

Growing DISCIPLES



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
DIOCESE of DES MOINES



Issue No. 2 | Spring 2022

WITH WIN TIME, EVERYONE WINS

What I Need or WIN time is a flexible period of time incorporated into the daily school schedule where extra help or enrichment opportunities are available for students. In addition, WIN time fosters student autonomy and goal setting, creating a learner-centered environment where students proactively address challenges with teacher support or collaborative learning.

In the Diocese of Des Moines, seven schools, including Holy Trinity, Sacred Heart, St. Francis of Assisi, Shelby County Catholic School, St. Luke the Evangelist, St. Pius X, St. Theresa, and Christ the King incorporate WIN time to enhance student learning. This results-oriented, data-driven approach to learning was implemented with input from faculty at each participating school, making WIN time a rewarding experience for all. Moreover, while individual teachers retain ownership over their classroom's WIN time, a partnership among faculty is encouraged to ensure every student receives academic support based on individual needs.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the impact of WIN time on student outcomes.



Holy Trinity, Des Moines

SAVE THE DATE!

In honor of Bishop Joensen's passion for education, we invite you to join us for the inaugural Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools on August 27, 2022, in Indianola, Iowa.

This event unites the entire Diocese of Des Moines community in celebration of the life-changing impact our faith-centered education has provided for more than 120 years.

During the event, the diocese will recognize special honorees, educators, administrators, and volunteers for their impact on our Catholic schools. Click [here](#) to nominate a Catholic school educator, administrator, or volunteer.



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE LAUNCHES RECRUITMENT VIDEO

To showcase our students and faculty and highlight the Catholic school difference, the Catholic Schools Office partnered with videographer Pete Soby to create a new recruitment video. The video launched online to kick off Catholic Schools Week and gives prospective families and supporters of Catholic education a peek inside our schools.

Click [here](#) to view the video online and share it with your family and friends.

WE WANT YOU! MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

Catholic Schools and the teachers who work there make a big difference in our students' lives. We invite our parents, alumni and other members of our Diocese of Des Moines community to consider making a difference as a substitute teacher. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.





St. Malachy, Creston

STUDENTS DISCOVER MEDIA TALENTS AT ST. MALACHY IN CRESTON

Middle School students at St. Malachy Catholic School in Creston are getting a lesson in media arts with the school's new Film4Faith Club. The club formed out of a need to offer live-stream events during the pandemic and has grown to include students interested in creating quality videos and live-stream events.

"My parents in Kansas City were thoroughly impressed with the quality of the streaming," recalled Jennifer Simmons, school administrator. "I thought we probably have some students here that would enjoy learning how to film and stream events."

Parishioner Steve Heffern was recording and streaming the parish's Masses. Simmons approached him about serving as the club moderator and involving St. Malachy students in the process of filming and streaming school and parish events. Heffern was on board, and the Film4Faith Club was born in the fall of 2020. All St. Malachy students in grades 7-8 are welcome to join the club. Currently, thirteen students participate as members of the Film4Faith Club.

Children are innately curious about the world and open to acquiring new skills. Extracurricular program offerings like the Film4Faith Club help students discover their unique talents and interests through experiential learning. Additionally, students can share the skills gained through these extracurricular offerings to support the entire school community.



STUDENTS DISCOVER MEDIA TALENTS AT ST. MALACHY IN CRESTON (CONT.)

"This club reaches those students who have a love and passion for something other than sports and music," said Simmons. "It's another outlet to get involved and learn new skills, to wear a team shirt and represent St. Malachy both at school, church, and Creston schools. We are part of a bigger partnership, and their part in it matters."

The club was modeled after a "train the trainer" learning model. Heffern initially trained students, but now master students help their classmates who are new to the club learn to record, edit and produce the videos. The students have become adept at working the equipment; they now create the weekly Masses without adult assistance, although Heffern is always nearby to offer assistance if needed.

Since the club's inception, students have taken part in recording and streaming weekend Masses, which involves a five-six camera set up, soundboard, and computer. Students connect to St. Malachy's YouTube to stream the video and adjust sound and camera choices throughout the mass. The student film crew also recorded two musicals at Creston High School and created social media video ads to promote Catholic Schools Week.

