foster human rights and promote equity so that diverse students and staff can thrive and society can benefit. Last year, we offered students from school-based Gender and Sexuality Alliance groups across our Board to attend the GSA Summit and help inform how we make schools safer for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Lakehead Public Schools will continue to sponsor the city-wide GSA Summit and implement change based on the student voice. Additionally, we partnered with Harmony Movement to develop and implement a student equity leadership conference. Approximately 80 students in Grades 7 to 12 participated in the equity leadership conference with the enthusiasm to learn about diversity, equity, and



# EQUITY



inclusion and were pleased to bring their knowledge and learnings back into their schools to further enhance the student experience. Harmony Movement Canada will continue to support this group of students over the coming year while they create a system equity project.

This past year, we met many of our goals from the Equity Action Plan. As the Equity Action Plan terminates in 2024, we look forward to redeveloping an updated version to meet and exceed provincial standards and continue to advance the equity and inclusion progress we have made at Lakehead Public Schools thus far.

To support the various religious backgrounds of students, families, and staff, the Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor developed a reference document called [Holy Days & Days of Significance Handbook](#) to help guide administrators in appropriate school event scheduling. Training on holy days has also been provided to further support managers on their duty to accommodate students, families, and staff for religious holy days.



# PATHWAYS

## Pathways

Providing students with opportunities to explore pathways in secondary school, post secondary education, apprenticeship training and the world of work is a priority at Lakehead Public Schools and we are pleased to announce that we have excelled in our delivery of many pathway programs through the guidance of our Strategic Plan pillars of **Lead** and **Inspire**. Our pathway programs include the Specialist High Skills Major program, co-operative education, the skilled trades, the transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9, and experiential learning, to name a few. We invite you to peruse this informative section of our Annual Report to learn how we promote pathways to success beyond graduation and provide differing pathways of success for every learner.

Lakehead Public Schools has over 190 students engaged in the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program which includes aviation, health and wellness, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and the arts. We have successfully expanded our SHSM co-operative education sections in all three secondary schools after applying for the expansion in education credits with the intent of increasing SHSM student enrollment. We are looking forward to applying for additional SHSM programs in the 2024-2025 school year.

A partnership with Canadian Tooling and Machining Association and Ontario Council of Technology Education resulted in approximately \$90,000 dollars of new precision cutting technology and machinery in each of our secondary schools. Manufacturing teachers at our secondary schools have been trained on the use of CNC precision cutting equipment. We will continue to ensure that students in technology and

SHSM classes are receiving instruction on this state-of-the-art equipment to prepare them for the world of work.



Lakehead Public Schools offers a diverse selection of courses and pathway opportunities for students to choose from. In 2023, secondary students participated in Dual Credits, SHSM, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), co-operative education placements

and paid co-operative education programs. Additionally, students now have more options to choose from in Dual Credits where they can earn a college credit as well as a secondary school credit. We plan to further expand the programming to ensure we meet student needs as they evolve. The skilled trades continue to be a preferred choice for many students in secondary school. Skilled trades events were offered to students in Grades 7 to 10 to ensure that students had opportunities to learn with and from industry partners. Through these experiences, students actively engaged in learning tasks and were able to ask industry specific questions to inform their decision making about future education, career, and life goals. We are finding that as more students choose an elective in the technology department and build



# PATHWAYS



strengthening skills in this area, an increased numbers of students enter the skilled trades pathway with career objectives. We aim to increase the number of students who participate in secondary technology as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) options which will prepare them for future careers.



Grade 8 to 9 transition information sessions took place in all intermediate classrooms. Guidance counsellors and Indigenous graduation coaches met with Grade 8 students in their schools, and Grade 8 students toured secondary schools to familiarize themselves with the space and to participate in activities to provide them with an understanding of the many electives available in secondary school. Through the school visits, students developed peer relationships through team building activities and engaging workshops and were invited to participate in the annual secondary school pow wow in the spring. Families joined secondary school staff at the annual open house to visit subject departments and meet administrators, teachers, and guidance staff. The Grade 8 transition information sessions help students to make informed decisions for secondary school courses and programs, and students learn to plan for future education and career goals with the support from guidance counsellors and educators.

In the area of experiential learning this past year, guidance counsellors received training to better understand the apprenticeship pathway. Guidance counsellors also participated in a tour of industry and a panel discussion with industry partners. Guidance counsellors will continue to receive professional development opportunities in the 2023-2024 school year to further assist students and families with accurate pathway information. Our goal for this professional development is to impart guidance counsellors with added confidence in supporting students who are setting goals to pursue an apprenticeship after graduation from secondary school. The Student Services departments will be able to provide parents and guardians with current information about pursuing all pathways, whether it be apprenticeships, college, university, or the world of work.

