Because *who* students become is just as important as *what* they become.
A Common Link Between Freshmen & Upperclassmen

A

m of us remember all too well, the transition from elementary school to high school can be one of the most difficult changes we experience during our formative years. Both socially and academically, incoming freshmen face new problems and increased pressure. But despite the inevitable stresses of this near-universal life event, very few strategies to support young students have been adopted widely. At Cardinal O’Hara High School, administrators are looking to buck that trend, utilizing a comprehensive initiative called Link Crew to help make that transition easier for incoming students.

Link Crew is a nationally renowned high school transition program that connects incoming students with juniors and seniors who help mentor and guide them throughout their first year. In 2015, Cardinal O’Hara joined more than 3,500 schools from around the world in implementing the all-inclusive course. It works by dividing the freshman class into groups of 8-10 students and then pairing those groups with two upperclassmen mentors – one junior and one senior. These two students, called Link Leaders, provide guidance and companionship to young students at a time when they need that support most.

“This is a program that the students can really feel like they own,” said Kelly Lanza, the Assistant Principal for Academic Affairs at Cardinal O’Hara. “Of course, we train our upperclassmen regarding how to implement the program and guide them through navigating problems. But we also give them a lot of autonomy. They remember all too well how hard it was to be freshman, so I rely on them to help new students feel like part of our school – regardless of their achievements, athletic ability, or group of friends. And the best part of the program is that it’s cyclical – once those freshmen become upperclassmen, they can apply to be Link Leaders and give back to a new group of students!”

Before the school year begins, Link Leaders attend a two-day seminar that imparts upon them the leadership skills and knowledge they’ll need to successfully implement the program. Leading those training sessions is Diane Casey, an educator for the better part of the last three decades and Cardinal O’Hara’s Link Crew Coordinator. Throughout the school year, she oversees the initiative, providing guidance to freshmen and upperclassmen alike.

Casey’s first year being involved with the program, she has already seen positive outcomes begin to take shape.

“These are real, student-to-student connections, and it’s all about inclusion – making our new students feel welcome,” she said. “It’s a bit like a Big Brothers Big Sisters program, and I think there are benefits for both the incoming freshmen, who receive great guidance and support, and the upperclassmen, who learn to become better leaders and communicators.”

All of the Link Leaders at Cardinal O’Hara were either recruited by teachers and administrators at the school or self-nominated to serve as mentors. Many of them remember how hard it was to transition from eighth grade to ninth – both academically and socially – and find great pride in helping a new class of incoming students feel more immediately at home at the school.

“Any way that I can help these new students I want to, because I know it makes such a difference,” said senior Frances Schueren, a second-year Link Leader. “It really helps ease freshmen into their first few days of high school.”

Elizabeth Tosto (left) and Frances Schueren (right), Cardinal O’Hara Seniors

But the program doesn’t end with the freshmen orientation the school puts on the eve of the first day of classes. Throughout the course of the year, the volunteer Link Leaders make efforts to reach out to their freshman mentees both in and out of the classroom. Some of the help the Link Leaders provide is structured – planned trips to classrooms, invitations to afterschool events, group hangouts in the lunchroom, and the like. But one of the more powerful aspects of the program is the organic bond it creates between students, many of whom perhaps would not have much reason to interact with one another.

“When I was a Link Leader last year, I was one of the freshmen I was mentoring happened to be in my Spanish class, so I was able to sit next to her at the beginning of the year and ask the teacher if we could be partners on some of the group projects. We became good friends through that, and I’m really excited to sit next to her in Spanish class again this year.”

Followong initial publication, Kelly Lanza and Diane Casey were promoted from their listed roles. Lanza is now Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs at Cardinal O’Hara High School, and Casey is Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs at Cardinal O’Hara High School.

$24,385,820

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS

As America’s First Catholic Schools, ADPS has had a long time to build an educational dynamic that works for students and families throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania. Here’s a quick look at some of ways we’re keeping that tradition strong in our schools every day.

