

Catholic Schools Department Hires STREAM Coordinator

The Department of Catholic Schools has named Jean Comer as the part-time coordinator for the new Diocesan initiative called STREAM. Comer is no stranger to the Diocese of Buffalo. She has been a teacher and program coordinator for enrichment at St. Gregory the Great School since 2007, was the chair of the school's advisory council, and served as the areas education chair for the "Journey in Faith and Grace."

Based on the national movement called STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and driven by the business community as a way to address the shortage of available candidates with 21st century skills necessary to take positions in the fields of science, engineering, technology and math; STREAM uses the Catholic schools' holistic approach to education with the inclusion of religion and the arts. [STREAM](#) involves a sustained push to make learning more relevant by developing activities, programs and experiences which answer the question "Why am I learning this?"

In her new position, Comer's responsibilities include the selection of [10 pilot schools](#) for the 2014-15 school year, the training of teachers and administrators, the development of curriculum models, making community connections, and putting together a "STREAM Team," that will help create STREAM Academies.

"We hope to get everyone from the pre-K students to our 13-year-olds really excited about STREAM, especially since we know they can do more than we can imagine," Comer said. "I look forward to working with our teachers to develop project-based learning that crosses curricular lines so that teaching and learning are more integrated. Twenty-first century learners will demand a new approach to learning, and I know our teachers are attuned to that."

As with many new undertakings, and this initiative in particular, success hinges on understanding and collaboration on a variety of levels. "Looking for support outside the traditional places might seem new and different now, but will be the norm in the future" said Comer. "Many corporations and local businesses were contacted to become corporate sponsors, or to partner with our schools to provide financial, technical and/or volunteer support." Individual donors with an interest in STREAM are also encouraged to participate. "As little as \$300 will buy a robotics kit for a school whose students otherwise would not have that kind of experience."

Volunteers can come from all backgrounds and levels of experience. “There are many ways parents, grandparents, alumni, parishioners and other supporters of Catholic education can help. If you have expertise or passion for any subject relating to science, technology, engineering, any of the arts or math, and you want to volunteer, give me a call!

Those with a talent for (grant) writing, fund raising, community outreach, marketing, PR and/or video technology can help fund or promote the STREAM initiative. Those who live locally and want to be more hands-on might assist running an afterschool, evening or weekend STREAM Academy project. Call me, I can help define a role for willing volunteers.” said Comer.

The official kickoff for the STREAM program will be held at the Darwin Martin House on June 5, 2014. School principals, STREAM coordinators and Home School Association representatives will join administrators from the Diocese and Darwin Martin House to roll out the initiative.

Looking forward, STREAM enthusiasts will be invited to attend a Robotics Competition and Science Scrimmage held at St. Joseph’s Collegiate on Sunday, December 7, 2014 which will highlight the creative accomplishments of the STREAM pilot schools and the STREAM Academies. Bishop Malone will celebrate mass for the student competitors, their families and STREAM supporters.

Jean Comer can be reached at 716-847-5523 or jcomer@buffalodiocese.org.