



Durham Catholic District School Board

St. Patrick Catholic School

Motto: "Discover the Spirit"



In the Beginning

In April 1991, St. Patrick Catholic School opened its office in the basement of the former site of St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church at 72 Church St. in Ajax. Pat MacKinnon was the principal, Sue Waite was the secretary and Father Bolger was the pastor of the parish. The staff and student body would be comprised in part from St. Francis de Sales Catholic School and St. Jude Catholic School.

From September to December 13, 1991, St. Patrick was located in portables on the St. Jude Catholic School site. The initial student enrolment was 299.

On December 16, 1991 (one week before the Christmas break), the St. Patrick Catholic School community (374 students and 20 staff) made their long-anticipated move to the brand new building – the current site at 280 Delaney Dr.,

Ajax. The building's contemporary architecture blends into the landscape of the developing north Westney Heights Area. Pryde Daycare, which services the community, is conveniently located onsite.



The official opening and blessing of the school was celebrated by Bishop J.S. Knight on March 11, 1993. Pat MacKinnon was the principal and Lorraine Aarons the vice-principal. Construction of a 12-classroom, two-storey addition started in the spring of 1995 and was occupied as of January 1996. September 1996 saw a student enrolment of 820.

In February 1997, 500 St. Patrick Catholic School Community members attended the Special Olympics Opening Ceremonies at Skydome in Toronto as part of a school-wide integrated unit. The unit included lessons, activities, events and field trips that provided and supported education awareness of the needs and talents of people with special needs.

In 2008, the staff and students set a goal of enhancing the school's outdoor environment through funding provided by TD (Toronto Dominion) Friends of the Environment. Through this green project, in the south end of the yard, an outdoor classroom with seating and shade was created. This area has been a vital

source of protective shade, a habitat for small animals, and an educational outlet that fits with our faith goal of becoming stewards of creation.

2012 marks the 152nd Anniversary of St. Francis de Sales Parish, which started in 1860 under the patronage of St. Wilfrid (the name of the parish changed in 1871). A tapestry of St. Patrick is located in the parish ambulatory. It was blessed and installed at the Dedication Mass.

St. Patrick Catholic School continues to emphasize community building, spiritually, through programs and activities such as the following:

- School Masses and liturgical celebrations
- Remembrance Day assemblies (often with veterans as guest speakers)
- Advent/Lent-related celebrations
- St. Patrick's Day celebrations (celebrating our Patron)
- Holy Thursday, including the Stations of the Cross
- Easter Celebrations
- May celebrations (for the month of Mary)
- Bible presentations
- Community celebrations of the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation
- Involvement of the parish priest in school life
- Activities such as Focus on Faith Staff Day, spent at Daily Bread Food Bank
- Staff United Way participation
- School-wide ShareLife participation
- Support of Charities (Heart and Stroke Foundation, Terry Fox Run)
- Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter food drives to support St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Christmas Families Project (in cooperation with St. Vincent de Paul Society, local business community and other community sponsors) to provide assistance to families in need
- Random Acts of Kindness awards
- Junior and Senior Ambassador Clubs (discussion groups on such topics as racism and what it feels like to be an immigrant)
- Rainbows groups
- Multicultural celebrations
- Staff dress-down days for charity

- Peaceworks program
- Cooperative games workshops





St. Patrick Catholic School continues to emphasize community building in an effort to foster a welcoming, family-type atmosphere, including programs and activities such as these:

- Clubs and sports teams (e.g., intramural sports at lunch, Ambassador Club, choirs, Student Art Gallery in the library)
- Programs linking students of different ages – e.g., Reading Buddies
- EcoSchool Programs, such as Waste Reduction Plan, Compost Club
- Parent volunteer involvement
- Parent Information Evenings, with topics such as Understanding Report Cards, with guest speakers, including Board consultants
- Writing of the St. Patrick Catholic School Community Cook Book
- Career Days





St. Patrick Catholic School continues to emphasize community building through an emphasis on communication, which includes:

- Open door policy
- Good communication with parents
- A school newsletter, which includes messages from administration, student work, general information and news, Board news, parish news, community news
- Parent bulletin boards and Parent Resource Centre in the library
- Welcoming Committee Outreach to new families
- Volunteer translators

Fun Facts

Athletics

St. Patrick Catholic School has always been a great supporter of and competitor in sports within the Durham Catholic District School Board. Since it opened in 1991–1992, the school is the proud recipient of 44 divisional sports banners (at least one per year to the present day) and five Tournament of Champions banners. St. Patrick C.S. is also proud to be the first elementary school in the Board to sport glass basketball backboards.

