

— A Year in Review: 2025-2026 —

# Wilfrid Laurier University | Faculty of Education Newsletter



*“We engage our students, staff, and faculty in meaningful learning to strengthen our communities”*

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## Message from the Dean

*Dr. Maria Cantalini-Williams*

It is a pleasure to share this annual newsletter with our partners in education.

This past year has included many highlights such as ongoing exploration of Artificial Intelligence, international practicum experiences, research awards, diversity initiatives, and the development of a PhD program in Educational Studies launching in September 2026.

We have strived to engage our students, staff and faculty in meaningful teaching and learning activities to enhance our local and global communities.

In order to address the needs of school boards, we have increased our number of Bachelor of Education students and we are developing a new three-semester program planned to begin in May 2027.

We sincerely appreciate the professional mentoring offered by associate teachers and principals of partner schools. To learn more about our exemplary programs and wonderful students, staff and faculty, please read the stories in our newsletter!

Warm wishes for a restful and safe summer!



## **Message from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate & Bachelor of Education Programs**

### ***Dr. Jennifer Straub***

Our Faculty of Education strives to inspire leadership and purpose across our B.Ed., International Education Studies Program, and Education Minor/Teaching Option programs. Our graduates demonstrate strong commitment and growth through rigorous coursework, practica, and research, and leave well prepared to support diverse learners and contribute to school communities locally and globally.

This year, we advanced innovation by strengthening learning in response to emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. Feedback from program reviews continues to guide improvements as we reimagine our Bachelor of Education in response to provincial changes. Thank you to our dedicated staff, faculty, and partners. Congratulations to our graduates!



## **Message from the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs & Research**

### ***Dr. Julie Mueller***

Our Master of Education program in Interdisciplinary Studies and Student Affairs continued to foster collaborative professional learning communities across three cohorts, offering flexible delivery modes and individualized inquiry pathways.

A major milestone this year was the admission of five PhD students to our new PhD in Educational Studies, launching in September 2026 with both funded full-time and flex-time options. Faculty research activity expanded through Tri-Council grants, community partnerships, and cross-institutional collaborations.

Together, our graduate and research community continues to model an adaptive, inclusive, and collaborative educational environment.





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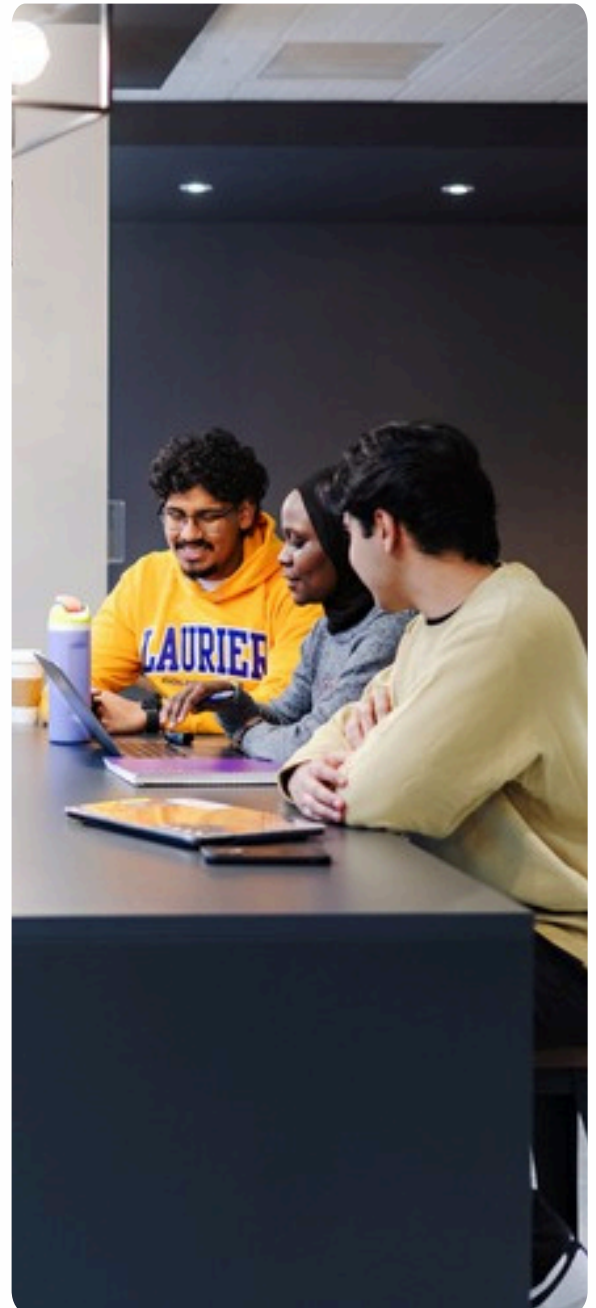
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# Increasing Teacher Diversity

This year's Increasing Teacher Diversity events in Waterloo and Brantford put students at the centre, bringing together secondary school learners from equity-denied groups for a day focused on their future.