This past year also saw the implementation of a new program at our Board, the Recognized Experiential Learning for Credit, where students can earn a credit while strengthening personal skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, problem solving, and more. We are pleased to continue to implement creative and innovative programs that will meet the needs of students as they plan for future aspirations. Outdoor education experiences are valuable learning opportunities which extend learning and strengthen relationships and stewardship to the environment. School staff and community partners worked together to facilitate exemplary outdoor educational experiences and to provide authentic learning that is connected to the real world. These opportunities help students to understand the many options that are available as they plan for future goals and ambitions.

# KINGFISHER LAKE

## Kingfisher Lake Outdoor Education Centre

At Lakehead Public Schools' Kingfisher Lake Outdoor Education Centre, the year 2023 was filled with learning, laughter, discovery, and experiential learning on the land. The winter season included adventures in cross-country skiing, traditional fire-lighting, and snowshoeing. As winter turned to spring students began to study aquatic life through pond and benthic studies, while others honed their skills in the art of canoeing. Nature hikes continued to be a highlight as students connected with the flora and fauna of the Boreal Forest. We are pleased to announce that we saw the return of the overnight programs for students after a pause of a couple of years. Students once again filled cabins to tell stories by the fire, experience the stunning sunrises, and enjoy the camaraderie and friendships alongside dedicated teachers and administrators. The Kingfisher Outdoor Education Centre staff are honoured to work with such curious and adventurous students and are committed in offering exceptional curricular relevant learning experiences for students.



## Facilities & Infrastructure

The Facilities department strives to offer safe, accessible, and equitable schools and office buildings for the students and staff of Lakehead Public Schools. The mandate of the Facilities department is to develop a capital plan for schools with a focus on academic achievement, to continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to continue to improve classroom teaching and learning environments.

Although the capital plan was challenged by supply chain issues in 2023, the Board completed many infrastructure projects to maintain or exceed ministry safety standards. Notable outdoor upgrade projects included: new parking lot pavement at C.D. Howe Public School; new fencing at McKellar Park Central Public School and Armstrong Public School; sidewalk refurbishment at Gorham and Ware Community School in Junior and Senior Kindergarten area and at Valley Central Public School child care centre; and traffic improvements at Valley Central Public School and Westmount Public School.

To enhance the student experience in the open-air, new outdoor classrooms were built at Sherbrooke Public School and Gorham and Ware Community School, and new bleachers and scoreboards were installed at both Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Hammar skjold High School.

The Board prioritizes the safety of students and staff and ensures that the interior of facilities reflects our goal of safe and welcoming environments. Many interior building upgrades took place in 2023, notably: kitchen server improvements at Five Mile Public School, Algonquin Avenue Public School and Claude E. Garton Public School; storage space created at Armstrong Public School; bathroom upgrades at McKenzie Public School, Whitefish Valley Public School, Sherbrooke Public School, and Kakabeka Falls Public School; new floor tiling at Crestview Public School and Vance Chapman Public School; new ceiling grid and tiles at Sherbrooke Public School and Ogden Community Public School; and improve hot water distribution at Vance Chapman Public School.

This past year, the Facilities department completed many energy-saving upgrades as well. These included: new steam to hot water conversion system at École Gron Morgan Public School and Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute; new LED lighting retrofits at Algonquin Avenue Public School, C.D. Howe Public School, Crestview Public School, Five Mile Public School, Hammar skjold High School, Kakabeka Falls Public School, Ogden Community School, Sherbrooke Public School and Claude E. Garton Public School and the installation of new Building Automation Systems (BAS) and new boilers at Kakabeka Falls Public School.

Many exciting upgrades are scheduled for the upcoming school year. As always, our upgrades and infrastructure projects satisfy the legislated requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Environment, Ontario Fire Marshall, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.



### Article: Family Fun During Family Literacy Week

January 2023

Students in Claude E. Garton Public School's Mme Smyk's SK French Immersion class had an exciting time this week as they welcomed their parents into the classroom for a very special Family Literacy Week party! The families shared literary learning en français and enjoyed a delicious snack.

In addition to celebrating French culture, the French Immersion program at Claude E. Garton Public School also prioritizes inclusiveness and highlights festivities that families traditionally participate in. For example, this week many classes at the school learned about Lunar New Year. Students learned about the legend of Nian, created red envelopes filled with class money, and took part in a guided drawing of their own dragons. Students discussed New Year wishes and wrote their own wish on streamers hung on a giant paper tree.



