

Archdiocese announces first STEM schools

Interim superintendent Barbara Edmondson announced Jan. 28 that the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Department of Catholic Schools has developed a criteria and a process for designating STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) schools.

She also named the first schools to meet the criteria developed by the archdiocese. Starting in the fall of 2011, Baltimore's Holy Angels, Towson's Immaculate Conception, Ellicott City's Resurrection-St. Paul, Parkton's Our Lady of Grace School, Pasadena's St. Jane Frances de Chantal School, Aberdeen's St. Joan of Arc School and Frederick's St. John Regional School will have the STEM designation.

"In a time when our nation and schools seek to provide our students with learning experiences which prepare leaders in a global and technologically advanced society," Edmondson said, "we are proud to recognize seven of our elementary schools which have identified the establishment of STEM instruction as a key initiative for the 2011-2012 school year. The work of these schools and their partnerships with the higher education and private industry will create a network of affiliates and begin to build a cadre of instructional mentors for our elementary school faculty and students."

The archdiocese has introduced several enhanced academic programs in the last few months.

STEM schools will have continuous professional development for teachers, integrated use of computer technology and technology teaching tools, a successful advanced math track, data-driven decision-making, the presence of a science lab, and partnerships with businesses and/or universities focused on one or more STEM disciplines.

St. Jane Frances de Chantal and St. Joan of Arc recently received federal grants to fund STEM-related professional development.

St. Joan of Arc will host a Technology Fair from 10 a.m. to noon. Feb. 3. Contact Dr.

Jane Towery jtowery@stjoanarc.org for more information or to RSVP.

Archdiocesan high schools have also made advancements in the STEM disciplines, including Archbishop Spalding and Seton Keough, both of which offer the Project Lead the Way program.

Holy Angels Catholic School, which is located on the same campus as Seton Keough, will benefit from the relationship due to the high school's strong engineering and biomedical programs as well as its successful partnership with St. Agnes Hospital. Seton Keough, which also offers an Aerospace Engineering program to its students, was recently named one of two schools in the Baltimore-Washington area to participate in the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's DREAM Lunar Extreme Workshop next June.

"In addition to these seven schools," Edmondson said, "many elementary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese have placed an increased emphasis in the areas of math and science and are integrating technology in their instruction to better prepare our students for careers in these rapidly advancing fields. As a result, parents can be confident in their choice of a Catholic school to educate, form and challenge their children as they prepare for the next phase of their academic careers."

The news release said the archdiocese will work to encourage all Catholic schools to participate in educational methods and approaches that have been inspired by the recent national commitment to science, technology engineering and math.

For more on Catholic schools in the archdiocese, visit archbalt.org/aplacetogrow.