

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CENTER OF EXCELLENCETM

EXPANDING OUR REACH

CSCOE BEGINS
SERVING GREATER
MINNESOTA
SCHOOLS

PRINCIPAL PILGRIMAGE

CATHOLIC SCHOOL
LEADERS RENEW
ZEAL FOR MISSION

GROWING COMMUNITIES

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
EXPAND TO
MEET DEMAND



FALL 2022

Fall 2022

STENZEN CO

6

Catholic school leaders and staff attend a training session led by Phoenix School Counseling, the partner organization for CSCOE's Peace of Mind initiative. Photo by Jim Bovin.



14

St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic School staff and volunteers make room for the school's first middle school students in nearly 50 years. Photo by Jim Bovin.



16

St. Agnes School's David Johnson teaches a final class of second-grade students, retiring after nearly five decades of service. Photo courtesy David Johnson/St. Agnes School.



4

WELCOME
CSCOE President Brian Ragatz.

5

SUMMIT OF EXCELLENCE
Catholic school staff prepare for a day of faith, learning and fellowship.

6

PEACE OF MIND
Partnership brings mental health support and resources to students, parents and staff.

8

BELIEVE AND READ RESULTS
Literacy initiative boosts reading levels across more Catholic schools.

10

CSCOE EXPANSION
CSCOE brings "one size fits one" approach to Minnesota's preschool-8 Catholic schools.

14

SCHOOL GROWTH
Catholic schools expand across the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to meet demand.

16

TEACHER PROFILE
St. Agnes teacher David Johnson takes a final curtain call after nearly five decades.

17

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Enrichment opportunities for educators and leaders promote excellence.

18

FAITH FOCUS
Catholic school principals follow in the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land.

On the cover: Ellie V., seventh-grade student at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic School in Delano. Photo by Jim Bovin.

BOARD MEMBERS

Michael Cole
Global Business Educator, L'Oreal

Gail Dorn
Executive Chair, Catholic Schools Center of Excellence

Father Kevin Finnegan
Pastor, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, Edina

Steve Hoeppner
Vice President, Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation

Brian Ragatz
President, Catholic Schools Center of Excellence

Steve Ryan
Partner-in-Charge, Taft

Michelle Schlehuber
Teacher, Holy Trinity Catholic School, South St. Paul

Kathy Schneeman
Catholic Author and Community Volunteer

Anita Arockiasamy Wills
Former Director of Enrollment, Visitation School, Mendota Heights

Robert Wollan
Former Global Managing Director, Accenture Strategy

ON THESE PAGES ...

We share the story of Catholic education: how a history of excellence and a future of hope continue to shape generations of virtuous leaders.

Whether behind the scenes or front and center, we are passionate supporters of Catholic elementary schools in their pursuit to develop the whole child — mind, body and soul.

Copyright © 2022
Catholic Schools Center of Excellence



WELCOME



CSCOE PRESIDENT ★ BRIAN RAGATZ

A long, long time ago, I was a student at a Catholic elementary school like the nearly 35,000 students statewide we have the pleasure of serving today.

I recall one day in fifth grade when the teacher wheeled in the TV cart. I'm sure you can picture it now: an obscenely large tube TV with a safety strap over the top, VCR attached, multiple remote controls velcroed to the stand, and laminated instruction sheets taped to the side.

It was the beginning of science class, and the teacher wanted us to watch a video explaining an upcoming experiment, but first the actor portraying a scientist challenged us students with a warm-up question.

He took out two large buckets, one five gallon and one 10 gallon, both filled to the brim with water, and asked us, "Students, which is fuller?"

For a class of fifth graders, it was certainly a thought-provoking question, and I recall an exhilarating debate. "What's the answer?" one of the students shouted. The teacher simply said, "Neither one; full is full."

To some extent, this is how I view the Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE) as we begin the 2022-23 school year. Whereas we entered last year serving the full roster of 78 preschool through eighth-grade Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, we enter this year serving more, a "fuller" complement of all 152 Catholic schools in Minnesota. And we could not be happier!

A new school year always brings excitement and a promise of new growth, but God has blessed us more abundantly this year through a major investment from our initial and sustaining funder, the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation. This additional multi-year support makes possible our expansion to serve every preschool through eighth-grade Catholic school in the state by making connections, sharing best practices, and providing resources to move the needle in enhancing excellence and increasing enrollment.

