THE CCSE SPIRIT
The Catholic Coalition for Special Education Newsletter
AUTUMN 2021
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Somebody's Knocking at Your Door...

Principals, teachers, parents and siblings are all wondering where their middle schoolers with developmental disabilities will go to high school. One constant that is very clear, regardless of what else might be going on in the world, is that parents continue to desire a Catholic education for their children with disabilities.

We have a burgeoning group of students in K-8. We need more Catholic high schools in our region to open their doors to students with disabilities. Christiano, a recent high school graduate, put it quite eloquently when he said:

"CCSE is important to families like mine. My younger brother, Nino, has Down syndrome and he is the heart of our family. I have never met a better person. My family is so fortunate that CCSE has worked so hard to get inclusive education into Catholic schools. Nino is thriving in a full inclusion program at Our Lady of Lourdes in Bethesda. I can't think of a better place for him. He loves going to school every day, but as he enters 5th grade, we wonder about high school. I just graduated from a Catholic high school like my brother did before me. We would love for a Catholic high school to start a program so that Nino can also attend one. CCSE is working hard to help him realize this dream."

And just like Nino – Eddie, Davide, Ory, Kathryn, Karlena and Emily to name just a few, also wonder where they might find a Catholic high school to call home.

Research has demonstrated again and again that when students with and without disabilities learn alongside each other everyone benefits academically, socially and spiritually. Catholic schools are uniquely qualified to include students with disabilities precisely because they are Catholic, precisely because we believe in the unity of the Body of Christ and that Body is not complete unless all its members are included. An inclusive education really is the fulfillment of Catholic education and Catholic social teaching.

Now is the time for Catholic schools, especially our Catholic high schools, to start planning and CCSE is here to help.

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Ory's Faith is Family's Anchor

Quick-witted, compassionate, generous, thoughtful, jokester, are just a few ways Maria, Theresa and Olivia describe Ory, their younger brother. Ory, who has Down syndrome, is 14 years old and an eighth grader at St. Louis Catholic School in Clarksville, Maryland.

Like his peers, Ory is looking forward

Theresa, Maria, Ory, Olivia & Koda

with excitement to attending a Catholic high school, although finding a Catholic high school to open its doors to Ory is a struggle and concern. In June Ory will be the first graduate of St. Louis School's Louis IX Program which was launched with the help of CCSE. According to Maria, "Ory would not be at St. Louis and have had the Catholic school education he has had without CCSE. CCSE has paved the way for so many children. They set a really great example. CCSE teaches us how to be advocates and not give up on these issues."

CCSE has been building the capacity of Catholic schools for 17 years. Our grants to schools and specialized technical assistance for school staff have resulted in stronger Catholic schools with established special education programs and dedicated staff for children with disabilities.

Ory's sisters agree that a faith-based education "creates a camaraderie, a community and a strong bond" based on shared values. Theresa added, "I think it should be the mission of every Catholic school to include people who learn differently."

Ory's parents, Debbie and Orlando, shared that "Ory is our family's anchor – not just our immediate family but the whole extended family. They adore him and he adores them." He is the first one to suggest prayers before dinner and at family gatherings. Recently when a friend at school lost a parent, Ory urged his family to say prayers for his classmate and his family. After school, when Debbie meets Ory he often runs ahead so that he can stop and say prayers at the statue of the Blessed Virgin.

Maria said, "Ory teaches us that we can always find the good in someone. He is so friendly and compassionate." Theresa noted that she and her siblings have learned much from Ory. "He has made us more

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Francesca Pellegrino and CCSE were featured this fall in an episode on "How the Church is Showing Compassion to People with Disabilities" for EWTN News In Depth. To watch the CCSE segment or the complete episode which received much praise, visit ccse-maryland.org/video.html.

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The President's Message

Resilience and love are the words that come to mind as I review the events of the past year. A continuing pandemic and the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks led us through a wave of emotions from anger to love and from sorrow to hope. With these sentiments, we have learned valuable lessons of what we are capable of under the most challenging of circumstances. Let us always honor all those who made sacrifices, large or small, to help us in our hour of need.

