

AACA | ALPHONSUS ACADEMY

& Center for the Arts

May 14, 2019

Dear Friend and Colleague,

Last week educators from DePaul University and Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools were invited to attend the AACA Innovative Teaching Forum. The forum was designed to showcase innovative teaching and learning designed and implemented by AACA teacher. This event offered a unique opportunity for local educators to see exceptional learning experiences through demonstration, panel discussion, and review of lessons. The AACA Innovative Teaching Forum nurtured teacher-leaders and fostered a strong sense of professional learning for the AACA teaching staff.



Throughout the school year, teachers participated in collaborative learning groups and professional learning sessions designed by DePaul University Office of Innovative Professional Learning. Each group was organized to facilitate professional conversation, action research, and reflection. The goal of each collaborative group was to explore innovative teaching, initiate new innovative opportunities for the learner, and implement instructional practices that are student-centered and reflect 21st century learning. AACA teachers worked with Dr. Donna Kiel, DePaul University professor, Ari Frede, adjunct professor, and a group of DePaul University instructors to refine our curriculum and design innovative lessons.

At the conclusion of this professional learning opportunity, AACA teachers earned DePaul University Innovative Teaching Micro-credentials. The DePaul University Innovative Teaching Micro-credentials are given to teachers at the completion of an intensive learning experience that combines research, reflection, personal learning, and successful implementation of an instructional practice. AACA teachers have earned an “electronic badge” signifying the earned credit and learning outcomes. In June, AACA staff will attend a ceremony at DePaul University recognizing their work and success.



The AACA Innovative Teaching Forum offered educators a review of innovative teaching practices spanning all grade levels and content areas. Teacher-teams shared how they implemented SOLE (Self Organized Learning Experiences), STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math), and the *Studio Habits of Mind* as an assessment tool. The kindergarten team demonstrated the literacy instructional practice *Daily 5*. The preschool team demonstrated the integration of science and technology into their curriculum. And finally, the upper school teams led a panel discussion about their professional journey in lesson design and innovation. Many teachers shared specific

units and lessons ranging from arts integration to differentiation to cross-grade collaboration. Participants were thoroughly engaged, excited, and appreciative of the forum.

AACA teachers shined as a result of the Innovative Teaching Forum. The event put AACA teachers on “center stage” solidifying the school’s position as both innovative and progressive. It was a proud day for AACA, and, as principal, I was humbled by the work and commitment of our teaching staff.

Sharing our learning environment with others is an important part of our mission. Leading teaching and learning in a Catholic school also complements our mission and vision. We hope you find time to see our learning environment “in action.” Please do not hesitate to let me know when you are available or “in the neighborhood” for a tour. Our doors are always open!

I am truly blessed to be working at AACA and within the St. Alphonsus parish community. Our mission to prepare students for their future begins with the investment in teacher learning and professional opportunities. AACA teachers engaged in this opportunity to learn knowing that the bulk of their work would happen outside the school day. Their work and commitment to learning, the school, and our students is impressive!

AACA is a leader in innovative instructional practices, teacher professional learning experiences, and Catholic education.

Thanking you in advance for your support and partnership,

Caz Badynee
Proud Principal of AACA

cbadynee@aaca.school

