



12 elementary schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools use Renzulli Learning to apply, deepen, and extend their learning.

Teachers are able to understand students by their strengths and interests, and plan lessons using differentiated, project-based learning.

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Barbara Graham,
Junior High Science
and English Teacher,
St. Kevin School

Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools Uses Differentiated Instruction and Project-Based Learning Through Renzulli Learning to Enrich Curriculum in Elementary Schools

Summary

When the advisory board and administration in one of the Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools' elementary schools wanted to implement a tool to help apply, deepen, and extend their school's curriculum, they turned to Renzulli Learning. Soon, more schools in the Diocese elected to implement Renzulli Learning. Today, 12 schools in the Diocese use the online solution — with nine additional schools planning to start using it in the next school year. The schools are now able to personalize learning as they understand students by their strengths and interests, and plan lessons using differentiated, project-based lessons. As a result, the schools are seeing more involved students, inspired teachers, excited parents, and an impressed community.

Diocese:
Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools

LOCATION:
Brooklyn, NY

SETTING:
Urban

SCHOOL BREAKDOWN:
97 Elementary Schools (K–8)
20 High Schools (9–12)

ENROLLMENT:
Approx. 44,000

“I see Renzulli Learning as combining the best of what we know about differentiated instruction and project-based learning.”

Anthony Biscione
Associate Superintendent
for Curriculum
Diocese of Brooklyn
Catholic Schools

Apply — Deepen — Extend

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Renzulli Learning[®]
Proven Differentiation™

This use of
online curriculum
is the way of the future;
it's a healthy balance
between online
and offline.

“Renzulli Learning
makes differentiated
instruction a lot
easier. It gives
teachers the ability
to segment
populations and
assign different tasks
to different groups
at any given time.
Teachers can
differentiate by
learning styles and
readiness levels,
and they have at
their disposal
thousands upon
thousands of project
based learning
activities to utilize.”

Anthony Biscione
Associate Superintendent
for Curriculum
Diocese of Brooklyn
Catholic Schools

The advisory board and administration of St. Robert Bellarmine School in Queens were looking for a tool to help apply, deepen, and extend their school's curriculum, as well as make their school more attractive to new students.

“We were looking for ways to further encourage children's creativity and expand children into their penchants,” says Principal Angela M. Fazio from St. Robert Bellarmine School. “We also hoped that it would be a tool to attract new students.”

Associate Superintendent for Curriculum of the Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools Anthony Biscione had heard about Renzulli Learning, and liked its philosophical foundation — that all children have gifts and talents, and we have to help uncover them. He and the St. Bellarmine team agreed that it would be a good fit for the school.

“I had known about Dr. Renzulli's work with gifted and talented programs, and when I saw how Renzulli Learning had evolved, it seemed to provide teachers with a lot of the resources they need,” says Biscione. “I see Renzulli Learning as combining the best of what we know about differentiated instruction and project-based learning.”

Biscione says that the Diocese initially implemented Renzulli Learning only at St. Robert Bellarmine School. However, once they saw how easy it was to implement, they decided to replicate the solution with other elementary schools in the Diocese.

“I ran an informational meeting the year after we implemented Renzulli Learning at St. Bellarmine, and an additional 11 schools expressed interest in Renzulli,” says Biscione. “That was the second rollout of Renzulli for us. Now, there's a group of nine additional schools that were looking for something to do to enrich their schools' curriculum, and when I presented Renzulli to them as an option, they chose to use it. It's a cost-effective way of differentiating instruction and achieving a lot of the goals that we'd like to achieve.”

The students in the 12 schools that are currently using Renzulli Learning each spend about 90 minutes per week in the online program.

St. Robert Bellarmine School Pioneer's Renzulli Learning

As the first school principal in the Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools to implement Renzulli Learning, Fazio says that she likes to be innovative and was excited that the Diocese chose St. Robert Bellarmine School as the pioneer for using the online solution in combination with traditional classroom learning.

"This use of online curriculum is the way of the future," Fazio says. "This was a way for us to incorporate it without it being overwhelming — it is a healthy balance between online and offline."

The school schedules time in the computer lab for each grade twice a week, giving students the material they need to move forward on their own projects. Students use the online tools two hours each week, and can spend additional time on their projects if they choose. The students receive two types of assignments: the whole class gets one project that is the same, and then teachers differentiate to give each student an appropriate choice among 30 projects for their second assignment.

Laura DiMarcello, third-grade teacher at St. Robert Bellarmine School, says using Renzulli Learning in this way is exciting and intriguing for teachers, helping them target their various learners with appropriate projects. But, it doesn't stop there. Students also look forward to using the online tools.

"The kids look forward to using Renzulli Learning," DiMarcello says. "They get upset when they can't use it."

Fazio says that she had been seeing a pattern of kids looking up information and then regurgitating it for tests, but now, Renzulli encourages them to find information and process it. Students at the school are using the online tools to improve their writing skills, reading comprehension, creative thinking, and understanding of how to research and then use the research to do their own reading and writing.

Fazio adds that students are proud of their projects, and the school displays their work throughout the school for parents, colleagues, officials from the Diocese, and the community to see.

"Using Renzulli Learning has proven to be another piece in the big picture of what I feel is a well-rounded education," Fazio says. "And, I think people recognize it. It has given us another path to spark learning, and I welcome that."

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Laura DiMarcello
Third-Grade Teacher
St. Robert
Bellarmine School

Diocese of Brooklyn Catholic Schools Sees Positive Responses from Students, Teachers, Parents, and the Community

“When the students know they’re going to use Renzulli, they’re much more cooperative and enthusiastic. It makes it much more exciting for them, and that is infectious for the teacher. When they get the ‘ah-ha’ moment on their own, it tends to stay with them, and they own it.”

Barbara Graham
Junior High Science and English
Teacher
St. Kevin School

“Teachers saw how their students profited. Planning became easier. They learned more about the students as individuals. It helped them realize that students could be reached in different ways by getting to their individual needs.”

Sue Royce
Principal
St. Kevin School

“Parents love Renzulli Learning because they see their children are challenged and interested, and are doing further research on their own.”

Angela M. Fazio
Principal
St. Robert Bellarmine School

St. Kevin School

After hearing about St. Robert Bellarmine's success using Renzulli Learning, Sue Royce, principal at St. Kevin School, decided to implement Renzulli Learning to motivate children to go further in their learning.

Barbara Graham, a junior high science and English teacher at St. Kevin, says that she started by using pre-made projects in Renzulli Learning. Her students' ability to retain what they've learned through these projects, she says, has been “unbelievable.”

“Many times, kids just study for the moment,” Graham says. “But since we’ve initiated Renzulli, they learn so much more because they’re so much more actively involved in what they’re doing.”

Graham's students completed a three-day body-systems project in which she says the students were excited about presenting what they had learned; this motivated her to do even more with Renzulli Learning. So, when it came time to plan for the school's annual school-wide fair, Graham again turned to Renzulli. She was exploring in the Renzulli Learning system, and came across the project, “Create a Museum,” which gave her an idea: St. Kevin's Presents A Night at the Museum.

“Some of the lower-grade teachers were concerned that it would be over their students' heads, but even the kids in the nursery participated,” Graham says. “We formed groups based on student interests, and they all really knew what they were talking about when they made their presentations at the fair. We invited the community to see their work. It was a real community experience as opposed to a school experience.”

Students at St. Kevin School completed projects for A Night at the Museum, during which the school invited the community to view students' presentations.

