

Center for Catholic Education History

The Center for Catholic Education grew out of a simple, but important question: What can the University of Dayton and other Catholic universities do to help Catholic elementary and secondary schools? The CCE has been working diligently to answer this question since it was founded in 1996. The idea for the Center for Catholic Education first came about when Dr. Theodore Wallace, then-president of local Chaminade Julianne (CJ) High School and Mr. Clay Mathile, a local business leader, began exploring opportunities to improve the business and financial aspects of the Catholic high school's operation. After these efforts brought about great improvements in the CJ community, Wallace and Mathile sought to share their newfound wisdom with other Catholic schools through a practical cooperative effort. Soon, the idea for a Center for Catholic Education was hatched and proposed to Bro. Ray Fitz, S.M., President of the University of Dayton. The idea caught on quickly with the support of many friends in the school and wider Catholic community. The Center for Catholic Education got rolling through the generosity of an anonymous, three-year, \$1.2 million donation.

The first task of the Center was to establish a collective identity from which a mission might emerge. This was an important, but delicate task. The Center established a consultative team consisting of some big names in Catholic education, including Sr. Mary Traviss, O.P., Director of the Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership at the University of San Francisco and Sr. Claire Fitzgerald, S.S.N.D., Director of the Catholic Leadership Program at Boston College. These women headed up two of the leading programs concerned with leadership in Catholic education. Also among the team were Sr. Kathryn Ann Connelly, S.C., Superintendent of Schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and Fr. James Heft, Chancellor of the University of Dayton. The expertise of these individuals and numerous others was invaluable in helping the Center to establish an identity and find its niche. Setting the course for any entity in the sometimes treacherous landscape of higher education is indeed a daunting task, but with creativity, passion, and Christian charity, the CCE was able to establish itself as an advocate for and advisor to Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

The initial thought for the purpose of the CCE was that it would operate mainly within an academic realm, through strategic planning services and data collection and distribution. To build scholarly activity, Dr. Thomas Hunt joined the staff at the CCE in 1996 and Fr. Ronald Nuzzi joined in 1997. Dr. Hunt was a writer and researcher for the CCE, authoring and editing dozens of articles and 27 books. Widely known as an energetic teacher and passionate advocate for Catholic education, Dr. Hunt gained notoriety for the CCE and contributed greatly to his field. He remained a beloved member of the CCE staff until he passed away on April 17, 2014. He is still fondly remembered within the University of Dayton and Center for Catholic Education community. Fr. Nuzzi, who completed his Ph.D. at the University of Dayton, worked in close conjunction with Dr. Hunt on several projects during his time at UD and after he left for Saint Louis University and finally the University of Notre Dame, where he currently acts as an executive director for the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program. Notably, the two acted as co-editors for the *Journal of Catholic Education* (originally *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*), a journal founded in 1996 through collaboration between the University of Dayton and a number of other Catholic Universities. Besides his writing, Nuzzi

also did a lot of traveling during his time at UD, establishing himself as a sought-after leader for professional development workshops for Catholic schoolteachers.

While published writing remained an important aspect of the work of the Center, working with schools on strategic planning became less of an emphasis, and in 1998, the CCE shifted its focus more towards helping local schools with curriculum development and other similar needs. Around the same time, an endeavor that would become a major service of the Center began taking root. While on a trip to Chicago area, Dr. Wallace and Bro. Ed Brink, S.M., a colleague of Wallace's from his days at CJ, stopped by the University of Notre Dame to meet with the leaders of the ACE program. This program places new graduates in under-resourced Catholic elementary and high schools around the country. The new teachers live in community and teach at the schools where they have been assigned. In exchange, they receive a modest stipend and free coursework necessary to complete a master's degree. The Center for Catholic Education, seeing the potential of this exciting new idea, decided to pursue its own program modeled after ACE. It was called the Lalanne program, named after Jean-Baptiste Lalanne, who worked with Blessed William Joseph Chaminade to develop the Marianist educational philosophy. Bro. Ed was selected as the first Director of the Lalanne program. In 1999, the first cohort of Lalanne teachers was assigned to schools in the Dayton area. Since then, the program has flourished, expanding into cities across the Midwest. ACE, Lalanne, and similar programs now existing at Catholic colleges and universities all over the United States are delivering hundreds of young, energetic teachers to Catholic schools each year and giving those teachers the positive experience and education they need to stay in Catholic schools throughout their careers.

In 1999, Sister Angela Lydon, S.B.S., Ph. D., was named Director for the CCE. She brought a strong outward focus to the Center and a desire to assist schools across the country with curriculum and professional development. An important initiative started during her time as director was the *Passing on the Tradition* series. With the Ohio Department of Education's new Praxis teacher preparation program, the CCE was looking to integrate a Catholic aspect to training, so that teachers would be prepared both intellectually and spiritually for their task. The *Passing on the Tradition* series was a workshop and eventually a multimedia kit that incorporated spirituality into training for teachers becoming Praxis mentors. The first pilot of the program was done in 2000 and saw immediate success.

In 2002, the CCE began another program that would eventually become one of its pillars. Following closely the model established by the Seton Resource Center in New Orleans, Louisiana, the Urban Childhood Development Resource Center (UCDRC) was created to address nonacademic barriers to learning that are common in urban areas. Some of the services offered by the UCDRC include violence prevention programs, family resources, health screening, and counseling. As of 2014, UCDRC works with five local Catholic schools that operate in the city of Dayton. Funded primarily by grants and private donations, UCDRC provides vital services through onsite counselors without putting much financial strain on the schools. The impact has been substantial. Through UCDRC, the CCE provides much needed assistance to Catholic schools while carrying out a mission of social justice.

