



# Creating a play structure for all students at Thomas D'Arcy McGee

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Recreational activity in elementary school is an important part of the day and it normally takes place at recess with other students. For many years Thomas D'Arcy McGee students have been playing on a large green field on school property at recess.

However, some students in the Developmental Education (DE) program use the assistance of wheelchairs or walkers and it is more difficult for them to play with other students in the school yard.

Former Thomas D'Arcy McGee Principal, Deborah Langdon and the school community decided that their school was in dire need of a play structure that would allow for all the students to play and socialize together on school premises. As a result, Thomas D'Arcy McGee Catholic school started to develop a plan to build an inclusive play structure on school property.





An inclusive play structure can be defined as a playground that can be used by the entire student population including students from the DE program. Part of the process of developing the plan for the structure was asking for ideas from the school community. Students were also asked to draw their ideas for an inclusive play structure, which were touching and thoughtful, the theme of inclusivity was implemented in the ideas the students put together.

The fundraising for the inclusive playground took just over a year to finish. The fundraising for the project was organized by a sub-committee of the Thomas D'Arcy McGee School Council. Fundraising activities included hosting a spaghetti dinner and auction, hosting a valentine's dance and raffling off priority seats to the annual Christmas concert. On top of the fundraising, Thomas D'Arcy McGee was awarded an Enabling Accessibilities Grant for the inclusive play structure project. Combining the money from the grant and the fundraising, the school raised over \$80,000 in just over a year's time. It is truly amazing to see a school of only 175 students make a commitment and raise over \$80,000.

The inclusive play structure at Thomas D'Arcy McGee consists of a large ship with a ramp that will allow students in walkers and wheelchairs access to play on the ship. The playground includes several activities and musical elements that are arranged around the perimeter of the structure to allow all students easy entree. All parts of the inclusive playground are positioned to allow for free access and movement, whether on foot or in a wheelchair.





The official mission of Thomas D’Arcy McGee Catholic school is to create and maintain a faith based educational environment which ensures that all children reach their highest academic achievement possible. Adding an inclusive playground to school property is a major step in making the school an improved educational environment which allows all students including those enrolled in the DE program to fully participate in recess with other students.

Looking at how Thomas D’Arcy McGee added an inclusive playground to their school, it shows people that a small school of 175 students can execute a major project to improve the school facilities. This school managed to raise over \$80,000 in just over a year’s time, this example can be used to inspire future school projects across the province.

Now that the inclusive play structure has been added to school property, the project continues. Led by current Principal, Kim Hutchinson, the school community is now fundraising and searching for grants to have a rubberized surface installed to allow for wheelchairs and walkers to easily access all parts of the structure.

Located in Beacon Hill North in Ottawa, [Thomas D’Arcy McGee](#) is a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6 school. Thomas D’Arcy McGee Catholic school first opened its doors in 1969, and the school currently hosts 175 students.





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