Accessibility, Academics, & Achievement by the Numbers

New & Re-enrolling AOPS High School Students for 2016-2017

TerraNova — Mastered

A Breakdown of AOPS Success

TerraNova is a series of national standardized tests that assess K-12 students’ achievement and mastery in core subjects.

The 2016 results reflect how Archdiocese of Philadelphia Schools elementary students performed compared to all other students. For example, a score of 10 means the student scored higher than 90 percent of test takers nationwide.

Among ADPS 7th graders – the highest grade level in which all students were tested – total mean scores by county were up to 41 percent higher than the national average of 50.

$24,385,820

141 SCHOOLS ACROSS 5 PA COUNTIES

19 BLUE RIBBON ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS Awarded in our Archdiocese

3 New AOPS Schools Opened + With 4 Schools Honored in 2016 Alone!

In Scholarships and Grants Awarded to New & Re-Enrolling AOPS High School Students for 2015-2017

From 2006 to 2016, AOPS students saw an INCREASE in TerraNova rankings for grade levels in which all students were tested.

Archdiocese of Philadelphia Schools

 works for students and families throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania.
To learn about geology, the students of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer Catholic School gather in a classroom. They put on the appropriate gear and then they rise right into the gaping mouth of an active volcano.

Thanks to the virtual reality app, Google Expeditions, and the efforts of the school’s faculty, students can also join Paul Revere on his midnight ride. Or explore outer space, the ocean floor, and the organs of the human body. Ultimately, the students get to experience their lessons live and in person — no books or brown paper bags required.

“The kids are ecstatic,” says Jonathan Fox, technology teacher and classroom coordinator. “Each time we go to a new location, as it loads into their headsets, there’s just this shocked noise across the room. ’Whoa!’ ‘Cool!’ The room explodes with voices. Instead of just watching the noise across the room, ’Whoa!’ ’Cool!’ The room explodes with voices. Instead of just watching it in front of you, adds Sandra, a sixth grader. “It’s easier to understand because you can see in it front of you,” adds Sandra, a sixth grader. “It’s easier to understand because you can see it in front of you,” adds Sandra, a sixth grader.

Teachers guide and narrate the tours, using the technology to teach practical lessons across all subjects.

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Judge says the technology gives students a valuable point of reference. Students can write about the experience and immerse themselves in the lesson. “There aren’t always pictures in the textbook, but smell it, “ she says. “We’ve found ourselves in a world that most of us, as administrators, couldn’t have seen, uncor- as we are competing with technology and innovations that were unimaginable at one point,” Judge says. “So rather than fight technology, why can’t we just embrace it and make it work for us in the best educational way possible?”

Even the app itself has changed in the short time since the school adopted it. Google Expeditions has teamed up with partners like PBS and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt to add a slew of new locations. Fox says while there were around 200 tours available last fall, now there are over 600. With so many expeditions, the teachers have plenty of options for engaging students — and adults. Case in point: when teachers planned the tours, using the technology to teach practical lessons across all subjects.

When my daughter gets back from school each day, the stories she shares are always accompanied by a smile. Certainly she doesn’t always enjoy tests or homework — what child does? But she never balks at school itself. She literally loves it.

It’s clear to me she respects and is friends with everyone on staff, even the principal. She comes home with comments on her teacher and how funny he is, and I can’t help but appreciate how closely they know her, and how they treat her not only as our child, but as a child of God.

This warm atmosphere permeates my daughter’s school. St. Lucy Day School for Children with Visual Impairments/Archbishop Ryan School for the Deaf (SLDS/ARAD) is an atmosphere that brings peace and belonging to a group of students who have experienced challenges in their lives. And, I believe, it’s an atmosphere that prepares them to succeed academically.

