



# The Constellation

The Monthly Newsletter of Strathmillan School

JAN  
2026

## MESSAGE FROM THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM



Happy New Year! We hope that you have had some time over the school break to connect with family and friends. Thank you for supporting our school community in the first four months of the school year. As the new calendar year begins, we have so much to look forward to at Strathmillan School!

While Ukrainian Orthodox Christians now celebrate Christmas on Dec. 25, those in other Eastern Orthodox religions will celebrate Christmas on January 7th, 2026. Enjoy your sauerkraut, borsht, perogi, holobtsi, pyrizshky, and kolach!

December featured an engaging holiday performance. Thank you to Ms. Dawson for leading

the concert! Golden Gate students hosted us for their band concert dress rehearsal, and we enjoyed Spirit week. We've also completed our five sessions of the SJASD Swimming programme for grade 3 students.

We are happy to announce we have added new staff members, including Gracie-Lea Wareham, Paige Buhler, and Kamla Chaudhary as Education Assistants. Dejun Gu has joined Strathmillan three days per cycle as Assistant Clerk.

For those with pre-school children, please note that our Kindergarten Information Evening (for students registering for the fall of 2026), will take place on February 3. Forms to register grade 5 student for grade 6 will come home on January 30.

We are making progress in our efforts to improve outcomes for students. Our improvement plan was communicated in our School Report and Plan – check it out on our website under the Parents and Community Tab ([LINK](#)). We are working together to foster academic excellence, to cultivate a safe and healthy school, and to enhance our sense of community and belonging.

Warren Nickerson and Kellie Straub

## STRATHMILLAN PARENT COUNCIL

The next meeting of the Strathmillan Parent Council will be on **Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM** in the library. Plans are being made for fun lunch, and the committee will be struck to support Grade 5 Farewell.

# STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR READING AT STRATHMILLAN

This year, Strathmillan School introduced the **Acadience Reading Screener** for students in Kindergarten through Grade 3. The screener is a research-based tool that helps teachers understand how students are developing essential early reading skills. By identifying areas of strength and need, teachers can provide timely support and ensure every child is on the path to becoming a confident reader.

## How is It Different?

In some ways, this approach is not different than what we were already doing. We know early literacy is critical for long-term success, and we have always included word work. However, we are putting more emphasis on whether young children have foundational knowledge. When they know the sounds of letters and how to say letter combinations, they can decode words fluently and accurately. We've already been able to document growth in Strathmillan students' knowledge in our progress monitoring before the holiday break. This information helps teachers plan instruction that is systematic and responsive to each child's needs.

## Who's Leading the Way?

Our work is supported by an incredible team:

- Melissa Kirkland and Helen Proulx, our literacy coaches, who have been working closely with teachers to deepen understanding of effective reading instruction.
- Kellie Straub has provided outstanding leadership in organizing and analyzing the assessment and the data.
- Division leaders and coaches have also played a key role in guiding this initiative, including Deidre Sagert, Rosanna Montebruno, and Sandra Melo.



## What About Older Readers?

In later grades, teachers are examining instructional practices that are important for confident, meaningful reading. We're developing teaching strategies for rich vocabulary, encouraging fluent reading, enriching background knowledge, and writing about what we read in order to help students tackle complex texts. Teachers in grades 4 – 5 are learning together from the leadership of our program leader, Sherri Steuart, guided by the work of Doug Lemov (*Teach Like a Champion*).

Our teachers are committed to learning more about systematic approaches to reading instruction, while continuing to nurture thoughtful, engaged readers and writers. These efforts are reflected in our school plan and represent an important step toward building strong literacy foundations for every child.

## MUSIC NEWS – MS. DAWSON

In early December, students worked hard to learn and perform their winter concert. It was a huge success! Thank you to the families that were able to attend the matinee, evening shows, and live streams. During the show, students sang about wanting a snow day, and before the end of the year, we had a snow day! I wonder if our Strathmillan students wished that into being!

We were also very fortunate to be invited to Golden Gate to listen to the bands play their concert repertoire for us. The students enjoyed seeing old friends, siblings, and neighbours playing their instruments. Next up in music classes, we will be exploring more instruments. In choir, we will be preparing for the Winnipeg Music Festival!



## SAFETY and SECURITY REVIEW

We have been reviewing our safety procedures to protect Strathmillan children since the incident in a Winnipeg School in November with an unwelcome visitor. We are focusing on strengthening our procedures to control access to the building:

- All staff will be wearing ID badges while inside the building, including replacement staff, lunch supervisors, and volunteers.
- All doors will be locked during the school day, except for the front door, which is monitored by direct line of sight and cameras.
- Entry doors will be monitored during recess and lunch reentry.
- All visitors must check in at the office

Please be gracious with our staff upon arrival as these safety procedures take time and diligence. What's most important is that we do everything we can to keep children safe at Strathmillan.

## GUIDANCE CORNER – Mrs. Straub

### KC's Minions – Helping Students Solve Small Problems

At Strathmillan, our Grade 4/5 Kelso's Choices Recess Helpers proudly call themselves KC's Minions! Their mission is simple but powerful: to support students during recess when they encounter small problems that are not dangerous or scary and can be solved by the students

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**“You are strong enough and smart enough to solve your own small problems.”**



themselves.

Our message is clear: “You are strong enough and smart enough to solve your own small problems.”

KC's Minions wear high-visibility vests and carry a clipboard with all nine Kelso's Choices for quick reference. They also have a helpful script to guide them if they get stuck. If a student has a big problem, the Minions will direct them to a duty teacher for assistance.

