When Students Know the Target:

How OLi⁴ Is Strengthening Clarity, Ownership, and Student Growth at Cardinal Stritch Catholic High School & Academy

SCHOOL PROFILE

Cardinal Stritch Catholic High School & Academy (PreK-12)

READING SPECIALIST/ INSTRUCTIONAL COACH:
Angela Sizemore

ENROLLMENT:
500+ students

OLi⁴ PARTICIPATION:
Year 2 Participant

FROM INFORMATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

In her first year of OLi⁴, Angela Sizemore absorbed new ideas. In her second year, **she began transforming classrooms.**

> *"Last year I was taking in a lot of information. This year, I feel like there's so much more implementation we're doing."*

At Cardinal Stritch Catholic High School & Academy—a PreK–12 school serving more than 500 students—that implementation centers on one powerful shift—**teacher clarity.**

WHAT CHANGED: MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE

Angela realized that while teachers were delivering standards-based lessons, students weren't always fully aware of the purpose behind them. **Today, that looks different.** In classrooms across K–3:

- Learning intentions are explicitly taught.
- Success criteria are clearly defined.
- Students can articulate what they are learning and why.
- Expectations are visible and discussed—not just posted.

> *"The students know what their objectives are. They know what is expected."*

Even kindergarteners can answer:

- "Today I am learning..."
- "When I'm done, I should be able to..."

This is not surface-level compliance. **It is cognitive ownership.**

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BEFORE ▸ AFTER: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Before OLi⁴	After OLi⁴
Objectives posted ▸	Objectives internalized
Teacher-directed learning ▸	Student-articulated learning
Limited clarity language ▸	Shared schoolwide vocabulary
Passive engagement ▸	Motivated, accountable learners

Angela explains it simply:

> *"Kids are no different than adults. They want to know what's expected. Why am I doing this? What will I get out of it?"*

When students understand the target, engagement rises, motivation increases, and **learning accelerates.**

LEADERSHIP SHIFT: A NEW LENS ON WALKTHROUGHS

OLi⁴ also changed how Angela evaluates instruction. Walkthroughs and observations are no longer centered only on teaching behaviors. **They focus on student evidence.** She now asks:

> *"Is clarity visible in a 5–8-minute walkthrough—not just during formal observations?*

> *"Can students explain what they are learning?*

> *"Is learning sustained beyond the teacher's delivery?*

> *"I'm seeing a better all-view of the class. It's more than covering standards. How is this affecting the whole class?"*

That shift ensures clarity is embedded—**not performative.**

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LITERACY GROWTH THROUGH THE SCIENCE OF READING

Cardinal Stritch has implemented structured Science of Reading practices, including Orton-Gillingham training across grades. **The difference is measurable.** Angela notes:

K–3 classrooms trained in structured literacy show stronger skill development.

Students emerging from two years of implementation demonstrate improved foundational skills.

Assessment data reflects upward movement in MAP, state testing, and Acadience results.

> *"There is a huge difference. I see a huge difference in our students' abilities coming out of those classes."*

Implementation has expanded year over year:

Year 1: K-1
Year 2: Added Grades 2-3
Year 3: Expanded into Grade 4

This phased, fidelity-driven rollout allows for **sustained capacity building.**

BUILDING A COMMON LANGUAGE ACROSS 500 STUDENTS

Cardinal Stritch operates as a single PreK–12 campus with approximately two sections per grade level. That means a kindergartener and a high school senior are part of the same learning system. Through OLi⁴, clarity is becoming the common thread—ensuring students experience consistent language, expectations, and ownership year after year.

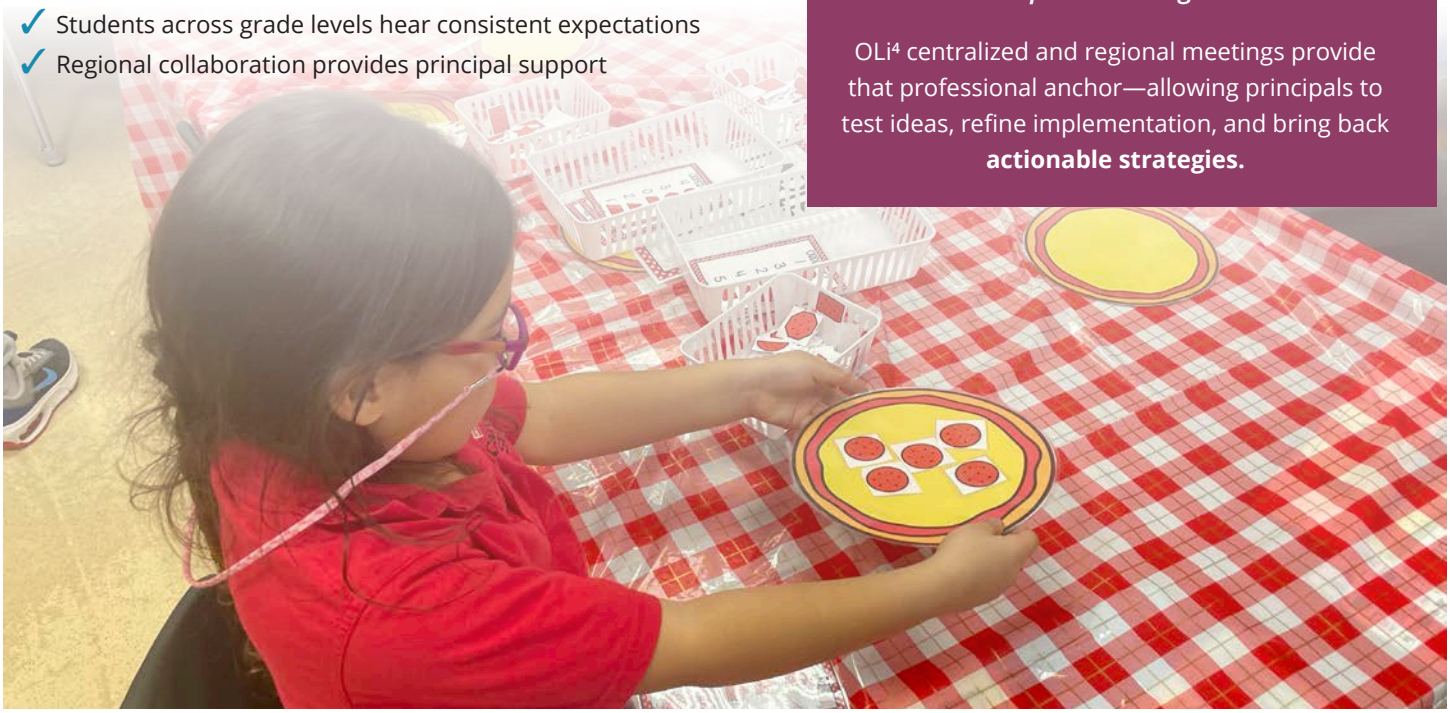
Through OLi⁴:

- ✓ Teacher-based teams use shared language
- ✓ Learning intention vocabulary is embedded in meetings
- ✓ Students across grade levels hear consistent expectations
- ✓ Regional collaboration provides principal support

Angela describes the isolation of school leadership:

> *"You don't always know who that person is to go to."*

OLi⁴ centralized and regional meetings provide that professional anchor—allowing principals to test ideas, refine implementation, and bring back **actionable strategies.**



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THE NEXT FRONTIER: MATH

Angela is candid: math scores remain low, but the roadmap is clear.

> *"We've seen the growth and turnaround in reading. We've got to build math the same way."*

The clarity framework, fidelity of implementation, and leadership lens developed through OLi⁴ are now being applied to math instruction—**ensuring alignment across subjects.**

CLARITY CREATES STUDENT OWNERSHIP

Clarity is more than a strategy. It is access. When students understand what they are learning—when they can name the goal, describe success, and track their own progress—learning becomes something they own, not something done to them.

At Cardinal Stritch, clarity is strengthening more than instruction. It is strengthening:

- Student confidence
- Student voice
- Student accountability
- Teacher consistency
- Leadership focus

AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT IS SHIFTING MINDSET.

Instead of asking,
"Did we teach it?"

The question becomes,
"Did students understand it?"

Instead of focusing only on coverage, the focus becomes ownership. Through OLi⁴, leadership has moved from monitoring instruction to ensuring that learning is visible, intentional, and understood.

And when students know the target—they are far more likely to reach it.