

The nominating committee and the board of directors recommend the following Slate of Nominees to join RisingOaks' Board of Directors for a 2-year term, 2026 to 2028. In doing so, the following core leadership values were considered:

1. **Mission driven:** values align with RisingOaks' Mission, values, beliefs and guiding principles.
2. **Governance:** understands the difference between the work of management and the board; is able to think strategically and assist in setting direction for the organization.
3. **Knowledge and judgement:** understands child care in their role as a parent or advocate for quality child care; has the ability to appropriately question data and information presented to the board for its deliberations.
4. **Engagement & participation:** will be diligently prepared for meetings and actively engaged in board discussions.
5. **Communication & Teamwork:** respects confidentiality; will contribute meaningfully and knowledgeably to board discussions, providing valuable input and advice to management.

In addition, the Board of Directors considered key competencies, expertise (e.g., accounting, government relations, HR, legal) and under-represented perspectives (e.g., Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, members of 2SLGBTQIA+ community, individuals with visible or invisible disabilities, male perspectives, parents & caregivers, lived or professional experience in diversity, equity and inclusion and/or anti-racism work).

Through a rigorous application, competency assessment and interview process, the nominating committee determined that the following individuals were eligible to stand for election or re-election, to RisingOaks' Board of Directors. This Slate of Nominees was approved by the Board of Directors on March 10, 2026 and is now proposed to the membership for an official election to fill six (6) director positions.

BOARD RECOMMENDED SLATE OF NOMINEES

Alex Zhou, B. Math		Alex holds an Honours BMath in Financial Analysis and Risk Management from the University of Waterloo. Alex gained experience working in finance and technology startups before moving into data and analytics. In his current role, Alex focuses on planning and delivery of analytics transformation. Alex has two children at RisingOaks Early Learning and looks forward to giving back to the community as a board member.
Centre:	Alex	
Occupation	Senior Manager, BMO	
Prior Board Experience	RisingOaks Early Learning Board of Directors – Director (2 years) – Nominating committee (1 year) – Finance & Audit committee (1 year)	
Ankita Banerjee, MBA, CHRP, CHRL		Ankita holds an MBA in HR and Finance and has worked in HR since 2017, across restaurant, marketing, and automation industries. She began her career teaching underprivileged children with Teach for India. As an HR Generalist at ATS Corporation, she provides strategic HR support and manages talent initiatives. Ankita has a son at RisingOaks Early Learning Oak Creek, and enjoys traveling and cooking with her family.
Centre:	Oak Creek	
Occupation	Human Resources Generalist, ATS Corporation	
Prior Board Experience	none	
Bernard Crawford, B. Comm, PMP		Bernie graduated from Ryerson University with a Bachelor of Commerce in Information Technology Management and holds a Masters Certificate in Project Management from Schulich. A technology lover at heart, he is a team leader primarily in software implementations. Bernie hopes to bring his diverse employment background and skills to find efficiencies, while assisting the nominations committee in identifying our next leaders. Bernie has one child who attends RisingOaks Early Learning St. Nicholas.
Centre:	St. Nicholas	
Occupation	Project Management Professional	
Prior Board Experience	RisingOaks Early Learning Board of Directors – Director (2 years) – Nominating committee (2 years)	

Cindy Ofunne, MBA, PMP, CSM		
Centre:	n/a	Cindy is a global leader bridging innovation, education, and community impact. With 14+ years across healthcare, telecom, IT, aviation and education, she drives strategic transformation. As Director of PEC PM Experts and founder of STEMPorte, she advances project management and STEAM education. A former Associate Professor at Conestoga College, she serves on multiple boards and is pursuing a DBA at Temple University. Cindy is a PMP and recipient of the 2025 “40 under 40” and YWCA “Women of Distinction” awards.
Occupation	Founding Director, PEC PM Experts Inc.	
Prior Board Experience	RisingOaks Early Learning Board of Directors – Director (2 years) – Governance committee (2 years)	
Nikkilesh Uchil, BSc, CPA		
Centre:	St. Luke	Nikk is a CPA with 20 years+ experience in finance and operations. He has been with OpenText for over 8 years and has a passion for technology. He focuses on engineering and security products while supporting a portfolio of 600+ cloud and off-cloud products. He looks forward to bringing his experience with financial strategies and emerging technologies to the board and finance & audit committee. Nikk is committed to helping every child have a brighter future! His daughter attends RisingOaks Early Learning St. Luke.
Occupation	Finance Director, OpenText	
Prior Board Experience	none	
Olivia Choi, BES, Master of Marine Management		
Centre:	St. Patrick	Olivia is a first-time mother to a child who attends RisingOaks Early Learning St. Patrick. She is passionate about play-based early learning and is a firm believer in lifelong learning. Olivia has degrees in geography and marine management and has had the privilege of working in the field of collaborative governance, and Indigenous-led stewardship, for the past 8 years. Olivia enjoys interacting with community, immersing herself in challenging and new experiences, and learning from those around her.
Occupation	Project Manager, Council of the Haida Nation	
Prior Board Experience	Chair several tripartite (First Nations, Canada and British Columbia) governance committees	

Notice to Members

The Slate includes six (6) nominees to fill six (6) vacancies. As a result, members will be asked to approve the Slate, thus electing all six directors, with one motion.

The newly elected directors will join the following directors, who are now completing their second year of their current term, to form RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario’s 2026-27 Board of Directors:

Director	Occupation	Centre, if applicable
Christiana Alkiviades, CPA	Manager, Corporate Accounting, University of Waterloo	n/a
Robert MacDonald, MBA	Director, Technology & Risk Management, FTI Consulting	n/a
Necia Martins, EdD, MBA	Associate Registrar, Wilfred Laurier University	John Sweeney
Jessica Ronzio, MSW, RSW	Psychotherapist, Reclaim & Rise Counselling	Oak Creek
Katherine Walsh, MBA	Director, Program Delivery, OTIP	St. Matthew