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## Principal's Message

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year!

It is so nice to have such an amazing group of families join us for an exciting year ahead. We are fortunate enough to have so many of our students back with us for another year and also a whole new group of students joining us.

For those returning from last year, you'll notice a change in our monthly newsletter's name. This change reflects our annual theme, which this year is 'The Sun.' This theme will be woven into our classes in various creative ways, fostering a vibrant learning environment.

The beginning of a school year is a time for a fresh start with so many new things to look forward to. We have the opportunity to set new goals and establish new routines. We have the opportunity to make new friendships and connect with new people in our community, and we have the chance to learn so many new things.

Throughout the year, you'll receive a monthly newsletter. This newsletter is a vital tool to keep you updated on our Shared and Distance programs. It will provide a sneak peek of upcoming events and other important information. Please take a few minutes to read through each newsletter. This month, we introduce the team of teachers who will be working with our students.

### **My Introduction**

This year will be my 30th year in education and I can say I enjoy being a teacher as much today as when I first began. I have had the opportunity to teach everything from Kindergarten to university-level courses, and this year, I am lucky enough to be teaching grade 9 English Language Arts.



I completed my Bachelor of Arts at The University of Calgary with majors in Psychology and Sociology before continuing to complete my Bachelor of Education. Following graduation, I started my own school, where I created inclusive learning environments for younger students. In 2000, I joined the teaching team at an independent school in Okotoks, Alberta and spent 15 years working with highly motivated and academically strong students. In conjunction with my teaching role, I fulfilled the roles of Head of Lower School, Head of Middle School, Principal and Head of School during that time.

For the past nine years, I have been on the team with Third Schools. Beginning as a grade 8/9 teacher in a special education classroom and moving to the Principal of the Third Academy Junior and Senior High School. In the fall of 2020, we launched **ursa** and I was given the opportunity to lead this fantastic program where our focus is on building a community of engaged learners all working from home.

Tracy Gilluley, **ursa** Principal

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## Faculty and Staff

### ursa Teaching Team For 2024-2025

Melanie Guest – [mguest@thirdschools.ca](mailto:mguest@thirdschools.ca) – Elementary ELA, Math, Science, Health

Tina Parish – [tparish@thirdschools.ca](mailto:tparish@thirdschools.ca) – Elementary ELA, Math, Social Studies, Junior High Social Studies

Jason Ash – [jash@thirdschools.ca](mailto:jash@thirdschools.ca) – Elementary ELA, Math, Onsite Foods, Genius Hour

Sonita Bhavra – [sbhavra@thirdschools.ca](mailto:sbhavra@thirdschools.ca) – Elementary Science, Junior High Math, Science, Health

Thera MacKinnon – [tmackinnon@thirdschools.ca](mailto:tmackinnon@thirdschools.ca) – Junior High ELA, Senior High ELA, Social Studies, Art, Genius Hour

Tracy Gilluley – [tgilluley@thirdschools.ca](mailto:tgilluley@thirdschools.ca) – Principal, Junior High ELA

Dean Ingram – [dingram@thirdschools.ca](mailto:dingram@thirdschools.ca) – Associate Principal Distance, Senior High Math and Science

Susan Alexander – [susana@thirdschools.ca](mailto:susana@thirdschools.ca) – Senior High Math and Science

Bradley Bridgewater – [bbridgewater@thirdschools.ca](mailto:bbridgewater@thirdschools.ca) – Physical Education

Pedro Tironi – [ptironi@thirdschools.ca](mailto:ptironi@thirdschools.ca) - Music

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## Dean Ingram

Welcome to the 2024-25 School Year! My name is Mr. Dean Ingram and I have been with **ursa** for the past three years.

I have been a teacher for over 30 years and have taught everything from grade 1 to grade 12. Since graduating from Memorial University of Newfoundland, I have taught a broad spectrum of Math & Science courses in a number of schools throughout



Newfoundland and Labrador. For the past decade I have been delivering my courses through an online delivery method. I have had a varied Teaching Career and have been a classroom Teacher, Department Head, School Administrator as well as the aforementioned Online ETeacher. I consider myself to be a lifelong learner and have continuously sought out learning opportunities that will improve my skill set as an educator.

