Technology Education at Trinity Elementary School
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Trinity Catholic Schools holds as her vision – *awaken greatness*! Making this vision alive in how we educate the whole student is a challenge taken seriously by the teachers, the staff, and the administration.

Part of this *greatness* comes in how we can provide our students with the tools necessary for academic success. One of those tools – especially in education today – is a level of readiness with technology. We know students of today – very often from as young as a preschool age – are able to navigate and "swipe" on a tablet device with little to no direction. True computer skills, though – typing, crafting charts for reports, using graphics – seem to get lost in today's world of "apps" and online learning platforms.

Trinity Elementary School is on the forefront of giving elementary age children solid instruction in this regard. Recently, I sat down with Mrs. JoLyn Tessier (Trinity Elementary School Principal) and Mrs. Darcy Dahmus (Trinity Elementary School Technology Instructor) to visit about the innovative ways the students of Trinity Elementary School are learning to use technology responsibly and in a way that gives tools for academic success.

Schneider: Mrs. Dahmus, tell me about your background and how you came to Trinity Elementary School?
Dahmus: My background in technology was a result of working 25+ years in jobs which required quite a bit of hands on learning in Microsoft Office products, various design programs, a couple of web design programs and some computer/printer troubleshooting.

My husband and I enrolled our son at Trinity Elementary School for preschool and saw such tremendous benefit that we continued into elementary school. We both grew up in and saw the benefits of attending faith-based schools such as being able to learn and freely speak about our faith in God, small class sizes, values-based citizenship, and having the feel of being "family" with teachers and fellow students. When a position opened (back in the 2017-2018 school year) originally as a technology/library para for grades K-4, applying for it seemed like the right thing to do at the time. My role quickly morphed into teaching strictly technology for grades K-6.

Schneider: How did you, Mrs. Dahmus and Mrs. Tessier, come up with the idea of developing a technology curriculum for K-6? Did you see a need/deficiency to address?
Tessier: As principal, I saw a need for a formal program because it had been something the current teachers had to include into their schedules each week and this was very tough to do. As most people quickly realize, technology is kind of its own "beast" and is difficult for teachers who may not have a lot of experience with technology, to teach it or to teach it in depth. Technology is such a large part of the way the world works today and all of our school community wanted our students to be able to grow with it – to be better prepared for when they exit the school system and enter the working world.
Dahmus: Early in 2017, JoLyn asked me how I felt about developing the technology program and little did she know that type of challenge is right up my alley! Initially, I needed to determine where the students were at with their technology knowledge but it quickly became apparent that although most students had quite a bit of tablet usage and knowledge of apps, they didn't really

know very much about computers and basic word processing nor did they possess true typing skills.

Schneider: What tools did you use to craft the technology curriculum?
Dahmus: JoLyn purchased a technology curriculum to serve as a guideline for my lesson plan development. The North Dakota Education Standards also serves as a guideline. Once I determined where each class was at in terms of skills, I built from there. The students love to learn new skills and quite often they get immediate gratification from putting what they've learned into action.

Typing reports begins as early as third grade. Students should not be worried about how to get their information on paper. They should be more worried about the content in their reports. Giving them the tools to empower them and help them take that worry out, maybe even make it more fun, seemed like something we needed to incorporate into our weekly lessons. So, adding a typing program as part of their time with me each week, seemed like an obvious inclusion.

Schneider: What is the frequency of class time you have with the students? Does each grade have a certain number of minutes each week?
Tessier/Dahmus: Each class in grades K-6 meets once per week. Kindergarten has half hour classes whereas grades 1-6 have 45 minute sessions.

Schneider: What does "digital citizenship" look like at the elementary level? What sorts of things do the students learn about "digital citizenship?"
Tessier/Dahmus: Digital citizenship can look different based upon the grade level. All grades learn about the various types of computer/technological equipment, what they do and what they may look like. Students also learn about personal information and why it's important not to share it.

Kindergarten students are able to define "personal information" and learn to tell a parent or trusted adult if something they see on the computer makes them feel uncomfortable, is mean, if something pops up onto their monitors or if they receive an e-mail from someone they do not know. They also learn to ask a parent for permission to be on specific Internet sites.

Grades 1 and 2 learn where the Internet comes from, how to make great passwords, how to protect those passwords and why asking a parent for permission before sharing private information online is so important.

Grades 3 and 4 learn how to make sure their messages are clear and respectful, how to stay safe on the Internet, and that they shouldn't make any purchases online without a parent present. Students also learn at this age that digital content is permanent and cannot be deleted. Copyrights are defined and they learn why they are important and how to give proper credit.

Grades 5 and 6 learn how to use the Internet to research or to find out credible information. Students learn about effective keywords for searching online, search engines, meta search engines and directories. They also reflect on what it is like to multitask on a cellphone. Cyberbullying is focused on where students are given different scenarios and can make choices to evolve into an upstander. As part of this, they also learn how to evaluate examples of online messages and decide what information is appropriate to share, and when.

In the growing and evolving world of technology, the technology curriculum at Trinity Elementary School will continue to provide students a strong foundation in good, productive,

and responsible use of this incredible tool! This part of elementary education, woven through each academic discipline, calls us to rise to the challenge of our vision – *awaken greatness* – and to continue to faithfully live our mission – *educating the whole student – mind, body and soul*.