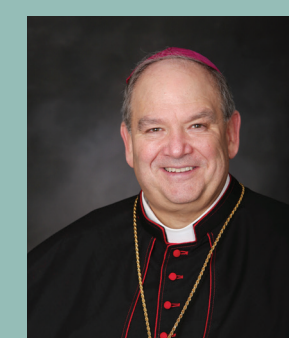
In this issue of our magazine, I hope that you enjoy reading about our "co-pilot approach" to helping each school be the best it can be and the ways Catholic schools are growing in excellence and in enrollment. The people and the achievements of Minnesota's Catholic schools, as well as CSCOE's expansion, will only increase the impact of our shared mission. Here we go! †

Catholic Schools

SUMMIT OF EXCELLENCE

OCTOBER 19 AT THE MINNEAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER

A full day of faith, learning and fellowship for all preschool-eighth grade Catholic school staff. Featuring: Mass with Archbishop Bernard Hebda and keynote presentation from Gerry Brooks.



Archbishop Bernard Hebda



Gerry Brooks



Andrea Gribble



Dr. Katy Lichon



Deacon Joe Michalak



Dr. Jules Nolan



Clare Roach



Brian Sinchak



FABULOUS SESSIONS:

- "5 Strategies to Boost English Learner Success" with Dr. Katy Lichon and Clare Roach
- "Making Magic Happen in Middle School" with Brian Sinchak
- "Prayer: How to Improve EVERYTHING You Do — Or Your Money Back" with Deacon Joe Michalak
- "Student Discipline With the Brain in Mind" with Dr. Jules Nolan
- "5 Keys to Social Media Success" with Andrea Gribble

And more!

Peace of MIND

CSCOE INITIATIVE SHINES A LIGHT ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

By Debbie Musser



Physical education teacher Mike Sullwold and middle school teacher Stephanie Coffee, both of St. Rose of Lima Catholic School in Roseville, attend August's all-staff training for Peace of Mind partner schools at St. Peter Catholic Church in Mendota. Photo by Jim Bovin.

Mental health is important in every stage of life. For students, social and emotional well-being is essential for success in the classroom.

Since July 2020, the Catholic Schools Center for Excellence's (CSCOE) Peace of Mind mental health and wellness initiative has equipped Catholic school communities with support and resources.

"Through our partnership with Phoenix School Counseling, Peace of Mind gives schools a menu of options to best support their school communities," said Brian Ragatz, CSCOE president.

The Phoenix School Counseling team, led by Dr. Jules Nolan, a licensed psychologist and nationally certified school psychologist, provides live and recorded webinars for educators and families, videos, presentations, in-person trainings and resources for students.

"The 'Phoenix' in our name refers to a human's ability to rise from adversity

and begin anew; we help students do just that by teaching them critical social and emotional skills," said Nolan, president and owner of the Twin Cities-based organization.

During the 2021-22 school year, Peace of Mind provided more than 5,600 hours of school counseling and reached more than 9,000 teachers and parents with webinars, doubling the numbers from 2020-21. In addition, a cohort of 10 partner schools received additional Peace of Mind resources, including on-site counselors; that number is expanding to 21 partner schools this school year.

Peace of Mind donor and campaign chair, Lisa Anderson, is thankful that CSCOE is successfully meeting the needs of children facing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. "It's exciting and rewarding to shine a light on how important this initiative is and to see 11 more schools with counselors on-site," Anderson said of the partner school initiative.

PROVIDING PEACE OF MIND

"I just watched the Peace of Mind webinar on 'parenting pitfalls.' This is why we chose Catholic education. The practical tips woven with our values of faith help me be a more confident parent. Thank you!"

- CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENT

"It helps to understand the brain science behind what happens in the classroom. Thank you for changing the way I think about behavior!"

- CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATOR

"I learned more in one hour than in two years of therapy!"

- CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENT

Dr. Jules Nolan of Phoenix School Counseling (center) leads a training for Catholic school faculty and staff members. Twenty-one Catholic schools are in CSCOE's Peace of Mind partner school initiative. Photo by Jim Bovin.



"Peace of Mind allows us to create healthy, positive and meaningful relationships that help students regulate intense emotions and create a positive learning environment focused on kindness, compassion and love," said Dr. Jennifer Krieger, principal at Holy Spirit Catholic School in St. Paul, a Peace of Mind partner school.

Building a toolbox of resources

A Holy Spirit parent's experience with Peace of Mind included evening sessions packed with insights and one-on-one sessions for her child and a counselor to talk about feelings and build confidence related to academic struggles.

"The counselor provides the love and guidance needed to build a toolbox of resources," she said.

Phoenix School counselor Tiffany Johnson works with students at Roseville's St. Rose of Lima Catholic School in individual, small-group and whole-class lessons.