From a personal standpoint I live in Clarenville, NL. with my wife of 27 years and I have a 23 year old son who I am very proud to be able to say has decided to pursue Education as a career. I enjoy sports of all sorts and I admit that I am a die hard Toronto Maple Leafs Fan. My summers are spent pursuing outdoor activities. I enjoy hunting and fishing. I also enjoy camping. I try and get as much exercise as I can - as I age I know how very important this is.

My favorite season is the Fall as it is when I can get in the woods on my ATV enjoying all that nature has to offer.

For more about me click the link below.

<https://youtu.be/alLnmwceQE?si=3Z1XHyrZn7tQY1>

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## Susan Alexander

Grade 12 Math - Getting to know Ms. Alexander!

Hello! My name is Ms. Susan Alexander, and I am excited to be your Math 30-1, Math 30-2, and Math 31 teacher. My teaching journey began after a significant experience in my education. After initially being less serious about school and facing failure, I was motivated by a few teachers and family members who believed in me. Encouraged by my teachers, I started teaching children voluntarily at a very early age, which sparked my passion for education.

With nearly 20 years of experience teaching a variety of subjects from Grade 1 to Grade 12, I hold a Bachelor of Science in Math and Education and a postgraduate degree in Computer Science. Outside the classroom, I enjoy reading, cooking, shopping, travelling, and spending time with my family. I'm committed to lifelong learning and continuously seek opportunities to enhance my skills as an educator.

Feel free to reach out to me at [susana@thirdschools.ca](mailto:susana@thirdschools.ca) or through Canvas for any questions or concerns. I look forward to a rewarding year with you!

## Jason Ash

I have been teaching for 27 years in the private, charter and public school settings. Over the years I have taught every grade level from Grades 1-12 and almost every subject at least once. Primarily, my focus has been on middle school (Grades 5-8) over that span, and I enjoy working with children and constantly learning new things. This is my fifth year with the Third Academy/**ursa**/Lynx programme. My assignment this school year is Grade 5/6 online English Language Arts, Math, and

the Okotoks LYNX programme for grades 1-9. I have two daughters in grades 9 and 6, and we love to spend time outdoors, camping, hiking, and playing sports.



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## Sonita Bhavra

Hello and welcome!

My name is Sonita Bhavra. I am teaching Math 7-9, Science 5-9 and Health 7-9 this year. I am also the teacher for various CTS courses and this year I am the homeroom teacher for **ursa** Grades 7/8.

I am from Calgary, Alberta and did all my schooling in Calgary. I am married and have three children. My oldest son is in grade eleven, my daughter is in grade eight, and my youngest daughter is in Kindergarten.

I started working with Third Academy in March of 2016, where I worked with junior high students. I also taught the Grade 5/6 class. In September of 2020, I started working with **ursa** and have loved working as an online teacher since!

This summer, I spent lots of time with my family and friends, as we had four weddings to attend. We also made time for a road trip to Montana and B.C. We did lots of hiking and explored Glacier Lake and Marble Canyon—amazing places to see!

I'm looking forward to an awesome year and getting to know my online students!

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## Bradley Bridgewater

Bradley Bridgewater is the lead LYNX Cochrane teacher and teaches mornings at Third Academy. Before joining Third Schools, the Calgary Board of Education employed him for five years, teaching students across all grade levels (K-12) in subjects across the curriculum.

Bradley's educational journey began at Mount Royal University in Calgary, where he earned his Bachelor of Education degree with a minor in Health and Physical Education in 2019. His extensive experience in playing and coaching a variety of sports, coupled with a profound interest in nature-based education and community service, has shaped his approach to teaching. Since 2013, he has been sharing his love for sports and the outdoors as a volunteer at an outdoor nature-based camp.

His cousin Jason, also a LYNX teacher, introduced Bradley to Third Schools, telling him the position would be a great fit with his outdoor background. Bradley is seen smiling every day while engaged with students enjoying themselves while learning about nature.



