

## Schools recognized for inclusiveness in national study

Dear Friends of Catholic Schools,

Do you know what do the following items have in common?

Read Live, Soliday System, Barton System, SuccessMaker, Sensory Tubs, Weighted Vest/Lap Belts, Universal Design for Learning, Handwriting without Tears, Adaptive Classroom Equipment, KPALS/ PALS Reading, Read Naturally, Rewards, ALEKS Math, LexiaCore5 Reading, Voice Activated Software, Standing Desks, Bookshare, Spelling Mastery, Touch Math, FM System, Braille Notetaker, Braille Writer, CCTV, Learning Ally and Infnitext,.

These all are tools utilized in our Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas to help meet the needs of all learners, especially those students with special needs. In addition to these, Catholic schools provide student advocates, aides, resource rooms, specialized labs, summer programs, student improvement teams, counselors, paraprofessionals, and learning resource teachers.

However, the most important component of how Catholic schools meet the needs of students with special needs does not involve programs or materials. While programs and materials are, indeed, important, the most important aspect of what our Catholic schools in this area of education involves something less tangible - the sincere desire to serve all children and welcome them as the masterpieces of God that they are.

Here is what our parents tell us:

“Our daughter is flourishing at her Catholic school because she is accepted exactly as God created her. We have been overwhelmed by the way God has used her life to inspire others as she becomes an active member of her school community. She is surrounded by people who respect the gift of her life each day as she joyfully gets to live her Catholic faith. She is blessed!”

“We are so blessed to be able to send our daughter to a Catholic school despite her limitations. She has grown and thrived for the last 5 years under the guidance of teachers, administration and support staff who have gone above and beyond in learning about her unique needs and God-given talents. I am so impressed that I have never heard “we can’t do that,” but rather “let’s figure out how we can make this work.”

In June of 2016, our Catholic schools were recognized by the Center for Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University for being more inclusive of students with special needs than other Midwestern and national Catholic schools. This is a remarkable accomplishment considering that the Perfect Wings program (our program for supporting schools in meeting the needs of students with special needs) has only been in existence since 2000. I am very proud of our schools for their efforts, and while we appreciate this recognition, we know there is much more to be done...and we intend to do it!

¡Vaya con Dios!