Peer relationships at SLDS/ARAD are similarly affirming. My daughter and her classmates are a close group. They are typical tweens and teens that happen to share the experience of blindness. They challenge each other to grow in independence, and their “modeling-up” peer motivation is a powerful force in my daughter’s life. She will do things for her friends that I could never get her to try.

This pervasive, positive environment is something I have been fortunate to witness since my daughter first enrolled at SLDS/ARAD. In fact, several years ago I wrote a letter to Chris Momney, AOPS Executive Deputy Secretary for Secondary Education, specifically on the matter:

“I recently attended my daughter’s report card conference and was reminded of just how lucky we are to have a SLDS/ARAD education available to her.


Judge is also quick to attribute the program’s success to the faculty’s willingness to constantly research, share, and evaluate the latest approaches. She says while the school doesn’t adopt every new technology, they stay open to new methods that offer substance as well as awe.

“I think we find ourselves in a world that most of us, as administrators, could not have seen, uncor-

The academic, spiritual, and social environment is amazingly supportive, yet appropriately challenging.

Through parent’s groups in which I participate, I know about the school options that exist nationally for kids with visual impairments, and SLDS/ ARAD is among the best of those. I am fully invested in my daughter becoming a contributing member of society and the staff at SLDS/ARAD and right there with me.”

Creating and maintaining a great school is no easy task. I know the school environment we have at SLDS/ARAD does not exist everywhere. That is because not every school has staff working so hard to nurture their students’ confidence in themselves and to maintain a great atmosphere for learning and spiritual growth — despite facing the inevitable challenges of operating a school.

The educators here push themselves to stay ahead of ever-changing technology, and ensure their students are comfortable incorporating it into their studies and their lives. These teachers are called on to perform at the strategic and the operational level, day in and day out, in year and year out. The result is a truly great school.

Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world.” I wholeheartedly agree that SLDS/ARAD is preparing my daughter to bring her whole self to become part of that change.

Why
BELONGING MATTERS.

a parent’s perspective

The academic, spiritual, and social environment is amazingly supportive, yet appropriately challenging.

When you’re choosing a school for your child, I think it’s only natural for a parent to think, “What will my child get from this institution?” If you are considering private schools of any sort, the question of what you “get” for the cost of tuition will come up over and over. It’s definitely something that came to my mind.

But looking back on my son’s experiences with Catholic schools, I don’t think they “got” anything I really wanted them to get. Instead, I feel like it’s what school asked my children to “give” that had the greatest impact on their education.

In the most basic sense, I knew Lansdale Catholic (LC), the AOPS school my sons attended, would ask them to “give 100%.” They’d have to give 100% (LC), the AOPS school my sons attended, would ask them to “give 100%.” They’d have to give 100% of their attention and effort in order to reach their academic potential. But more importantly, my husband and I knew Lansdale would ask them to literally “give” something — to live up to the same ideals of community, compassion, and service that we’ve always strived for in our family.

The children would be highly involved in service during his time at Lansdale, always seeking change in another human being’s life. He was able to see firsthand how “giving” could be more than a donation — it could be real change in another human being’s life.

My husband and I are proud that we chose an institution that would perfectly practice the values we both hold dear. I have tremendous respect for my fellow teachers who have a similar outlook on what education can be. I believe that we are endowed with tremendous gifts, and there isn’t anything we as a species are incapable of achieving. I want my students to come away from my classroom with an unshakeable belief that they can contribute to the human story in their own unique ways.

In particular, the Kairos experience led Jack to join a mission program in Costa Rica immediately after graduation. It was an expedition to a very impoverished area of the country. There, Jack had the opportunity to meet and understand the Costa Rican people, hear about their problems, and directly contribute to their household and religious needs. He was able to see firsthand how “giving” could be more than a donation — it could be real change in another human being’s life.