While many are deserving of recognition, here I focus on our Catholic school principals and teachers who last school year pivoted to hybrid classrooms while ensuring students with disabilities did not take a back seat. This year, while grappling with different requirements, schools are celebrating that they are back in person. I cannot think of a more fitting time to have launched our *Making IT* Happen Awards* (*Inclusive Teaching) to honor exemplary classroom teachers.

Like many charities, CCSE has experienced the challenges wrought by the pandemic. Social distancing has been hard and being required to cancel in-person events has been dispiriting. Communion, defined as the act of sharing with another, fellowship and participation is part of human nature and cannot be restrained indefinitely. We faced the challenges head on and pivoted to a virtual spring benefit, featuring our self-advocates. For me, however, the highlight was our golf tournament when we were finally able to gather in person. We were graced with sunshine and a wonderful turnout. Everyone left smiling and with good memories.

As part of CCSE's strategic plan and investment in growth, CCSE moved into new offices this spring to accommodate our expanding needs. Leading a small organization through growth in these challenging times is something of an undertaking. But as the late Sister Kathleen Lannak, former Principal at St. John the Evangelist School in Silver Spring, MD once said "It's a matter of realizing that once you say 'I'm going to do it', God's graces take over and people start jumping on board and helping you do it." So, I am praying that you, our readers, are ready to jump on board to help CCSE expand its capacity to serve more students, teachers and families. Together there is much we can accomplish!

My heartfelt gratitude goes to all our supporters, teachers, schools, friends, and employees who make our work possible. In 2021our financial support to schools took the form of robust technical assistance services to select schools where we focused our resources on helping those schools ensure their students with disabilities continued

Francesca & Alex Pellegrino

to make progress even in a hybrid setting. A hallmark of our expanded technical assistance is the partnership with Notre Dame of Maryland University and Dr. Maggie Hubbard. This partnership expands our capacity to provide more direct coaching and consulting support to schools. (*Read more on page 3.*)

CCSE's pro-bono services while free of charge to schools and families, are not free of cost. Your generous support allows us to continue to provide these services.

In September, I met virtually with representatives from an Archdiocese 600 miles away working towards inclusion in all its Catholic schools. I visited a Maryland Catholic school 25 miles away, seeking guidance and support on best practices as it expands its resource program to include students with developmental disabilities. In October, CCSE participated virtually in Loyola University Chicago's 2021 Mustard Seed Conference. Moreover, this year, we fielded more parent inquiries than ever. We also continue our advocacy efforts to find Catholic high schools to open their doors to students with disabilities. A burgeoning group of middle schoolers are wondering where they will find a Catholic high school to call home. We are committed to tackling this critical, time-sensitive need.

Your love and generosity make CCSE's work possible so that families find an open door and a place at the table for their children with disabilities. Your support is critical. As you gather around the family table during the holidays, I hope you remember the good you have done and the lives you have touched. You enrich our community, change lives and truly make a difference for our children and youth with disabilities, their families, teachers and schools.

As the year draws to a close, we look forward to the new year with renewed anticipation that 2022 brings the promise of better things to come. Most of all, I cannot wait to see many of you again!

From the CCSE family to yours, many blessings for much good health and prosperity,

Francesca

President & Founder

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.

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We Moved!

After nine wonderful years at the corner of Connecticut and Knowles, we are delighted to spread our wings a bit with some extra space just a few blocks away.

Only our address has changed. Please make note of our new location:

3750 University Blvd. W., Suite 203
Kensington, MD 20895

NCEA Seton Awards
2019 HONOREE

Expanded Technical Assistance Programming for Select Schools

by Maggie Hubbard, Ed.D., Notre Dame of Maryland University, Academy of Catholic Educators (ACES) Assistant Director for Special Education.
Dr. Hubbard currently serves as a CCSE Professional Advisory Board Member and is the former Director of Special Education for the Archdiocese of Washington.