Mme Smith's Grade 4/5 French Immersion class participated in a variety of art and literacy activities, including listening to French stories, participating in a "write the room" activity, and sharing their newfound knowledge in a sharing circle. Students understand and appreciate that literacy in French Immersion involves speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Literacy is an integral part of all classrooms at Claude E. Garton Public School and educators strive to make their classrooms vibrant and engaging.

"J'ai adoré toutes les activités !" - Keira, Grade 5 French Immersion ("I loved all of the activities!")

"J'ai vraiment aimé dessiner des dragons et découvrir la légende de Nian" – Erik, Grade 4 French Immersion ("I really liked drawing dragons and learning about the legend of Nian")

"J'ai aimé l'information sur le festival des lanternes et apprendre à fabriquer ma propre lanterne. Nous avons utilisé de la peinture rouge et dorée parce que ce sont des couleurs de la chance en Chine, et nous avons inclus des lapins pour marquer l'année du lapin. » – Felicity, Grade 4 French Immersion ("I liked learning about the lantern festival and getting to make my own lantern. We used red and gold paint as those are lucky colours in China, and we included rabbits to mark the year of the rabbit.")

« C'était vraiment cool de pouvoir écrire un souhait du Nouvel An et de l'accrocher à notre arbre à souhaits. Cela donne vraiment vie à notre apprentissage lorsque nous participons à ces activités. »



Madison, Grade 4 French Immersion ("It was really cool to get to write a New Year's wish and hang it on our wishing tree. It really makes our learning come to life when we get to participate in these activities.")

« J'ai adoré dessiner un dragon. » – Spencer, Grade 5 French Immersion ("I loved drawing a dragon.")

Family Literacy Week activities permitted students to learn new vocabulary, exercise their creative minds, and engage in new interests.

**Article: Collaboration with Local and Regional Groups  
Produces Memorable Donation****June 22, 2023**

A partnership between Rainy River First Nations' Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre, Lakehead University, and Algonquin Avenue Public School has provided a group of Grade 8 students with the unique opportunity to build and donate a 10-foot birch bark hand-built canoe.

The project entailed classroom activities such as studying the watercraft and its history, and outdoor activities including gathering materials from the land such as spruce roots and birch bark, and learning to canoe on a body of water. Throughout the building process, the students received traditional Indigenous teachings related to the vessel, experienced land-based learning, and understood that the canoe symbolizes the connection between land and water. To add finishing touches to the build, the school enlisted the artistic proficiency of Fort William First Nation knowledge keeper Helen Pelletier to teach the skilled application of sgraffito (bark etching). The canoe features an etched sturgeon to showcase the significance of the fish in Indigenous cultures of Northwestern Ontario.

During the build, the Grade 8 students received guided instruction by Lakehead University's 1st year Indigenous Learning 1100 class where the older students engaged the youth in a variety of Indigenous land-based learning activities. The young teenagers were also pleased to welcome another group of mentors from Lakehead University, specific to their exploits on the water. Lakehead University's School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism department coached them on canoeing techniques, canoe safety skills, and an appreciation of the watercraft.

On June 22nd, the canoe traveled to Manitou Mounds Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung, a National Historic Site of Canada near Stratton, Ontario, to be donated and used for educational purposes in their Interpretive programming.





## DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

### Article: Wellness Promotes Achievement and Academic Success

April 2023

The Lakehead District School Board's Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) knows the importance of providing relevant, inclusive, accessible, engaging, and responsive learning environments. As the Board ensures healthy learning environments at school, it also provides additional learning opportunities for students, families, and staff as wellness is conducive to achievement and academic success. The Board is pleased to offer and support an equity of outcomes for every student. The PIC Wellness Symposium was held in April and featured several community partners in the professional fields of health and wellness to deliver knowledge, tips, and advice to members of our school communities. We, alongside our community partners, are committed to the health, wellness, and success of every student. Health and wellness is essential for student progress, prosperity, and achievement. We thank our partners for their dedication to the health and wellness of the community: St. Joseph's Care Group; Our Kids Count; Thunder Bay Boys and Girls Club; Healthy Kids Thunder Bay; Thunder Bay District Health Unit; Children's Centre Thunder Bay; Thunder Bay Counselling; Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre; and Canadian Mental Health Association.