My son Jack continued to participate in community service during his time at Lansdale, always seeking new ways to give back. After attending the Kairos retreat, his outlook on himself and on his concept of community was changed. He met like-minded teens there, kids looking for a way to build stronger connections with God and with each other. They became inseparable friends, and that friendship reinforced Jack’s desire to serve others selflessly.

I was so proud to watch my sons and their classmates work to raise $12,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation; they truly went above and beyond. But it was even more proud to see them become personally involved in the life of Kevin, one of the Make-A-Wish Foundation beneficiaries. Kevin had a medical condition that kept him from getting involved in football, a lifelong dream of his. Thanks to the culture of Lansdale Catholic, the students were able to create an amazing experience for Kevin, one in which he was allowed to suit up and play with the team, and even score a highly celebrated touchdown. It was remarkable to see the school community become so involved in Kevin’s life.

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My husband and I are proud that we chose an educational path for our sons that focused on “giving” instead of “getting.” We knew from the beginning that doing so would mean asking more, and expecting more, from their involvement in school, family, faith, and community. We weren’t always sure if that investment would be appreciated, but when Jack’s graduation yearbook arrived, we found a wonderful surprise. Without telling us, Jack had set aside space in the yearbook on the senior “Thank you to my parents” page. “I’ve spent years trying to get you off my back, but now I realize you’re the ones who have always had my back.”

If that understanding was just the smallest part of what we had “gotten” out of choosing Lansdale Catholic, it would have definitely all been worth it.

When you’re choosing a school for your child, I think it’s only natural for a parent to think, “What will my child get from this institution?” If you are considering private schools of any sort, the question of what you “get” for the cost of tuition will come up over and over. It’s definitely something that came to my mind.

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Is Catholic high school the right fit?

Find out at an upcoming AOPS event!

Visit as a family at a HIGH SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE THROUGHOUT MARCH & APRIL

Throughout March and April, AOPS high schools will be hosting open houses where you can learn about curriculum, meet the admissions team, and discover financial aid opportunities!

Archbishop John Carroll High School
Thursday, March 15th
Archbishop Ryan High School
Sunday, April 14th
Archbishop Wood High School
Sunday, March 18th
Bishop McDevitt High School
Tuesday, April 10th
Bishop Shanahan High School
Wednesday, March 21st
Bonner & Prendergast Catholic High School
Sunday, March 18th
Conwell-Egan Catholic High School
Sunday, April 14th
Father Judge High School
Thursday, April 12th
John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls’ High School
Saturday, April 7th
Lansdale Catholic High School
Call 215-362-6160 to schedule a visit!
Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls
Call 215-455-6900 to schedule a visit!
Mercy Career and Technical High School
Wednesday, April 18th
Pope John Paul II High School
Sunday, April 15th
Roman Catholic High School
Sunday, April 8th
St. Hubert Catholic High School for Girls
Sunday, March 18th
SS. John Neumann and Maria Goretti High School
Call 215-465-8437 to schedule a visit!
West Catholic Preparatory High School
Call 215-386-2244 to schedule a visit!

For more information, visit AOPCatholicSchools.org/hs-open-houses

Take a special all-day tour at 7TH GRADE VISITATION DAY MARCH 14TH — ALL DAY EVENT

At 7th Grade Visitation Day, guest students will get all-day access to the high school of their choice. They’ll attend special sessions while getting the chance to talk to students, staff, faculty, and administrators about what their life at an AOPS high school could be like. Learn more & sign up at AOPCatholicSchools.org/VisitDay

9
BRIDGING THE GAP

Our Lady of Port Richmond’s matching scholarship program connects schools and supports students.

New teachers. New textbooks. And, of course, new tuition fees. Transitioning to high school can be challenging — for both students and parents.

That’s one reason why Our Lady of Port Richmond Regional Catholic School is helping to ease that burden. The school’s Matching Starter Scholarship Program awards 10 students with high school tuition aid that is then matched by the Catholic school each student chooses to attend.