Since its founding, CCSE has worked tirelessly to provide financial and Technical Assistance (TA) to Catholic schools to ensure that all of God's children are welcome. CCSE's TA outreach to schools has expanded significantly thanks to its partnership with Notre Dame of Maryland University's Academy of Catholic Educators (ACES).

ACES is a team of experienced educators who go into area Catholic schools to coach and mentor teachers in best instructional practices. Under this partnership, CCSE covers the cost of the professional services provided by the ACES team. Thanks to the generosity of CCSE and its donors, the selected schools benefit from this Technical Assistance and never receive a bill.

I am passionate about creating classrooms that are places where all children can access a rigorous curriculum and thrive as learners. This passion was ignited early when, as a first grade teacher, I realized that learning how to teach the students who learned differently made me a better teacher for all of my students. A major milestone in my career came when a young boy with Down syndrome, Ben Stevick, entered my class. Through teaching him I learned how possible it is for all children to be educated in a regular education classroom. I also learned that including students who are diverse learners enriches the educational experience of the entire school community. This experience led me to pursue a master's degree in special education. Later, I sought to help other teachers in their efforts to educate all children. I ultimately earned a doctorate in Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction with a research emphasis on the implementation of Differentiated Instruction. My passion is now focused on enabling all students to access the curriculum by helping their teachers become better able to teach all students.

Working with CCSE has allowed me to reach more teachers in more schools while at the same time expanding CCSE's professional capacity.

In working with a school, I meet with the entire instructional team to identify areas of focus for the year. After classroom observations, a tentative plan is developed for the year. The schedule for visits is determined based on the needs identified during planning with regular updates provided to CCSE.

Maggie Hubbard & Gail Donohue

Services are tailored to meet the specific needs of each student, teacher, and school, and may include:

- Administrative support in the development of a school-wide inclusion plan;
- Classroom observations and providing feedback to teachers and administrators;
- Suggestions for best instructional practices and supporting the implementation of those practices in a variety of ways;
- Support in the development of appropriate educational plans including suggestions for interventions, accommodations, and modifications.

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, under our partnership, CCSE contracted me to work with four CCSE partner schools in the Archdiocese of Washington. I had the privilege of spending a total of about 85 hours, both in-person and virtually, working with teachers, resource teachers, and principals coaching, mentoring, problem solving, brainstorming, all with the focus of improving curriculum access. Of course, last year was unusual because of the pandemic and the increased challenges that came with teaching children with the safety restrictions in place. Instructional access on many levels became a primary topic of coaching for all students.

I am delighted to be able to continue our partnership with CCSE during the current school year.

Technical Assistance Awards

While our *Believe in Me!* Grants traditionally help address the immediate needs of Catholic schools seeking to create or expand inclusive programming, grants are not always the right fit.

This was not the year for schools to expand or create new programs; therefore, CCSE focused its resources on Technical Assistance (TA) awards.

Comprehensive TA provides capacity building to expand and strengthen inclusive programming. It helps build a community of practice and ensures teachers are equipped to meet the needs of all the learners in their class and that they are acquainted with best practices to ensure the success of all students. It can also help avert issues or promptly address challenges as they arise. This kind of long-term TA tailored to the specific needs of an individual school is what helps transform schools into inclusive communities of learning. TA is available to full faculty or to a select team.

We know that the typical Catholic school budget does not allow for the tens of thousands of dollars which professional technical assistance can typically cost, which is why CCSE takes on the fundraising to provide these foundational services for free. Catholic schools never receive a bill from CCSE.

This year, we have been providing Technical Assistance awards to the following schools:

- St. Bartholomew School
  Bethesda, MD
- Holy Redeemer School
  Kensington, MD
- St. John the Evangelist School
  Silver Spring, MD
- Our Lady Star of the Sea School
  Solomons, MD

VOICES

"From the oldest to the youngest, inclusion isn't just beneficial to the person with differing abilities and their quest to be well educated. The whole school [Our Lady Star of the Sea School in Solomons, MD] is learning how to make inclusion work, and benefiting from it. This will go with all of them into their adult worlds, and, in turn, affect so many others in a positive way. After all, most of Aibhilin's life will not be spent in school, it will be spent out in the world, and we should all be ready for that!"

