



St. Brigid School

Excellence Faith Community



What's New?

Over the past couple of years, improvements have been made to the Father Hayes Building and it is in great shape! It has a new roof, new boiler, new windows, a renovated stage and gym floor!

Work began on the 1915 building this past summer and we are continuing this 4-year process to repoint and seal the bricks. One side is complete and another scheduled to be done this summer. The final two sides will be completed within the next few years.

Repairs and replacement of the roof over the first floor wing is complete. Windows have been replaced in the office, main hall, and in one of the first floor classrooms. The ceilings on the first floor hallway and upper stairways have fresh coats of paint!

A new phone system has been approved and will be installed over April break. This upgrade was made possible by the generosity of the guests at last year's auction who donated the seed money to make this needed system improvement become a reality.

NEASC Update: Planning for Our Future

In July of 2024, St. Brigid School submitted the 2-year progress report to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) for accreditation. The report was accepted without reservation.

The commission had 4 major recommendations in the decennial report in: planning, technology, individual education plans and professional development. The commission commended the care in which these and other areas of the Strategic Plan have been addressed.

Technology upgrades include Chromebooks for all students, MacBooks for teachers, smartboards in classrooms, and a plan to continue rotating new Chromebooks in as old ones phase out.

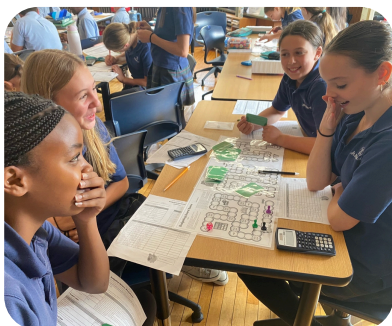
The process for identifying student needs has been assessed and careful review of applicant IEP's have been instrumental in determining our ability to serve students who apply or are currently enrolled.

Ongoing professional development opportunities with Math Specialist Tracy Zager and Mindfulness Educator Bethany Cunningham are providing our teachers with excellent strategies that are improving the experience for the students.

In addition to the major recommendations, the school stewards the money received from the annual appeal, fundraisers, sponsors, and in-kind gifts in a way that will allow improvements to the programs and education. The careful management of funds will also ensure we have the facilities in which to operate.

Moving forward, we strive to continue working on improvements in curriculum, instructional practices, student experience, facilities and upgrades. The next NEASC review will be in April 2027.

Letter from the Principal



"The mission of St. Brigid School is to educate the whole child in a welcoming Catholic community, providing students with a strong foundation for life".

Dear Friends of St. Brigid School,

The publication of our yearly newsletter always causes me to pause to thank God and all the people who enable us to live our mission as an educational institution and faith community. Long ago, one of my academic and spiritual mentors stated that all decisions made about our school must first pass the test of mission. This test of mission requires that we reflect on why we want to do something, how it will serve all members of the school community, and how we will make it happen. This test of mission is a filter that focuses all decisions made at St. Brigid School and helps us navigate the rapidly changing world we all live in.

This newsletter shows that faithfulness and adhering to our mission are formulas for success and provide a top-notch experience for those who choose to be part of our community. This community includes our students, their families, teachers, staff, administrators, and all who give their time, talent, and treasure to assist St. Brigid School in providing a foundation for life rooted in the gospel message of Jesus.

Our school community has deep roots, but as you read the remainder of this newsletter, I hope you see that our school is intent on growing all of its programming and formation efforts. It takes many forms of support from all constituencies, including yours, to make this mission-driven effort a reality for all who enter our doors and are transformed for life.

Thanks for joining us on this mission-driven journey! Your involvement and support are invaluable to us.

Sincerely,

Bill Burke
Principal





Spiritual Animator Position Created to Inspire Students, Parents, and Staff to Enliven Our Faith

With fewer families applying for subsidy from Our Lady of Hope Parish, an investment was made by Fr. Sullivan to allocate some of that funding from the parish to invest in position that would help to bring more faith into the school community and assist in strengthening the relationship between the school and the parish.

After a long search, Barbara Vassallo, known to students as Ms. V joined our staff in the position of Spiritual Animator. With 42 years of experience in religious education, Barbara is a wonderful addition to the staff.

She began her journey with us by connecting with the students, teachers, and parents to gather information on the hopes and needs of our community in relation to faith life.

With this information, she began planning and organizing service projects, classroom activities and educational initiatives which brings faith to life both in school and in the world around us. Ms. V. focuses on helping students deepen their understanding of the Mass and learn liturgical music, collaborating with Andy Happel, our music teacher. Together, they inspire students to engage more fully and participate in our weekly school Mass.