"The relationship I have with the students and the collaborative relationship with the teachers allows students the space to address situations in the moment and find ways to problem solve," Johnson said. "I am there to walk alongside the students as they continue to see their greatness." †



True believers

Believe and Read program brings proven literacy results to Catholic schools

By Sandra R. Sabo

A literacy initiative in Catholic schools is making an impact on thousands of young readers — from those who struggle to those who excel to everyone in between.

The Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE) partners with Groves Learning Organization and Cretin-Derham Hall to bring Believe and Read to kindergarten through third-grade Catholic school classrooms. For the past five years, this structured, scientific approach to reading has met students where they are and taken them to the next level of comprehension. The statistics are telling.

In fall 2021, 79% of first-grade students at St. Jerome School in Maplewood were considered high risk for not reading at grade level. By spring 2022, that number dropped to 21%.

During the same school year, the number of St. Jerome students in first through third grade who were reading above grade level tripled.

“For many of the students who were reading below grade level, we found that the Believe and Read methodology was an effective way to help them gain or regain skills,” said Principal Anne Gattman, who noted the differences school staff particularly saw in new students in 2020 and 2021.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, as of 2019, the national average of students reading at grade level by fourth grade was only 35%.

Beginning in kindergarten, students master letter recognition, learn the correct sound associated with each letter, and move into building words. The literacy program devotes two hours per school day to reading or writing activities, including whole-group instruction, small-group support and independent study.

“There’s a challenge in front of us every day to teach language well,” said Gattman, noting that 70% of St. Jerome’s 175 K-8 students are multilingual learners. “The data tell us we’re moving children out of the high-risk category very effectively. We’re also proving that the Believe and Read model is very effective with English language learners.”

Gattman added, “It’s important to give a shout-out to the fact that CSCOE made a commitment and has stuck with it ... giving us an on-ramp of three years to learn the program, understand how to do it well, and then [help us make it sustainable].”

Results generate buzz

Like St. Jerome, St. Dominic School in Northfield is in its fourth year of Believe and Read.

“The program strives to have every child reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade. By the second year of the program, that’s exactly what we had,” said Brooke Johnson, St. Dominic’s enrichment specialist, literacy coach and sixth-grade social studies teacher.

Overall, for the 2021-22 school year, St. Dominic students in first through third grade who were reading at or above grade level rose from 52% in the fall to 74% in the spring — a 42% increase. Word has gotten out in the community, and school leaders weren’t surprised when a summer open house attracted parents who specifically asked about Believe and Read.

Students join their parents in giving the curriculum a thumbs-up. When Archbishop Bernard Hebda recently visited St. Dominic School, he asked a first-grade student to identify the best part of the school day. The student’s immediate answer: “Believe and Read.” †

BELIEVE AND READ

SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS

2021-2022

BELIEVE AND READ IS IN 49 PRESCHOOL-EIGHTH GRADE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, AND CSCOE WORKS TO PROVIDE THE PROGRAM TO MORE SCHOOLS EACH YEAR.

98%



of Believe and Read students improved their reading during the year.