Nickie Grannell-Fockler
Aibhilin's Mom

We Love our Volunteers!

L-R: Breanna Vitak, Joe Vitak, Francesca Pellegrino, Lucy Collins and Gina Baldini work on a project at the new CCSE office. Breanna, Lucy and Gina all benefited from CCSE's work and we are delighted that they stay in touch with us!

Bequests Help the Next Generation

Please make a difference for children with disabilities and the Catholic schools CCSE supports now and in the future. If you have an estate plan or are giving it serious thought, consider making a legacy gift to support CCSE's efforts for inclusive Catholic education.

Bequests designated for CCSE's general purposes support:

CCSE's *Believe in Me!* program provides funds to Catholic schools (K-12) in Maryland and Washington, D.C. to hire special education teachers and para-educators, purchase specialized classroom equipment, and receive professional development for school administrators and teachers.

CCSE's Technical Assistance ensures that schools are equipped and staffed to meet the needs of students and that teachers are well-prepared to serve all their students.

CCSE's Tuition Assistance Grants for Studies in Special Education encourages teachers and other professionals to pursue advanced degrees in Special Education.

CCSE's Family Advocacy and Support helps families of children with disabilities navigate the complex maze of services by providing current information on programs and community resources.

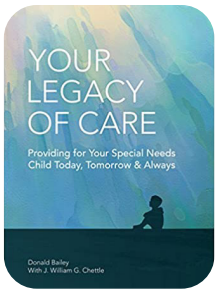
If you would like more information about planned giving opportunities and tax savings, please contact CCSE's Associate Director Anne Hummer at 301-933-8844 ext. 103 or ahummer@ccse-maryland.org

www.ccse-maryland.org/helpDonate.html#bequests

Family Corner

Your Legacy of Care: Providing for Your Special Needs Child Today, Tomorrow and Always.

Author: Donald Bailey with J. William G. Chettle



To follow is an edited digest from the book's Preface written by Madeleine Will, former Vice President, National Down Syndrome Society's Policy Center & former Assistant Secretary of Special Education, U.S. Department of Education. Ms. Will currently serves on CCSE's Professional Advisory Board.

For parents of a child or adult child with a disability there are few more complex and unnerving responsibilities than fashioning a plan to address the needs of our family member for the short and long-term.

On the one hand, this is an exciting time of new possibilities for individuals with disabilities in many dimensions of life - in education, employment, independent living and social inclusion. On the other hand, enabling them to take advantage of new possibilities through sound planning and resource management can seem daunting. Having an expert to guide one through a discussion of topics such as investments, estate planning, tax strategies, wealth protection and preservation is invaluable.

Fully aware of the resource-intensive demands of supporting a family member with a disability not only through college but also across their lifespan, author Donald Bailey has written *Your Legacy of Care* as a natural outgrowth of his own life experience. He draws on his experience as both the father of a son with special needs and a successful financial planner and estate and retirement plan expert.

The author shares the latest developments in the field. The chapter on education contains an understandable explanation of a groundbreaking change in federal tax law passed by Congress - the Achieving A Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) of 2014, which permits individuals with a disability and their parents and families to establish a tax-advantaged savings account to be used for a broad range of expenses. The user-friendly self-assessment tool and a model Letter of Care create a road map to provide detailed information and instruction regarding a loved one's personal, medical, legal, and financial needs.

Download your complimentary copy of *Your Legacy of Care* at: https://yourlegacyofcare.com/

VOICES

"I'm so lucky I went to Catholic school from pre-k all the way through high school. Now I'm at Vanderbilt … We are made in the image of God and we are all part of the Body of Christ."

