



Durham Catholic District School Board



Brother André Catholic School



In the Beginning

In September 2005, a brand new Catholic school opened in the Ajax neighbourhood of Nottingham. It was built to accommodate the growing population of Mother Teresa Catholic School, which was overcrowded at the time. An extensive naming process took place at the Board level and the name Brother André Catholic School was chosen.

The Nottingham area is located in near Westney Road and Taunton Road. Set in front of a large hill, the school building sits next to a newly built public school and across the street from a beautiful park and soccer field maintained by the Town of Ajax.

Our founding principal, Suzanne Roche selected a staff of 18 teachers, one custodian and one educational assistant. At the end of the summer of 2005, the building of the school was slightly behind schedule, and the Board didn't get the go-ahead to take possession of the

school until the day before the Labour Day weekend of 2005. Wearing workboots and hardhats, the staff toured the new building and set to work getting their classrooms ready for the students, who would arrive the following Tuesday.

The staff worked all through the long weekend, cleaning, organizing and decorating. Each student desk was approximately two feet tall, and each leg of the desk needed to be unscrewed, readjusted and then screwed in again. It was a time-consuming process, but in a show of true community, everyone helped each other adjust the desks so that the students were able to sit in them on Tuesday.



The original staff of Brother André Catholic School

The school opened its doors on Tuesday, September 6, 2005, with a student population of 394. It was the largest school opening in Durham Catholic history at that time. Both staff and students were excited that first morning. However, the school was not entirely ready, lacking a finished library and gym; but the staff and students were charmed with the beautiful new building and set to work creating a community and its own traditions.

In May 2006, Brother André Catholic School was officially blessed and opened. Most of the students were involved in both the daytime and evening celebration. During the day, the students celebrated a very special mass with Father Roy Roberts from the school's parish St. Francis de Sales. Special songs were practiced and learned. Father Roy had all the

students and staff take their shoes off once they entered the school gym to signify that the school was now a blessed and sacred place. It was a very moving mass for everyone in attendance. After the mass, Father Roy visited each classroom to officially bless each room. As Brother André was a porter or door keeper, each classroom door was shut, and Father Roy knocked on the door, and the students answered his knock as Brother André would have done and each of the four corners of the classroom were blessed with holy water. Each student received a prayer card with Brother André on it as well as a medallion with his picture on it.

The evening portion of the official opening included a procession of the current faculty as well as speeches from the school board, Town of Ajax dignitaries, students and Principal, Suzanne Roche. There was a beautiful liturgical dance by some students that wowed everyone. Visitors toured the school and admired the beautiful, brand new building and the hard work that the staff had undertaken to build the community of Brother André that year. It was a very special and proud time in the school's history.

In that first year of being open, the focus was on creating a thriving community of learners. To achieve this, a series of many contests and challenges were created to involve the students. Contests such as creating a mascot for Brother André were quite popular among the students. The winning submission, after a school-wide vote, was the Eagle. The Brother André Eagle is proudly displayed on our spirit wear, team logos, and throughout the school building.

When you enter the school, you will notice over 400 hand-painted tiles lining our foyer walls. Each student, staff member, clergy and parent council member created a unique and individual tile to be placed on the wall. These tiles have created a legacy of individuality, creativity and respect. The tiles are as distinctive and diverse as the school population.

The Brother André Catholic School school community is a very multicultural one, with students representing many cultures and countries, including the Philippines, Europe, the Caribbean, Egypt and the Middle East. Many students who have just arrived in Canada attend Brother André Catholic School, creating a diverse learning community where students and staff respect and celebrate multiculturalism.



Celebrating the 2010 Winter Olympics

Since its opening, Brother André Catholic School has been a dominating force in athletics where students enjoy sports such as basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, tchouckball, track and field, cross country, skipping and flag football. Many athletic awards line the walls of the gymnasium and have created a legacy of athletic excellence.



Staff vs. Girls Basketball team

Students are more than just athletic. They also enjoy a wide range of creative activities, such as the knitting club, the sewing club, art club, math club, yu-gi-oh, folk dancing, craft club, choir, and social justice clubs. Over seven years, three full-length school plays have been performed involving students from Grades 3 to 8. These plays were a highlight of the school year and were much enjoyed by students, teachers, parents and visiting schools.



The cast of Godspell, one of the school plays



The Brother André choir at UOIT



Talent show – Teacher’s Dance



A Kindergarten class

In 2011, the school received its Silver certification for being an EcoSchool. Brother André Catholic School students are very active in recycling, boomeranging compostables home, as well as being on the lookout for anyone or any class wasting energy. The goal is to become a Gold level EcoSchool in the near future.

The school has an active Catholic School Council. From the time it opened, the fabulous parents on the council have been very involved in helping to build a fantastic community. The school council runs the much anticipated Halloween Dance-a-Thon, Pizza Days, the Meet the Teacher Barbeque and the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon. In the past, the highlight of the end of the school year was the Fun Fair, where students and their families toured the school and enjoyed a barbecue and some engaging activities. Brother André Catholic School is a fun and thriving community, thanks to the dedication of the parents on the Catholic School Council.



One of the annual Halloween Dances



Kindergarten Christmas concert

In September 2012, Brother André Catholic School underwent a large transformation as St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic School opened its doors. Many staff and students either moved to the new school or moved on to other schools and opportunities within the Board. Projected enrolment for September 2012 was 375 students, which was significantly lower than it has been in the past few years.

Although this has been a huge change for the Brother André Catholic School community, students and staff look forward to the new opportunities they will face.

Our Patron Saint

Our patron, Brother André, was born Alfred Bessette on August 9, 1845, in St. Grégoire, Quebec. He was sickly and not expected to live long, and remained in frail health his whole life. Unable to read or write, and sick more often than well, Alfred went from one lowly job to the next until he joined the congregation of the Holy Cross. As he was uneducated, Brother André was assigned the humblest of tasks, including being the porter: answering the door and welcoming visitors. As part of his daily duties, Brother André would visit the sick in the hospital or in their homes. Many of them were healed by his prayers. More and more people came to him for advice and hope. Soon the news of Montreal's humble brother spread far and wide. Brother André took none of the credit, giving it to St. Joseph instead.

Devoted to St. Joseph, Brother André began to gather money to build a chapel to St. Joseph. After more than 50 years of prayers and donations, the St. Joseph Oratory was finally built at the top of Mount Royal. After Brother André's death in 1937, a million people came to the Basilica to pay their respects to this simple, humble man. On May 23, 1982, Pope John Paul II beatified Blessed Brother André. In October 2010, Pope Benedict XVI canonized St. André Bessette.



The school celebrates at a canonization Mass for Brother André.

Brother André Catholic School was proud to join Canada and the world in celebrating our patron saint. Although he is now known as St. André Bessette, he will always be Brother André to our community. We try to follow his example of devotion, doing humble tasks for the good of others, along with being prayerful and welcoming of all who come through our doors.

Principals

Suzanne Roche (2005–2006)

Liz Snow (2006–2007)

Neil Boland (2007–present)

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