In 2016, the program’s first year, eight graduating Our Lady of Port Richmond students accepted the scholarship for a cumulative total of $58,000 in tuition aid. “We wanted to acknowledge the hard work that families have made, but we’re also thankful for the backing that most schools wouldn’t,” says parent Albert Brown. “They aren’t just in the backing that most schools wouldn’t,” says parent Albert Brown. “They aren’t just serving hot breakfast to those in need.

That’s why, in December 2016, the boys’ basketball program of West Catholic High School gathered early on a cold Saturday morning at the Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission. They cleaned the facility’s sleeping areas and served hot breakfast to those in need.

Breakfast Rescue Mission. They cleaned the facility’s sleeping areas and served hot breakfast to those in need.

But for me, the season’s biggest highlights weren’t the physical achievements. The real successes had little to do with competitions at all. Instead, they often took place in the quiet, away from the cameras and crowds. They happened at classrooms, homeless shelters, and schools for at-risk youth, where students were able to build up their peers, their communities, and themselves.

That’s why, in January 2017, the Monsignor Bonner and Archbishop Prendergast Catholic High School baseball team participated in a wheelchair basketball game against Widener Memorial School’s varsity team. It was the fourth consecutive year the teams played — and for the record, Widener Memorial posted a 55-52 victory.

In addition to serving their communities, AOPS high school student athletes found new ways to serve one another. The AOPS Student-Athlete Advisory Committee was created at the beginning of the school year specifically to serve the needs of students participating in athletics. The 38 representatives held meaningful discussions concerning fencing, bowling, sportsmanship, and time management.

That last topic is particularly important at AOPS, where we believe that as wonderful as athletic scholarships and collegiate athletics can be, they should never take precedence over education.

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How Augmented Reality Is Transforming the Way We See Classrooms

Seeing Beyond Real Life

It wasn’t long ago that augmented reality seemed like the stuff of sci-fi movies. But thanks to devices and apps like Google Glass, Snapchat filters, and Pokémon Go, AR has already begun to impact our day-to-day lives. As this technology has grown in power and popularity, educators and developers have created exciting ways to use AR in the classroom. These tools allow students to actively engage with lesson concepts, visualize shapes in 3D, and even create their own interactive projects, opening an entirely new world of educational opportunities.

As this emerging trend becomes more common in classroom settings, many experts predict that AR will revolutionize the way students learn in K-12 schools and higher education.

What is Augmented Reality?

AR is a live view of the real world overlaid with computer-generated sensory input such as sound, video, or graphics. In other words, viewers see real life topped with a digital overlay. If you’ve ever watched a televised football game topped with a digital overlay, you’ve seen AR in action.

What’s The Difference Between AR and VR?

Augmented reality and virtual reality both alter our perceptions of our surroundings. The difference is the degree to which our environments are stimulated.

Augmented reality layers computer-simulated environment over existing reality, blending digital elements with the real world. Virtual reality fully immerses and interacts, providing a completely computer-simulated environment.

Bringing Lessons to Life

Classroom AR fosters intellectual curiosity. By giving students and teachers access to new experiences and information, they can interact with their lessons and content in new ways.

Traditionally, learning has involved translating concepts from two-dimensional books and diagrams into the three dimensions of real life. AR removes that step, allowing users to view, rotate, and explore ideas without the risk of hazardous experiments or excursions.

This interactivity reinforces students’ connections with the materials, their classmates, and their surroundings. Many apps also encourage collaboration between students, fostering teamwork and social learning.

As with any new technology, AR can have its share of hiccups, ranging from costly hardware to issues with functionality. Some students may also have difficulty managing so much extra information. However, these issues are likely to get ironed out as AR technology becomes more widespread and accessible.

By staying informed on these latest developments, we can ensure a healthy balance of new approaches and proven techniques that better prepare students for the future.

Growing Across Subjects and Grades

AR technology is most commonly used for science-based subjects, such as biology and anatomy, as well as geography and art. However, it is increasingly being used in a wider range of activities and assignments.

