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**EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
AWARD RECIPIENTS**

Premier's Award for Excellence in Education

Jason Garton, Tyndall Park Community School, Winnipeg School Division

Garton was a high-school dropout, who realized early on that with a teaching degree, he could use his personal experiences to improve the lives of at-risk children in the community. For the past three years, Garton has been a special education classroom teacher, working with early years students with emotional or behavioural disorders, first in the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) at Earl Grey School, and currently in the Treatment Academic Program (TAP) at Tyndall Park School. Garton is able to convey to his students the knowledge that they are valued, believed in, listened to and understood. With his calm demeanour and a clear focus on student needs and development, Mr. G, as he's affectionately known by his students, creates a safe and peaceful learning environment where they can successfully learn social skills and coping strategies, and develop emotional stability that will prepare them for possible integration into a general classroom. Garton teaches students about being good role models through leadership opportunities and by spreading kindness in the school community through good deeds. He has changed the school culture to be more caring and inclusive of all children, and has become a trusted mentor to both parents and colleagues. Through his passion and dedication, Garton brings about high levels of self-esteem and resilience in his students, who are eager to learn and are overjoyed with their successes.

Teaching Excellence

Robert Abbott, École McIsaac School, Flin Flon School Division

Abbott has been a physical education and health education teacher for most of his 15-year teaching career. He has spent thousands of volunteer hours looking after intramural and extracurricular programs on the local and divisional levels. Abbott's generous time commitment is fueled by his passion and energy for working with students of all skill levels and engaging them in various quality activities including canoeing and hiking expeditions, ski trips and three-day camps. He also coaches a variety of sports including basketball, soccer, badminton and cross country, and he is the head instructor for the school division's hockey program. In the fall of 2016, he readily accepted a position as the lead teacher for the school's newly developed Engaged Learning program in order to have a greater impact on several grades 7 and 8 at-risk youth. He has been successful in building strong rapport with these students, delivering a multi-level curriculum and programming that is both challenging and meaningful. Under Abbott's care, attendance rate has increased remarkably and students have been making great gains academically. Through his many efforts, he has positively impacted student learning and engagement in the school division.

Teaching Excellence

Louise Caughel, Happy Thought School, Lord Selkirk School Division

Caughel engages her Grade 1 students in inquiry and has them enthralled by their discoveries, eager to share their findings with friends and family. Caughel uses an inquiry-based approach in her teaching and she incorporates her students' individual interests, perspectives and experiences into her lesson plans. Her classroom has a fun wonder wall, where each child writes a question pertaining to what they are learning. The class as a whole then researches these wonders to come up with answers. Students test their theories and plot their results on a graph, as Caughel helps them investigate, explore, predict and assess the big ideas included in the curriculum. Caughel integrates math, writing, social studies, science and arts throughout each day, keeping students engaged and motivated to learn. She also enhances the learning environment by involving her students in class meetings, where they solve problems collectively. She volunteers in the school's garden club and its breakfast program, and is also a member of the leadership committee and the Aboriginal Academic Achievement committee, where she explores and promotes best practices for infusing the seven sacred teachings into curriculum. She has earned much praise from colleagues, students and parents.

Teaching Excellence

Marjorie White, Dufferin School, Winnipeg School Division

White calls her Grade 1 class the Justice League of learning. She refers to her students as superheroes and trains them to face the challenges that each day brings with confidence, helping them to overcome an "I can't" attitude. She speaks to her students about their seven powers – the seven sacred teachings of honesty, truth, wisdom, love, humility, courage and respect – and she works on developing these daily. White empowers her students with positive affirmations and looks for opportunities for them to perform acts of kindness in the school and the inner-city community. White sets high expectations in a caring learning environment where students are encouraged and motivated to participate. Her students were recently awarded top class in one of the school division's annual math competitions. She uses costumes, makerspaces and a flexible classroom environment to deliver curriculum. She builds a strong rapport and trust with parents and uses Twitter to share her students' proud accomplishments with the community. White is also involved in many fundraising and community events. She has worked for the Sierra Leone Refugee Resettlement as their educator and program co-ordinator, where she developed a six-week summer learning program for newcomer/refugees and at-risk children from grades 1 to 12. Whether her students come from war-torn countries or from the heart of Winnipeg, in White they see a cheerful determination to never give up on themselves or others.

