

Holy Cross Catholic School

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Kids learn best when using more than just their eyes and ears

Holy Cross Catholic School uses multi-sensory teaching methods to better reach all learners



Teacher Miss Annette Barrett said that the first graders enjoy the many hands-on manipulatives they use to learn.

"We use the connecting cubes to count and to make towers to find out about the relationship of numbers to each other. We then use the information to make bar graphs."

"During phonics class we use all kinds of manipulatives to help us learn sounds, and put sounds together to make words we can read and write. One of our favorites is the strange balls we use to toss and catch while making sounds," commented Miss Barrett.

The manipulatives are part of Holy Cross Catholic School's efforts to address multiple learning styles among all students from EC3 to eighth grade. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 4.6 million children--7.8% of children 3-17 years of age--have been told they have a

learning disability. Many of these learning disabilities can be overcome when teachers incorporate a variety of senses in the learning process.

Mrs. Robin Jo Jensen took a few moments recently to share the efforts of faculty and staff to address the needs of children of all abilities and learning styles through the implementation and use of this multi-sensory approach at Holy Cross Catholic School.

Why did you begin working on addressing the needs of kids with learning challenges? Did you notice an increase in kids with these needs? We haven't noticed an increase. There have always been "struggling students," we just know more about them now--that they learn differently than other children. Most often, it is not that these children cannot learn, they just need to learn differently.

What have you been doing the past several years to meet the needs of children who learn differently than the majority of students? One of my visions for the programming at HCCS is to meet the individual learning needs of each and every student.

We have brought in various in-service presenters to speak to us and educate us on the subjects of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), and Emotional Disorder (ED). We brought in a psychologist to speak to us on a broad spectrum of learning disabilities, and had a certified reading specialist speak to us on reading-related learning difficulties.

Based on the presentation by the reading specialist, we decided to bring in a certified Orton-Gillingham trainer, who presented an in-service to our Faculty, specifically on Dyslexia and how the Orton-Gillingham method meets the needs of those students who are dyslexic.

Did you make any changes based on those presentations? After much time, effort, research and lengthy discussion, I made the decision to train all of the classroom teachers and as many "special subject" teachers as possible in the Orton-Gillingham Approach.

What is the Orton Gillingham Approach? The Orton-Gillingham Approach uses a comprehensive, leveled, multi-sensory approach to direct and enhance student learning. This program applies to all disciplines--math, reading spelling, phonics, etc.--at all grade levels. It gives us, as teachers, strategies and methods to help those students who are challenged to learn in a different way.

When a child isn't learning, teaching "louder and slower" isn't going to change anything. We need to teach in a way that that particular child can grasp and learn; therefore "multi-sensory" is the way to teach: visual, auditory, kinesthetic--reaching all of the senses.

Have you made any other changes to address student needs and challenges? We also put into place the supportive consultant program which supports the same philosophy. The program helps us to identify those students who struggle with learning or behavioral challenges, so that we can find a teaching approach best suited to their needs.

For more information about the Orton-Gillingham Approach to teaching, please go to: www.ortongillingham.com.