



Necessity is the mother of invention, and for one mother, the source of a life-changing mission that is impacting children throughout the Diocese of Madison. When Deb Krebs noticed her youngest son was not faring well with reading, beginning in Kindergarten, she searched for extra help. Discovering the Barton Method, designed to address spelling, reading and writing struggles for students with dyslexia, was a gamechanger.

Soon after she began tutoring her son, another family at their school asked her to tutor their son. When Krebs' son entered St. Ambrose Academy (SAA) for 6th grade, the school administration strongly encouraged her to expand the work she was doing to better serve the SAA student population.

Meeting the needs of students is an important goal for Joan Carey, SAA Executive Director, who noted how, "Deb is swift to point out that traditional methods that teach learning to read do not succeed with as many as 20% of learners. Catholic schools often lack the resources to train teaches to pinpoint the nature of their students' learning difficulties or to employ onsite learning specialists."

In 2016, with great determination and support from many sides, including a three-year grant from the Diocese of Madison's Apostolate for Persons with Disabilities, Krebs formally launched the SAA Reading Institute.

The grant allowed Krebs to support St. Ambrose students and others, with expansion beginning immediately. "In that first year, I started working with three schools after being trained as a screener to identify dyslexia and to know more about the Barton Method," said Krebs.



Since then, Krebs has continued to train 15 tutors who work with 35 students in five local Catholic schools and sees this work as a vital part of the Catholic mission of education. She notes how often "students can be passed off as being lazy or unintelligent but dyslexia has

nothing to do with that, it has to do with how they process information.” Accessibility to reading opens doors for students, gives them confidence, and inspires a love for learning and developing their own unique talents.

Krebs cites notable examples like Walt Disney and Charles Schwab as successful people who were dyslexic and how “we need the gifts that these kids have to solve our world’s problems. By having a program like this, it allows students to stay in our Catholic schools where they can become well-formed Catholics equipped to make a difference with the way God has made them.”

As the Reading Institute grew, the SAA administration and Krebs recognized the benefits of creating an independent apostolate to expand on the strong foundation already laid.

Rebranded in 2020 as the Learning Atrium, an independent organization, Carey affirmed that Krebs is positioned for even more focused success as interest has grown for these services and as it “now has its own governing board, a strong team of advisors focused solely on offering students who struggle with reading challenges a path forward.”

Angela Hinline, SAA Learning Specialist,



sings high praise for Krebs, “a true champion for this much needed support.” As an educator, Hinline works with a wide variety of students, and knows how “the lack of a diagnosis and proper support can cause children to suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety and even depression as they (and their parents) find themselves falling further behind their same-aged peers in reading.”

The impact of this work is only just beginning. Hinline shared how, “the years of suffering that are lifted through this program is truly amazing. One mother shared with us that her child may be the first in their family to ever graduate from high school” after recognizing that her son’s struggles were the same ones that had limited other family members’ educational dreams.

The Learning Atrium promises to have a profound effect on the Diocese. St. Ambrose Academy celebrates the birth of the Learning Atrium and congratulates Deb Krebs on her dedication to the important cause of children who deserve individualized instruction that can open the door to reading, writing and learning.

“Not Indiana Jones, but the hallmark of serious scientific research,” is how Dr. Geoffrey Ludvik, Ph.D., History and Latin teacher at SAA, recently described the work he did this summer. While COVID-19 led to the cancellation of overseas digs in Israel, Ludvik still made discoveries in his field. In this quarter’s newsletter, Ludvik shares some of the fascinating aspects of his work outside of SAA - and how it connects back to the classroom!

We seek to understand the nature of human occupation in the Tell el-Hesi region of the northern Negev Desert from the earliest civilizations through the Islamic period and World War I. Specifically, Tell el-Hesi is the largest site in the region, home to a major city-state around 2800-2700 BC. By examining artifacts, excavation reports, and even old maps, we are trying to reconstruct what life was like in the Holy Land for those living several generations before Abraham.

My expertise in archaeology is the study of technology and workshops, especially those related to the fine arts. Based on the original excavation records, folks in the 70s and 80s believed a workshop may have been present at the site.

I examined all the artifacts found in that area and, with the collaboration of a PhD student and my former doctoral advisor, we successfully identified the remains of a cattle bone carving workshop from 2700 BC. A master craftsman was producing intricately carved bone tubes in the area, objects likely used as important containers. I am in the process of finalizing several reports for publication in various academic journals based on these results.

No workshops for these carved bone artifacts have ever been identified. The one at Tell el-Hesi is the very first. We can now begin to test how far similar artifacts were traded from this known node of production, helping reconstruct the economic interactions of the earliest human civilization in the Holy Land, the ancestors of the Biblical Canaanites.

One of the things I emphasize in class is how to support an argument with reference to historical data. In Cycle II- Medieval through Renaissance History, I have an activity where students need to look at several collections of replica Viking-era artifacts I bring in as if they were all found in single graves.

Their job is to tell me as much as possible about the life, economic class, profession, religion, gender, and time period of the individual. This year, I will use the example of the workshop at Tell el-Hesi to demonstrate how multiple lines of evidence can converge to make a stronger case.



When guests visit SAA classrooms at the Breakfast Tour, individual visits or the Open House they consistently comment how they wish they could learn what SAA students are getting in the classroom.

Since you can't re-do junior or senior high, we're offering the next best thing: a window into the SAA classroom with some of our outstanding, talented faculty!

This year, SAA is debuting our **Spotlight Series**, an all-new digital series where you are invited to step into the classroom with one of our faculty. Using actual content from their SAA classes, they'll give you a half hour presentation on a topic within their expertise. You'll walk away with a little extra insight into history, English, archeology, science and our Faith, plus see a glimpse of what our students experience on a daily basis.

Hosted online, you'll be able to ask questions of your own. More information about the new, digital Spotlight Series will be sent in September or contact carolyn.averill@ambroseacademy.org!

9/29/2020 | Mr. Michael Kwas, M.A.

11/3/2020 | Mrs. Emily Swanson

12/1/2020 | Dr. Geoffrey Ludvik, Ph.D.

2/9/2021 | Ms. Theresa Klinkhammer, M.T.S.

3/16/2021 | Ms. Katie Behrens, M.A.

4/20/2021 | Dr. Mary Skemp, Ph.D.