Ms. V. visits with the preschool students, who call their time with her "Bible Class". Her goal is to introduce faith concepts to our youngest students, so they can participate in our weekly Mass. She teaches them songs, reads Bible stories and reinforces information through crafts.

Ms. V. works with our older students to help them bring the faith to others. Through collaborations with Park Danforth, The Deering Pavillion, and St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen, she is providing opportunities for our students to form intergenerational relationships, give their time, and serve others with love and justice.

She brings elements of our faith to life daily in the school by engaging students in projects they create in her weekly afterschool Service Club. She helps with All Saint's Day Celebrations, incorporates Mary on the Mantle during Advent, and assists with the Nativity and Epiphany. Stay tuned for her work with the middle school students as they are preparing to present the Living Stations of the Cross.

Ms. V.'s role extends beyond supporting our students. She is also dedicated to guiding our parents and staff on their own Faith journey. She currently hosts the Library of Faith Book Club, which meets weekly to discuss books that relate to parenting and faith. She organized a special presentation called "Our Faith Journey as a Family" and plays a vital role in fostering connections between families within the school and the parish community.

Events planned in conjunction with the parish life coordinator and the Knights of Columbus further help to bring unity to the school and parish. We are excited for the future as we bring the Catholic faith to life with the help of this new position!



Middle School Practical Skills

Several years ago, there was a story on the local news about the need for schools to teach financial literacy. Teachers here at St. Brigid School have been teaching that for years, beginning as early as kindergarten!

And while we think it is important for young people to have money sense, we also recognize that if we are going to truly prepare them for life, there are other important things they should learn.

This is how our Practical Skills Class came to be. In 7th and 8th grade, students learn real life skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

From learning how to read a recipe and cook, to mastering basic sewing skills like threading a needle and making simple stitches, to managing household tasks, securing a job, and budgeting, our students gain valuable hands-on experience. These eye-opening lessons spark important conversations and equip them with the practical skills they need to navigate the challenges they will soon face.

We are fortunate to have guest speakers, parent volunteers, and alumni who come in to give real life insight and training.

Mrs. Green, who has been teaching this class since its inception, has a knack for inspiring students and making the class fun and very worthwhile.

In addition to the highlighted subject areas, students also learn the following skills:

- Financial Management
- Junior Achievement
- Resume and Interview Skills
- Manners and Etiquette



CPR & First Aid

For the past few years, Ella Couture, a 2017 alumnus, who is a current EMT and senior Nursing student at St. Joseph's College of Maine has returned to Mrs. Green's Practical Skills class to teach students basic first aid, hands-only CPR and how to use our AED. Ella remembers this class and recognizes how much it prepared her and her peers for many things they have now personally encountered as young adults.

Plant Propagation

Did you know that plants can aid in keeping our air healthy? Our middle school students not only know this, but they have learned how to grow plants by propagating already healthy plants.

Mrs. Green has introduced students to terrariums, houseplants, veggies from seed and lots of other green things in between.



Cooking

This is for sure the tastiest section of Practical Skills class. Students learn to read recipes and then try their hand at creating delicious food for to share with the class.

From savory to sweet, the aromas fill not only the classroom but the school! And it's a bonus if they enjoy it so much that they make cook for their family at home!



Sewing by Hand and Machine

A lost art? Maybe. But how great a skill is it to be able to sew a button back on, or fix hole in a seam?

Students learn to thread a needle and make basic stitches. They also learn to sew on a sewing machine!

The students have used their skills to update the costumes for the Living Stations of the Cross, donated items to organizations, and made many things. Their enthusiasm for this skill is so fun to watch!



Professional Development: Mindfulness and Math



Teachers and staff are lifelong learners, and while they are required to engage in a set number of hours to keep their teaching credentials up to date, the trainings are often above and beyond their regular workday. In response to the goals of the strategic plan, the past two years have allowed teachers and staff to receive ongoing professional development trainings in math and mindfulness.

Last year Annalise Record worked with our teachers to provide math enrichment. Bethany Cunningham, a longtime supporter of our school, has provided teachers with tools that focus on mindfulness and collaboration between teachers, staff and students to add to the development of the whole person.

This year we are happy to have Tracy Zagar working with teachers on math and Bethany returning for more mindfulness.



Tracy Zagar, Math Coach

Tracy is contracted with St. Brigid elementary math teachers for the 2024-2025 year. Each grade level has met with Tracy three to five times throughout the school year.

