

INTERVIEW WITH DALLAS CARTER, HIGH SCHOOL DIRECTOR AT ST MICHAEL SCHOOL IN HAWAII

Interview conducted by Quentin Wodon

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EXCERPTS:

- “In response to comments made by parents during the last accreditation self-study process regarding their desire for the establishment of a Catholic high school on the North Shore of Oahu, St Michael School partnered with an online Catholic high school program that offered a curriculum featuring highly-qualified teachers from throughout the nation.”
- “With the high price of land in Hawaii and with the limited resources available to us, digitized education is the only way our little school on the country side of Oahu is able to have a high school option at all for our students in this area of the island.”

Could you please describe where you currently work and what your responsibilities are?

Aloha! My name is Dallas Carter and I am currently the High School Director at St Michael School in Waialua, Hawaii. For over 75 years, St. Michael School has been a staple in Waialua, Hawaii and many in our community benefited from the Catholic education we provide, which focuses on academic excellence in a faith-based environment.

In response to comments made by parents during the last accreditation self-study process regarding their desire for the establishment of a Catholic high school on the North Shore of Oahu, St. Michael School partnered with an online Catholic high school program that offered a curriculum featuring highly-qualified teachers from throughout the nation. Additionally, it established an on-site learning facility to provide students with a safe space to complete their online studies, to foster a hybrid model of education by hosting classes on campus, and to ensure student integration with a solid Catholic campus life.

Box 1: Interview Series

What is the mission of the Global Catholic Education website? The site informs and connects Catholic educators globally. It provides them with data, analysis, opportunities to learn, and other resources to help them fulfill their mission with a focus on the preferential option for the poor.

Why a series of interviews? Interviews are a great way to share experiences in an accessible and personal way. This series will feature interviews with practitioners as well as researchers working in Catholic education, whether in a classroom, at a university, or with other organizations aiming to strengthen Catholic schools and universities.

What is the focus of this interview? In this interview, Dallas Carter, High School Director at St Michael School in Waialua, Hawaii, discusses some of his experiences with digitalization in education. The interview is part of a series on that topic.

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What has been your experience in your organization about digitalization and education? What has worked well?

Our high school utilizes an accredited online program that allows students the option of attending school fully online or via a hybrid model with our 'on-campus' high school facility. I am the school's program supervisor for all of the online studies and I also run the day to day operation of our on campus high school facility for the students utilizing the hybrid model.

With the high price of land in Hawaii and with the limited resources available to us, digitized education is the only way our little school on the country side of Oahu is able to have a high school option at all for our students in this area of the island. I am excited to share that this year we will celebrate our two very first high school program graduates which have both been accepted into the colleges of their choice.

The establishment of the innovative high school program on our campus has allowed families on the North shore area to feasibly continue private education for their children at the high school as opposed to pulling them out of private education or sending them to the nearest private high school on the island which is nearly 1.5 hours away due to rush hour traffic. As a further result of this innovation St Michael school has also been able to provide students that have moved away to the mainland a way to stay connected to our school by being enrolled in some of our online classes. We have also been able to partner with different schools to be able to provide quality education virtually to students throughout Oahu, Maui, the Big Island, the continental U.S., as well as some students in Japan, Okinawa, and Saipan.

What has been challenging?

While there are numerous benefits to the digitization of education, there is still much that needs to evolve. The age of educational digitization is still, in my opinion, in its early years and so there are many aspects of the various SIS and LMS options available that still need to be fine-tuned to meet the needs of the students and educators. Furthermore, most professional educators in the K-12 space will note the utmost importance of human connection and relationship in the holistic development of a student. Online learning, while opening doors to endless possibilities, can easily lack that essential human connection. It is not an insurmountable challenge but it does require the intentional focus of the educator to ensure connection with the students. There can also be issues with connecting students from various places in a virtual setting due to time differences. Proper scheduling is essential of educating students from multiple locations at the same time.

What do you think more generally are the opportunities from digitalization for K12 education in the United States?

In general the digitization of K12 education allows for access to quality education for anyone around the world that has access to a computer and the internet. The possibilities are truly endless. As I shared earlier, the online learning platform has allowed my small school to bridge the gap between islands, states, and even countries. We partnered with different schools to be able to provide quality education virtually.

There is also a massive opportunity to utilize excellent teachers to teach students in multiple locations at the same time. Last year I was personally able to teach students from all the places I listed earlier at the same time in one virtual classroom. Such an ability could not only make use of educational talent but also be able to help schools in hard financial situations to be able to partner with another school or schools to provide a teacher for their students in various subjects (as an example one teacher could teach Biology for 3 different schools in a virtual setting and the 3 schools would split the costs for that one teacher).

Finally, could you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am a husband, father of six, high school director, small business owner, Catholic Apologist, National Catholic Speaker, and a Diocesan Catechist for the Diocese of Honolulu. I have my degree in Theology from Franciscan University in Steubenville and my Master's from Chaminade University in Honolulu. In addition to my theological academic background I also teach Hawaiian history and I speak my native Hawaiian language. I have had the honor of having my lectures, articles, or interviews featured on EWTN, Relevant Radio, Catholic News Agency, The Maccabee Society, The National Catholic Register, LifeSite News, The New York Times, People Magazine, and other outlets.



Photo: St Michael School in Waialua.