

Faith. Academics. Service.

Catholic Schools

TODAY'S CATHOLIC CELEBRATES

Catholic Schools Week

St. Joseph Grade School

A National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence

celebrating
JANUARY 29 - FEBRUARY 4

Faith. Academics. Service.

Catholic Schools Week

- Children are educated in the teachings of the Catholic Church and in embracing a Catholic way of life
- A qualified, caring, and committed faculty and staff
- A core curriculum that far exceeds state standards
- Consistent excellence in state standardized testing
- Strong programs in music, visual arts, computers, foreign language, & physical education
- 1 of 46 US Catholic Schools to be named a 2011 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the US Department of Education
- Designated a Four-Star School by the Indiana Department of Education
- After-school care program
- Excellence, character, and sportsmanship on the athletic field

**St. Joseph
Grade School
K-8 Open House**
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Sunday, January 29
11:00am-1:30pm
--
216 N. Hill Street
South Bend, IN 46617
574-234-0451
www.stjosephgradeschool.com



Educating hearts and minds in the Holy Cross tradition since 1854



KAY COZAD

Meg Ryan works with freshman Thomas Dooley, right, and junior Dylan Call, center, during a Pathways to Success class at Bishop Luers High School. The Pathways to Success program is a new initiative developed by Ryan to serve those students with special needs.

Bishop Luers serves special needs students with new program

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — Pathways to Success, an innovative new program implemented at Bishop Luers High School last year, is blazing trails for special needs students in search of a Catholic education in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. In its third semester, the program, developed and facilitated by Meg Ryan, ensures that this Catholic high school lives up to its vision statement to “expand our challenging curriculum to include more course offerings, which address the needs of students at every

level.”

The program, housed in the old home economics room, is designed to assist any student who has a working individual educational plan (IEP) for a diagnosed disability. Those disabilities may include attention deficit disorder (ADD), Asperger’s Syndrome — a high functioning form of autism, autism, cognitive, learning, and/or physical disabilities, and other health impairments such as epilepsy.

Pathways to Success came to life after Bishop Luers Principal Mary Keefer reported to Ryan

NEEDS, PAGE 18

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Catholic School!



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Sunday, January 29, from 12:30-2:00

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- ✓ Our belief that Christ is the reason for the school
- ✓ Our warm and caring atmosphere
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For more information about our school, please call 432-4000

Open House to visit our schools on both campuses: February 1, 2012- 9 AM to 2 PM

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Open House Sunday, Jan. 29, 1-3 p.m. www.StPiusCatholicSchool.net

NEEDS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

that state funds earmarked for special education were budgeted through Fort Wayne Community Schools for Luers.

"She said they had money and wanted to hire a new teacher," says Ryan. The young and enthusiastic teacher took the challenge, and as a third party contract employee, set about designing a program that would meet the needs of the diverse group of students with whom she would work.

Ryan, a native of Fort Wayne and parishioner of St. John the Baptist Parish, is a 2005 graduate of Bishop Luers. She holds a bachelor's degree in education, with a minor in communicative disorders, from Saint Mary's College at Notre Dame.

After a year teaching abroad in Ghana, her initial intent was to work with elementary-aged students. But when Keefer invited her to take on this project, she admits she was intrigued. And after the initial adjustment and "establishing her turf" at the high school, Ryan says, "I love this age of student. I am comfortable and really like that I can have an adult conversation with them."

After completing a mission statement and philosophy for

Pathways to Success, which is an elective course that earns a grade, Ryan realized that without teacher support her program would not fly. So, in August of 2010, with hopeful determination and a Power Point presentation she set out to win over Luers' 41 faculty members.

"I approached it in the light that we can serve these students the best way possible. They are still children of God and deserve to be educated," she says passionately, adding, "The teachers are really flexible here with my program. It's a learning process for all of us."

This semester 17 of 40 students who have IEPs are scheduled for the 50-minute classes throughout the day, while many come to Ryan intermittently for special assistance with assignments or exams. Many of the classes are one-to-one intervention, while others are small group study.

In what Ryan calls a guided study hall, her students are required to bring assignments or study materials to work on, along with their planner, which helps the students develop organizational skills. Twice each quarter, Ryan prints out each student's grades, with a detailed report on any missing assignments for any grades below a C-, information important for future studies.

Though academic success is the focus, the heart of the program is Ryan's ability to adjust



Meg Ryan works on an assignment with freshman Thomas Dooley during a Pathways to Success class at Bishop Luers High School.

each session to the individual student's need. She assists students with social skills, interaction, anger management and life skills, as well. One student is learning teeth brushing and basic hygiene. "Every day is different," says Ryan, adding, "There's lots of flexibility."

Developing a relationship with each student is high on Ryan's priority list and she works diligently to create opportunities to do just that.

"I have a conference once

every quarter to talk with them," she says. "I feel like at the high school level having a conversation can build a relationship."

Ryan creates a classroom that is "safe, comfortable and open."

"Kids know the boundaries, but the room is relaxed," she reports, adding, "They trust me and that means a lot to me. Through these experiences they can learn to be upstanding people."

Freshman Thomas Dooley seems to be reaping the benefit

of Pathways and says, "Actually I can do my homework because I get helped by Ms. Ryan. She's a nice teacher."

Junior Dylan Call couldn't agree more that Pathways to Success impacts his education. "I'm doing a lot better. We work on history, which is my hardest class. I can take tests here and she can read them to me. She's my best friend and hero!"

Ryan was encouraged by the meeting held at St. Charles School in Fort Wayne on Jan. 18 for parents, teachers and administrators who were interested in providing a Catholic education for their special needs students.

"Acknowledging the fact that there is a need and knowing they must address it is the first step," Ryan says.

When asked about her hope for the future of Pathways to Success, Ryan enthusiastically replies, "I'm very hopeful. Eventually I'd like the program to become Luers' own special education program run by them. I'd love for Luers to train more teachers, to serve more students."

As for her very diverse and special students she says, "My goal for them is to grow as students and individuals by the time they leave Luers. I want them to be successful in life."

No one can argue with that.