She provides helpful feedback for teachers to engage students in meaningful math conversations. By facilitating grade level teachers, Tracy encourages problem solving through the understanding of math through the study of relationships, patterns, and algorithms. With the help of Tracy, teachers gain the ability to let students learn through observation, prediction, and collaboration.



Bethany Cunningham, Mindfulness Educator

Bethany's program is customized to provide skills that strengthen classroom communication and to use social emotional learning to improve academic learning and a develop a more connected school community.

Our middle school students learn the importance of mindful communication, collaboration, stress management and working through difficult emotions in productive ways.

The younger students gain tools for self-regulation, calming down when they are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or over stimulated, as well as active listening and mindful communication. Teachers and students benefit from the tools Bethany provides.

Extracurricular Activities

Aftercare and Enrichment Programs



Despite the toll of the church bells at 3:00 pm signifying the end of our official school day, our campus remains bustling as students head to our aftercare and enrichment programs. Aftercare students have the opportunity to interact in a structured environment with students and staff they might not see during the regular school day. St. Brigid School serves students in grades preschool through middle school, many of whom participate in aftercare.

Throughout the school year, there are various opportunities for students to participate in Enrichment Programs hosted by staff, parent volunteers, or outside organizations. Some of the highlighted clubs from the 2024-2025 school year include: Homework Club, Running Club, Girls Who Code, Creative Writing Club, Yearbook Club, ConnectKids, Baking Club, and Community Service Team. This is an ever-growing program and Director, Sarah Wagner, is dedicated to collaborating with others and staying attuned to the students' interests in order to introduce new programs that enhance the overall student experience.

Two years ago, in response to a need for our families, we piloted a Summer Camp which runs from the time we end school until other summer camps open. We are excited to be in our third summer of offering this to our families with students entering kindergarten through 5th grade. Campers enjoy going on field trips, playing outdoors, and interacting with special guests! Past favorites have included visits from magician Peter Boie, Snowology 207, the Portland Fire Department, Mad Science, Fournier's Karate, and Spark's Ark.

This year, Sarah has grown the summer program further by including a total of 7 weeks of Summer Camp for incoming pre-k students! This is another way to bridge the gap for childcare while providing a safe and comfortable environment for our students over break.

Our Aftercare and Enrichment Programming continues to thrive as we adapt to families' needs!

Athletics

Athletics at St. Brigid plays an important role in our student experience and in the development of our young people. We have middle school sports programs in the fall, winter and spring consisting of a total of 14 teams. We are also joined by Holy Cross and St. James in a few sports and are known as SMC-Southern Maine Catholic.

When we don't have enough players for a sport, Brooke Reid, our Athletic Director works with area middle schools in the SMMSAC league to form Co-op teams so our students can play together in sports they love.

Our Middle School Sports include Boys & Girls Soccer, Field Hockey, Co-ed Cross Country, Boys & Girls Basketball, Co-ed Indoor Track, Baseball, Softball, Boys & Girls Lacrosse, Outdoor Track, and Volleyball.

St. Brigid School also has a basketball program for our Pre-K through Grade 3 students. Offering these sports helps cultivate a welcoming environment for our kids to try new sports and excel at their favorites. Some of the skills these athletes learn are good sportsmanship, teamwork, respect, and how to support and encourage each other. These skills will follow them throughout their athletic career and life.

Our sports programs would not be possible without our volunteer parents who give their time to coaching our students. Our programs successes are linked to those coaches.

Coaches, we are grateful for all you do!



Pre-School Program Expansion

Due to an overwhelming number of families seeking a Catholic education for their children, the 2024-2025 school year found us in a position to expand our entry level program!

We welcomed a second classroom for our preschool program, which is open to incoming three year old children. What began as a part time program 10 years ago, has become a highly sought after early childhood program, which is licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Veteran teacher and alumnus of St. Brigid School, Emily Haley, returned for her third year working in this program as lead teacher in one classroom, and we welcomed Kayla Fessenden, mother to a current 8th grade student at SBS, to lead the new classroom. Nicole Napolitano and Nicholas Zabenko rotate between the two classrooms as teacher aides.

Together, the lead teachers and their aides bring experience, nurturing leadership, quality care, and the social, emotional, academic, faith, and physical development skills that set the groundwork for a successful educational journey for the students as they continue to grow.

