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Toward Serving All Children

Six Catholic Schools, Teacher Receive CCSE Believe in Me! Grants

To Expand Programming for Students with Special Needs

*"Whoever receives
one child such as
this in my name
receives me"*

(Matthew 18:5)

The Catholic Coalition for Special Education (CCSE) has awarded \$60,000 in grants to five Catholic schools and a Catholic school teacher in the first round of its 2011 ***Believe in Me! Grant-Making Program.***

CCSE's mission is to ensure students with intellectual disabilities have the same opportunity to receive a Catholic education as their typically developing brothers and sisters. The grants were announced recently before a packed room of Catholic school educators, students and family and friends at CCSE's annual awards ceremony, this year combined with the CCSE Family Fest, held in Silver Spring.

Grant recipients include a first-time \$5,000 award to **Mother Seton School** in Emmitsburg, MD, which traces its roots to Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint and founder of Catholic schools in America.

The grant will help start the Mother Seton Learning Center, to include students with intellectual disabilities, and help fund the salary of a special education teacher. As with the school St. Elizabeth Ann founded, "things just happen," said school principal Sister JoAnne Goecke, recounting how the Mother Seton's highly qualified but new and part-time resource teacher dreamed up the idea of establishing the center.

In addition to Mother Seton, other grantees and awards are:

- **Holy Cross**, Garrett Park, Montgomery County. Principal Lisa Kane said the \$15,000 grant will enable the school to hire another special education teacher for five new middle school students it has recently welcomed to its resource program.
- **St. Jerome's Academy**, Hyattsville, Prince George's County. The \$15,000 grant will allow the school to expand its classical curriculum to students with low incidence disabilities. "We want to open our arms a little wider," said Principal Mary Pat Donoghue. "We've had conversations with families in our parish who had no hope of Catholic education. They're entitled to it, and their children are entitled to it," she said.

**CATHOLIC
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- **The Heights School**, Potomac, Montgomery Country. Assistant Headmaster Thomas Royals said the \$10,000 grant will expand existing services to students with disabilities at the school, including for a student with Down syndrome.
- **Bishop McNamara High School**, Forestville, Prince George's County. The \$5,000 grant will expand and help pay the salary of a special education teacher in the St. Joseph's Program. "Our dream is to one day be the first Catholic secondary school to have a full-scale learning center (for students with intellectual disabilities)," school Principal Michael Hunt said.
- **Holy Redeemer**, College Park, Prince George's County. The \$5,000 grant will enable Holy Redeemer to expand its resources program and provide specialized materials for children with intellectual disabilities, said Maria Bovich, principal.
- **Mary Hay**, teacher at **St. Philip the Apostle**, Camp Springs, Prince George's County. Hay, who is pursuing a master's degree in special education at The Catholic University of America, received a \$5,000 grant for **Tuition Assistance for Advanced Study in Special Education**.

Since it was founded six years ago, CCSE has handed out more than a half-million dollars in grants to Catholic schools and teachers in the Archdioceses of Washington and Baltimore (which encompass Washington, D.C. and most of Maryland). However, in that same time, CCSE has received more than \$2 million in requests for aid, according to CCSE Grant Committee chair Fernand Lavallee, noting the need for the grants is high.

CCSE offers a host of programs, ranging from providing grants to schools and educators seeking to expand their inclusive programming to children with disabilities, to providing technical and other support to schools and families. It is believed to be the only Catholic organization on the East Coast and one of just a handful in the U.S. that supports children with disabilities and their families through a variety of means: grants and technical assistance to Catholic schools and educators; and school and community resources and support to families.

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The mission of the Catholic Coalition for Special Education is to ensure that children with special needs are able to attend, and receive an appropriate education in their local Catholic elementary schools and high schools. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI "no child should be denied his or her right to an education in faith, which in turn nurtures the soul of a nation." CCSE provides grants and technical assistance to help Catholic schools in Washington, D.C. and Maryland achieve this goal.

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