Theresa Brogan, graduate
The Academy of the Holy Cross and
St. John the Evangelist Catholic School

Video Workshop Brings Paula Kluth, Experts into Our Schools

When CCSE tells our partner schools that we are willing to help them in every step of their inclusion journey we expect them to take us up on that offer. And when one school asks for assistance, we often find ways to include other schools in whatever responsive action we plan.

Thus, when one principal sought professional development to facilitate inclusion of students with Down syndrome during his staff's August planning days, we were able to provide an exceptional training opportunity to multiple schools.

CCSE collaborated with nationally-renowned inclusion expert Paula Kluth to offer a special viewing opportunity of her video series, "Supporting Students with Down Syndrome in Inclusive Schools: An Online Short Course." Three schools in the Archdiocese of Washington took advantage of this valuable pro-bono technical assistance, saving them thousands of dollars: St. John the Evangelist in Silver Spring, St. Bartholomew in Bethesda, and Holy Redeemer in Kensington.

According to Caitlin Keeton, Principal at St. John the Evangelist School in Silver Spring, her teachers actively participated in each session. "We would periodically pause the video to discuss what we were learning and how it applied to our students with Down syndrome," Keeton said.

In particular, Keeton said, "The teachers most appreciated the concrete examples and practical strategies and ideas they learned about, including the CALM protocol." The CALM (Comfort, Avoid Physical Contact, Low Voice and Manage the Space) protocol is a technique used to defuse a crisis situation. For more information see: https://www.paulakluth.com/readings/autism/calm-in-crisis/

Keeton added that "We are grateful that CCSE helps us to support students with disabilities through professional development and consulting with experts in the field."

Spring Benefit Celebrates Inclusive Teaching

From the opening welcome, featuring Theresa Brogan and Breanna Vitak - Moreau Options graduates from The Academy of the Holy Cross - to the closing montage featuring self-advocates from area Catholic schools, CCSE's 2021 Virtual Benefit was a celebration of our students, teachers and partner schools and the valuable work of CCSE.

Undaunted by the pandemic, CCSE took to the airwaves this year from a live-stream set in a classroom at The Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington, MD, to honor four teachers for their exemplary inclusive teaching. Hosted by CCSE President Francesca Pellegrino and popular D.C. radio and television personality Tommy McFly, the lively presentation included cameo appearances from CCSE friend and advocate Bishop William Byrne of Springfield, MA (former pastor of Our Lady of Mercy parish in Potomac, MD), as well as many self-advocates throughout the evening.

Opening Doors to Catholic Schools was the theme weaved throughout the program as Pellegrino emphasized the importance of Catholic education for children with disabilities. "Opening doors is what CCSE is all about…inclusive education is about allowing all God's children to reach their academic, social and spiritual potential and allowing them to reach the full flourishing of their humanity," she said.

This year we introduced the *Making IT* Happen Awards* (*Inclusive Teaching). Introduced with rousing music and a red carpet rollout, we honored four area teachers: **Christine Green, Our Lady of Mercy School**, Potomac, MD; **Alison Interlandi, formerly of Our Lady of Lourdes School**, Bethesda, MD; **David Long, Our Lady of Lourdes School**; and **Donna Reese, The Academy of the Holy Cross**, Kensington, MD. These teachers believe in every student's right to be an integral part of their class and in their own responsibility to help that child reach his or her potential while sharing their unique gifts with their classmates.

Thank you to our extraordinary Event Committee for all their hard work in ensuring the success of the spring benefit.

We can't wait to see you in person next spring. **Save the date - Friday, April 8, 2022 - for CCSE's 17th Annual Spring Benefit.**

To view the Spring Gala 2021 video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B6crfBSDdgP

How it looked behind the scenes

Guest stars and self-advocates Theresa Brogan & Breanna Vitak

Co-hosts Francesca Pellegrino & Tommy McFly

VOICES

"From an educator's standpoint, knowing that CCSE is here is a tremendous benefit. Knowing that there's an organization that is encouraging, that is championing, that is advocating for Catholic schools to be stretching and taking risks and learning about how enriching it can be to include a child with an intellectual disability. To have that encouragement and knowledge that these CCSE cheerleaders and leaders are here is without measure."

