

# Advancing the Mission

## Catholic Education Is a Team Effort

▲ by Dr. Thomas Chadzutko

Many recall the visit of Pope Francis to Our Lady Queen of Angels School in East Harlem in September of 2015. While he was intrigued by the use of the SMART Board, he also used this time to reflect on the importance of Catholic education.

Pope Francis stated: "School then ends up being one big family, a family, where together with our mothers and fathers, our grandparents, our teachers and friends, we learn to help one another, to share our good qualities, to give the best of ourselves, to work together and to pursue our dreams."

The mission of Catholic education within the Diocese of Brooklyn shares in this important vision. Through the leadership of Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, Catholic education is made a priority and everyone associated with the Catholic academies and parish schools plays a vital role in advancing this mission.

Quality Catholic education is built upon a strong foundation of those who have gone before us and we continue to build for the future. Essential to our continued growth are: sustaining the mission of Catholic education for generations to come, providing students with the necessary skills to be successful in the future, the quest for academic excellence, supportive parish priests, dedicated principals, teachers and staff and the commitment of parents.

Reflecting on Catholic education, one of the first essential elements is the role that the Catholic faith plays in advancing the mission. Academies and parish schools are places for the new evangelization, which includes complete formation and service to others. Striving to follow the Gospel and creating learning environments based on values and virtues is an essential part of the Catholic identity of each academy and parish school.

### Living the Gospel

Upon entering an academy or parish school, one is reminded that the reason it exists is to infuse the Gospel message into academic programs, learning environments and into the culture within the learning environment. People can experience the

Catholic identity of an academy and parish school as soon as one enters the doors.

I enjoy visiting academies and parish schools throughout the year. What strikes me often are the conversations that I have with the pastors, parish priests, principals, teachers and students. They all share in enhancing the mission of Catholic education within the academy and parish school community. The students often share their experiences, whether it be in providing service to others, working with their classmates, participating in regular Mass and prayer experiences. All of this is fostered on a regular basis by our parish priests. The academy and parish schools are an essential element in the life of the parish.

Parents, as the first teachers, are partners in Catholic education. By choosing Catholic education, parents want not only a quality Catholic education, but also want for their children to have a full understanding of the Catholic faith.

The Catholic faith is the cornerstone of academies and parish schools in the diocese, and the students are the future of the Catholic Church. Through our Catholic Identity, we must continue to encourage them to be bearers of the Good News.

### Academic Excellence

Catholic academies and parish schools are charged with infusing the curriculum with strong Catholic values and virtues, while striving to provide academic excellence. It is not Catholic identity or academic excellence – it "both and" – and each is equally important to the success of each individual student.

Academic excellence is achieved through the instructional leadership of principals. Through their efforts to guide teachers, they ensure that the necessary resources are available to them. In addition, through the efforts of various benefactors and partnerships with the colleges and universities, principals and teachers are provided with extensive professional development in all academic areas.

The academies and parish schools in the Brooklyn Diocese have been the recipients of the generosity of the St. Elizabeth Seton Trust. Through its financial support, several programs have been established:

- Artist in Residency – a fine arts program for fourth, sixth and eighth graders infused with play writing, the literary classics and production of plays
- Greek and Latin Roots Challenge –

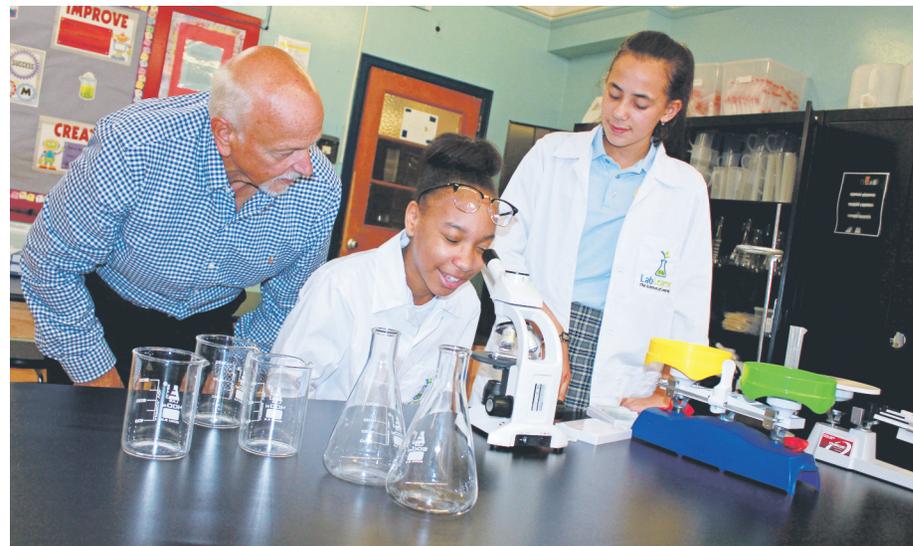


Photo © Marie Elena Giossi

▲ Dr. Keith Verner, founder of LabLearner, instructs students using LabLearner STEM Lab equipment at Salve Regina Catholic Academy, East New York, in this 2017 file photo.

a program providing all students with an understanding of the English language based upon Latin and Greek words

- STEM Labs – providing 30 academies and parish schools with a state-of-the-art science, technology, engineering and math lab for use students in all grades.

Over \$3 million has been contributed by the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Trust for these efforts.

DeSales Media Group continues to provide academies and parish schools with the latest technology and infrastructure. Through the generosity of DeSales Media, academies and parish schools have received iPads and Chromebooks for teachers and students, internal wiring and professional development for teachers and principals.

Through partnerships with Catholic colleges and universities, academies and parish schools have been provided programs in math and English language arts.

The goal of academic excellence is to ensure that all students are provided with a well-rounded academic program allowing them to develop their critical thinking skills and apply what they have learned to real-life situations. Dedicated teachers make this happen each and every day. It is important to show true appreciation for everything teachers do for the students entrusted to them. This appreciation is also extended to administrators who work tirelessly in a striving to provide each student with a quality Catholic education.

### Partners in Catholic Education

In the academy governance model, academies have found true partners in the Board of Directors. These volunteers work tirelessly to support the efforts of the principal. The Board of Directors provide their time, talent and expertise to enhance the mission of Catholic education. Their contributions in development, finances, marketing and recruitment are essential to the

success of the academy governance model.

As partners, the Board of Directors support the pastor as spiritual moderator of the academy and the principal as the chief catechist and instructional leader.

Catholic academies and parish schools receive great support from parents who sacrifice each day for their children to be provided with a quality Catholic education. This is never easy, but parents continue to make Catholic education a priority for their children.

### Skills for Future Success

Catholic education within the Diocese of Brooklyn is focused on providing each student with a quality Catholic education. By everyone working together, the students will be provided with the necessary skills to be successful in the future.

Catholic education is a true "team" effort and when everyone communicates, cooperates and concentrates on the needs of the students, we will be successful in forming the whole child: spiritually, emotionally, educationally and physically.

As we prepare for this new academic year, let us all work together for the students enrolled in academies and parish schools. They are the future and they need support, encouragement and attention.

As Pope Francis has reminded us, "Catholic education allows us to celebrate the opportunities which enable each of us all, not to lose hope of a better world with greater possibilities. Catholic education allows us to dream and to move ahead in our lives. Everyone has a role in attaining those dreams and we all must work together to ensure that dreams are met."

May the Holy Spirit inspire everyone for a successful 2018-2019 academic year!

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