

# Local educators win Prime Minister's awards

**Cornelia Naylor**  
staff reporter

Three Burnaby educators jetted off to Ottawa to accept an award from Prime Minister Stephen Harper this week.

Cristina Primerano, Julie Kamiya and Marina Giovinazzo of Brentwood Preschool were in the nation's capital to accept a certificate of excellence for early childhood education at the 2014 Prime Minister's Awards on Oct. 7.

The trio was recognized for its innovative approach teaching 72

young learners aged three to five at their parent participation preschool.

"They are so skillful and sensitive, much like gardeners tending to individual plants in their garden," stated one parent in the team's nomination papers.

Among the inventive projects highlighted in their nomination was "The Dark" – a project aimed at helping kids examine their feelings about the dark.

The teachers built a dark space in the classroom and collaborated with their students on how they could become friends with "The Dark."

Other unique activities included teaching students to use real tools, like ladders and electric drills, to build self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Besides the trip, the Prime Minister's award earned the Brentwood team \$5,000, to be split between the preschool and the teachers for professional development, equipment or resource materials.

"It was pretty amazing, definitely hard to put in just a few words," Kamiya told the NOW after the Ottawa trip. "I think the most amazing part of it was meeting other inspirational teachers and just feeling their passion that they have."

This is the second time the local preschool has won the award; Brentwood took home its first certificate of excellence in 2009.

Three other Burnaby educators were also recognized by the Prime Minister's office with regional

awards, earning certificates of achievement and \$1,000.

Janet Chen and Kim Makaseff, who bring a combined 50 years of experience to their work at the Grace Lutheran Preschool, were recognized with a certificate of achievement for early childhood education for their play-based, inclusive approach.

And Burnaby South Secondary School math teacher Amos Lee was awarded a certificate of achievement in teaching excellence for his efforts to make math learning fun

by connecting it with real world applications.

"He challenges students to think and encourages them to strive for nothing but the best," wrote one colleague in Lee's nomination package.

In all, B.C. educators won 22 awards out of 37 nominations from the province.

Across Canada, 224 educators were nominated, and 54 were recognized with Prime Minister's awards.

All 17 certificate of excellence winners were flown to Ottawa to receive the awards from Stephen Harper himself.



**Teacher teamwork:** Laureen Harper (middle) hosts Brentwood Preschool teachers (from left) Julie Kamiya, Cristina Primerano, Marina Giovinazzo and Melanie Shibaoka at 24 Sussex Dr.

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BURNABY NOW

*"They are so skillful and sensitive, much like gardeners tending to individual plants in their garden."*

PARENT  
Brentwood Preschool

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