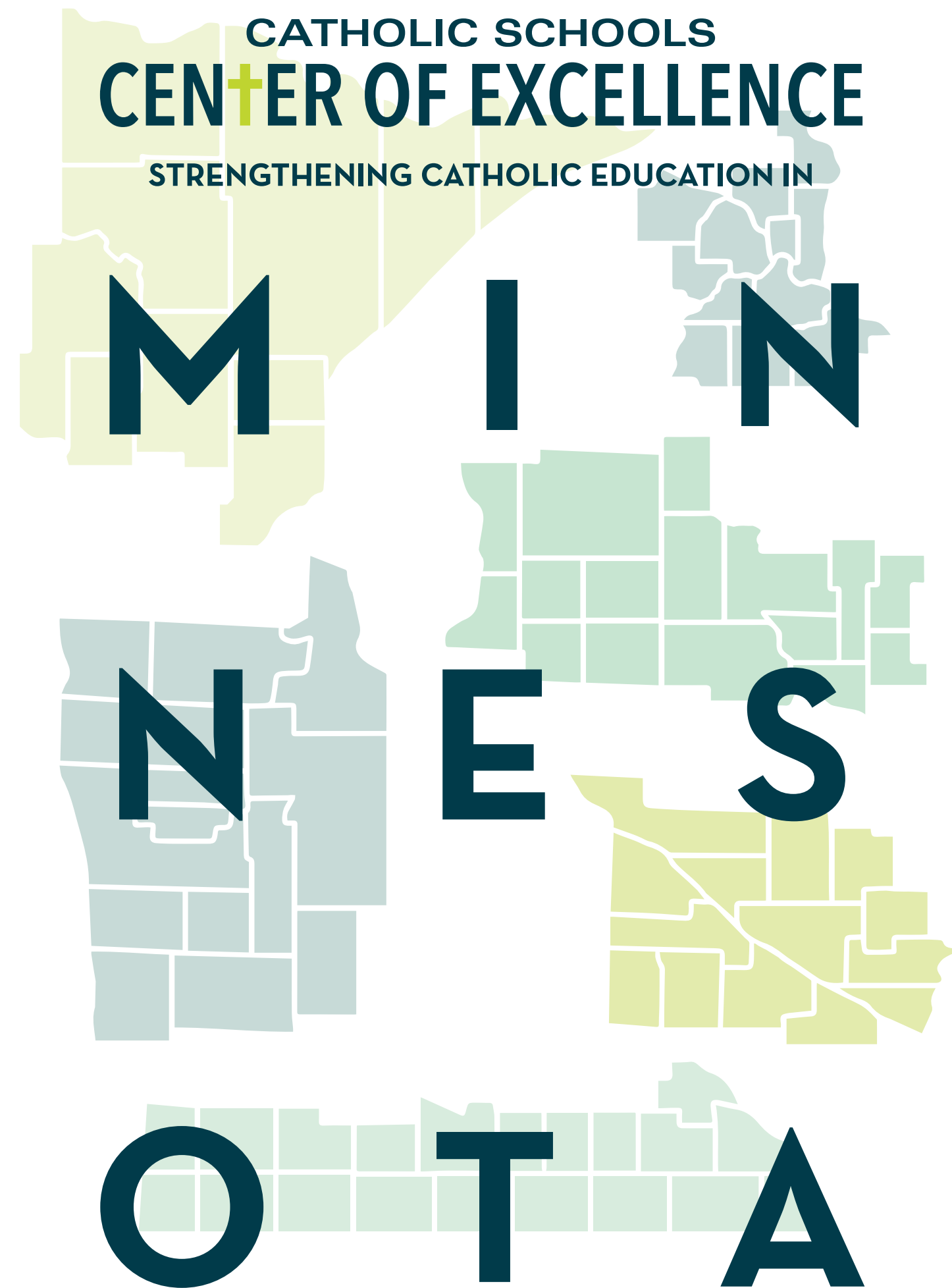
75%

of Believe and Read students were reading at or above grade level this past spring, a significant number relative to both national norms and to the starting point in the fall.

59%

of Believe and Read students made more growth than their peers across the nation, doing more to close the reading gap than the national norm by more than 9 points.

DATA COMPILED BY GROVES LEARNING ORGANIZATION.



Principal Sarah Striener of St. John Vianney Catholic School in Fairmont visits with CSCOE consultant Helen Dahlman. CSCOE photo.

CSCOE expands to serve all 152 preschool-8 Catholic schools statewide

By Debbie Musser

Seven years ago, the Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE) was established to enhance excellence and increase enrollment in the 78 preschool-eighth grade Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Now CSCOE is taking a big step forward by expanding to support Catholic schools in the state's other five dioceses — Crookston, Duluth, New Ulm, St. Cloud and Winona-Rochester.

"Thanks to the vision and generosity of Dick Schulze and the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, we can bring the 'CSCOE way' to 74 more Catholic schools throughout greater Minnesota," said Brian Ragatz, CSCOE president.

Since 2015, the Schulze Family Foundation has provided CSCOE with more than \$35 million to support Catholic schools. The foundation is now investing another \$10 million to bring CSCOE's successful programs, services and support to every preschool-eighth grade Catholic school in Minnesota.

Steve Hoeppner, vice president of the Schulze Family Foundation, noted

that the CSCOE team is upholding the foundation's vision of excellence in Catholic schools by working closely with their principals, pastors, teachers and others.

"We've seen measurable improvement in academic excellence, as well as a level of enrollment growth that hasn't been seen in decades," Hoeppner said. "The foundation's belief is that the work CSCOE is doing can have the same positive impact throughout the state and potentially beyond."

The additional CSCOE support followed the Schulze Family Foundation's outreach to the greater Minnesota Catholic schools in 2021 that included a \$25,000 challenge grant for each to assist with enhanced excellence and enrollment growth.

"All 74 schools met their challenges and ended up raising more than \$3 million on their own before the Schulze Foundation grants were paid," Hoeppner said. "Given that success and CSCOE's success, our board of trustees decided to invest \$10 million to see if CSCOE can help those schools and their communities move the needle to an even greater extent in the areas of excellence and enrollment."



St. Edward Catholic School in Minnesota



Director of Enrollment Kelly Refsnider visits St. Mary's School in Alexandria.