Here’s a quick list of potential AR applications for classes ranging from Pre-K to 12th grade.

Pre-K to 3rd Grade

Teacher Guided Content

- Homework help — Selected images can trigger video tutorials with helpful tips.
- Educational gameplay — Timed math challenges can make lessons more engaging.
- Improving literacy — Teachers can reinforce reading and spelling skills with flash cards that come to life.

4th Grade to 12th Grade

Student Created Content

- Book reports — Students can animate synopses and bios with audio and video.
- Classroom safety — Triggers placed around the room can demonstrate various aspects of lab safety.
- Open house visits — Guests can explore interactive displays and tours.

4 Educational Augmented Reality Apps

Aurasma

An AOPS favorite, this app allows students to access video tutorials right from their textbooks — or create interactive stories with alternate endings. It links graphics, videos, and audio to everyday objects around the classroom.

Elements 4D

This app puts the power of the periodic table in the palms of students’ hands. Elements can be inspected, rotated, and even combined to create new compounds and chemical reactions in real time.

Quiver: 3D Coloring Book

Students color in a seemingly typical normal diagram of animal cell — then this fun app brings it to life. Creations pop off the page in 3D as they move, make sounds, and respond to commands.

FETCH! Lunch Rush

Kids love helping Ruff Ruffman keep up with his hectic lunch orders. Based on the popular PBS Kids character, this game provides a fun way to practice addition and subtraction — and a chance to play with virtual sushi.

Augmented Reality: Just Another Passing Fad?

Trendy as AR might be, it’s unfair to write it off as the latest tech craze. It has already fundamentally changed the way many people interact with media, games, and even cars. Incorporating AR into the classroom builds familiarity with technology that will continually impact entire industries and job markets. More importantly, AR can push our schools forward, enabling students to learn, create, and share concepts in meaningful ways.

Student-Created Content

4th Grade to 12th Grade

Teacher Guided Content

- Homework help — Selected images can trigger video tutorials with helpful tips.
- Educational gameplay — Timed math challenges can make lessons more engaging.
- Improving literacy — Teachers can reinforce reading and spelling skills with flash cards that come to life.

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4th Grade to 12th Grade

Student Created Content

- Book reports — Students can animate synopses and bios with audio and video.
- Classroom safety — Triggers placed around the room can demonstrate various aspects of lab safety.
- Open house visits — Guests can explore interactive displays and tours.

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When I entered high school as a freshman, my goals were safe and straightforward. I wanted to hang out with my same circle of childhood friends. I wanted to work towards acceptance into a good engineering school. And I wanted to continue being the quiet, timid kid who liked studying and playing sports.

Fast forward to today, and my life looks a lot different. I’m currently a seminarian in the college division at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. My entire vocation revolves around being personable and ready to help others.

Meanwhile, I was also coming into my own academically. I learned to manage my time and channel my strengths. At the time, my sights were still set on becoming an engineer. Archbishop Wood’s rigorous AP classes and SAT preparation helped me get accepted into the schools I’d dreamed of attending.

But the priesthood stayed on my mind. During my senior year, I began attending daily mass and meeting with my school minister, Fr. Paul O’Donnell, to discuss seminary. I found joy and affirmation in theology class and my extracurricular service opportunities. Those classes, conversations, and experiences solidified my decision to pursue the priesthood. I can say with confidence that my time at Archbishop Wood helped me get where I am today. And I am continually grateful for all the opportunities to build confidence in my faith — and in myself.
Attended 7th Grade Visitation Day

Natalie Rodriguez

March 14, 2018

An incredible future starts here.

How can Archdiocese of Philadelphia high schools unlock new paths for students? On March 14th, students can find out in person at our 7th Grade Visitation Day.

Find a school & schedule your visit at AOPCatholicSchools.org/VisitDay