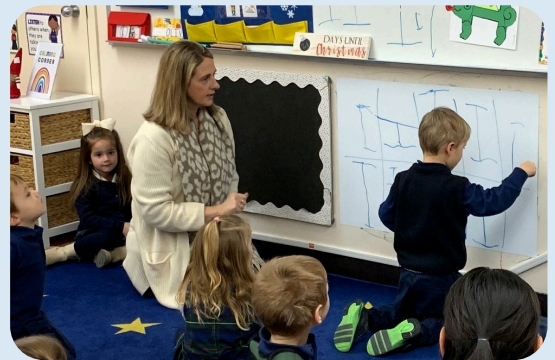
A day in the preschool program offers students a balance of play time both inside and out where they can practice body regulation, develop social skills, learn to sit in a group, take turns, actively listen, and care for one another.

Interactive play and academic activities focus on fine motor skills, creativity, following directions, as well as academic skills including letter and number identification, handwriting development, color recognition, rhyming, sounds, and so much more!

In addition to their busy days, our preschool students also participate in art, music, gym, Spanish, religion, and weekly Mass. Weekly interaction with older "buddy" students welcomes these young children gently into the larger school community. They bring a sense of joy and wonder to everyone who has the privilege of interacting with them on any given day!

If you are interested in learning more about this program, visit our website at www.sbrigid.com or contact Ellen Couture, Director of Admissions at ellen.couture@portlanddiocese.org

It is not too early to be added to the waitlist!



Development Update

"The Shirt" & SBS Apparel



"The Shirt" is a tradition that unifies us as a community. Each year we use a different quote or tag line that speaks to who we are as a school.

This year we used the quote "Dare to be Great Today", inspiring everyone to do their best and be great every day. It's a privilege to be able to give our community the opportunity to come together in small but significant ways.

It's amazing to see our apparel and "The Shirt" outside of school. Our winter hats are the most popular item we sell, and this year we went with "hunter orange" which was a hit!

Annual Appeal



The Annual Appeal began in November and Giving Tuesday in December gave us a \$2,700 bump that was greatly appreciated!

The money is marked for the continuing work on our 1915 school building, where maintenance is needed to ensure we can safely occupy this historic space for years to come. While some work has been completed, the remainder of this project is expected to cost \$150,000.

As of January 31, 2025, we have raised \$50,000!

We are excited to progress toward reaching our goal of \$75,000 for this year. Thank you for your support and prayers.

Harvest Fair

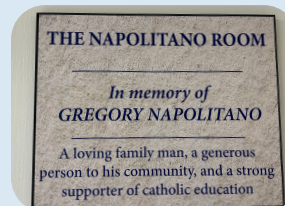


The annual Harvest Fair, which is our longest running fundraising event, didn't disappoint! It is one of the biggest fundraisers in terms of profit, volunteers and background work.

Mascots, games, activities, and shopping, along with the ever-popular Buckets of Fun entertained guests all day!

Our wreath sale and Charleston Wrap fundraiser, added to the proceeds of this event and helped us exceed our \$15,000 goal! This event net \$24,500.

Classroom Naming



Our classrooms are the heart of St. Brigid School. It is very special to be able to give meaning to our student's spaces.

The opportunity to name a classroom allows donors to honor a family member, special person, or organization. This naming right is for life.

One of our new additions to the classroom naming collection is the Napolitano Room, honoring Greg Napolitano, who sadly passed away in 2022.

Another new addition is The Lombard Room, also referred to as The Constitution Room. This is named by a former St. Brigid parent. In addition to the plaque, images of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Declaration of Independence enhance social studies in this classroom.

To learn more, contact Brooke Reid, Development Director at brooke.reid@portlanddiocese.org or 207-797-7073

New Staff & Roles

We extend a warm welcome to those who joined the St. Brigid staff this year!



Sydney Giroux
Grade 2 Teacher



Kayla Fessenden
Pre-School Lead Teacher



Stacey Turkington
Physical Education Teacher



Kristen Connelly
Pre-K Aide



Andy Happel
Music Teacher



Nicole Napolitano
Pre-School Aide



Nick Zabenko
Pre-School Aide



Barbara Vassallo
Spiritual Animator



Jared Valenzuela
Pre-K Aide

We are pleased to announce the following staff changes:

- Alice Peterson moved from Pre-K Aide to Grade 2 Teacher
 - Sandra Jacobs moved from Kindergarten to Grade 1 Teacher
 - Jennifer Goodine moved to Grade 4 - Grade 8 Spanish Teacher
-

Upcoming Events

Walk-a-Thon



The Walk-A-Thon is a new fundraiser inspired by our Jump-A-Thon. This event is a way to promote health and wellness while students participate in raising money for their school. It will take place March 10th -14th, 2025. The fundraising goal is \$20,000. The revenue will continue to fund the ongoing capital improvements on the 1915 building.