This leadership role helps our Grade 4/5 students develop valuable skills while making recess a positive experience for everyone. By encouraging problem-solving and independence, KC's Minions are helping build a stronger, more supportive school community.

# STRATHMILLAN LIBRARY– Ms. Branco

## Tips to keep on reading throughout the winter season:



Set aside 15 minutes daily for reading. Create a cozy area with good lighting and choose books you can enjoy together. For those children starting to build their reading stamina through novels, consider reading a chapter or two aloud to your child. They will get excited about the story and want to read more! For storybooks, consider “you read to me, I’ll read to you”: you read one page, and your child can read the next page. Whether reading together or independently, focus on enjoyment, not speed.

If students are looking to get their hands on lots more books the [St. James-Assiniboia Public Library](#) is a great place to browse and borrow reading material! Check their website for hours.

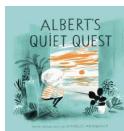
Check out the [St. James-Assiniboia School Division](#) Library website for **Sora**, a digital eBook borrowing platform available to students using their SJASD computer login.

## Mindful Time in the Library

Want a quiet time to read, draw or create at recess time instead of playing outside? The library is now open at morning recess for grades 1, 2, 3, and afternoon recess for grades 4 & 5 for students who want a quiet time indoors for mindful, quiet activity.



## A few of the many books about mindfulness that can be found in the library:



Arsenault, Isabelle.  
Albert's quiet quest.



Sosin, Deborah.  
Charlotte and the quiet place.



Verde, Susan. Are you listening?



White, Dianne. Finding grateful.



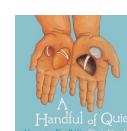
Portis, Antoinette. Now.



DiTerlizzi, Angela. The marvelous now.



Willey, Kira. Breathe like a bear.



Nhat Hnh, Thich. A handful of quiet.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION – Mr. McKenzie and Ms. Orsulak

Our grade K and 1 students practiced balanced and coordination on an obstacle course that included a balance beam, steppingstones, ramps, and curvy lines. These activities help children develop balance, strength, and coordination that helps them succeed in outdoor play and sport.



Our mini gym was out of commission for the last week of December, as the tile floor is being replaced with new vinyl gym flooring. We're very excited about the improvement!



Among other activities, students in the intermediate grades have been playing games like guard the pin. To play, students have to protect their bowling pin from being knocked down by other players using dodgeballs. Players develop teamwork, communication, and movement skills, plus it's super fun!

### Friendship Indoor Soccer Tournament

Grade 4-5 Strathmillan students participated in the Friendship Indoor Soccer Tournament on November 28 at Athlone and Bannatyne schools. The tournament takes all the students who played against one another in inter-school play and combines students on different teams to play along side one another on tournament teams. The idea is to promote friendship between students in different schools. In future, these same students will be playing together as Sturgeon Heights Huskies!

Mr. McKenzie noted that we've never had as many grade 4-5 students participate in the tournament (62), and the attendance at early morning practices and after-school tournaments was commendable! It's a testament to the success of our students that they have the sense of responsibility to fulfill their commitment to team play.

### Basketball Club

In January, the grade 4-5s will begin basketball in Interschool Sports. Students have been invited to sign up, and the basketball fun will begin in the new year.



# JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Jan 4 <b>PATROL SQUAD 3</b>	5   Day 5 • Lego Club Gr.3, Rm.38 • Games Club Rm 1,13	6   Day 6 • Lego Club Gr.3, Rm.38 • Beading Club Grade 4/5 • Primary Choir • Early Dismissal	7   Day 1 • Lego Club Gr.3, Rm.38 • Games Club Rm 3, 14, 16	8   Day 2 • Lego Club Gr.3, Rm.38 • Intermediate Choir	9   Day 3 • Adapted swimming	10
11 <b>PATROL SQUAD 4</b>	12   Day 4 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.41 • Intermural Ball Hockey • Games Club Rm 1,13	13   Day 5 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.41 • Primary Choir • Beading Club • Strathmillan PAC Meeting 6 PM Library	14   Day 6 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.41 • Intramural Ball Hockey • Games Club Rm 3, 14, 16	15   Day 1 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.41 • Intermediate Choir	16   Day 2 • Adapted swimming • Grade 3 Boys Intramurals	17
18 <b>PATROL SQUAD 1</b>	19   Day 3 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.25 • Intermural Ball Hockey • Games Club Rm 1,13	20   Day 4 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.25 • Beading Club • Primary Choir • Early Dismissal	21   Day 5 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.25 • Intramural Ball Hockey • Games Club Rm 3,14,16	22   Day 6 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.25 • Intermediate Choir	23   Day 1 • Adapted swimming • Grade 3 Girls Intramurals	24
25 <b>PATROL SQUAD 2</b>	26   Day 2 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.27 • Intermural Ball Hockey • Games Club Rm 1,13	27   Day 3 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.27 • Primary Choir • Beading Club	28   Day 4 • Intramural Ball Hockey • Games Club Rm 3, 14, 16	29   Day 5 • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.27 • Intermediate Choir	30   Day 6 • Adapted swimming • Lego Club Gr. 3 Rm.27 • Grade 3 Boys Intramurals • Grade 6 Registration	31

## UPCOMING DATES in FEBRUARY

- Feb 2 – Inservice – no school for students
- Feb 3 - Early Dismissal
- Feb 3 -Strathmillan PAC Meeting – 6 PM
- Feb 3 - Kindergarten Information Eve– 7 PM
- Feb 16 - Louis Riel Day – NO SCHOOL
- Feb 17 - Early Dismissal