Click [here](#) to listen to an interview about the Faith and Film Club on Iowa Catholic Radio. Click [here](#) to check out the St. Malachy YouTube Channel videos produced by students.

U.S. Navy Commander Quintin James discusses the displacement of the water with students from Dowling Catholic.



USS IOWA SUBMARINE COMMANDER VISITS ST. THERESA

U.S. Navy Commander Quintin James of the USS Iowa submarine briefly became a teacher at St. Theresa Catholic School in Des Moines during a visit to Iowa on Jan. 18. James came to see the school's SeaPerch project, one of many STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs at St. Theresa Catholic School.

Faculty member Ronda McCarthy discovered the SeaPerch program while attending a teacher training at the U.S. Naval Academy. As a result, St. Theresa was the first school in Iowa to implement the SeaPerch program.

Several of McCarthy's former students who competed nationally with their SeaPerch robot returned to the elementary school from Dowling Catholic High School to meet the submarine commander and show him how they operate a SeaPerch.

Since 2011, St. Theresa Catholic School has offered an integrated STEM education that is recognized locally, nationally, and internationally. Students in all grades experience STEM-centered learning that caters to learners of all academic abilities by working collaboratively using hands-on methods to solve real-world problems.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Commander James' visit to the school.



MORE AFFORDABLE THAN YOU MAY THINK

Considering a Catholic school for your child but concerned about the cost of tuition? Catholic education is more affordable than you may think.

Families with a demonstrated financial need may be eligible for tuition assistance from the Catholic Tuition Organization (CTO) to help make Catholic education affordable. Providing families in need with assistance is at the very heart of our mission and no family is turned away for the inability to pay full tuition at our schools. If you desire a Catholic education for your child, we will help you find a way.

Every year the CTO provides tuition assistance to eligible families whose children attend Catholic schools in the Diocese of Des Moines.

CTO is a charitable organization that receives voluntary cash contributions from Iowa taxpayers, and then allocates those funds in the form of tuition assistance to eligible families who attend accredited nonpublic schools. . Last year, 40 percent of Diocese of Des Moines Catholic school students received tuition assistance from CTO.

CTO is now accepting applications for the 2022-2023 school year. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply before the April 1 deadline.



Dowling Catholic students Christopher Pierson, Zach Harnden, Mackenzie Royal and Charlotte James represented the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools at the National School Choice Week Legislative Breakfast on January 27.

SCHOOL CHOICE LEGISLATION IN IOWA

School choice directs public education funds to follow students to the schools or services that best meet their educational needs. The concept of school choice is hardly new, with one of the earliest forms of school choice traced back to Vermont in 1869. School choice programs are legal, and the U.S. Supreme Court has found in numerous cases that public funding "can be allocated to a family to spend on a child's K-12 schooling, including for faith-based education," (EdChoice, 2021). School choice programs exist in more than half of U.S. states, but school choice legislation is poorly understood. Learn more and get the facts about school choice in Iowa [here](#).

IOWA 529 PLANS

Did you know that you can set aside funds now to help pay for your child's Catholic school education with an Iowa 529 plan? A 529 plan is a type of investment account you can use to save for qualified education expenses, including K-12 Catholic school tuition. In addition, with a 529 plan, you can save on taxes while you save for your child's or grandchild's education. Click [here](#) to learn more.





DIOCESAN SCHOOLS WISH A FOND FAREWELL TO TWO BELOVED ADMINISTRATORS

Ellen Stemler, principal at St. Theresa Catholic School, will retire at the end of this school year after more than 32 years in Catholic education. Stemler grew up in Des Moines and is the product of Catholic education, having attended both Holy Trinity Catholic School and Dowling Catholic High School. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Iowa State University and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University. During her tenure with St. Theresa Catholic School, she led several STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiatives to position the school as a leader in STEM education. Her efforts earned the school local, regional and national recognition for its PK-8 integrated STEM education.