Wall of Fame – “BRICS” Program

In 2002–2003, to build respect and community in the school, the Wall of Fame was born. Each classroom votes for one student who exemplifies the established criteria and in June of each year, each elected student puts his or her name on a “brick” of the wall outside the main office.

Moustache Shave for ShareLife

In this annual event, the principal, Pat MacKinnon, and any male staff member with a moustache, would collect pledges to have his moustache shaved off. All proceeds went to ShareLife. There would be a student assembly, and the participants would be on stage for the shave.



Under-the-nose job

St. Patrick Catholic School principal Patrick MacKinnon agreed to part with his moustache as a reward for students at the school collecting \$534 for charity. The barber's blade was wielded by lumberjack-teacher Marian McKay.

photo by Andrew Iwanowski

Our Patrick

Unique Stories from St. Patrick Catholic School's History

Sky Hawks Paratroopers

In 1997, the Sky Hawks Paratroopers did a fly-past over St. Patrick Catholic School. The anticipated day turned out to be a windy, clouded-over, miserable day. The Sky Hawks showed up as scheduled, and kept dropping items from their planes to determine the intensity of the wind and the not so visual landing. To the delight of the St. Patrick community, they did go ahead as scheduled. One parachute landed on the roof of a house that was uphill from the school grounds. Another paratrooper successfully landed on the school field. After he landed, he grabbed the lines of his parachute, but due to high winds, he was pulled across the field. Fortunately, he was able to stay grounded. The community was thrilled with the show.

Head Shaving for Cancer

In 1998, to raise cancer awareness/support for a Grade 6 student with cancer, teacher Mike O'Neil put out a challenge: if the school could raise \$2,000 (to help send the student to Italy for treatment), Mike would shave his head. Mike then invited the rest of the male staff to join him in this challenge. Tim Coburn said he would consider it if \$5,000 was raised – the rest of the male teachers cheered the

increased amount and came on board. Two days before the agreed upon date for monies raised, they were \$1,000 short of the \$5,000. By the next day, the goal was miraculously reached and razors were being sharpened! On the last day of school, in June 1998, the following staff gave a heads up for a great cause: Pat MacKinnon (Principal), Mike O'Neil, Tim Coburn, Sam Rao (plumber with the Board), Dave Brown, Robert Fillion, Steve Kinahan, Dennis Kivlaheen and Mike Young. Men weren't the only participants – Mrs. Livingston (parent) also took part, and Debbie O'Hare cut her long hair really, really short.

The staff also did a lottery with the students to determine who would be the lucky student to do the first clip.

Original School Mission Statement

As a Christian Community, St. Patrick Catholic School aims to provide its students, staff and community with a safe and welcoming learning and teaching environment. This environment will provide all members of our school community with the opportunity to develop Spiritually, Academically and Physically.



Our Patron Saint

Patrick was born in Scotland around the year 387. As a teenager, he was kidnapped and taken to Ireland to work as a slave, tending and herding sheep. He prayed to God and God directed him back to his homeland. On the way, Patrick studied in Rome to become a priest.

Patrick went to England for a time then asked to go back to Ireland as a missionary. He preached and converted thousands of people in Ireland, and built many churches. Patrick taught the Christian faith in story form. Legend credits St. Patrick with teaching the Irish about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by showing people the shamrock, a single plant with three leaves, using it to illustrate the Holy Trinity.

After years of living in poverty, travelling and enduring much suffering, he died on March 17, 461. He died at Saul, where he had built the first church.

School Prayer

St. Patrick,
we pray for our community to be a safe and caring place
for our students, staff and families.
We pray for the poor and needy.
Help those who are sad and lonely
and those who are sick.
Guide us to make the right choices,
and give us strength, wisdom and protection
during our journey in life.

Please God, help us to do our best
with the gifts that you have given us.
Let us lead a life of seeing and believing in you.
Help us to open our hearts and our minds as we work together
as brothers and sisters in God's family.
Amen.

St. Patrick, pray for us.

Principals

Pat MacKinnon (1991–1998)
Ester Nash (interim 1998)
Mary Simpson (1998–2005)
Liz Spratt (2005–2012)
Kate O’Quinn (interim 2012)
Joanne Gagnon (2012-present)

Contributors:

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