Students will challenge themselves to take as many steps as possible during their PE class. There are many prizes for individuals and classes. Prizes include JBL speakers, Beats Headphones, Fitbits and more! Thank you to our amazing sponsors for helping us present this event and reach our fundraising goal.

Online Auction & Celebration

Our annual online auction is one of our most prize driven and interactive fundraisers of the year. Participants will have a full week to bid on great items! Tell your friends, share the link and help us grow our audience! Join us online from April 25th-May 2nd on www.biddingforgood.com

After the online auction closes, we will have a celebration to recognize the hard work done behind the scenes and to share how much the online auction raised for the school. If you don't win, or didn't participate in the auction but would like to make a donation, there will be a paddle raise item at the celebration. Donations are warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Join us in person to celebrate on May 3rd at 6:00 pm in the Craig and Dolly Foster Gymnasium. The theme of the celebration is the Kentucky Derby! Please visit our website or scan the QR Code at the bottom of this page for more details.



All Catholic Schools Reunion



The 3rd annual All Catholic Schools reunion is becoming a beautiful tradition that brings people from all generations together! Present and former Catholic Elementary Schools including St. Josephs, St. Patrick's, Cathedral, St. Dominics, Sacred Heart, Holy Cross and St. Brigid School will be represented at the reunion. Attendees and alumni from all years are invited!

Please join us June 13th at St. Brigid School at 5:30PM to mingle with old friends, tour the school, and enjoy light refreshments.

RSVP by visiting our website: www.sbrigids.com

Auction



A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported St. Brigid School, helping us kick off an incredible start to the school year! Our event sponsors, the companies who purchase gym banners and in-kind donations mean the world to us. Without the support of our loyal sponsors, wonderful families, and everyone who supports us, we would not be able to exist, grow, or improve. Our future is brighter because of all of you!



Brooke Reid • Director of Development • brooke.reid@portlanddiocese.org



We Love to Make You Smile

Dr. Chris "Topher" Pochebit

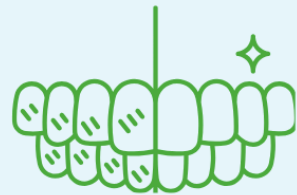
2004 graduate of St. Brigid and 2008 graduate of Cheverus. Graduated dental school at UNE. Dr. Pochebit is a family dentist and finds joy in all aspects of dentistry. With a gentle approach and a commitment to patient comfort, Dr. P has built a reputation for making dental visits a positive experience. Outside of his professional life, Dr. Pochebit is a devoted family man. He is married to his wonderful wife, Brittany, and together they have three sons: Daniel, Zachary, and Ryan. Dr. P enjoys spending quality time with his family on Little Sebago along with their yellow lab, Franklin. He is an avid golfer and hockey player and is currently the team dentist for the Maine Mariners hockey team.



**Cosmetic Dental
Care**



**Comprehensive
Family Dentistry**



**Adult Invisible
Braces**



**Dental
Implants**



Crowns in a day

Accepting New Patients!



207-878-3100



9 Sanborn St
Portland, ME



info@portlandnorthdental.com



www.portlandnorthdental.com

Thank you to our Corporate Sponsors!

Gym Banners

Benchmark Construction
Bruno's Pasta Company
Bruno's Restaurant
Cheverus High School
Conroy-Tully Walker Funeral Home
Dale Rand Printing
Legends Rest Taproom
Miss Portland Diner
MR Brewer LLC
Snowology
The Club at Riverside
Waypoint Brokers

Acadia Lending
Alliance Physical Therapy
Cport Credit Union
C. Skin Co.
Gowen Power
Lockton
Mainway Landscaping & Excavation
Milliken, Perkins, Brunelle
Nick Guerette Properties
Play It Again Sports
Raymond James
Varney Agency



Harvest Fair

Aspen Dental
Northstar Mortgage
Peaks Island Fuel
Port Harbor Marina
Portland North Dental
Raymond James
Servpro
Solomon Edwards
The Club at Riverside
Town and Country FCU
Westbrook Deer Processing

Walk-A-Thon

Cheverus High School
Meg & Co
Play It Again Sports
Rose's Italian Restaurant
The Dump Guys
Varney Insurance

2024 Auction

Conroy-Tully Walker Funeral Home
Lockton
Pape Chevrolet
RLC Engineering
Wicklow Custom Homes

We would like to recognize the following honor and memorial contributions to the Annual Appeal

In Honor of Craig and Dolly Foster

In Honor of Lucy & Lennie Mullen

In memory of Patrick Galligan

Annual Appeal



Alumni Event RSVP



St. Brigid School
Excellence Faith Community

695 Stevens Ave. Portland, ME 04103 207-797-7073