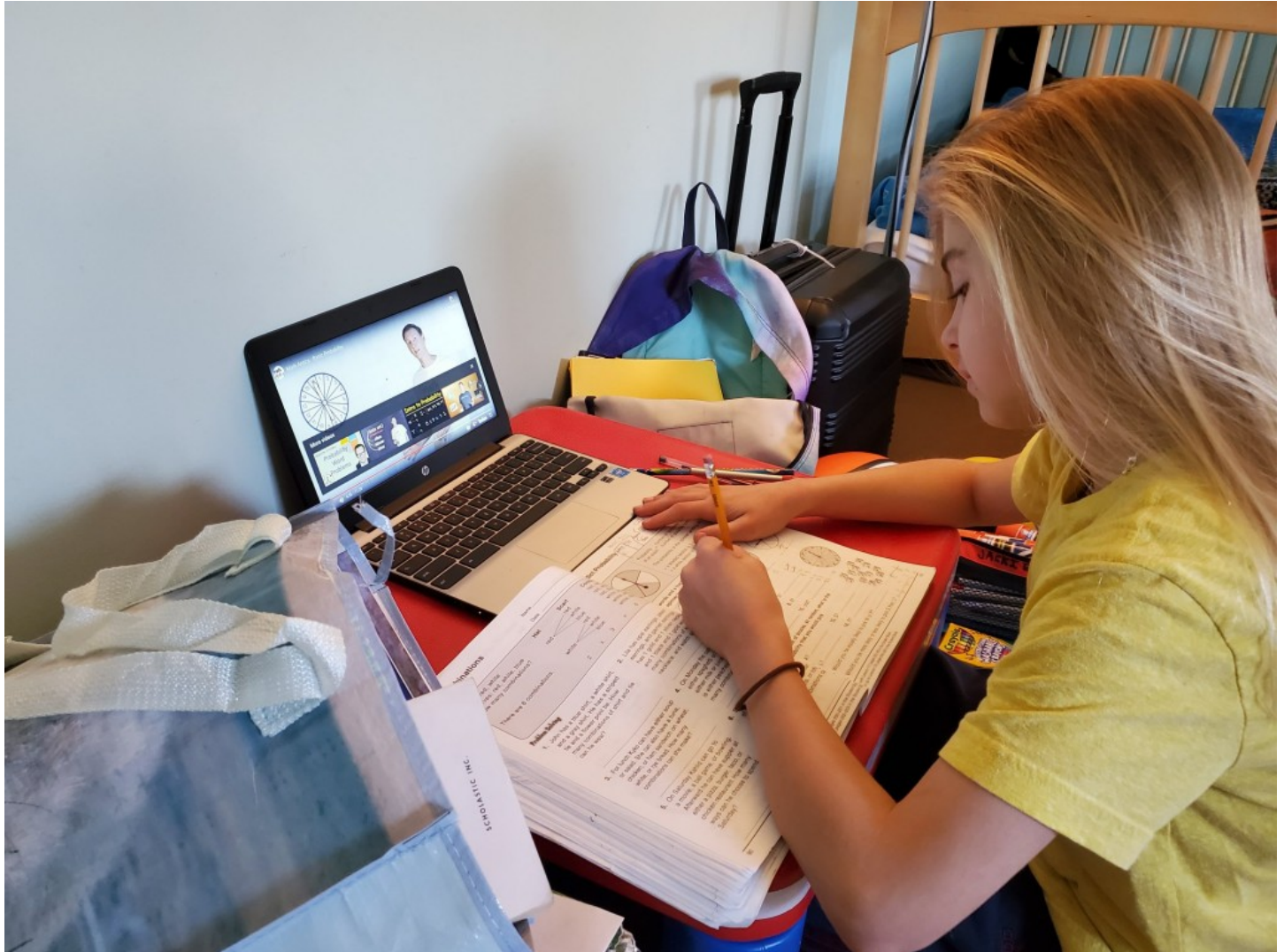


Academy of Saint Therese's Students Excel With New Distance Learning Curriculum

Cresskill Catholic Elementary School Covid-19 Pandemic Response Sets Students Up for Learning Success



Teaneck, Mar 30, 2020 (Issuewire.com) - While teachers from elementary schools all across Bergen County have had to get creative amid the COVID-19 crisis, the [Academy of St. Therese](#), a leading Catholic elementary school in Cresskill, New Jersey, immediately launched a collaborative mix of virtual classrooms and interactive workshops to ensure educational standards and student learning did not get caught up in the pandemic.

