

Teachers equip themselves for classroom with development days

As a religion and science teacher for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades at Our Lady of Grace School in Parkton, Addison Beck knows that she is challenged with forming young people at an important age.

That's why she was particularly excited to take part in an Equip for Ministry professional development day Nov. 4 at Resurrection-St. Paul School in Ellicott City.

Across the diocese that day, 1,302 Archdiocese of Baltimore teachers took part in 45 classes in 23 parishes. Another professional day was held for the teachers Oct. 10.

Equip for Ministry is the archdiocesan process for lay ministry, based on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' document, "Co-Workers In the Vineyard Of the Lord," and its formational areas – spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral. Equip's formation process consists of two levels. Level one is comprised of one course in each of the four areas, and level two includes one course in each of the spiritual, human and pastoral areas, and three courses in the intellectual area.

Beck said she enrolled in Equip for Ministry for spiritual growth and education.

"I just want to get as much as I can so I can go back and share it with my students and help them to continue to grow in their spiritual journey also," she said.

Beck, who recently earned her second master's degree from Loyola University Maryland, has found Equip's online courses with Tom Little on spirituality and Mae Richardson on church and ministry to be very informative.

"I find it to be a very positive means to take a class," Beck said. "I find the discussion board helpful. The teacher of the course will pose a question about the reading we're assigned and then we have to undergo reflection on our own and respond via the computer. All of us in the class have to talk through the discussion board. It's an excellent outlet and growth process."

Richardson, coordinator of pastoral leadership formation, said the professional development days are aimed at preparing Catholic school teachers to understand the basics and essentials of the faith and understanding the mission of the schools.

“We also have theology classes, some of the basics of Catholic theology, so that our teachers are skilled and competent to articulate that to their students,” Richardson said. “It’s been a really impressive outreach of the Department of Evangelization and the Department of Schools.”

Anne Finn, a teacher’s aide at Resurrection-St. Paul, said part of the workshop lessons included how volunteers can be used in the classroom and the nature of leadership.

As an aide, enrolling in the class was optional, but Finn said she wanted to because, “it would be good to think about my own faith and how that would help the children I work with. It’s been interesting to talk with teachers from other Catholic schools, meet them and talk about how they collaborate in their own school.”

Finn, who has children at Resurrection-St. Paul and is embarking on teaching as a second career, said that she had never taken an online class before. It has allowed her to reflect on questions addressing the nature of leadership.

“This is the first step in a long process for me,” she said. “I’m starting a new career path and also starting this course. Hopefully, they’ll progress together. It’s a huge undertaking trying to get all the teachers from the archdiocese to do this. I know they’ve working really hard on this.”

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