



Press Release: September 26, 2016

Catholic Coalition for Special Education Awards *Believe in Me! Program* Grants to Area Schools for Inclusive Education Programs

(Kensington, Maryland) – More schools are recognizing that inclusive education benefits the whole classroom – the children with disabilities and the children without, the faculty and the broader school community. If our Catholic schools welcome the body of Christ, then they must also embrace the same teachings and ultimately show the wider community how to build a just society.

The three Catholic schools receiving grant awards this year are examples of schools that have embraced inclusive education and children of all abilities.

“The continuing efforts by our grantee schools to provide quality, inclusive education are admirable and hopefully their success will demonstrate to other schools that they can welcome children of all abilities too,” said Fernand Lavalée, Esq., Board Member and Chair of the Grants Committee.

This year, CCSE has awarded nearly \$81,000 in *Believe in Me! Program* grants to three schools in three different Maryland counties. The 2016 recipients are:

The Academy of the Holy Cross (high school), Kensington (Montgomery County): This grant will continue to help fund the salaries of the special education teachers serving the Moreau Options Program. The program, created two years ago, provides its students with inclusion in regular classes along with small group instruction. CCSE commends the Academy of the Holy Cross, which has grown its program to 10 students this academic year.

“As we enter our third year with now 10 students in the Moreau Options Program, I am thrilled to observe our upperclasswomen in the program emerging as leaders for the new students – helping them feel welcome, teaching them how to use technology, and sharing with them all their favorite aspects of Holy Cross,” said Emily Montgomery, Director of the Moreau Options Program.

St. Louis School, Clarksville (Howard County): St. Louis is a new CCSE grantee school. It first spent the past year with CCSE planning, attending faculty workshops, receiving technical assistance and preparing the faculty and community to welcome its new students. The school is using its grant to help fund the salaries of one special education teacher and one paraprofessional in the establishment of its new St. Louis IX Program.

“I am excited to begin this initiative and am confident the students the program serves will be a blessing to our entire community. St. Louis School couldn’t have made this vision a reality without the Catholic Coalition for Special Education’s technical assistance and financial support,” said St. Louis School Principal Terry Weiss.

St. Philip the Apostle, Camp Springs (Prince George’s County): Another new CCSE grantee school, St. Philip is using its grant to help fund salaries and expand its current inclusion program. Lavalée said, “This is St. Philip’s first request to CCSE for grant funding. St. Philip’s establishment of a program on its own to serve students with intellectual disabilities is both commendable and an inspiration.”

“We are thankful for the generous grant from the Catholic Coalition for Special Education,” said St. Philip the Apostle School Principal Karen Clay. “This grant allows us to live out our school mission of welcoming all students with their individual abilities and talents as gifts from God. The grant will fund

the salary of an instructional assistant to support a student with Down syndrome in the classroom, as well as play an active role on our student assistance team. In following Christ's message of all are welcome, we strive to create a faith filled academic environment with proper supports so we can open our doors to all families who wish their child to receive an education rooted in the teachings of the Catholic faith."

Many Catholic schools would like to serve all their families and educate all their children, but don't think they have the resources or staff to educate students with developmental or intellectual disabilities. For the past eleven years, CCSE has been there to provide professional development, technical assistance, public awareness, family support and to help fill the funding gap at schools, granting nearly **\$900,000 to 29 schools in eight Maryland counties.**

Through CCSE's *Believe in Me! Program*, Catholic schools located in Washington, D.C. or Maryland may receive seed grants to expand or create sustainable programs enrolling two or more students with cognitive disabilities. Funding may be used to hire and train special educators, purchase equipment and materials, or provide appropriate accommodations and modifications to the curriculum.

CCSE also provides scholarships to Catholic school teachers to attend professional development and training classes.

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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