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### Melanie Guest



Hello! My name is Ms. Melanie Guest. I have been teaching in various environments for the past 20 years! That is right, I started when I was only 5. Pretty impressive, ya?

The first teaching assignment I took was at an international secondary school in Kampala, Uganda. While there, I helped organize a Physical Education Program for all the East African International Schools run by the Aga Khan. I loved the opportunity to work with local teachers to create programs that used minimal or flexible equipment to provide excellent body awareness and physical literacy skills for all the students from grades 7-12. While there, I was also part of organizing and implementing two educational field trips for students 12-19 years of age to learn about mountain environments, one to Mount Elgon for the students at my school in Uganda and one for students at a sister school to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania! It was a wild ride and an excellent learning opportunity for the student's growth and for me to see what is possible with some creativity!

Throughout my career as an educator, I have guided and taught in various environments and at multiple schools. Some of the other highlights were working to develop the WILD program in Cochrane, helping develop and implement the first years of outdoor CALM at the Outdoor Learning Center in the Bow Valley, and finding my way to the Third Schools Family five years ago to bring the first LYNX class from concept to reality in Canmore in 2020!

I love the outdoors for recreation and as a learning environment, and I believe in using nature as a teacher. Unfortunately, this love of the outdoors took me out of it when I was injured at the end of the 2021-22 school year. Luckily, I was already teaching a couple of online classes with **ursa** in the mornings and could pivot to the online teaching environment full-time as I was recovering.

Though online was different from where I thought I would end up, I soon fell in love with teaching through this medium. It provided new learning, new challenges, and new opportunities to connect with students and families from all over the world, and I soon fell in love with it!

I join my students from the beautiful community of Canmore in the Canadian Rockies, where I live and have been raising my two children since my return from Africa. From here, I am transported to locations with different environments to explore through my students' screens, stories, and work.

I look forward to watching my past students grow into their most wonderful selves while connecting with all the new students and their families joining us this year online!

I look forward to seeing you around either online during classes or out in nature after school!

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## **Thera Mackinnon**

I am Thera MacKinnon and look forward to a great year!

I graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta, majoring in English and minoring in Art. I began my teaching career in New York City. While working in New York, I earned my Master of Education degree focusing on Curriculum Design and Instruction. Following my time in New York, I moved back to Calgary, where I taught for eight years at Calgary Academy.



There, I had the opportunity to develop leadership skills in leading professional development, both with fellow staff at the school and in the United States, in reading strategies and remedial interventions. I then moved to the Dominican Republic and taught at an online school, teaching English to 10th through 12th grade. I also served as the Reading Specialist for Elementary students and taught English and ESL to grades 6 through 10.

I joined Third Schools in 2020, working with Third Academy, LYNX, and **ursa** students. This year I teach English Language Arts to grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12, Social Studies 10, 11, 12, and Art to grades 1-12 on Wednesdays.

I was born in Calgary and grew up in rural Alberta. I am thankful to be back in this beautiful country. In my spare time, I draw, paint, train and compete in the equestrian discipline of dressage. Being outside and interacting with nature is one of my favourite things.

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## **Tina Parish**

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! My name is Tina Parish, and I teach 1-4 ELA, 3/4 Math, and 1-9 Social. I live in Humboldt, Saskatchewan and have been teaching for 25 years. I also have been teaching ECE programs at various colleges for 18 years. I am married and have three kids – 20, 16, 12. In my spare time, I love to travel, attend concerts and sporting events and run. I am excited about this upcoming year and look forward to learning more about

your child. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask! Here's to a great year!



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## Pedro Tironi

Dear families,

My name is Pedro Tironi, and I am the music teacher for **ursa**, LYNX and Third Academy for the 2024-2025 academic year.

I am excited about this opportunity and look forward to supporting your child's musical development and growth. This year's program will include music-making, theory, and movement activities. Additionally, the school will be organizing two school-wide concerts this year.



If you need to reach me, please feel free to email me at [ptironi@thirdschools.ca](mailto:ptironi@thirdschools.ca). Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions, as I strive to respond within 24 hours.

I am eagerly looking forward to the start of the academic year and to the opportunity to meet you all soon.

