

Believe in Me! Grant Recipients Celebrate

"Sophia has done more to inspire hearts, educate minds and nurture souls than I could have imagined possible," said Verona Leahy, Pre-K3 teacher at St. Thomas More Academy in Middletown, MD.

St. Thomas More Academy is a first-time CCSE grant recipient. Patricia Neumark, Dean of Academics, and Verona Leahy accepted the award for St. Thomas More Academy on September 24 at the awards ceremony in Silver Spring, MD. St. Thomas joins second-year recipient St. John's Catholic School in Hollywood, MD. Both schools are expanding their inclusive education programs thanks to CCSE seed grants. CCSE was disappointed that a third school had to decline its grant due to its inability to fill a special education position, demonstrating the urgency of addressing the chronic and pervasive shortage of special education teachers.

CCSE grants are complemented with capacity-building Technical Assistance to support best practices in inclusive education. This year, a record number of schools are receiving year-long, pro-bono Technical Assistance provided by Maggie Hubbard, Ed.D., Instructional Coach. More schools than ever

are requesting Technical Assistance as demand swells.

Dr. Hubbard said CCSE's Technical Assistance "helps teachers in a practical way as they learn how to include a child with intellectual disabilities. What they then do for the rest of their students works for the student with an intellectual disability. The goal is for the school to see that inclusion is not about one child, it is about all children."

Both of this year's seed grant schools are applying CCSE funding towards the salaries of classroom para-professionals

"We are thrilled to award grants to Catholic schools who say 'yes' to

inclusive education," said Francesca Pellegrino, CCSE President. "Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. We are counting on them to apply lessons learned from their positive, inclusive Catholic classroom experiences to their own family lives, workplaces, and communities."



A CCSE grant to St. Thomas More Academy will help children like Sophia experience an inclusive Catholic education.



Photo by: Ashley Barnas, The Catholic Standard

Norah and her classmate play together at St. John's Hollywood. Principal Susan McDonough said, "It is a blessing that Norah has come into the lives of the students and staff...she makes our world better every day."

Marjorie Thrives at Inclusive St. Jerome Academy

Six-year-old Marjorie, a "fiery red head," rides her scooter and runs to school alongside her three siblings.

Imagine this little bundle of energy, born with Down syndrome, struggling through two open heart surgeries when she was just eight months old. Imagine her fighting for her life when she was hospitalized with Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). Imagine the little girl with low muscle tone struggling to sit up, to pick up small objects, to talk.

Katherine and Kevin Somok of the St. Jerome community in Hyattsville, MD do not have to imagine. They live it every day. Their daughter Marjorie is doted on by older brothers, Peter and Joey, who wrestle with her and without realizing it, give her the physical therapy she needs to stay strong. Her younger sisters, Maria and Hannah, look up to Marjorie and love to play with her. The family wants Marjorie to reach her full potential and for everyone to "share in their hopes for their little girl."

Thanks to CCSE, their dream for her is becoming a reality as she attends Catholic school with her siblings "among those she knows and loves best."

CCSE's fundraising, consulting, and advocacy ensures Catholic schools educate children with disabilities. St. Jerome Academy willingly opened its doors to Marjorie. Generous gifts to CCSE provided the resources for a grant to St. Jerome Academy to add a resource teacher and expand its resource program to

include students with developmental disabilities.

Each day Marjorie enthusiastically bursts into school saying, "Hi Flynn!" to Mr. Danny Flynn, St. Jerome Principal, who notes that CCSE funding "expands our mission and creates new avenues of inclusion for families currently in our community and those yet to come."

Thriving in her Montessori classroom with her sister, Marjorie changes her shoes independently, joins the singing circle and often receives support from her special educator or private help from her speech therapist. When Marjorie walks down the stairs to her classes, she shares smiles with older students who often greet her with an enthusiastic "Hi Marjorie!"



Maria (left) and Marjorie play with baby sister Hannah. Not pictured are big brothers Peter and Joey.

The President's Message

Imagine the Possibilities!

Stories like Marjorie's (page 1) inspire the work we do every day. Imagine the possibilities you create for Marjorie and other students with disabilities by supporting CCSE! The need remains great. CCSE continues to receive calls from anxious parents with questions about the possibility of Catholic schools enrolling their children. Those Catholic school teams moved to say "YES" continue to request both CCSE's financial support and our Technical Assistance.

Indeed, the demand for our pro-bono Technical Assistance to help implement the best inclusive special education practices is only growing. Read on this page just how valuable it is to St. Bart's!

We work hard daily to throw doors wide open ensuring families find a welcoming community at CCSE and at Catholic schools. Now we are introducing our first-ever Self-Advocate Ambassador, Theresa Brogan, who showcases the benefits of inclusion (see insert story).

Your love and generosity allow CCSE to respond to the many requests we receive so that families find a place at the table and a Catholic school to call "home" for their children with disabilities. As you gather round your own family table during the holidays, please remember how much we appreciate the good you have done and the difference you've made in so many lives.

From the CCSE family to yours, many blessings for a joyful Christmas, much good health and prosperity.