**Article: A Special Brew: Westgate CVI Special Needs Class Runs Mini-Coffee Shop for Staff****April 2023**

Westgate CVI is pleased to provide students a variety of opportunities to form relationships with their peers, teachers, and other staff members both inside and outside of the classroom. The school recognizes that each student and staff member play an important role in the community and appreciate their individual skills and talents. This spring, the Special Needs class at Westgate CVI served up a neat initiative every Friday morning that had staff perked up and hallways smelling delicious. In their project "A Special Brew", the Special Needs class ran a mini coffee shop for the school staff where they received orders for refreshments and delivered them to classrooms and offices fresh from the carafe or kettle. The students undertook the responsibilities of entrepreneur, bookkeeper, barista, cashier, waiter, and waitress, all while working together as a team and strengthening their independence.

Westgate CVI prides itself on providing a safe, welcoming, equitable, accessible, and inclusive environment that reflects the diversity of its community. The school recognizes the unique needs of every student and provides them with the opportunities and supports to succeed.



**Article: Student Leaders Learn to Apply Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Schools****October 12 and 13, 2023**

Approximately 80 students in Grades 7 to 12 participated in a leadership conference facilitated by Harmony Movement in October to learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion. The students were joined by fellow youth from Superior-Greenstone District School Board and both school boards learned to implementing the knowledge and learnings into their schools.

The leadership conference focused on the following concepts:

- Building the equity literacy of students around core concepts and barriers to inclusion;
- Developing leadership skills to create more inclusive school communities;
- Organizing for change: leveraging the community, storytelling, and action planning;
- Building in some action planning.

The conference included discussions on mental health, empowerment, and community, and was presented in a plenary format with small group break-out sessions.

Molly Onchulenko, Grade 11 student at Superior CVI, says attending the conference has taught her a lot about friendship, community, and respect. "I can't wait to bring [this knowledge] back to my school, be more helpful in my school community, and share what I know now. The break-out sessions have been phenomenal. I've learned a lot, personally."

Anthony Jeethan, human rights and equity advisory with Lakehead Public Schools and Superior-Greenstone District School Board, says that feeling safe at school is crucial to a student's learning experience, and praises school staff for their commitment to providing welcoming environments for all. "Inclusion is about how you're welcomed, how you're respected. And those are things that are vital to schools and vital to learning. You can't learn in an environment where you don't feel safe. And that's why this work is so important. We're making sure students know they have places at Lakehead Public Schools. This work is something that is ongoing, and our educators and staff have done such an amazing job at prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our schools."



We are proud of the young leaders for learning to recognize biases and challenging social constructs to create respectful, inclusive environments for the students of today and tomorrow.

To learn more about Harmony Movement, visit <https://harmony.ca/>.



**Article: KZ Lodge Program Students Build Tiny Home****March 2023**

The Tiny Home Pilot Project undertaken by Hammar skjold High School's KZ Lodge students has reached completion. The pilot project launched during the 2022-2023 school year through a partnership with the Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy, Matawa First Nations Management, Lakehead Social Planning Council, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Smart Modular Canada, Form Studio Architecture, the City of Thunder Bay, Home Depot Canada Foundation, and the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board, and has provided Indigenous youth with valuable trades skills. The students offered a tour of the tiny home they built from the ground up – an impressive accomplishment – to the public with pride and a great sense of achievement.

The Tiny Home Pilot Project was a pre-apprenticeship program nested within the KZ Lodge North program and engaged Indigenous youth in the build of a one-bedroom 10x30-foot tiny home for donation to Matawa First Nations Management for use in a northern community. During the build, the KZ Lodge students learned to read blueprints, studied the principles of carpentry, learned to identify numerous building materials, applied mathematics skills, and safely operated common power tools. The completion of the tiny home pilot project provided the young builders with Interdisciplinary Studies secondary school credits and the Working at Heights Certificate through the Carpenters' Local Union 1669. Lisa MacLeod, teacher at the Hammar skjold High School KZ Lodge program, says that tackling both the need for more innovative housing solutions and enabling hands-on skill development in students empowers the community now, and in the future as well.

"We have noticed that the Tiny Home Pilot Project has encouraged students to stay in school. It is directing them to future education and employment opportunities in the skilled trades and connecting them to organizations including Kiikenomaga Kikenjigenwen Employment and Training," said Mrs. MacLeod.



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### **Mission, Vision, and Values**

Lakehead District School Board's mission, vision, and values were developed in collaboration with our valued stakeholders both inside our organization and within the broader community. Our mission, vision, and values shape all of our actions and decisions across the school system.

#### **Our Mission:**

Lakehead Public Schools is committed to the success of every student.

#### **Our Vision:**

We promote and support equity of opportunities and outcomes for students, in an environment that is accessible, safe, inclusive, and respectful. We support every student and staff member to be inspired and successful lifelong learners.

#### **Our Values:**

Inclusion, Respect, Integrity, Empathy, Responsibility.



**You belong here**

