

White Paper: St. John's-Kilmarnock School Vision Statement

Prepared for SJK Board of Governors

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When Adam Dietrich informed his fellow SJK students they were in for a special school lunch, they had no idea they were about to become part of a process that would link the classroom to the world. Creating a global microcosm out of a noisy school lunchroom, Adam distributed food to the haves and the have-nots: pizza for the lucky ones, dirty water and stale bread – or nothing – to those not-so-lucky ones. Was it fair? No. But it was real – the real world into which Adam, a passionate advocate for human rights, will one day venture.

The Human Rights Lunch wasn't just a few hours of experiential learning; it was part of a process that began in a classroom teeming with creative possibilities. Encouraged by his media-savvy teacher, Adam pitched the story to CBC Radio's Outfront. On the day of the lunch, two CBC producers recorded the events and, with Adam, created a documentary that was aired nationally. Passion led to thought. Thought led to research. Research led even further: to action and, if only on a small scale, change. An academic assignment, nurtured within an environment that encourages self-confidence and innovation, was transformed into a meaningful and possibly life-changing experience.

This is the world of possibilities in which the teachers, students and parents of St. John's-Kilmarnock School choose to live. Nestled in the heart of Canada's Technology Triangle, SJK shares a dynamic education landscape with four institutions of higher learning and embraces a regional culture that exemplifies a commitment to research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

SJK students are part of a school community committed to building a better world. Daily, monthly, yearly, snapshots of school life reveal that the Human Rights Lunch was just one event in a continuous cavalcade of creative, passionate, committed students, teachers, parents and leaders.

Snapshot: The SJK gym is packed with students, teachers, judges and interested visitors for the annual Science Fair. For Jonathan Tomkun, this is the first step toward the regional and national competitions, where he not only receives awards but also has the opportunity to meet other young scientists. Science and technology move beyond the SJK curriculum into the larger world, when seven students (a remarkable number for one school) attend summer sessions at Shad Valley, an innovative leadership program focusing on science, technology and entrepreneurship. The Memorial University team, which includes SJK student Peter Wawzonek, wins the top prize for their TV program "The Great Canadian Energy Diet."

Snapshot: SJK student Shaun Zanin pursues both grade 12 and university credits (at the University of Guelph) while completing his last two years of secondary school. A cooperative work term at the Fergus office of MPP Mike Chong gives Shaun the opportunity to work intensely on issues of local politics. An upcoming cooperative experience will take him to Queen's Park. Already thinking of future university studies, some of Shaun's grade twelve

colleagues are preparing for Advanced Placement examinations, a globally recognized academic program that provides secondary school students with the opportunity to study and learn first year university curricular content while still in high school.

Snapshot: When *The Poem Repair Shop* hits the airwaves, the announcers behind the microphone are SJK students, encouraged and led by English teacher and media mastermind Adrian Hoad-Reddick. This program, a weekly live radio show broadcast on University of Guelph's Community Radio station CFRU, is just one of Mr. Hoad-Reddick's many initiatives, all designed to explore creativity in writing, speaking and media. Students attend a half day "Writers' Sweatshop" and build ideas to use while working with a professional poet as part of the Writer-In-Residence program. A monthly student newspaper is planned, written, edited and managed by a student editor and her staff. Under Mr. Hoad-Reddick's guidance, four students attend the George Brigg's Technology Symposium to demonstrate Microsoft Word macros they programmed for use by teachers in marking student papers. The conference organizer offers the students his business card and asks to be informed when the prototype is ready for distribution.

Snapshot: Months of rehearsals, including weekends, lead up to the performance of the award-winning play by Canadian Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Good Night, Desdemona, Good Morning, Juliet*. For three nights, the cast and crew weave their theatrical magic on a professional stage at the Waterloo Entertainment Centre. Director and SJK Drama and English teacher David Newman borrows costumes from the Stratford Festival, and during rehearsals, he invites a professional acting colleague to instruct the cast in the choreography of sword fighting. The performances are further enhanced by the set, designed and supervised by SJK student Kate Hoad-Reddick, who had recently taken part in a week-long academic enrichment program at the University of Waterloo, specializing in set design.

Snapshot: Visiting Japanese teaching assistant, Ms. Yukiko Nakanishi, stands in front of a grade five classroom and explains how to create the Japanese version of a Valentine's Day card. She has already connected this class with pen pals in her native Japan, and as the students ask "Miss Yuki" to show them how to write their greetings in Japanese characters, she patiently fills the whiteboard with phrases they can copy onto their cards. In a few months, the students will receive replies from their friends on the other side of the world.

Snapshot: Sixteen triumphant field hockey players link arms on a cold, windy Toronto playing field and celebrate the OFSAA gold medals placed around their necks moments earlier. Competing against much larger schools, the young women on the SJK team are fuelled by the long-term vision of their coaches and inspired by their own passion for the game. Their cheering parents stand in the background, celebrating an achievement that includes their own months and sometimes years of dedicated support.

Snapshot: Another group of athletes, this time young wrestlers, led by coaches who value achievement balanced by sportsmanship, welcome a visiting team from Guelph's John F. Ross School to the SJK gym. Gracious in victory and defeat, the SJK wrestlers and their fans receive a letter of thanks from the visiting coach who commends them for both their sportsmanship and their courtesy. "It is always easy to cheer for 'your guy' but I distinctly remember hearing loud

applause even when it was one of my athletes who won,” he writes. “Thank you for giving my team the opportunity to come to your school and have such a positive experience.”

Snapshot: A grade seven class spends weeks collecting food items for donation to the Guelph Food Bank. A few weeks before Christmas, the students spend a Tuesday afternoon transporting, unloading, and sorting 2968 lbs. of donations into food bank barrels. The experience “really opened our eyes,” the class reports. “All in all, the trip reminded us what this season is about.”

Snapshot: Led by teacher Rob Spackman, a group of students travels to Nepal for several weeks of physically demanding trekking on their way to Dauleshwory, a small school in the Himalayas. They bring donations from the SJK community, money that will buy books, classroom supplies, furniture, musical instruments, sports equipment and building materials for a school that struggles to exist in the uncertain social climate of the region. This is not the first time Mr. Spackman has organized such a trip, and because he knows the physical and mental challenges facing the participants, he expects them all to undertake rigorous physical training for the high-altitude trek. “The people of this area are very poor,” he writes in the school newsletter, “and often a child’s school uniform is the only complete set of clothes he or she may own.”

Snapshot: A grade three student produces her own class newspaper and charges her classmates 25 cents per issue, all of which is donated to the Humane Society.

St. John’s-Kilmarnock, the school of choice in Canada’s Technology Triangle, ignites the passion in students today...to build a better world tomorrow.