BLiCSS

BLENDED LEARNING IN — CATHOLIC SCHOOLS SYMPOSIUM

Technology, Teaching, and Transformative Practices

Symposium
Program Book

Notre Dame, Indiana
March 25-27, 2026

Message
from the Director

Fr. Nate Wills
C.S.C., Ph.D.

Ryan Family ACE
Professorship

Director, Higher-Powered
Learning

Faculty, Mary Ann Remick
Leadership Program

Dear fellow education innovators and practitioners,

It probably seems redundant to hear a priest say that he loves the Pope. But I do. And I don't think I'm alone! Isn't it amazing to hear the Pope speak in an American accent, see him wear a White Sox hat, or know that he will likely be cheering against Notre Dame basketball when they play Villanova in Rome this fall?

Pope Leo wrote an Apostolic Letter this past October on the 60th anniversary of the Vatican II document on education. You probably already know that it's called, "Drawing New Maps of Hope." In it, he offered a challenge to Catholic universities in particular to "offer…more tables to sit around together, without unnecessary hierarchies, to touch the wounds of history and seek, in the Spirit, the wisdom that springs from the lives of peoples."

This is the 9th annual Blended Learning in Catholic Schools Symposium (BLiCSS), and I feel pretty good that I think we're taking up Pope Leo's challenge by being here together this spring. Our theme this year is "Technology, Teaching, and Transformative Practices," which will give us a chance to move beyond surface-level discussions of tools and tips to explore that which is truly transformational in our Catholic schools. This gathering gives us the opportunity to share ideas, hear from practitioners in the field of Catholic education, and engage in this professional, personal, and perhaps even spiritual growth that the Holy Father encouraged.

Once again, I'm thrilled to welcome all of you to the University of Notre Dame's beautiful campus, and we're looking forward to sharing the wisdom that each of you brings to this year's BLiCSS.

Thank you for your presence, your insights, and your commitment to the work ahead.

In Christ,

Fr. Nate

Symposium
Essentials

Theme

Technologies like GenAI, adaptive software, devices, and digital collaboration tools are reshaping how we think about teaching and learning. We chose the theme Technology, Teaching, and Transformative Practices because it captures the dynamic interplay between these innovations and the challenges and opportunities they present for students and educators alike. We hope to move past surface-level adoption toward practices that are thoughtful, intentional, and inspirational. By setting our sights on transformation, we seek to open space for educators to share not just what is new, but what is effective, sustainable, and inspiring.

Resources

Access symposium digital resources by scanning the QR code on your table or by visiting bit.ly/BLiCSS9

BLiCSS Goals

GOAL 01

To gather thought leaders in the blended-learning space with an explicit connection to Catholic schools to share ideas, bright spots, and challenges

GOAL 02

To develop our shared capacity to implement high-quality blended learning in Catholic schools

Contact Information

For any issues you have during the conference, you can contact Lewis at lpoche@nd.edu or (225) 505-1499.

Presented by:

HIGHER - POWERED LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME | INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES
Alliance for Catholic Education

With support generously provided by:

i-Ready
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MAGISTERIUM [AI]

Symposium Schedule

Wednesday, March 25

Morris Inn - Private Dining Room

05:00PM - 06:00PM
Registration and Welcome Reception

06:00PM - 08:00PM
Dinner & *Technology, Teaching, and Transformative Practices*
Fr. Nate Wills, C.S.C., Ph.D. and Lewis Poche
Sponsored by Curriculum Associates, creators of i-Ready

Thursday, March 26

Carole Sandner Hall - Remick Commons
08:00AM - 09:00AM
Breakfast

09:00AM - 09:05AM
Overview of Schedule and Speakers
Lewis Poche

09:05AM - 10:00AM
How Catholic Schools Are Actually Using GenAI
Fr. Nate Wills, C.S.C., Ph.D. and Lewis Poche

10:00AM - 10:10AM
Break

10:10AM - 11:05AM
Accompanying Young People in the Age of AI
Meaghan Crowley Sullivan

11:05AM - 11:15AM
Break

11:15AM - 12:10PM
Prompting with Power and Purpose: Designing AI Prompts for Multilingual Learner Success
Katy Lichon, Ph.D. and Jenny Dees

12:10PM - 12:15PM
Group Photo

12:15PM - 01:00PM
Lunch

01:00PM - 01:55PM
Breakout #1

Carole Sandner Hall - Remick Commons
Incorporating Technology for Instant Formative Assessment
Thomas Betterly

Remick Family Hall - Room 316
From Data to Daily Instruction: Leveraging Assessments to Elevate Explicit Instruction
John Carder and Jodi Turpening