Graduating sixth-grade students at St. Mary's School in Tracy leave their mark on the library walls each year.

CSCOE photos.

WHO CSCOE SERVES



152

preschool–eighth grade
Catholic schools and
principals across Minnesota



35,000

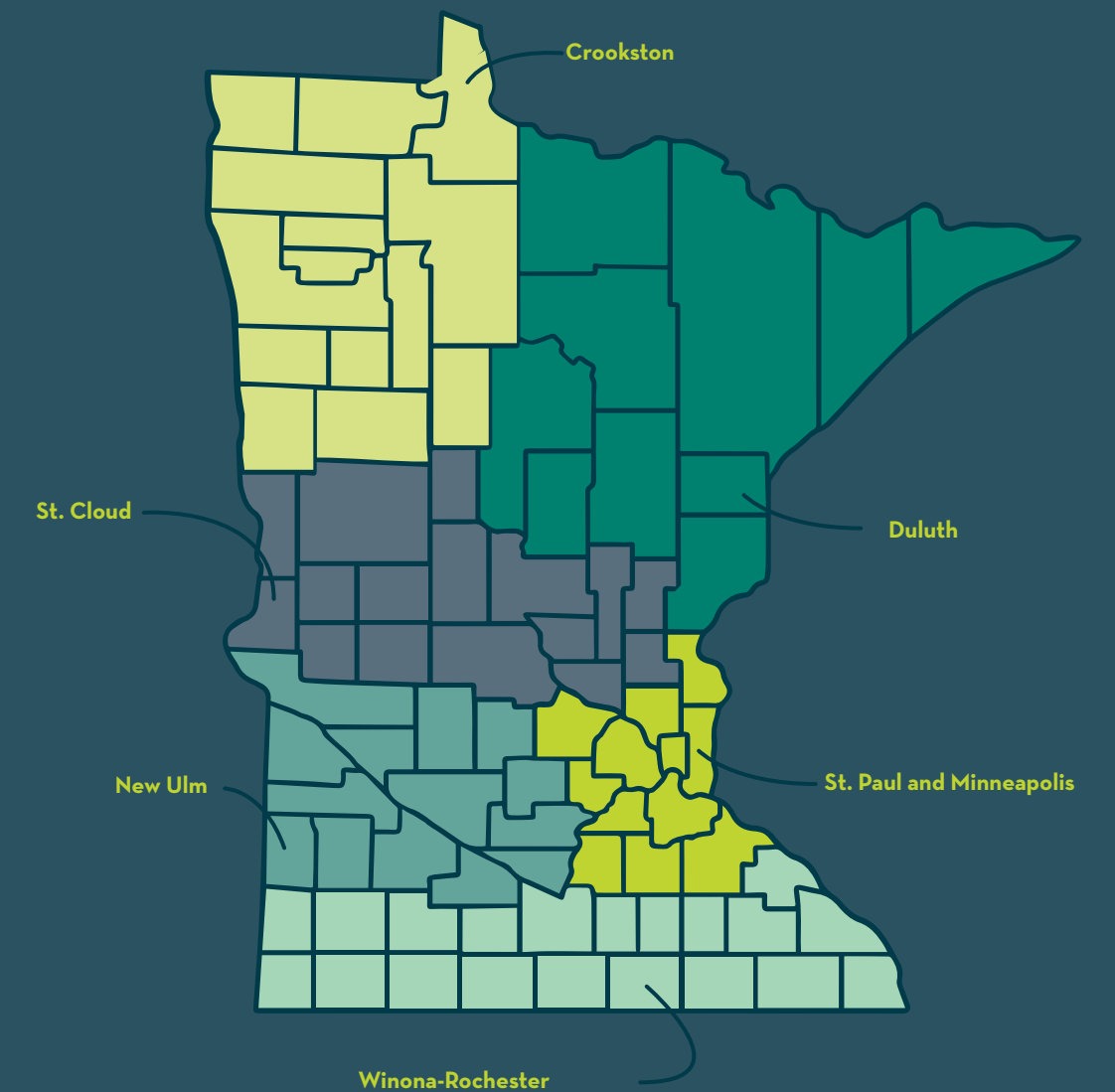
students



nearly
5,000

staff members

BRINGING THE CSCOE WAY TO MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



A 'one-size-fits-one' approach

During the summer, the CSCOE team hit the road, visiting all the Catholic schools outside of the archdiocese. They met principals, listened and learned about their needs, and toured the schools.

"Each Catholic school is unique, yet they all have the same foundational principles," said Helen Dahlman, a CSCOE consultant.

