

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Bellevue School receives National Inclusion Award**

Dan Sherman, principal at St. Madeleine Sophie School in Factoria, has received the Edward M. Shaughnessy III Serving All God's Children Award for Inclusion. He was honored July 12 at the National Catholic Educational Association's Education Law Symposium in Louisville, Kentucky.

Opened in 2005 under Sherman's leadership, St. Madeleine Sophie began with the intentional mission to welcome families whose children represent a highly diverse economic, ethnic and academic population. The school's Inclusion Program, which includes over 40 percent of the school's population, offers individualized support for students with learning differences ranging from children with profound intellectual and physical challenges to highly capable children in need of a differentiated approach.

"It really has been a joy," said Sherman. "While we knew full well that doing what we are doing is so much easier when starting fresh rather than trying to change an established culture, we firmly believe that the things we are learning can be replicated at many of our sister diocesan programs."

While never intending to match the resources for services available in a state-supported district, St. Madeleine Sophie nevertheless provides exceptional service to those families who desire a smaller, more holistic and faith-based alternative for their children. Tricia Bertsch believes it's the right school for her son.

"The local school district wanted to send Calvin to a different elementary school where he would be isolated. We knew this could never work for him because, despite his medical issues, he is a happy, social and appropriate 5-year-old," Bertsch said. "The minute we placed the call to St. Madeleine Sophie, we knew we found a special school."

A heightened focus on teaching empathy has also earned St. Madeleine's the title of "Changemaker School," part of a national network of leading elementary schools recognized by the nonprofit Ashoka International for cultivating important social skills in students.

"Rooted in the mission of any Catholic school is the development of each child's awareness of his or her membership in the larger community and our responsibility to actively work for the betterment of a diverse society," Sherman said. "Empathy for different gifts is primary skill we seek to instill throughout our student body."

The Edward M. Shaughnessy III Serving All God's Children Award for Inclusion is given annually to a Catholic school administrator or educator who has made an outstanding contribution to furthering inclusive Catholic education for all, especially children with learning differences.

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