

Towson Catholic's Marian Program to assist students with learning needs

Towson Catholic High School was awarded a \$50,000 Knott Foundation grant to launch its Marian Program, a resource plan to provide assistance to students with learning needs who are still capable of successfully managing the school's college preparatory curriculum. The grant will be used for salary and startup costs.

In the past, teachers addressed learning needs in the classroom and provided after-school assistance, but often students with learning needs were not accepted into the curriculum because the school had no resources to support them.

Students in the new program must have documented learning needs such as dyslexia, processing issues or attention deficit disorder (ADD), which can be accommodated during the school day. Those students will use the same curriculum in all subjects as other students outside the Marian Program.

The plan is for students to meet daily one-on-one with a resource specialist to cover study skills, organization, assignments and SAT preparation. Small groups will reinforce learning strategies to help manage the curriculum in the mainstream classroom.

Robin Bruck began at Towson Catholic in January as the full-time resource specialist working with students on a pull-out basis while the program was being developed by Towson Catholic and funding sought. She will return for the new school year.

"Her credentials are strong in the area of special education and her experience in both special and regular education spans more than 30 years in Baltimore County," said Mrs. Pitz. As the program grows, the principal hopes to hire a part-time counselor. Program fees should make it self-sufficient in the future.

Other Marian Program highlights include personal educational plans for students which will outline their needs, and strategies to meet those needs. Parents will

regularly approve the plan and receive reports from Mrs. Bruck about students' progress. She will help parents navigate the system in cases where testing is needed and extended time for SATs is necessary, and she will help resolve other issues involving outside resources.

The guidance counselor, Tom Whedbee, will assist Marian Program students in managing the demands of high school.

"Having time during the school day to meet with the resource specialist should support students with strategies to handle classroom assignments, projects and independent work at home," said Mrs. Pitz. "I am thrilled to offer this program to our students who may need a little extra help to achieve success."