CSCOE is also connecting principals through its online Principal Hub and its "co-pilot" program with current and recently retired archdiocesan principals, who will be go-to contacts for a principal from greater Minnesota throughout the year. These pairings of

principals can learn from each other and support one another in numerous ways.

"We'll do what it takes to serve every school with CSCOE authenticity, where we focus on relationships with an opt-in, one-size-fits-one approach that gets results," Ragatz said.

Heather Pfannenstien, principal at St. Peter and Paul Catholic School in Richmond and St. Boniface Catholic School in Cold Spring, is excited about joining others who have the same mission and passion for educational excellence through Catholic schools.

"Partnering with CSCOE will give us new opportunities, new ideas, tried and proven strategies, and more," Pfannenstien said. "That ignites a new energy of hope for the present and the future." †



Building boom

Catholic schools expand to meet demand

By Sandra R. Sabo

Preschoolers at Our Lady of Grace Catholic School in Edina attend a welcome event. Photo courtesy Our Lady of Grace.



St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic School Principal Mary Ziebell (right), new seventh-grade teacher, Stephanie Ogland, and parent volunteers convert the staff lounge into the new seventh-grade classroom. Photo by Jim Bovin.

Last fall, Jackie Hartmann's twins were among the four new sixth-grade students at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic School in Delano. This fall, with the school's new middle school, the twins didn't have to make another change. Plus, their younger sibling, now a first-grade student, shares the same school schedule and calendar.

Initially attracted by St. Max's smaller class sizes, Hartmann appreciates how the school has helped her children develop good study habits and meaningful relationships. "Every single teacher knows my kids' names," said Hartmann, whose family isn't Catholic.

Preschool through sixth-grade enrollment has nearly doubled in the last five years, setting the foundation for a middle-school program, which St. Max hasn't had in nearly 50 years. The parish and school advisory board believed it was important to give students two more years of a faith-filled time to learn, grow and become more self-confident, according to Principal Mary Ziebell.

"When we asked current families if they were interested in opening a middle school, we heard an overwhelming 'Yes!'" she said. Ziebell needed at least eight students to make seventh grade viable; 12 registered, ensuring that eighth grade will be added in 2023. Families pitched in to move furniture, repaint classrooms, and empty a storage room that will become an art room and science labs.

With a \$10,000 impact grant from the Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE), the school purchased textbooks and other resources. Through the CSCOE Principal Hub, an online community board, Ziebell found free desks offered by St. Alphonsus Catholic School in Brooklyn Center. "That eased our budget and made the CSCOE grant go even further," she said.



Other Catholic school expansions across the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis:

Middle school

St. John the Baptist Catholic School, Jordan
St. Jude of the Lake Catholic School, Mahtomedi

Preschool

Ascension Catholic School, Minneapolis
St. Helena Catholic School, Minneapolis
St. John Paul II Catholic School, Minneapolis
St. Peter Claver Catholic School, St. Paul

Congratulations!

"CSCOE has been a blessing to us, helping us continue to grow."

Sized for preschool

While St. Maximilian Kolbe repurposed existing space, Our Lady of Grace Catholic School (OLG) in Edina completed construction of an addition. Part of it houses a new Catholic preschool — something the school community lacked.

"Our mission is making Jesus Christ known and loved, and we want to engage families right away with our youngest learners," said Nicole Rogers, OLG's preschool director. The school can accommodate 120 students, in addition to OLG's kindergarten through eighth-grade enrollment of approximately 700.

Katie Pearson was delighted to enroll her son in preschool this fall. Her daughter, a second-grade student, has flourished academically, spiritually and socially at OLG. "The education is top notch, and the OLG community is unparalleled. We have no doubt their faith and love will enfold the preschool as well."

All preschool students see OLG specialists for art, music, Spanish and library. The preschool has its own playground, large motor room, S.M.A.R.T. (Stimulating Maturity through Accelerated Readiness Training) room to encourage large muscle movement, and kitchenette for science experiments and cooking projects.

"We could have up to 60 preschool students next year crossing over into kindergarten," Rogers noted. "We're definitely a growing and thriving community." ✚

Teacher profile

David Johnson leaves a legacy at St. Agnes

By Victoria Rabuse

At St. Agnes School in St. Paul, one often caught former second-grade teacher David Johnson making his way from his classroom to lead rehearsal for the spring musical. He made this same journey for more than three decades when he began directing the high school musicals in 1988.

Even more impressive is his full tenure at the school. Johnson just retired after 49 years of service.

