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CATHOLIC COALITION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Catholic Schools Week –
Opening Door for Students with Special Needs
CCSE Helps Catholic Schools and Teachers Say YES

(Kensington, Maryland) – "Families of children with disabilities have been hit especially hard by this pandemic. Virtual learning, mask wearing, social distancing, and resulting isolation all pose extra difficulties for our special learners. Our Catholic schools have risen to the challenge with teachers and parents working together to help students adapt quickly to new ways of learning, often with limited resources and preparation," said Francesca Pellegrino, Founder and President of the Catholic Coalition for Special Education (CCSE).

"If ever there were a year to celebrate Catholic schools, 2021 is it. A true fulfillment of Catholic education means including and educating all students together so that they all reach their full potential," said Pellegrino.

CCSE has worked since 2004 to help families and students with disabilities access a Catholic education. It is difficult for families of children with disabilities to find a school that not only provides a quality education, but also truly believes that all children, no matter the differences, have unique gifts that they bring as valued members of a school community.

"Our goal at CCSE is to advocate for students with disabilities so that all students desiring a Catholic education can find a place at the table and a school to call 'home.' Catholic schools are uniquely qualified to serve students with disabilities precisely because they are Catholic. Including students with disabilities in Catholic schools helps ensure the Unity of the Body of Christ.

"And there remains much work to do. Most of the students served to date by CCSE have been in primary or middle school. **They are ready to head to high school.** CCSE hopes that our work will pave the way for more Catholic high schools to open their doors to students with disabilities thereby helping to shorten the long line of students and families who are seeking a Catholic high school to call home," said Pellegrino. And now that Villanova University has launched its post-secondary education *VUnited Scholars Program*, students with disabilities have more and more post-secondary education options.

On Saturday, March 13, CCSE will celebrate its 16th annual Spring Benefit – which this year will be virtual. Registration and participation is free this year, with plenty of opportunities to support CCSE. Visit https://ccse.ejoinme.org/2021CCSEBenefitHome for details.

CCSE has awarded grant monies to 31 Catholic schools in nine Maryland counties totaling $1,100,000. CCSE has directly impacted over 9,000 students, teachers and families.

CCSE supports Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington and Archdiocese of Baltimore by providing seed grants to expand or create sustainable programs enrolling two or more students with 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 offers technical assistance and training – all free of charge – to help schools be the best they can be in serving and teaching all God's children inclusively.

CCSE also provides scholarships to Catholic school teachers pursuing advanced degrees in special education and offers workshops and other training /coaching support to Catholic schools to help them meet the needs of students with disabilities at the classroom and administrative levels.

The mission of the [Catholic Coalition for Special Education](#) *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.*

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