Maggie Hubbard, Ed.D.
CCSE Professional Advisory Board

We Can Help Your School

FREE OF CHARGE

"Believe in Me!" Grants

If your Catholic school is located in the Archdioceses of Baltimore or Washington and is considering expanding or creating a program to enroll two or more students with developmental/intellectual disabilities who would benefit academically, socially and spiritually from qualified special education instruction, CCSE invites you to submit a proposal for a seed grant.

Grants may be used to hire special education staff, purchase materials necessary to provide appropriate accommodations and modifications to the curriculum, and for professional development.

- To learn more about these grants or training, see: www.ccse-maryland.org/schools.html.

Training and Technical Assistance (TA)

CCSE's Training and Technical Assistance (TA) ensure that schools are equipped and staffed to meet the needs of students with disabilities and that teachers are well prepared to serve all students in their classrooms through select opportunities. Technical Assistance (TA) may consist of:

- in-service training, topical workshops and professional development;
- individual teacher coaching and collaborative teaching strategies;
- designing scheduling tailored to students' needs;
- defining the admissions process, reviewing IEPs and educational reports;
- establishing a peer mentoring program;
- implementing appropriate modifications and accommodations;
- year-long capacity building assistance tailored to a school's needs.

Teacher Tuition Grants

CCSE recognizes there is a chronic and pervasive shortage of special education teachers qualified to provide individualized special education instruction in the classroom. To help offset this shortage, CCSE has established the Teacher Tuition Assistance Grants for Advanced Degrees in Special Education to provide financial assistance to teachers and other professionals.

- For more tuition grant information, contact CCSE at 301–933–8844 or grants@ccse-maryland.org.

Golf Tournament Back on Course!

Our fourth annual *Believe in Me! Golf Classic*, on September 13 was the first in-person event sponsored by CCSE in nearly two years. It was wonderful to finally see so many good friends after such a long Covid-driven break.

Worthington Manor Golf Club in Urbana, MD hosted this year's fundraiser with nearly 100 golfers participating. The warm bright sunny day was a welcome change from past years when mother nature was not as cooperative. Everyone had a wonderful time as the golfers tangled with the challenging Worthington track.

CCSE President Francesca Pellegrino expressed special thanks to the Golf Committee including Co-chairs Frank Pellegrino and Christie Nawrot and Committee members: Mary Brogan, Anna McDermott-Vitak, Miguel Eaton and Sean Fromm. "We could not accomplish so much without the dedication of the Committee and the many volunteers who helped make the tournament an immense success."

There were several great low scores posted and congratulations are due to all our tournament winners this year, with special recognition for our ***first-place winning team*** from Howard Insurance.

CCSE extends heartfelt thanks to all supporters of this signature event which this year raised over $56,000, allowing CCSE to offer more grants and training to Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington and the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Thanks also to all our golfers for showing support for CCSE and an ever-larger universe of deserving Catholic school students who have developmental disabilities.

See you next year!

Special thanks to our generous sponsors and supporters without whom this event would not be possible:

Mary & Steve Brogan
Sean & Cathleen McCormick Fromm
Christie Nawrot & Steve Ikin
Bichop & Linda Nawrot

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Ory's Faith is Family's Anchor

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knowledgeable about everyone with different abilities. Everyone learns differently. Nobody is the same. The experience of having a sibling with a disability has instilled in us values of acceptance, patience and compassion. There is no room for exclusion, and everyone deserves to be included," she said.

During these challenging times caused by the uncertainty of the pandemic, everyone agreed that it has been especially difficult for students with disabilities. Learning from peers and socialization are important for these students. "The isolation and lack of socialization was stressful for all of us but especially for Ory," Debbie said. She explained that many of the children with disabilities are in high-risk health situations so many family and social activities had to be suspended.