Reflecting on nearly five decades

A proud 1957 graduate of St. Agnes, Johnson ran his own dance studio before he decided he wanted to work with children beyond dance. He returned to teach in St. Agnes' lower school in 1973 right after receiving his education degree from the University of Minnesota. For most of Johnson's teaching career, his second-grade classroom has been his home. The theater is a close second. Johnson, who has a background in dance and choreography, directed 32 productions.

Now with retirement official, he's reflecting on his career. He's seen St. Agnes overcome challenges to become a thriving community that's requiring more space to accommodate significant growth. He taught through the introduction and integration of computers in the classroom. He's also watched students grow up for decades, including his own family members.

Eleven of Johnson's 22 grandchildren have attended the school, in addition to all his children. His wife, Nancy, also teaches at St. Agnes. This past school year, Johnson had two grandchildren in his last second-grade class.

"They call me 'Pa,' and the rest of the kids call me 'Mr. Johnson,' and nobody bats an eye," he said.

Dr. Kevin Ferdinandt, St. Agnes headmaster, shared admiration and respect for his colleague and friend.

"David has given St. Agnes nothing but his life," Ferdinandt said. "Not everyone works until they're 83 years old in a classroom of second graders. You want to talk about a man of faith and an example for children? David Johnson is the picture of that."

A career dedicated to Catholic schools

Johnson appreciates the opportunity to teach in a Catholic environment where each day starts with prayer and is dedicated to Christ.

"The climate here at St. Agnes has always been very nurturing and encouraging," he said. "Christ is our center. Faith is strongly encouraged and part of every moment."

In this next chapter, he'll miss the close involvement with the students, but he looks forward to new experiences. Even in retirement, Johnson plans to stay involved with the school's theater productions and serve as a substitute teacher.

The curtain may be closing, but not all the way. †

ENHANCING STAFF EXCELLENCE ACROSS CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

By Sandra R. Sabo and Jessica Trygstad

Catholic schools take pride in helping students become the best version of themselves. The Catholic Schools Center of Excellence (CSCOE) aims to do the same for Catholic school educators and staff in part by providing free workshops and other professional development opportunities like these two recent sessions.

Teachers attend summer technology training hosted by CSCOE and its partner, Bluum. Photo by Bob Cunningham.

Ben Tierney (left), CSCOE's director of excellence, leads Catholic school principals and their administrative teams in a Dynamic Duo workshop. Photo by Jim Bovin.



Technology sessions from CSCOE partner Bluum Technology

Summer is synonymous with school break. But Catholic school teachers and staff pour their hearts into their vocation year-round. Educators from across the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis participated in several technology professional development sessions that CSCOE hosted in partnership with St. Paul-based Bluum Technology. Teachers took advantage of a variety of offerings for practical classroom applications.

"Catholic school educators are excellent, and we continuously seek their feedback and provide targeted opportunities to sharpen skills, add to their instructional tool kit and ultimately provide the best experience possible for their students," said Ben Tierney, CSCOE's director of excellence.

Workshops covered the Google for Education suite of programs, as well as software and apps like SeeSaw. These are all tools that improve efficiency, productivity and organization for both educators and students. When teachers maximize their knowledge of these tools, students succeed.

"We know how crucial professional development is to enhancing excellence, and we also know how expensive and even inaccessible it can be," Tierney said. "That's why we're proud to offer these opportunities to Catholic school teachers and staff free of charge."

"Dynamic Duo" for principals and administrative assistants

Tierney recently led a two-day workshop, "Dynamic Duo," for principals and administrative assistants interested in strategies for working better together.

"CSCOE's seminars are not required, but you get so much out of them," said participant Jim Grogan, principal of Holy Cross Catholic School in Webster. "The packed room is a testimony to what CSCOE is trying to do — bring corporate techniques into the world of Catholic education."

Many of Tierney's recommendations for maximizing excellence in the front office resonated with him. For the first time in his 34 years in education, Grogan is delegating specific daily, weekly and monthly duties to office staff.

"Through delegation or cross-training, staff will be empowered to do more. That's a great efficiency because every person coming in or calling with a question doesn't necessarily have to wait for the principal to get the answer," Grogan noted.

As an administrative assistant, Stephanie Overell appreciated the opportunity to clarify roles and expectations with the new principal at Holy Trinity Catholic School in South St. Paul.

"We've talked about using the Daily Dynamic Duo Date or D4, where we meet for 30 minutes every morning to go through requests and the calendar," Overell said.

"Dynamic Duo" was the first CSCOE workshop Anita Davis, Holy Trinity's interim principal, had attended. She left with plenty to think about.

