



DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

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OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS

April 30, 2018

Dear Parents,

I am excited to announce that we have begun implementation of ***Transforming the Paradigm of Catholic Education***, a \$5,000,000 initiative funded by a generous donor to help us fulfill some of the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan, *Transforming Our Future* that was announced this past fall. While there are a number of programs that will be launched in both our elementary and high schools, the one I will focus on in this letter is the Personalized Learning Initiative. This initiative will be rolled out at all elementary schools over the next three years, starting with six schools in September, 2018 including Assumption in Fairfield, St. Gregory the Great in Danbury, Holy Trinity Catholic Academy in Shelton, the Upper School at the Catholic Academy of Stamford, Our Lady of Fatima in Wilton, and at the new multi-age school, St. Joseph Catholic Academy in Brookfield.

While many teachers in the diocese already personalize learning and differentiate instruction, this initiative gives them the tools to take what they already strive to do and bring it to the next level. The initiative will provide for an updated technology infrastructure, new hardware and student devices, and programs to support the traditional Catholic school educational experience. In addition, schools will dedicate a portion of each day to a “station-rotation” model in which students will utilize an instructional approach that incorporates: (may vary based on age/grade of students)

An online suite of programs that presents material and practice in a way that is adaptive and responsive to student ability, skill, and performance

- Teacher directed instruction to small groups which are formed based on student need as indicated by performance on online programs and teacher observation
- Student collaboration on a teacher assigned project (allowing for some student voice and choice based on age and standard to be addressed) to create and communicate so as to demonstrate mastery of appropriate knowledge and skills
- Individual student time for reflection and planning

Teachers will utilize this method, addressing a different core subject each day, in order to support student learning in a way that addresses the needs of each individual student and demonstrates a recognition that all children are made in the image and likeness of God and that each brings unique God-given gifts and talents to the classroom.

Personalized learning is student-centered and allows students to learn in an environment that taps their unique needs and strengths to engage, inspire and empower them to reach their highest potential. Teachers are central to the personalized learning initiative, and the diocese will continue to provide support and training so that teachers can create a personalized learning model that will work for their students. Technology will be a tool to assist teachers by providing guidance in creating an individualized path for each student, and to use integrated digital content with the current curriculum. This does not mean that students will be isolated on devices for an entire class period, but instead students will be actively engaged in their learning and will employ 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication.

In addition to the personalized model, each school will be offered a complete “Innovations Lab” to further enhance the school’s STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) offerings. In this lab students will have opportunities to participate in hands-on imaginative and inspired activities to experiment, invent, design, and create while discovering concepts through lab stations such as Robotics, Coding, Engineering and Design, 3D Printing, and Digital Media and Broadcasting.

I have personally met with each of the faculties of the Phase I schools and they are excited at the possibilities that this new initiative will bring. While some professional development has already begun, all six schools will come together this Friday for the official kick off of the initiative during a full day professional development and networking session for teachers during which they will meet our partners in the initiative: Apple, Fairfield University, Christian Brothers/Catholic School Management, and Catapult Learning. We realize that, just as our students deserve a personalized approach to learning, so do our teachers and we will be walking teachers through the professional development, certificate programs, coaching, and support that will be available to them as bring this initiative alive in the classroom.

We are currently finalizing the details for a parent meeting during which we can more fully explain our plans to personalize and individualize instruction for students but wanted to share this news with you now as we begin the official implementation of this exciting new initiative.

Sincerely,
Dr. Steven F. Cheeseman
Superintendent of Schools