Through campus tours, interactive booths and a "human library" featuring real educators, students explored what a path into teaching could look like. They asked questions, heard honest stories, and discussed barriers they may face, while also learning about the supports available to them.

More than an event, Increasing Teacher Diversity creates space for students to see themselves in the profession, connect with role models, and begin imagining a future in education.



**Above: Vinay Tiwari and Jamila Maliha.**



**Left: Faculty and student volunteers in Waterloo**

**Below: Dr. Maria Cantalini-Williams, Dean, Faculty of Education, speaks in Waterloo.**

**Right: Dr. Darren Thomas, AVP Indigenous Initiatives, speaks in Brantford.**

**Below: Students gather at the Brantford event.**



# Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Conference

Wilfrid Laurier University partnered with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to advance inclusive education across nine island nations, bringing more than 30 education leaders to Waterloo to share strategies that will inform the OECS's 2026–27 strategy.

Rooted in the belief that belonging drives better outcomes for children, the collaboration highlights the impact of global partnerships in building more inclusive systems.



## Collaboration in Action for FSL Education



**Valérie Drake,  
Education  
Attaché with the  
Embassy of  
France.**

Laurier's Faculty of Education is advancing French as a Second Language (FSL) collaborations through distinct but connected initiatives for both students and educators. Earlier this year, students in the B.Ed. program and Department of Languages and Literatures engaged with Valérie Drake, Education Attaché with the Embassy of France, gaining insight into global perspectives on teaching and learning.

In a separate event, Laurier brought together educators and partners from universities and school boards for a collaborative session supported by the FSL Challenge Fund and Camerise. Participants co-created interactive, equity-focused FSL resources. Together, these events highlight the strength of Laurier's FSL partnerships and commitment to innovation, collaboration, and global engagement.



**York, Western,  
Brock, and our  
board  
partners:  
WRDSB,  
WCDSB,  
Greater Essex,  
and  
Wellington  
Catholic**

# Innovation Hub @ Grand Erie DSB

In February, our Science teachable cohort visited the Grand Erie District School Board's Innovation Hub at North Park Collegiate in Brantford a future-focused space supporting hands-on, technology-rich STEAM learning across the board. Teacher candidates explored advanced tools and flexible environments while engaging in design thinking, coding, digital fabrication, and inquiry-based learning, gaining insight into how such spaces enhance classroom practice and student engagement.



Building on our partnership, candidates also supported a family STEAM evening, leading interactive activities for students and caregivers. This collaboration continues to create meaningful opportunities, including alternative placements immersing candidates in community-based learning environments.

## Women Leaders Explore the Future of Public Education at Laurier's International Women's Day Luncheon

More than 130 community members, alumni, and education leaders gathered March 6 for Laurier's ninth annual International Women's Day Luncheon, focused on strengthening public education.

President Deborah MacLatchy highlighted the impact of strong education systems and noted that 91% of Laurier's 2021–2023 BEd graduates are now teaching in Ontario. A panel of women leaders, including Dean Maria Cantalini-Williams, discussed how collaboration and innovation are shaping the sector.

The event reinforced a clear message: education drives opportunity and thriving communities.

**Machelle Denison, Deborah MacLatchy, Nicole Robinson, Maria Cantalini-Williams, and Ami Shah came together as featured leaders at Laurier's ninth annual International Women's Day luncheon.**



# Storybook Math Camp

## A March Break Success!



Laurier's Brantford campus came alive over March Break as young learners joined the Faculty of Education's Storybook Math Camp. Designed for children ages 5 to 8, the week-long program combined storytelling, problem-solving, and hands-on activities to build literacy and numeracy in a fun, supportive setting.



Led by Dr. Tara-Lynn Scheffel and Dr. Sofia Ferreyro-Mazieres, with support from eight Bachelor of Education teacher candidates, the camp highlighted strong collaboration between experienced educators and future teachers. Together, they created engaging learning experiences while giving teacher candidates valuable hands-on practice.