"I have loved every moment of this amazing journey because of the people. I have been blessed to watch children learn, overcome obstacles, succeed, and soar! I have worked with the best educators and staff," exclaimed Stemler. "The opportunities given to me by St. Theresa and the diocese have been an important part of my life and for that, I am very grateful and humbled."

Stemler and her husband Denny are the proud parents of four children who attended Catholic schools in Des Moines. She is also the proud grandmother of nine - one of whom is the fourth generation student at Dowling Catholic.



St. Pius X, Urbandale

DIOCESAN SCHOOLS WISH A FOND FAREWELL TO TWO BELOVED ADMINISTRATORS (CONT.)

Also retiring is Mary Jo Kever, of St. Pius X School in Urbandale. A product of Catholic education and a Dowling Catholic graduate, Kever has spent 38 years in Catholic education. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Iowa State University, a Master's Degree in Teaching and Learning from Drake University, and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Drake University. Adept at curriculum design and faculty development, Kever promotes excellence at St. Pius by integrating strong curriculum instruction into a Christ-centered environment for the benefit of all students.

"I have enjoyed getting to know so many wonderful students and families over the years," exclaimed Kever. "The friendships I have made with colleagues and families have enriched my life beyond the school walls. The Catholic school community in the Des Moines Diocese is very special."

Kever is the proud mother of two daughters who attended Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools and graduated from Dowling Catholic. She also has a school-aged grandson who currently attends St. Pius, making him the third generation of her family to attend a Catholic school in the diocese.

The Diocese of Des Moines is grateful for the many years of dedicated service to Catholic education by Stemler and Kever, and we wish them well in their future endeavors.



St. Anthony staff member Luis Montero assists a student.

A REGIONAL MODEL OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Historically, Catholic schools have served as a direct ministry of the parish, with each school operating as an independent entity. However, this traditional parish model for Catholic schools does not consistently deliver sustainable governance and adequate resources to ensure the best in Catholic education. Therefore, the Diocese of Des Moines initiated a strategic planning process to produce a vision and plan to address this challenge.

Since January 2021, pastors in the Diocese of Des Moines have met biweekly to research and explore the regionalization concept.

These meetings, informed by Bishop William Joensen and stakeholders in Catholic education, resulted in a recommendation from area pastors that the Catholic schools in the Des Moines area form a PreK-12 regional system. Bishop Joensen fully endorsed the proposal to move to a regional model. This regionalization effort aims to ultimately ensure best practices in education, the long-term viability of our schools, and academic excellence for all students in the Diocese of Des Moines.

"I am grateful for the ongoing work of our pastors, boards, administrators and volunteers who bear the extensive expertise that will propel the regionalization process forward," said Bishop William Joensen.

St. Joseph, Des Moines



A REGIONAL MODEL (CONT.)

Currently, Catholic schools in the Des Moines region operate independently regarding budgets, teacher salary, tuition, tuition assistance, and business practices such as payroll, tuition collection, and purchasing. The plan to regionalize the Des Moines schools creates a business model that encourages collaboration, provides greater equity, and improves operational efficiencies across all the schools.

"My experience has shown me the necessity and immense potential of collaboration, a key component of this model as pastors, principals and diocesan leaders work together in new ways," said Dr. Dan Ryan, Interim Regional Coordinator and President of Dowling Catholic.

The next steps in the regionalization process include establishing a legal and canonical entity, developing bylaws, and selecting a board and leadership. **All schools will remain diocesan schools under the regional model.** The process will take time, and school families will be provided with updates on progress toward regionalization goals as they occur. Click [here](#) to view updates on regionalization efforts.



Christ the King, Des Moines

DIOCESE OF DES MOINES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools includes 16 schools in 23 counties in central and southwest Iowa. Catholic schools in the Des Moines Diocese build Christ-centered, collaborative, inclusive partnerships with parents, students, and parishes to provide innovative academic excellence and inspirational faith formation. To learn more about the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools, visit dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools or email ExpectMore@dmdiocese.org.

Growing Disciples is a quarterly publication of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools Office. Content may not be reproduced without the expressed written consent from the Diocese of Des Moines. To submit a story idea, email ExpectMore@dmdiocese.org.



St. Albert Catholic, Council Bluffs