



To Love, Learn, Serve, Build, and Grow

JEFFERSON CITY — Recently, I had the chance to go back to school. No, I wasn't cracking the books trying to fill my mind with the knowledge of the day. Although, many would easily argue that every day in the State Senate is an education in itself! This time, I was at the first day of classes at the new Barat Academy in St. Charles County. For those of you unfamiliar with Barat Academy, it is a Catholic Independent High School founded in the tradition of a Sacred Heart education, offering a college preparatory curriculum, and single gender classes on a co-educational campus. It is built on the LEARNLIFE philosophy that educates not only these students' minds, but their bodies and spirits as well. One of the things I find most inspiring is its philosophy based on the principles of to love, learn, serve, build, and grow.

The educators of this new place of learning start with the principle to love. They promote not just the philosophy of loving God, obvious from the Catholic doctrine they teach, but also loving each other.

An obvious tenet of the school's work is based on learning. But it's not just Catholic philosophy being taught. Students are offered a model of 21st Century education that utilizes the latest technology, such as laptop computers and wireless Internet connections, taught in classrooms set up with modular furniture flexible enough to be moved around to fit each occasion. It's this environment that will prepare these students for the technological, as well as the social and spiritual challenges they will face long after graduation.

Serving one another ties back into what Jesus said long ago when he exhorted his followers to love their neighbors as they love themselves. Barat Academy teaches its students that service is as important as learning, and the students will learn by serving one another. It's a fine ideal we don't often see in our schools today.

As the students put all these previous principles together, they build and grow their minds, bodies, and spirits. I can tell you, from what I saw at the opening of this new center of learning, this first class of students will spend their days being filled with knowledge, love, and compassion for their fellow man. They'll be able to go forth and spread these noble ideals and pass on what they have received.

It is exciting to see a new opportunity for students in our area to learn. My hope is that our area will provide many choices from public to private to parochial educational options for our students. We are blessed to have such great institutions of learning from our public to private schools available for our kids. The opportunities for them to grow and succeed are many, and, with the opening of Barat Academy, that list of opportunities has gotten more plentiful.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.