01:55PM - 02:05PM
Break

02:05PM - 03:00PM
Breakout #2

Carole Sandner Hall - Remick Commons
Ancient Truths, New Tools: Enhancing the Teaching and Learning of Religion with Magisterium AI
John Brahier

Remick Family Hall - Room 316
The Metrics and Magic of School Culture: Leading with Technology and AI
Michael O'Kane

03:00PM - 03:10PM
Break

03:10PM - 04:05PM
Breakout #3

> Carole Sandner Hall - Remick Commons
> Developing AI Agents to Help Students Develop Key Learning Skills
> Gabrielle Martin

> Remick Family Hall - Room 316
> From Vision to Classroom: The creation of a Director of AI role and LUMA at St Paul VI Catholic
> Michael Hargadon

04:05PM - 06:00PM
Break

06:00PM - 08:30PM
Dinner
Hank Family Forum, Corbett Family Hall, 8th Floor
Sponsored by Longbeard, creators of Magisterium AI

Friday, March 27
Carole Sandner Hall - Remick Commons
08:00AM - 09:00AM
Breakfast

09:00AM - 10:30AM
Higher-Powered Learning Workshop

10:30AM - 10:45AM
NEON Presentation

10:45AM - 11:00AM
Closing and BLiCSS 10.0 Location and Date Announcement

Session Descriptions

Technology, Teaching, and Transformative Practices
Fr. Nate Wills, Director, Higher-Powered Learning; Faculty, Mary Ann Remick
Leadership Program
Lewis Poche, Associate Program Director, Higher-Powered Learning

Technologies like GenAI, adaptive software, devices, and digital collaboration tools are reshaping how we think about teaching and learning. We chose the theme "Technology, Teaching, and Transformative Practices" because it captures the dynamic interplay between these innovations and the challenges and opportunities they present for students and educators alike. In our 2026 symposium, we hope to move past surface-level adoption toward practices that are thoughtful, intentional, and inspirational. By setting our sights on transformation, we seek to open space for educators to share not just what is new, but what is effective, sustainable, and inspiring.

How Catholic Schools Are *Actually* Using GenAI
Fr. Nate Wills, Director, Higher-Powered Learning; Faculty, Mary Ann Remick
Leadership Program
Lewis Poche, Associate Program Director, Higher-Powered Learning

Curious how Catholic schools are navigating the rise of generative AI? This session pulls back the curtain on what's actually happening in Catholic school classrooms across the country. We'll explore how educators are experimenting with AI tools, what kinds of policies—both formal and informal—are emerging, and how professional development is helping teachers and leaders use AI wisely. We'll also spotlight promising tools that remain under the radar and share insights from the field that can inform your own next steps.

Accompanying Young People in the Age of AI
Meaghan Crowley Sullivan, Curriculum and Professional Learning Developer,
iDEAL Institute at LMU

As artificial intelligence and digital technologies reshape how students learn and relate to the world, Catholic schools are called to accompany young people with wisdom, discernment, and a grounded understanding of human dignity. The Catholic Companion Framework for Technology and Innovation offers a K–12, faith-anchored approach that integrates Catholic anthropology, Catholic Social Teaching, and contemporary research on learning and digital life. This session introduces the framework's core strands and explains why a formation-centered response to technological change is urgently needed in Catholic education today. Participants will leave with a clearer sense of how the framework can serve as a guiding companion for formation and innovation in their own school communities.

Prompting with Power and Purpose: Designing AI Prompts for Multilingual Learner Success
Katy Lichon, Associate Teaching Professor, Institute for Educational Initiatives, University of Notre Dame
Jenny Dees, Associate Director of ALMA Educational Outreach, University of Notre Dame

AI has the potential to amplify - not replace - the professional expertise of educators, especially when supporting English learners. As classrooms grow increasingly multilingual, educators need tools that help them design engaging lessons and assess learning in equitable and responsive ways. Achieving this equity begins with crafting clear, intentional prompts - prompting with power and purpose. Participants will explore ways to design prompts that honor multilingual learners' assets and differentiate for varying proficiency levels. At the core, effective prompting reminds us that it's not artificial intelligence leading the learning, but the authentic intelligence of educators who understand their students.

Incorporating Technology for Instant Formative Assessment
Thomas Betterly, ACE Mathematics Teacher, Bourgade Catholic High School

Knowing exactly where students are—moment to moment—is essential in classrooms, particularly when serving learners performing below grade level. In blended-learning environments, this requires instant, meaningful formative assessment and subsequent decision-making.

This session will explore opportunities for reliable assessment, not occasional or unreliable survey-style checks like ""thumb-ometers"" or whole-group questioning. This session will help illustrate and design techniques for data collection for data-informed instruction. This session will explore techniques that incorporate continuous formative assessment through student-driven pacing and choice.