The energy and enthusiasm of participants reflected the camp's success. As a free community program, Storybook Math Camp not only supported early learning but also showcased Laurier's commitment to accessible, innovative education.



# Research-Policy Think Tank on AI in Education

Laurier's Faculty of Education was proud to host a Research-Policy Think Tank on AI in Education at the CIGI Campus in Waterloo, bringing together approximately 50 invited leaders from K-12 education, higher education, ministries and government, school boards, corporate partners, and non-profit organizations.

Co-led by Dr. Keri Ewart and Dr. Julie Mueller, the day was designed to move beyond siloed conversations and create shared space for research, policy, practice, and innovation. Grounded in the Faculty of Education's AIME Architecture framework, participants explored how AI can be implemented to protect learner agency, support ethical innovation, and to centre equity, inclusion, and educational purpose.

Following a cross-sector plenary panel, attendees used a customized AIME AI tool designed by mrln.ai to critically analyze AI in educational contexts. Through collaborative action planning, the think tank generated momentum towards a forthcoming Research-Policy Paper and a future symposium. Together, these outcomes signal the beginning of a broader national AI-in-education movement.



Learn more  
about AI in  
Education:  
[wlu.ca/aime-ai](http://wlu.ca/aime-ai)

## Across Borders, Beyond Classrooms: IES in Practice

This spring, 41 Year 3 IES students took on the world completing dynamic international placements online, locally, and abroad. They designed curriculum with NGOs, taught in IB and MLL classrooms, and facilitated international camps in Waterloo, Ottawa, and Germany.

Others supported learners as assistants and co-teachers in schools in Italy, Japan, Malaysia, and China, leading language learning, small-group support, and rich cultural exchange. As Marc Meisch of the International School of Penang put it: "Your students are positive, hardworking, and open in their mindset." Our IES students showed up, stood out, and made a global impact!



# Program Updates

Scan the QR codes to learn more about our programs.

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## International Education Studies

2025–26 was a standout for the IES program, with 180 students connecting global perspectives to real-world learning. As we continue to grow, we welcomed Dr. Rebecca Stroud to our full-time faculty team. The IESSA enriched the year with socials, charity events, and study sessions, while upper-year students mentored incoming Year 1s.

Ten students completed the TEFL program with Conestoga College, and all second and third students completed placements locally and abroad. The IES is proud to be an inspired, engaged, and inclusive community in the Faculty of Education.



**Explore the  
International  
Education  
Studies (IES)  
program:**  
[wlu.ca/ies](http://wlu.ca/ies)

## Bachelor of Education

Throughout the 2025–2026 academic year, Teacher Candidates engaged in a wide range of professional learning and community-based experiences across the Waterloo and Brantford campuses. Alternative placements included international, intercultural, and community-based settings, offering learning beyond the traditional practicum. Students participated in mentorship opportunities with faculty, school board partners, and experienced educators through French education initiatives, practicum experiences, and peer leadership programming. Additional activities included conferences, networking events, STEM workshops, EDI initiatives to support teacher diversity, Indigenous language learning, and faculty-led Lunch and Learns.

The Education Society Committee (EdSoc) fostered community through events, volunteer initiatives, and donation drives supporting local organizations. The Faculty also recognized student leadership, practicum contributions, and overall achievements across the program.



**Discover the  
Bachelor of  
Education (B.Ed.)  
program:**  
[wlu.ca/education  
/bed](http://wlu.ca/education/bed)

# Master of Education

Laurier's Master of Education (MEd) program offers full-time and part-time study through flexible online and blended formats, with eight courses completed over six terms across Interdisciplinary or Student Affairs streams, providing a foundation reflected in student experiences like the one shared below:

*"The Master of Education program at Laurier challenged and expanded my thinking as an educator. As someone who entered the program shortly after my undergraduate studies, one of the aspects I valued most was the opportunity to learn alongside classmates and faculty who brought deep real-world experience, were engaged in meaningful, ongoing research, and shared a genuine passion for education. Those perspectives made my learning both relevant and inspiring, and I continue to reflect on and apply what I gained from the program today."*

-Mackenzie Wauters, MEd graduate, Class of 2025



**Read about the  
Master of  
Education (MEd)  
program:**  
[wlu.ca/education  
/med](https://wlu.ca/education/med)

## Introducing Laurier's PhD in Educational Studies

Our PhD in Educational Studies program will welcome the first cohort of students in September 2026. The program includes foundational and advanced seminar courses and a unique portfolio component before students commence on research for a dissertation.