"As a new principal, I'm still figuring out which tools would work for us in a small school," Davis observed. "When we all do our jobs to the best of our ability, we help out everyone in the school community." †



St. Agnes teacher David Johnson. Photos courtesy David Johnson.

faith focus

By Sharon Wilson, CSCOE Event Manager

A generous CSCOE donor gifted pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Rome to archdiocesan Catholic grade school leaders. Last summer, the first group of leaders traveled to the Holy Land. They are: Tricia Menzhuber, St. John Paul II Catholic School in Minneapolis; Sister Maria Ivana, St. Croix Catholic School in Stillwater; Patrick Fox, formerly of St. Bartholomew in Wayzata; Eileen Douglass, formerly of Transfiguration Catholic School in Oakdale; Becky Kennedy, Our Lady of the Lake School in Mound; Jim Morehead, St. Peter Catholic School in Forest Lake; Dan Hurley, St. John School of Little Canada; Michael Rogers, Risen Christ Catholic School in Minneapolis; Theresa Gunderson, St. Stephen's Catholic School in Anoka; and Justin Shay, Ave Maria Academy in Maple Grove. Along with the principals' companions, pilgrims included Father Mark Pavlak, chaplain and theology teacher at Saint Thomas Academy in Mendota Heights, Mike Gerard, manager of CSCOE's C-STEM Lending Library, and CSCOE Event Manager Sharon Wilson. CSCOE photo.



Ten Catholic school principals, their spouses and other companions traveled to the Holy Land this summer. The trip, sponsored by a generous CSCOE donor, was an opportunity to see the sites where Jesus taught and deepen their faith to reinvigorate their leadership and schools.

The group saw three to four holy sites a day, including Calvary and Jesus' tomb; the region of Caesarea Philippi; the site of the wedding at Cana, where couples renewed their wedding vows; the sea of Galilee; and the town of Bethany, home to Mary and Martha.

Prayer and friendship

The pilgrimage was more than sight-seeing — it was also a spiritual journey that included daily Mass, prayer and reflection.

“Our group became a mirror of the early Church: We celebrated the Eucharist together each day; we enjoyed meals together; we encouraged and supported one another; we shared graces; and we laughed and played, all grounded in the one purpose of our being together, which was the Lord's

desire that we journey to the very landscapes which he traversed,” said Sister Maria Ivana, principal of St. Croix Catholic School in Stillwater.

Participants carried their own intentions on the pilgrimage. They offered prayers for their families, communities and Catholic schools along the way. Many developed new connections, including two principals who discovered they were praying for the same child battling cancer. These deep friendships will foster greater relationships among our Catholic school principals.

“I was blessed to walk in the footsteps of the Lord, and to do so with so many other wonderful and faithful principals was a true gift,” said Justin Shay, principal of Ave Maria Academy in Maple Grove. “As a new principal, I feel like I have a great new community of support. I know that this will continue to be a wonderful fruit of this pilgrimage.”

Renewed faith

Back at home, the principals are beginning the school year with renewed

excitement for their faith. Many are sharing their experiences within their school communities by speaking about the places they traveled and preparing presentations to share with staff and students. Others have become bolder about sharing their faith with staff and adding more time for prayer during the workday.

“I feel better equipped to talk about the life of Jesus, being able to visualize many of the places that we talk about in Scripture,” said James Morehead, principal of St. Peter's Catholic School in Forest Lake.

A renewed commitment to prayer, service and faith will continue to benefit not only Catholic school leaders, but also their entire school communities.

Our generous donor gifted every Catholic grade school principal in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis a pilgrimage to either the Holy Land or Rome, so we're excited to host more pilgrimages in 2023! †

Credits

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

EDITOR

Jessica Trygstad

COPY EDITORS

Phil Hoepfner
Jessica Weinberger

PROJECT MANAGER

Jessica Weinberger

WRITERS & CONTRIBUTORS

Debbie Musser
Victoria Rabuse
Brian Ragatz
Sandy Sabo
Jessica Trygstad
Sharon Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHER

Jim Bovin
Robert Cunningham

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Will Dinski

COMMENTS & STORY IDEAS

Jessica Trygstad at
jessicatrygstad@cscoe-mn.org

@CSCOE_MN

@CSCOE

@CSCOE_MN

CSCOE-MN.ORG

Save the
DATE

Catholic Schools
SUMMIT OF EXCELLENCE™

October 19, 2022

SHINE ON!™

March 12, 2023



April 1, 2023

CSCOE™
Bash

May 6, 2023

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Catholic Schools Center of Excellence
6600 France Ave S, #520
Minneapolis, MN 55435

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 29348



@cscoe_mn



@cscoe



@cscoe_mn

in

@company/catholic-schools-center-of-excellence

cscoe-mn.org