

NEWS RELEASE

WSD High School Named Apple Distinguished School

September 28, 2021 (Winnipeg, MB) – Winnipeg School Division’s École secondaire Sisler High School is pleased to announce that it has been recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for 2021-2022 for its use of technology to prepare students for careers and post-secondary opportunities in the creative and digital industries.

Apple Distinguished Schools are centers of innovation, leadership, and educational excellence. They use Apple technology to connect students to the world, fuel creativity, deepen collaboration, and make learning personal.

“At Sisler, our priority is student success. This designation highlights our success in creating an innovative and compelling learning environment that lets student pursue their goals and passions,” said Pat Graham, Principal, École secondaire Sisler High School. “We are extremely proud of our students and all they have been able to achieve in the creative and digital sectors with the help of technology and digital tools.”

Winnipeg School Division’s CREATE program at Sisler provides students with industry and post-secondary pathways to creative industries and hands-on experience in media production. WSD CREATE offers 24 courses to both high-school and post-high students in animation, game design, film, motion graphics and other digital media. Students currently use: MacBook Pros for high-end media projects, studio work and home use; MacBook Minis as collaborative centres; Apple TV for screen sharing and school announcements; and iPad pros and Apple pencils for animation, previsualization and concept art. CREATE students also used Apple tools to help develop a digital media studio for the Winnipeg Art Gallery, as well as youth programming for the gallery (which is taught today by WSD CREATE grads).

“The use of this cutting-edge technology is key to our program,” said Jamie Leduc, CREATE Department Head, École secondaire Sisler High School. “It gives our students an edge when entering the workforce, or continuing their education.”

Since 2016, over 100 Sisler grads have secured work in the creative industries. The post-high program, which began in 2019 with 15 students, now accommodates 45 students from across the province. The program has seen over 70 percent of its graduates employed in the creative industries, or pursue post-secondary education in the sector. WSD CREATE currently works with major studios and organizations like Nickelodeon, Nelvana/Corus, CBC, The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, Flipside XR, Rise Up Animation and more to provide mentorship, internship and work placements for students.

“Our partnerships really make things happen for the students,” said Bernard Alibudbud, a teacher in the WSD CREATE program at Sisler. “Our program is incredibly diverse. Most of our students and graduates come from diverse backgrounds and are eager to tell their stories. The whole industry is benefitting from this diversity of voice.”

In 2020, students in the WSD CREATE post-high program contributed animation to the Netflix short film ‘Cops and Robbers’ (themed around the Black Lives Matter movement), which was longlisted for an Academy Award and won a Peabody Award. In 2021, thanks to WSD’s partnerships with Vancouver Film School (VFS) and The Schroeder Foundation, 15 WSD CREATE students received full tuition scholarship to VFS. Over \$1 million in scholarships has been awarded to WSD CREATE students since 2019.

Manitoba Education has provided nearly \$750,000 in grants to the WSD CREATE programs since 2018 and involved staff in the development of provincial Motion Picture and Interactive Digital Media Frameworks for other schools to use.

WSD is celebrating 150 years of learning this year and has 79 schools, 32,752 students and 4,587 full-time employees. Its purpose is to provide a learning environment that fosters the growth of each student’s potential and provide equitable opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and diverse society.

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