Francesca

President & Founder



Francesca Pellegrino with son, Alex, who is the inspiration behind CCSE.



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CCSE Sparks Innovation



The Enrichment and Inclusion Education team at St. Bartholomew hails the importance of Technical Assistance in implementing best practices in inclusive education. Pictured are Karen Fogleman, Karlana Somerville, (8th grader), Barbara Brown and Admissions Director, Neda Ghassabeh.

CCSE's pro-bono Technical Assistance ensures that schools are equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities and that teachers have the expertise to implement best practices in inclusive education to serve all students in their classrooms.

Technical Assistance at St. Bartholomew Catholic School in Bethesda, MD is a team effort. Barbara Brown, Laura Digges, Karen Fogleman, and Amanda Herndon make up its Enrichment and Inclusion Education Team. They know that early intervention is key, and they start working with children as early as age three, providing support, consultation, and services to students and classroom teachers.

CCSE supports the team's efforts by providing pro-bono Technical Assistance through Maggie Hubbard, Ed.D., instructional coach. CCSE's Technical Assistance includes year-long support that builds teachers' skills in inclusive education best practices. **Last year, CCSE provided more than 200 hours of Technical Assistance to six schools in the Archdiocese of Washington and the Archdiocese of Baltimore.**

According to the St. Bartholomew's team, "Maggie is amazing. When we sit down and share concerns and data from our observations and working with students, Maggie calmly listens to the challenges, and offers not only practical examples of her experience but a plethora of materials that support teachers in their quest to differentiate."

Team members add that "Maggie gives guidance and ideas to our classroom teachers so that they can implement differentiated teaching for all students." Maggie considers factors and behavior as well as learning issues that can affect a student's academic ability. "We are thrilled that Maggie will be coming back to work with us."

Help Schools Say YES to Inclusion!

Make a positive difference for children with disabilities, their families, teachers, and schools by making a one-time or recurring gift to CCSE today.

CCSE is there for schools because YOU are there for CCSE. Your generosity makes an impact:

- Seed grants to schools to hire special education teachers – including two more grants this school year
- Specialized classroom equipment and materials
- Workshops on inclusive education for teachers and administrators
- Tuition assistance grants for Advanced Studies in Special Education
- Technical Assistance/Professional Development for Catholic school teachers. This year CCSE will provide Technical Assistance to eight schools.
- Signature Holy Hour/Happy Hour events to support parents of children with disabilities

Scan the QR code below to make a life changing gift today!



SCAN ME



Mark your calendar, Giving Tuesday is Tuesday, November 28.

Giving Tuesday is a national day of giving that follows Cyber Monday.

Please consider a tax-deductible gift to CCSE!

Spreading the Joy of Inclusion

Honorary Board Member Carin Collins and daughter Lucy enthusiastically led CCSE in honoring Monsignor John Enzler for his trailblazing efforts in inclusive education at the 18th annual CCSE Spring Benefit, March 25, 2023. Carin praised Father John, former pastor at Our Lady of Mercy, who said yes to Lucy just when Carin was praying to hear back from any Catholic school for Lucy. "Thank you for supporting CCSE, Father John," Carin said. "And congratulations on your lifetime of saying yes with your enormous outreach and following Jesus!"



Enjoying a hug and catching up at the Spring Benefit are Delaney Dunigan and Erin Fry. The Spring Benefit is CCSE's single largest annual fundraising event.



Spreading the joy of inclusive education L-R: Alex Pellegrino, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington; Evelio Menjivar-Ayala, Lucy Collins, Francesca Pellegrino, Stephen Collins and Carin Collins.

We gratefully acknowledge Fitzgerald Auto Malls as a CCSE Corporate Partner.

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Sun Shines on CCSE Golf Classic

It was all sunshine and smiles at CCSE's 6th Annual Golf Classic on September 18 at Worthington Manor Golf Club in Urbana, MD. The Scramble/Shamble format challenged the more than 80 golfers who turned out to support inclusive education in Catholic schools.

Congratulations to the winning foursome of Warren Blanchard, Ernest Jackson, Layton Johnson and Keith Robertson!

The Golf Committee thanks all supporters and sponsors of this annual event.



Deacon Keith Somerville and Derek Claytor head out to the links.

Without our generous sponsors and supporters, this event would not have been possible. CCSE extends our gratitude to:



Anne Hummer

Bishop and Linda Nawrot



The CCSE Spirit

CCSE's mission is to advocate for and facilitate an appropriate, inclusive, high-quality education for students with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities in the Washington D.C. and Baltimore region Catholic schools to enrich their lives, schools, and the broader community. The CCSE Spirit is published by the Catholic Coalition for Special Education, Inc. (CCSE).

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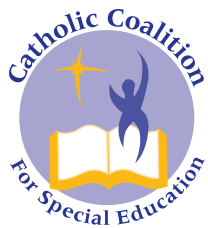
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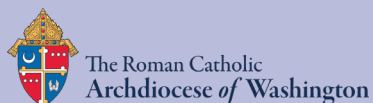
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Save the Date!

2024 Spring Benefit
Saturday, March 15, 2024



If You Believe in Me...I'll Believe in Me!