Outstanding New Teacher

Sarah Olszewski, St. John's-Ravenscourt School

Although Olszewski is quite new to the teaching profession and to St. John's-Ravenscourt School, her reputation as an innovative and dynamic teacher is cause for even the most reluctant high-school students to enroll in her science classes. Olszewski has the ability to light up her classroom with inspiration, teaching concepts and strategies, using vivid language and imaginative analogies and metaphors. With an expertise and passion for the subject matter, Olszewski is able to make authentic connections to students' interests and lives beyond the classroom. Her interactive lessons have students engage in insightful class discussions to determine, for example, which strategies or instruments would be most suitable to solve a scientific question. Colleagues highly regard Olszewski for her professionalism, her keen knowledge of best practices and her kind, collaborative spirit. Always generous with her time, Olszewski coaches a school volleyball team, teaches a morning spin class for students and faculty, acts as the student council advisor and also serves as a winter camping experience instructor. Even at this early stage of her career, Olszewski is having a marked impact on the school's science department and on creating a more welcoming learning environment for all students.

Outstanding Team Collaboration

Leah Benoit, Sheena Gordon and Ken Hunter, River Heights School, Winnipeg School Division

Benoit, Gordon and Hunter make up a physical education and health education team of teachers who deliver instruction to approximately 500 grades 7 and 8 students enrolled in an English and French Immersion dual-track school. Benoit, Gordon and Hunter collaborate in the planning and delivering of physical education and health education lessons to create a rich program that obtains the highest possible engagement from all students. In any given class period, the physical education space may need to accommodate up to three classes. They often co-teach using each teacher's professional strengths. As one teacher delivers instructions, the others support the class, anticipate potential issues before they occur and provide individual attention to those who need it. They offer different levels of intensity that empower students to challenge themselves and to develop life-long fitness habits. The Benoit/Gordon/Hunter team prioritizes the health, engagement and social well-being of students, and they work together tirelessly to offer the best possible curricular, intramural and extracurricular experiences. Because they strongly believe in an inclusive policy, all students – from the natural athletes to those with special needs – find their place on teams and participate to the best of their abilities. Individually, each of these teachers is uniquely talented. Together, Benoit, Gordon and Hunter are masterful.

Outstanding School Leader

Elaine Giasson, École Dieppe, Pembina Trails School Division

It is well known in the community that Giasson has been integral to the success of this early years French Immersion school. As principal at Dieppe since 2010, Giasson's clear vision of literacy and numeracy excellence in both official languages has been instrumental in developing a thriving and enthusiastic school culture. Her mission has become the school's mission – to provide a safe and stimulating environment, which promotes academic growth, encourages mutual respect and responsibility, and establishes an acceptance of individual differences. Championing the educational, social-emotional and physical needs of students, Giasson introduced the Spirit Buddies strategy, the Mitt Exchange program, and a compliment/encouragement bulletin board. She also created the kindergarten to Grade 4 Student Leadership (SLED) team. She encourages her teaching staff to share their passion for leisure activities by establishing clubs, such as the before-school "Active Start" or "Indoor Track" clubs, the "After-school Quilting" club, and the "Six Great Artists club". Giasson also works closely with the parent council in building a strong, supportive community. School events, such as concerts, walkathons and tri-conferences, are always highly attended. In 2015, due to the school's high student enrolment, a result of Giasson's successful leadership, the school division changed the school's grade range to kindergarten to Grade 4 from kindergarten to Grade 6 to better accommodate its increasing population. She played a pivotal role in reassuring and guiding the community through this transition. Giasson has repeatedly demonstrated the strengths and virtues of an outstanding school leader.