“At the Academy of St. Therese we are moving the curriculum forward with daily online instruction. We are doing so much more than offering “Busy Work Packets,” said Principal Glenn Clark. “Our staff quickly established a dynamic and personalized virtual learning experience for the students that meet the high educational standard of traditional Catholic education. The feedback from parents and students has been outstanding.”

Since the day Governor Murphy announced school closings in Bergen County, the Academy of St.

Therese administrators and teachers launched virtual learning opportunities across all grade levels and classrooms. The Catholic elementary school's distance learning is a hybrid of online learning approaches such as YouTube, CS First, Google Classroom, and Zoom to ensure students are provided with a wealth of resources to accommodate great learning at home.

Every morning Mr. Clark still provides students with their morning prayer, just as he did when the students were physically present in the school. Students then receive two to three hours of live teacher instruction, and up to two more hours of interactive classroom work. These live, online group and individual assignments and assessments help gauge students' progress with material, and tailor future lessons to meet the respective student's learning needs. Teachers and administration can view all student assignments as they are working on them, and provide real-time feedback and guidance.

"When we shut down earlier than we expected, we didn't want to just send children home with handouts and packets," said Clark. "Luckily I have an incredible staff who jumped right in to develop engaging and interactive lesson plans for our students at home."

One challenge many public school districts are working to address is students' access to reliable internet and computers. For many students, remote learning is currently optional in the district, since there is no guarantee families have equal access to online resources. Students and staff at the Academy of St. Therese did not have those problems. The school ensured every family had a reliable internet connection and sent all students from grades two through eight home with their own Google Chromebook. Preschool through first-grade learners will continue to have access to iPads and Chromebooks as needed. Mr. Clark said that the school, thus far, only had to send an additional two devices home to families.

"A quality education should never be optional," Clark said. "The Academy of St. Therese is grounded in the belief that every student, as a child of God, is deserving not only of the finest academics we have to offer but the encouragement, support and individual attention that a true 'Academy' must offer to each of its students. Our current distance learning curriculum is true to that mission."

Mr. Clark is proud of his staff's efforts to create materials prior to the school closure and working daily to develop distance learning content for students. Denise Nahass and Margaret Moore, Early Primary teachers at St. Therese, email parents daily lesson plans, worksheets and links to daily YouTube video lessons for learning days of the week, working on art projects, and reading books together. The Preschool through second-grade teachers has also instituted, "Morning Meetings," just as they had in their classrooms. In this way, although the children may be limited to their own homes, they get to see their classmates and teachers throughout the week.

The school implemented Google Classroom for all teachers and students in grades 3 through 8. This allows teachers to actively manage student activity online, and assess student performance. The Classroom app provides access to the wide array of online resources available through the Google "G Suite for Education." Since the shutdown, the Academy of St. Therese has integrated a variety of online resources in conjunction with Google Classroom facilitating collaboration, allowing students to work together seamlessly, from home.

Prior to the shutdown, the Academy of Saint Therese was already implementing new technology into the school curriculum to bring student learning to a higher level; which helped the school seamless integrated distance learning immediately. This year the Academy expanded the Archdiocesan STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) initiative online so that every student from Pre K 3 to Grade 8, can participate in a rigorous STEM curriculum, including at-home hands-on activities. Additionally,

the Academy began the CS First coding initiative in grades 2 through 8. The SCRATCH coding language, developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is an online curriculum that makes coding easy to teach and fun to learn in order to introduce computer science and coding concepts to all students.

For the Academy of Saint Therese curriculum, faith, community, and service are the dynamic underpinnings that breathe energy and excitement into the curriculum. Just because students are learning from home, does not mean the Academy of Saint Therese students will have to abandon their sense of community and service. For the past two weeks, students have been writing thank you letters to front line professionals helping protect the community from the Covid-19 outbreak. On Thursday, April 2, all students will dress in their school spirit wear and post pictures on their parent's and schools social media pages.

To learn more visit the Academy of Saint Therese website at academyofsttherese.com and join their Facebook community at facebook.com/ASTcresskill/.



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