As Ory's grade school days are coming to a close, the search for a high school is a top priority. *(See story on page 1, "Somebody's Knocking at Your Door.")* He is eager to continue his Catholic education – a family tradition for several generations. Ory's faith is important to him, and the family wants him to be able to grow in his faith at high school. Maria, who started high school on the day Ory was born, emphasized that any Catholic high school "would be the lucky ones to have Ory as a student. He would bring so much to the school. He is a blessing."

There are children like Ory in every single community, but programs in far too few. Because of CCSE's work, Ory's journey was a little easier.

With your generosity and support of CCSE, together we will continue to open hearts, open minds, and open doors to help ensure that children with disabilities find a place at the table and a Catholic school to call home. Together we are stronger.

Smiles all around

Nice Swing!

Winning Foursome members from Howard Insurance with an impressive score of 57 are Joe Kenary, Andrew Howard, Nate Cohan and Mike Quirk

Welcome to the Board!

New board member Maura Lannan & family

We are pleased to welcome Maura Kelly Lannan to CCSE's Board of Directors. Lannan is a long-time CCSE supporter and volunteer, and also serves on the Board of Education of the Archdiocese of Washington. She is a freelance reporter and has previously worked as a reporter for The Associated Press, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Waterbury* (Connecticut) *Republican-American*, mostly covering politics. Lannan is a member of the National Press Club, the Society of Professional Journalists and the John Carroll Society. While working for the *Chicago Tribune*, she was part of the staff that won a Pulitzer Prize in Explanatory Reporting for "Gateway to Gridlock," a 2001 series about air travel problems. Lannan has received numerous other awards and honors for her reporting.

"We are delighted to have Maura Kelly Lannan's communication skills as well as her strong commitment to inclusive Catholic education," Francesca Pellegrino said.

In joining the Board, Lannan said, "I am excited to join the CCSE Board of Directors which is an organization I have supported for many years since the birth of my son, who has Down syndrome. I believe in CCSE's mission of inclusive Catholic education and I look forward to helping CCSE in its efforts."

Maura Lannan is a parishioner of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Potomac, Maryland, where her volunteer activities for the church and school have included serving as co-president of the Mercy Parent Teacher Organization, a member of the School Advisory Council and a member of two Principal Search Committees. She also is a Board of Directors member and Secretary for the Potomac Woods Swim and Tennis Club in Rockville, Maryland. Lannan has a Bachelor of Arts from Boston College and a Master of Science in Journalism from Northwestern University's Medill Graduate School of Journalism. A native of Trumbull, Connecticut who now lives in Potomac, Maryland, Maura and her husband Robert have three children.

Somebody's Knocking at Your Door...

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There are two fabulous resources available for free for any high schools contemplating such an expansion:

CCSE's first publication *Including Students with Developmental Disabilities in Catholic Schools – Guiding Principles for Administrators and Teachers* https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/CatholicCoalitionforSpecial/GuidingPrinciples.html

And the NCEA Exceptional Learners White Paper, *One Spirit, One Body* http://www.ccse-maryland.org/NCEA-WhitePaper-OneSpiritOneBody.pdf

Will you open the door?

VOICES

"We may not have had our program, if it wasn't for the passion, prodding, pushing, and support of Francesca and the Catholic Coalition for Special Education. Francesca assured me that CCSE would walk with us and support us in making that decision to say yes.

"One of the things I hear most commonly from high schools who are exploring the question, is a fear of how they are going to financially support the program. Not only has CCSE helped us through grants, but that has inspired other donors and other foundations to also support the program. And then, on top of that, it just becomes a natural part of your operations.

"I think it really speaks to who we are as Catholics – to be able to say yes to bringing in an inclusion program. We have to overcome the fear that we have about how to financially support it or how our faculty will react. It really speaks to who we are as Catholics to be able to include all of our children in all of our schools."

Katy Prebble, President and CEO
The Academy of the Holy Cross
Kensington, MD

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Cynthia May, Ph.D.
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Bridget Shute
Teacher

Madeleine Will
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Save the Date!

2022 Spring Benefit
Friday, April 8, 2022

We can't wait to see you!