

Media Release

UCDSB Honours Six Employees with 2020 Trustee Innovation Awards

October 15, 2020 (Brockville, ON) – Six [Upper Canada District School Board](#) (UCDSB) employees have been recognized for their creative thinking and practices during the 2019-2020 school year with a [Trustee Innovation Award](#).

The annual awards program started in 2012 to recognize staff for innovative teaching and work practices, with the intent that these practices will be shared and used to improve the way the school board delivers education and other services to students and the community.

Winners of the 2019-2020 awards are as follows:

Kevin Kennedy, Teacher – Russell High School:

When the provincially mandated closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic first took place March 2020, Kevin, along with his colleagues, were learning how to transition from in-person teaching to an online format. During this period, Kevin reached out to his colleagues and conducted video interviews on a variety of topics, compiled their answers and posted them to the [russelltwolves](#) Instagram account. He used multiple online platforms to collect videos from staff, students and board employees. He also expanded his reach and contacted past staff and students and even received videos from overseas. His innovative and creative approach kept the [Russell High School](#) students and community connected during the unprecedented school closure period.

Ani Lalonde, Teacher – Rockland Public School:

Ani is a Physical Education and Health teacher, coach and mentor at [Rockland Public School](#). During the regular school year, she is known by the school community for her engaging Facebook page and the many extra-curricular and after-school activities she organizes. During the school closure, Ani wanted to support the physical and mental health of the school community and maintain a feeling of connectedness with them. This led her to launch [PE with Madame Ani](#) – a Facebook page that promotes healthy active living during a time of social distancing. She created and posted short, interactive videos about physical activities for families to do at home with basic or no equipment. Ani also adapted her gym classes for an online way of life. She has held extremely popular class workouts on Microsoft Teams for students, participated in and assisted in establishing synchronous learning for many classes, and supported online staff wellness activity sessions.

Paul Merredew, Teacher - Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute:

Paul has been instrumental in supporting [Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute](#) and the school district in implementing Indigenous studies. He has taught First Nations, Métis and Inuit studies courses for many years and is a leader throughout the district in program planning, implementation and innovation. As a strong advocate for Indigenous education, Paul plays an important role in establishing reciprocal relationships with many of the board's cultural advisors. Paul has dedicated many hours to planning in the annual Spirit of the Drum Powwow and arranging other learning experiences in the lead up to the Powwow, including a traditional canoe building weekend that was rich in culture, history, language and community. All of these efforts give students the opportunity to showcase their learning in an authentic way. Paul willingly offers his knowledge and expertise in presenting at professional learning activities within our school district, all of which are examples of his passion and commitment to Indigenous education.

Dion Running, Teacher - South Crosby Public School:

Dion is an exceptional educator with a passion for environmental causes as well as being an Indigenous education leader for [South Crosby Public School](#). Last fall, he collaborated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) on an experiential learning project to help students connect with nature and to understand the problems that the bat faces. Dion started conversations about the plight of the brown bat with his students and community partners and organized a bird box build at the school. This initiative and experiential learning activity helped engage and inspire students. Dion's caring and willingness to share this knowledge, passion and experience with a new generation of young learners will contribute to their success and inquisitive minds.

Amanda Seguin, Special Education Teacher – Russell Public School:

Amanda led the Special Education Team at [Russell Public School](#) in developing a successful Power Up Program pilot project that continued into the distance learning portion of last school year. She created half-day programming tailored to individual students that factored in academic strengths and needs as well as occupational and physical therapy needs. She established positive relationships with the parents of these students and provided weekly progress reports. Working closely with the school's educational assistant team during the school closure, she organized one-to-one Microsoft Teams sessions and hosted a very popular Power Up Program chat for the participating students every week. Amanda's enthusiasm, knowledge and creativity are an inspiration to her fellow colleagues.

Kindergarten Team: Julia Baker, ECE; Dawn Brewin, Teacher; Kristina Jackson, Teacher; and Jodi Oliver-King, ECE - Westminster Public School:

The Kindergarten Team at [Westminster Public School](#) embodies the true essence of teamwork. Every task or learning opportunity provided to students is meticulously planned and discussed as a group prior to sharing with the learning community. Each individual, from the wonderful early childhood educators (ECEs) to the dynamic teaching staff, play an integral part in the classroom experience, which was exemplified during distance learning as a result of the school closure earlier this Spring. Each morning the team orchestrated a live lesson that families could tune into on Facebook. Learning activities such as the lifecycle of the egg and butterfly were featured during these lessons. Following the live event, each staff member posted an engaging video for the students to watch and learn. The team uses the innovation and teamwork that it takes in both mainstream and distance learning to ensure their students and families are engaged.

“The innovation, creativity and dedication from these employees is remarkable” says Trustee Innovation Award Chair and UCDSB Trustee Corina Parisien. “They all found engaging ways to connect their students, staff and community, that was especially important during the global pandemic.”

Video clips of each of our winners are being produced and being shared at our Board of Trustee meetings, with the first two being shared yesterday (October 14, 2020).

[Paul Merredew, Teacher - Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute](#)

[Dion Running, Teacher - South Crosby Public School](#)

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