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## Extended Study Trip

Each fall, the Third Schools team takes a group of grade 9-12 students on an adventure. We have climbed the icefields, canoed in northern Manitoba, learned performance skills in Stratford, Ontario, and searched for salmon on the annual salmon run in British Columbia. We spent four wonderful days at Camp Caroline in Central Alberta this year. The trip allowed students to connect with other students and build relationships with their classmates. Though the weather was not as cooperative as we would have liked, the students were able to swim, hike, play games, and sing karaoke! Looking forward to next year's adventure.

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## SunSense -

Being sun-safe can make a massive difference to our health in both the short and long term. The Government of Canada and the Canadian Cancer Society have initiated the SunSense Program.

Incorporating sun-safe habits early on can help prevent skin cancers later in life, particularly for young children more susceptible to skin damage due to prolonged sun exposure. This initiative is designed to promote sun safety in schools by providing resources and guidance to educate students about how to stay safe in the sun. SunSense also offers sun safety training, policy templates for school staff, and certification opportunities.

For more information please visit [Home](#) | [Insite \(sunsense.ca\)](#).



# KEEP YOUR CHILDREN SAFE!

Free Sun Safety Certification Program  
from The Canadian Cancer Society



Research shows early childhood exposure to **ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION** is a significant contributing factor to developing skin cancer later in life.



Skin cancer is one of the most common types of cancer and is **HIGHLY PREVENTABLE!**



As little as **ONE SUNBURN** during childhood can increase risk of skin cancer

## BENEFITS OF JOINING SUNSENSE

- 1 Receive free sun safety tools and resources including
  - Lesson plans, teaching guides and activity sheets.
  - UV bracelets and UV paper
  - Posters and postcards
  - Communications tools
- 2 Sun safety training for staff
- 3 Sun safe policy templates
- 4 SunSense Certification - show parents and others interested in joining your daycare that you are knowledgeable and focused on ensuring children are protected from harmful UVR.



Schools and daycares can play an important role in reducing childhood exposure to ultraviolet radiation and can help children develop good sun safety habits early on.

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE PROGRAM:

“ Great program, thank you for the amazing resources!! ”

“ This is great to bring awareness to an important topic. Many kids loved the bracelets and are still wearing them proudly! ”



**SEEK**

Seek shade or create your own where it is not available.

**SLIP**

Wear weather appropriate clothing that provides sun protection.

**SLAP**

A wide brim hat protects your ears, neck and face.

**SLOP**

SPF 30 or higher to protect your skin.

**SLIDE**

Protect your eyes.



The Canadian Cancer Society SunSense Certification is recognized by the Canadian Dermatology Association for its educational value.





## Proctorio



In order to add another layer of security to our online assessments for our junior and senior high students, **ursa** has implemented a platform that enhances our ability to monitor

students while they are completing the assessments. Proctorio is used globally by many institutions worldwide and has proved successful. This platform will be used for all **ursa** junior and senior high online assessments during the 2024-25 school year. More information on the requirements is provided in the updated Parent Handbook.

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## High School Student myPass Accounts

myPass is an Alberta Education self-service website for students to:

Order high school transcripts in English and French

View diploma exam marks

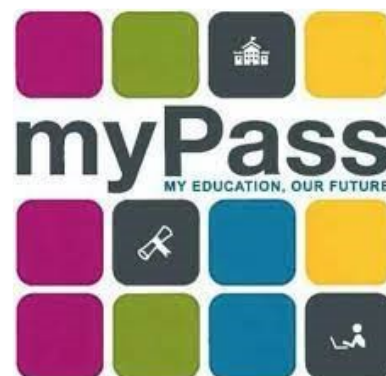
Register to write or rewrite diploma exams with online payment

View and print Detailed Academic Reports (DAR)

View progress towards a credential (diploma or certificate)

Order additional copies of an awarded credential in English or French

Receive notifications for important messages



**PARENTS:** you may use myPass to support the student and to notify the Minister of a home education program not supervised by a school authority

For Information on how to create the account visit

<https://public.education.alberta.ca/PASI/mypass/welcome>

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**Dean Ingram**

Dean is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters