

Connecting classrooms and students

Our Lady's Catholic Academy, an elementary school in the Diocese of Brooklyn, opened in 2009 using *The Superkids Reading Program™* for its K–2 students. In their ninth year of using the program, administrators and teachers attribute their students' growing reading success to *Superkids®*.

Classroom consistency

Teachers voice solid support for *Superkids* and its integration of all the foundations of early reading. Roselle Mauceri especially appreciates the seamless incorporation of phonics in the reading and writing activities. With nearly 20 years' teaching experience and five using *Superkids* in her first-grade classroom, she especially values the wide range of resources. "At first it seemed overwhelming," she explains. "There are so many different components to *Superkids*. But the Teacher's Guide lays out the program, and I was very pleased. I don't have to look for other resources; it's all there."

Principal Kevin Coyne notes that the *Superkids* program also works well for new teachers—both teachers at the beginning of their careers as well as teachers new to the school and the program. "We have a high student

“*Superkids is the consistent thread that new teachers, veteran teachers, and everyone in between can use effectively.*”

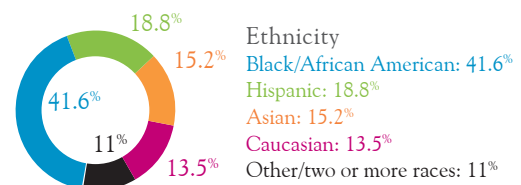
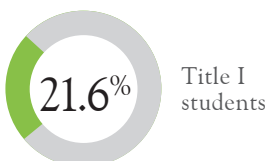
—Kevin Coyne, Principal

population turnover in our area, and we also have a fairly high turnover of teachers,” he says.

Second-grade teacher Doreen Lobelle, who has also taught first grade at the academy, credits *Superkids* for her successful transition as a teacher. “I’m a career changer, coming out of the public relations and marketing sector,” she explains. “With *Superkids*, I was very pleased not only from a beginning teacher’s perspective but also from a marketing perspective. It’s very well put together.” She believes the program encourages students because they like the immediately relatable characters. “The *Superkids* are like any regular kid.”

Our Lady's Catholic Academy

A PreK–8 Catholic school located in the large urban area of Queens, New York



“From many, we are one”

The teachers and principal believe that *Superkids* is ideal for their diverse mix of urban students. The motto of Our Lady’s Catholic Academy is “from many, we are one,” and the school works diligently to ensure every student can read. “*Superkids* serves as the great equalizer,” says Coyne. “Our diocese has always welcomed immigrants, as a gateway to America. If children literally walk into our school not knowing a word of English, this program is going to over time teach them the lessons and the skills that they need to be effective readers and writers.”

The values taught by Superkids are very consistent with our belief system as a Catholic school. There’s a real sense of social justice and of respect, compassion, and mercy.

—Kevin Coyne, Principal

Superkids’ incorporation of gentle life lessons aligns well with the mission of Our Lady’s Catholic Academy and to the full engagement of every child in it. “The *Superkids* don’t exclude each other in the stories,” says Coyne, “and it’s a great parallel to not excluding any learner.” Students connect to the dilemmas faced by the characters and how they work through them.

“A lot of reading programs have passages about life on a farm, for instance, or other things not really relevant to city dwellers,” says Lobelle. “*Superkids* really relates to kids everywhere because it focuses on the characters’ conflict resolution and problem solving, which resonates with any population.”

Superkids reaches diverse students

As principal Coyne points out, being connected to the *Superkids* characters puts learning to read in a different context. “Students don’t approach reading as ‘now I have to read.’ They approach the time as ‘now I get to learn what is going on with these kids today.’ It’s a motivating factor with children who struggle and keeps them engaged.”

Superkids is really part of our school life in a way that I don’t think most other academic or textbook programs become.

—Kevin Coyne, Principal

“When you talk about engaging students who may be struggling, students at a very young age become aware that they are not keeping up with the students around them,” says Coyne. “And *Superkids’* design allows for instruction to continue so students aren’t excluded because of the specific way that it’s differentiated.”

Students at every level are engaged in *Superkids* stories. Mauceri said she was surprised her more advanced students welcomed revisiting earlier lessons with their peers. “Some activities I thought would be too low to hold their interest, they still enjoy,” she said. In addition, pairing up students across levels helped struggling students even more. “We think it’s because of the motivation factor,” Lobelle concludes. “Anything to do with *Superkids* is fun.”

Aligning with the mission

In its ninth year of using *Superkids*, Our Lady’s Catholic Academy now has a school full of students who followed the program during their first three years (or more if they started prekindergarten, which uses the companion program, *Happily Ever After*®). “Our mission as a Catholic school is to see every child as an individual creation of God and do our best to meet their needs,” says Coyne. “For us to do that, we need tools. We can meet those children’s needs with the *Superkids* program.” More than 80 other schools in the Diocese of Brooklyn now also use *Superkids* as a result of Our Lady’s Catholic Academy’s success.

Coyne believes the *Superkids* program gives students a lasting foundation for reading and writing. “I’m a very big advocate of the program because I see it transform the students in my school. And you’ve heard it from the teachers as well: there’s something about a *Superkids* classroom that just permeates all that they do. And I’ve never seen anything comparable.”