

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Peel District School Board Honours 37 Students, Staff and Community Leaders at Annual Awards of Excellence

Mississauga, ON – May 9, 2026 - In celebration of Education Week, themed “[*Our Stories in Action*](#)” Peel District School Board proudly announced 37 award recipients for their exceptional contribution to public education across five key categories: Excellence in Community of Care; Excellence in Innovation in Education; Excellence in Sustainability in Education; Excellence in Equity in Education; and Excellence in Education.

In a record breaking year, over 300 nominations were submitted for this year’s honourees that include dedicated staff, visionary students, and passionate community members whose efforts are making a lasting difference in the lives of students and in the broader educational landscape.

“The Awards of Excellence is a powerful reminder that the strength of our community lies in the people who show up every day with passion, care, and an unwavering belief in students.”, said Rashmi Swarup, Director of Education, *“To all of our Award of Excellence recipients, thank you for the meaningful difference you make, your leadership, compassion, and commitment continue to inspire and create brighter, more inclusive pathways for every learner in Peel.”*

Among the recipients are **Bairavi Kalatharan**, a Grade 12 student at Bramalea Secondary School recognized for her leadership, academic achievements, and global impact; **Jason Richardson**, owner of FreshCo Bramalea, who supports local schools and families through donations and community-building initiatives; and **Michelle Sutherland**, a teacher at Bristol Road Middle School who champions Black student success through leadership, mentorship, and inclusive programming.

Together, their efforts from student leadership and international advocacy to community service and equity-driven education, demonstrate a shared commitment to strengthening and uplifting every student.

The following 37 recipients were presented with an Award of Excellence:

Excellence in Education

Name	Title	Location
Kelly Armstrong	Head, Cross Curricular	Jean Augustine Secondary School

Jane Chan Singh	Teacher	Cawthra Park Secondary School
Joanne Feely DeGraaf	Teacher	Peel Alternative School South
Andie Duval	Student	Chinguacousy Secondary School
Jessica Frost	IMPACT Coach	HJA Brown Education Centre
Bairavi Kalatharan	Student	Bramalea Secondary School
Elizabeth Kirsch	Teacher	Chinguacousy Secondary School
Simona Matei	Head, Curriculum	Central Peel Secondary School
Pradeep Rajah	Principal	Erindale Secondary School
Jerome Shaw	Teacher	Brampton Centennial Secondary School
Jonelle St. Aubyn	Teacher	Louise Arbour Secondary School
Jeremy Taylor	Principal	James Bolton Public School
David Yaciuk	Principal	Greenbriar Middle School

Excellence in Equity in Education

Name	Title	Location
Skye Bowen	Vice Principal	Chinguacousy Secondary School
Direnzo Frank	Student	Chinguacousy Secondary School
Adrienne Manansala - Concepcion	Community member	Plum Tree Park Public School
Yassin Mohamed	Student	Jean Augustine Secondary School
Michelle Sutherland	Teacher	Bristol Road Middle School

Community of Care

Name	Title	Location
Amanda Bulmer	Teacher	Parkway Public School
Suzanne Drake	Occasional Teacher	West Credit Secondary School
Azeem Francis	Settlement Worker - Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services	Oscar Peterson Public School
Ciarán Gearty	Teacher	Aloma Crescent Public School
Jannet Giftopoulos	Office Manager	Grenoble Public School
Stacia Holley	Community member	Rowntree Public School
Alexis Victoria Icasas	Student	Peel Virtual Secondary School
Shannon Johnston	Teacher	Streetsville Secondary School
Abigail Ma	Student	Cawthra Park Secondary School
Tara Monterroso	Acting Office Manager	McHugh Public School
Jason Richardson	Community member	Balmoral Drive Sr. Public School

Sharon Rigby	Indigenous Community Engagement Specialist	Maawnjiding Wiingushkeng Centre for Indigenous Excellence and Land Based Learning
Erin Riske	Vice Principal	Applewood Acres Secondary School
Anna Smakota	Community member	Sherwood Mills Public School
Abnir Varquez	Head Custodian	Eldorado Public School
Denise Walker	Teacher	David Leeder Middle School

Excellence in Innovation in Education

Name	Title	Location
Marion Bagby	IMPACT Coach	HJA Brown Education Centre
Nickole Gjorseski	Teacher	HJA Brown Education Centre

Excellence in Sustainability in Education

Name	Title	Location
Santhosh Durga Thyagarajan	Student	Streetsville Secondary School

The awards celebration to honour these exceptional contributions was held at the Peel Board's central offices. Entertainment was provided by talented student performers from Whaley's Corners Public School, Balmoral Drive Senior Public School and Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School adding a special touch of school spirit to the event.

In addition, during Education Week almost 1,500 staff, students, volunteers, and community members were recognized with Awards of Distinction for their outstanding contributions to schools and worksites across the region.

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About Peel District School Board

Peel District School Board (PDSB) is a diverse board that serves nearly 148,000+ students in 262 schools across Brampton, Caledon, and Mississauga. PDSB is the second largest school board in Canada and the largest employer in Peel Region. Learn more at www.peelschools.org and connect with us on [X](#) (formerly Twitter), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

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