In 2005, Bro. Ed, the Director of Lalanne, was selected as the next Director for the CCE. His promotion came with a unique challenge; he retained his position with Lalanne while taking on this new role. Acting as director of both the CCE and Lalanne certainly broadened his responsibilities and scope of services. However, with plenty of coordination and teamwork, the staff of the CCE was able to maintain its high level of effectiveness. Members of the staff were

willing to take on extra duties, adjust travel schedules to observe and mentor all of the Lalanne teachers, and exercise patience and professionalism to meet the hefty workload so that the Center could continue to flourish. The Center's two major initiatives, Lalanne and UCDRC, remained the central focus during Bro. Ed's tenure. These programs were making a major impact in the communities they served.

Piloted in 2006 and fully implemented in 2007, an initiative began during the time that Bro. Ed was Director called the Saint Remy Initiative. Still supported by the CCE and conducted under the leadership of Dr. Toni Moore, this initiative focused on the professional development of Catholic schoolteachers from a spiritual perspective. In the program, educators spend a total of three years delving into three dimensions of Catholic school leadership: spiritual, educational, and organizational leadership. Participating schools send principals as well as teacher-leaders to participate in retreats, development days, and school-wide projects focused on the particular theme for the year. The Saint Remy Initiative carries out an important function for Catholic schools. Whereas the religious sisters and brothers who once mostly staffed Catholic schools were typically given considerable spiritual formation during their instruction and discernment as religious, the faithful laypeople who now follow their legacy do not always start out with the same level of formation. The Saint Remy Initiative helps to address this potential issue by nurturing Catholic educators to be the strong, faithful leaders that they are called to be.

In July 2007, the current Director, Mrs. Susan Ferguson, took up her post as director. So far in her tenure, the Center has sustained its major programs and started adding a number of new and exciting initiatives. In addition to ensuring the sustainability of programs like UCDRC and Lalanne through fundraising and grant writing efforts, Susan and the staff of the CCE have worked to fortify Catholic schoolteachers by providing meaningful professional development opportunities. For the better part of the past decade, the Center has hosted professional development days and more recently, a yearly summit that attracts participants from all over the country, both in person and virtually. Two other professional development components of the CCE's body of work include the Excellence Initiative, designed to help schools perform well by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's published Standards, and the Literacy Initiative, led by Dr. Jackie Arnold and Dr. Mary-Kate Sableski, which informs Catholic school teachers new and creative ways to improve literacy. Recently, in the summer of 2014, the Center for Catholic Education and the University of Dayton hosted the National Catholic Education Association's conference on STREAM initiatives (Science Technology Religion Engineering Art and Math). The initiatives demonstrate the commitment of the Center for Catholic Education to the professional development of local teachers, as well as those nationwide.

While professional development has become a major component of the Center's work, Lalanne and UCDRC remain the two biggest initiatives. Lalanne recently celebrated its fifteenth year with a reunion and a survey to see how graduates of the program continue to engage their profession, their communities, and their church after program completion. Teachers of the newest cohort are well underway with the school year, and recruitment has already begun for next year's class. Staying true to its foundational objectives, Lalanne gives new educators a spiritual, educational, and communal formation that helps ensure a successful and fulfilling career, and connects under-resourced Catholic schools with enthusiastic, capable teachers. Similarly, UCDRC has grown into a transformational program for the schools it serves. During the 2013-2014 school year alone, UCDRC served approximately 1,750 students. Counselors working for UCDRC give students at participating schools both clinical and non-clinical help,

work with families and school staff, and provide extensive education and formation for students so that they can make healthy lifestyle choices. Lalanne and UCDRC exemplify what the CCE is all about: assisting Catholic schools with their particular needs.

Looking to the future, the CCE hopes to continue and improve its various positive endeavors and address the ever-present challenge of securing reliable funding sources. In addition, the Center is considering ways to bolster its scholarship. This comes from a general desire to increase its academic work, which was compounded by the loss of Dr. Hunt. Not only is his charm and spirit missed; so too is his outstanding mind. Another interesting possibility for the future is one that has been considered in the past: the Center is also investigating ways to start working with strategic planning for Catholic schools and school systems. By looking to its past, the CCE is rediscovering ways to build its future. Always looking ahead, the Center maintains a balance of innovation and rootedness.

In seeking to summarize the Center for Catholic Education's approach to helping Catholic elementary and secondary schools, one need not look farther than its mission and vision statements. After reviewing the CCE's long list of current initiatives, one may distill this work into those two sentences. The mission reads, "Through collaboration, research and creative action, the Center for Catholic Education, in close connection with the University of Dayton and with the Marianists, serves and leads the local, national and global Catholic school community." Meanwhile, one finds that "[t]he vision of the Center for Catholic Education is to be a servant-leader in working with Catholic educators to foster excellence in Catholic schools." There is a common theme here. The key to the work and success of the CCE is leadership through service. It is not through lofty recognition or powerful influence alone; not by success in finance or by strength in argument that the Center makes the impact it does. What matters in the CCE is humility: the ability to walk into a situation with the simple motives of service and charity. The staff members of the Center for Catholic Education have a unique ability see what is needed most in a given situation, and then creatively lend whatever assistance they can. This humble sense of responsibility and service towards one's neighbor is a warmth that permeates the work of the Center. Although the particular services offered by the Center for Catholic Education have developed and shifted throughout its history, this central focus will always remain.