Students in the program are from diverse educational backgrounds and sectors. The advent of the PhD in Educational Studies builds on the growing research programs of faculty members who are engaged in multifaceted and wide-ranging research approaches and fields of study.



**Learn about the PhD in  
Educational Studies:**  
[wlu.ca/phd-education](https://wlu.ca/phd-education)

## Additional Qualifications

We are strengthening collaboration with school boards to align our Additional Qualifications (AQs) with local priorities and system goals. Through ongoing dialogue, we're ensuring AQ offerings support educator growth, enhance practice, and remain relevant within broader professional learning plans.

## Mental Health Certificate

Our work in mental health education continues to evolve through strong partnerships with school boards and collaboration with Continuing Education and the Faculty of Education. The Mental Health Skills for Educators: Children and Youth Micro-Credentials support educators in building practical strategies to address the increasing complexity of student mental health needs.

In response to partner input, we are developing expanded delivery models, including in-person opportunities offered through board partnerships. This approach is intended to better integrate mental health learning into existing professional learning structures and align with board-specific priorities related to student well-being.

***Together with our partners, we remain committed to supporting educators in fostering safe, responsive, and inclusive learning environments for all students.***

**Professional Development and  
Additional Qualifications:**  
[wlu.ca/professionaldevelopment](http://wlu.ca/professionaldevelopment)





# Faculty of Education Spotlights

**Dr. Steve Sider** has been named a Laurier 2026–27 University Research Professor, recognizing the significant impact of his research on inclusive education and school leadership. He will be honoured at Spring Convocation, with the award also supporting his ongoing work through a research grant.



**Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad** has been named a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Innovation and Inclusion in Education, recognizing his leadership in equity-focused, community-informed research. His work will advance areas such as AI in education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and teacher diversity to foster more inclusive school–community ecosystems.



**Dr. Jennifer Holm** has been named the 2026 recipient of the Margaret Sinclair Memorial Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to mathematics education. Her extensive research, leadership, and commitment to strengthening mathematics teaching, along with initiatives like Dr. Elle's Math Academy, have made a lasting impact on educators and students alike.



**Dr. Maria Cantalini-Williams** has been named the recipient of the OISE Leaders & Legends Excellence Award, recognizing her outstanding leadership, exceptional achievements, and impactful global contributions to her field and community. Maria was presented her award by Associate Dean Dr. Joseph Flessa and her doctoral supervisor, Dr. Andrew Biemiller



**Dr. Mary Wilson** has received the Article of the Year award from the International Journal for Academic Development, recognizing the impact of her co-authored work, academic development, trust, and the state of the profession. The article highlights the vital role of trust in shaping and sustaining the academic development profession.



The Professional Development Office of O.E.C.T.A. has announced that BEd student **Hailey Pawsey** has been named the newest recipient of the O.E.C.T.A. Faculty Award at Wilfrid Laurier University, recognizing her outstanding contributions and commitment to excellence within the academic community.



The Science and Technology teaching team proudly celebrates Laurier students **Moira Murdoch, Emily Stewart, Dana Lapsley, Grace Mulligan, Zoe Bos, Maddison Merkley, Mya Sherman, Mady Gerger, Kennedy Corbett Curic, and Sarah Publicover**, who have earned the STAO Don Galbraith Pre-Service Teacher Award of Excellence and will represent Laurier at the 2026 STAO conference, where their STEM projects will also be published.



First-year B.Ed. student **Lucia Valdez** is already making a meaningful impact through her tutoring work with Laurier Students for Literacy at the Brantford Public Library. Her dedication reflects the heart of great teaching, service, compassion, and a strong commitment to helping others grow.



Several Faculty of Education students were recognized as Academic All-Canadian varsity athletes, a distinction that celebrates excellence in both academics and athletics.

Among this year's honourees are **Emma Artichuk, Sarah Bailey, Griffen Duenkler, Tori Zemelink** and **Sam Murphy**, who have demonstrated outstanding dedication in balancing their studies with competitive sport.



**Ethan McDonagh**, a Laurier Faculty of Education student, has been named a recipient of the 2026 Bank of Canada Museum Award for Excellence in Teaching Economics.

