

# CELA plans to boost enrollment

By BOB DOHR

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As Pewaukee's newest private Christian school nears the end of its inaugural year, the school's co-founder is looking ahead to bigger and better things, including boosting enrollment by 60 percent.

Christian Education Leadership Academy, on Ryan Street just north of Highway 16, is serving 250 students in grades kindergarten through eight this year.

Because of its first-year success and number of requests from other families to join, Brian Nahey, who co-founded CELA with his wife, Nancy, said the school is projecting enrollment to swell to 400 for the 2016-17 school year and hopes to establish a waiting list to fill potential openings.

Nahey said CELA will announce detailed plans to fulfill that goal in the coming weeks, including new scholarship opportunities.

For now, the school has planned three "Each One, Reach One" events in April and May, where current CELA families are encouraged to bring friends and neighbors who might want to join the school. The event will give families an opportunity to see the school, meet members of the CELA family and encourage them to look into the enrollment process.

## Like-minded families

The concept of the school, according to Nahey, is to build a community of like-minded families. It's based on the three pillars of academic excellence, Christian values and leadership development.

CELA is unlike many other religious schools, Nahey said. It's interdenominational, so the school doesn't cover any of the aspects that are unique to different denominations.

"We concentrate on Christian values and the type of life a person lives as a Christian,"



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Christian Education Leadership Academy in Pewaukee, a private Christian school in its founding year, plans to expand its enrollment by 60 percent for its second year of operation.

Nahey said.

Such as honesty. And as the value is taught, Nahey said the family is incorporated into the lesson.

"All of the materials integrate the family into the value," he said. "The parents have to be part of the homework."

## Unique learning

The physical structure of the school is different, too, with many of the early-grade classrooms grouped in a pod system with adjoining "family rooms" that are also used for learning.

"Every one of those pods has an electronic, interactive table for children to use, up to six at a time, in order to solve as a coherent group," Nahey said.

Positive reinforcement and individualized learning are also areas of emphasis.

That includes allowing students to retake assessments to make sure they're grasping the material.

"Our concept is if there are key items that you want children to learn, you make sure they learn it," Nahey said. "If they haven't, you give them an

opportunity to try again. If they haven't again, you work with them again, and this way you take and treat every child individually."

Class sizes are limited to 16 students or fewer.

## Children get to lead

Learning leadership skills also is an important part of the academy's mission.

Nahey said students are continually getting opportunities to practice leadership skills, whether it's leading morning prayer, reciting announcements over the public address system or setting up lessons for chapel.

The school's Christmas program, for example, was helmed almost entirely by the kids.

"Our young person that welcomed everybody, he was a third-grader. He opened up the ceremony," Nahey said. "Our master of ceremonies was an eighth-grader. All of the electronics were run by our children."

## New school leader

The inaugural year has not been without its bumps in the

road. In December, CELA parted ways with headmaster Jeremy Bock.

Nahey said the relationship just wasn't a good fit.

"He came from a very religious background, and he could not understand that this was a very unique school," Nahey said. "We were not a religious school, we were a Christian school, and it just didn't fit so we decided to part ways."

The school scrapped the "headmaster" title, replaced it with "head of school," and in February hired Don Galster to take over the role.

Galster previously served as principal at Bayside Middle School.

## Other schools closing

CELA's news about an expected boost in enrollment comes a few weeks after another private school in the area, Queen of Apostles Catholic School in Pewaukee, announced it would close after this school year because of declining enrollment.

Lake County Christian Academy closed its doors in May

2015 for similar reasons.

Nahey said CELA heard from quite a few Lake Country Christian Academy families after that school's closure. He said he's not sure whether there will be a similar response from Queen of Apostles families.

"We ran open houses, and we will run open houses again where we invite the outside in," Nahey said. "That was where we ran into the people from Lake Country Christian."

## Original plans changed

CELA was originally eyed for the city of Delafield, but the plan was met with resistance from some city residents who argued the school didn't fit with the city's land-use plan.

So the academy set its sights on Pewaukee. The school now sits on just under 60 acres on the west side of Ryan Street on land formerly owned by the Pewaukee School District.

In March 2015, the academy announced a tuition price of \$14,750 per student in grades K5 through eight, but also announced an ongoing tuition credit of \$5,000 per student on an annual basis and a Founding Student Scholarship of \$4,000 for each student enrolled at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, bringing the net tuition price per student for CELA's first year to \$5,750.

Each founding student will continue to receive the yearly Founding Student Scholarship, which will be reduced by \$400 each year as long as the student attends CELA. Total tuition cost for a founding student in the 2016-17 school year will be \$6,150.

Nahey said new scholarship information will be announced in the coming weeks.

An updated website is on the way, too.

Nahey said that when the school's website was developed, CELA was not a functioning school. Now it is, and the new site will reflect that, with photos, videos and testimonials.