



NEWS RELEASE

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Madonna Community of Inclusive Education & Services

The Archdiocese of Omaha Catholic Schools and Madonna School & Community-Based Services, in partnership with St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic School and St. Pius X/St. Leo Catholic School, are launching a new program, the Madonna Community of Inclusive Education & Services. The program's aim is to expand opportunities to serve students and adults with mild to moderate intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Omaha area.

Beginning in August of the 2019-2020 school year, the Madonna Community of Inclusive Education & Services will serve students with mild to moderate intellectual and developmental disabilities at St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Pius X/St. Leo, while expanding pre-vocational and vocational training programs at Madonna School & Community-Based Services.

"I am very pleased that Madonna, St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Pius X/St. Leo have joined forces in order to expand the Church's ministry," said Archbishop George Lucas, "This program is another living example of our Catholic community's dedication to educate and serve all of God's children."

Evidence shows that inclusive practices benefit individuals with disabilities and their neuro-typical peers. The Madonna Community of Inclusive Education & Services will execute evidence-based practices to provide the highest quality faith-based services, all in the least restrictive environment. "The goal of inclusion is to maximize opportunities for all students to participate in the classroom and for all adults to live and work in the community," said Jon Burt, President of Madonna School & Community-Based Services.

Burt expressed the timing is right for this important step. Madonna School & Community-Based Services will leverage its nearly 60-years' experience to lead the

program and support both schools through ongoing professional development and advisement. In time, the program is expected to more than double the number of individuals currently served. “Our foundress, Sr. Mary Evangeline, was a cutting-edge leader. This partnership is a natural extension of her vision and life’s work.” said Burt.

Through the partnership Madonna School & Community-Based Services will continue to expand its pre-vocational and vocational programs, including: High School, Transition, Employment Services and Community-Based Services. St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic School will serve students with intellectual and developmental disabilities across grades PK-8, while St. Pius X/St. Leo will offer services in grades PK-1 and then expand services incrementally in the coming years.

“Joining the Madonna Community of Inclusive Education & Services is a natural step for our school. Our community is dedicated to meeting the needs of every student we serve, and we are excited to expand our tremendous education program,” said Fr. Steven Stillmunks, Pastor at St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Church.

The Madonna Community of Inclusive Education & Services complements recent efforts by the Archdiocese of Omaha Catholic Schools to expand Catholic education opportunities, efforts that have resulted in a positive net enrollment in Catholic schools over the past five years. “My hope is that one day, any family, regardless of finances, or ability or disability of any kind, who wants a Catholic education, will have that opportunity. This program helps us bring that to reality,” said Dr. Michael Ashton, superintendent.

Families who are interested in the program should contact Madonna School & Community-Based Services President, Jon Burt, at jburt@madonnaschool.org. New special education faculty positions have been created to support each school, and job postings can be found at <https://careers.archomaha.org/>.