Recognized for his engaging, inquiry-based practicum lesson, Ethan is already making an impact by connecting students to real-world economic issues.



FSL BEd student **Emma Rigsby** was honoured with the 2026 Helen G. Mitchell Award of Excellence from the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association. This prestigious recognition highlights her exceptional efforts, strong professional attributes, and developing skills as a future educator, marking her as an outstanding emerging teacher of modern languages.



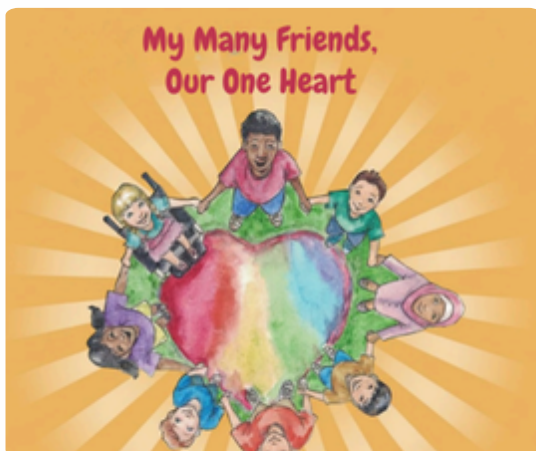
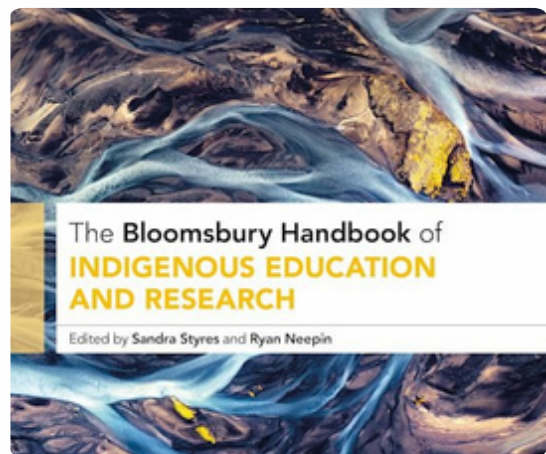
# Recent Faculty Publications

Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad has recently co-edited two publications advancing equity in education: the *Handbook of Anti-Discriminatory Education*, a global volume offering strategies to challenge systemic barriers, and *Activist Leadership for Inclusive Schools: Canadian Insights*, which explores leadership approaches to dismantle oppression and support inclusive, community-driven schools in Canada.



Dr. Steve Sider, co-edited *A Research Agenda for Inclusive Education* (2025), a volume that brings together international experts to explore how schools can better support students with disabilities. The book examines key people, practices, and policies shaping inclusive education and offers frameworks and strategies to promote more equitable, inclusive learning systems.

Dr. Ryan Neepin, a member of the Fox Lake Cree Nation and co-editor of *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Indigenous Education and Research*, highlights that over 476 million Indigenous peoples across 90+ countries often lack culturally appropriate education; this volume surveys Indigenous education, addressing historical contexts, systemic inequities, and key themes while presenting global perspectives on theory, methods, sovereignty, identity, and practice.



Dr. Raghad Ebied is the author of the children's book *My Many Friends, Our One Heart*, available in English and English/Arabic. Through engaging storytelling, the book promotes compassion, acceptance, and appreciation for diversity while encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and inclusive representation of children from diverse backgrounds.



It's a pleasure to share this annual newsletter with our valued and supportive school board partners in education:

- Avon Maitland
- Bluewater
- Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic
- Bruce Grey Catholic
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic
- Grand Erie
- Halton
- Halton Catholic
- Hamilton-Wentworth
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic
- Huron-Perth Catholic
- London District Catholic
- Peel Region
- Six Nations Schools
- Thames Valley
- Upper Grand
- Waterloo Catholic
- Waterloo Region
- Wellington Catholic

This newsletter was created with contributions from the Faculty of Education and the Communications and Administrative Coordinator.

To reach out, please email us at: [educomms@wlu.ca](mailto:educomms@wlu.ca)  
Connect with us on [LinkedIn](#)

## Thank you!

*Thank you for your continued support, collaboration, and commitment to advancing teaching, learning, and innovation.*

*We value our partnership with school boards and your vital role in supporting student success across communities*



Visit the Laurier Faculty of Education website:  
[wlu.ca/education](http://wlu.ca/education)