From Data to Daily Instruction: Leveraging Assessments to Elevate Explicit Instruction
John Carder, Manager of Professional Learning, Curriculum Associates
Jodi Turpening, Director of Assessment and Student Services, Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Unlock the power of data to drive meaningful classroom change. In this session, participants will learn how to move beyond compliance and use assessment data (example used is i-Ready data) as a strategic decision-making tool. We'll explore how to design high-impact explicit instruction lessons informed by student performance data, focusing on prerequisite skills and standards mastery. Attendees will gain practical strategies for integrating reports and lessons into daily instruction, ensuring every part of the explicit instruction framework—modeling, guided practice, and independent practice—is data-driven. Whether you're looking to deepen your understanding or apply these principles more broadly, this session will provide actionable insights to transform teaching and learning.

Ancient Truths, New Tools: Enhancing the Teaching and Learning of Religion with Magisterium AI
John Brahier, Director of Educational Engagement, Longbeard/Magisterium AI

This session will explore the complexities of thoughtfully integrating AI in Catholic schools with careful attention to 1) fidelity concerns from secular AI platforms and 2) pedagogical concerns about AI in education more generally. With these concerns in mind, as well as the key guidelines offered in Drawing New Maps of Hope and Antiqua Et Nova, this session will hone in on the religious instruction as a specific test case. Participants will explore how Magisterium AI, a specialized tool for the exploration of the Catholic faith, can support authentic teaching and learning of religion and theology. (Please bring a device to engage directly with the platform as part of this session.)

The Metrics and Magic of School Culture: Leading with Technology and AI
Michael O'Kane, Principal, St. Mary's Primary School, Glenview, Maghera (Diocese of Derry - Ireland)

This interactive session explores how Catholic school leaders can cultivate vibrant, inclusive school cultures by blending the power of technology and artificial intelligence with the heart of Gospel values. Drawing on my experience as principal of a Catholic primary school with over 300 pupils and 60 children with additional needs in six specialist classes, as well as my roles as an Apple Professional Learning Specialist and Apple Distinguished Educator, I will share practical strategies for using digital tools to gather real-time insights from staff, pupils, and parents, making the invisible aspects of culture visible and actionable.

Participants will experience how AI-driven analysis of stakeholder surveys and social media can reveal both the metrics and the "magic" that define a school's ethos. The session highlights the importance of balancing data with meaning, stories, and relationships, especially in times of change or challenge. Attendees will receive adaptable resources for using digital exit tickets, fostering pupil voice, and supporting inclusion through accessible technology. Rooted in Catholic mission, this session empowers leaders to harness technology ethically and purposefully, ensuring every child is seen, heard, and valued. By the end, participants will leave with concrete tools and renewed inspiration to lead school communities where culture is both measured and lived.

Developing AI Agents to Help Students Develop Key Learning Skills
Gabrielle Martin, Chief Academic Officer, Arrupe Virtual Learning Institute

In an attempt to help both students and teachers navigate the waters of AI in a meaningful and responsible way, AVLI has been experimenting with the creation and use of AI "agents" to help students develop essential learning skills such as time management and help seeking. In this presentation, I'll share the process we used for creating the agent using Gemini and details as to how it's being deployed in current coursework.

From Vision to Classroom: The creation of a Director of AI role and LUMA at St Paul VI Catholic
Michael Hargadon, Educator/Director of AI and Emerging Technology, St Paul VI Catholic High School

This session shares a blueprint for launching a Director of AI & Emerging Technology role and how we built LUMA, an AI-enabled classroom assistant, at St. Paul VI Catholic High School. We will cover the why (inertia, mission aligned need and catholic identity), the how (the advocate role, administration buy in, teacher co-design and student engagement), and the tech (Google Classroom integration, teaching style integration, course materials integration, catholic identity integration and privacy/ethics by design). Attendees will leave with artifacts: sample job description, rollout roadmap, survey instruments, and an AI Impact & Integrity framework. I'll highlight early outcomes, teacher time savings, student engagement gains, and assessment integrity, plus lessons learned from change management across departments and the diocese. Come for candid stories, stay for practical templates.

Higher-Powered Learning Workshop
Fr. Nate Wills, Director, Higher-Powered Learning
Lewis Poche, Associate Program Director, Higher-Powered Learning
Megan Cerbins, Associate Program Director, Higher-Powered Learning

During this session, the HPL team will lead the participants through a period of reflection and planning. What have you learned at BLiCSS that you wish to implement within your organizations? Participants will learn about the programs HPL offers to support schools in implementing and sustaining blended learning initiatives.

BLiCSS

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| Thank you!

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107 Carole Sandner Hall
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556
hpl@nd.edu
Phone: 574-631-5001
ace.nd.edu/hpl