

The Journey Begins: Embracing Seton Schools

When St. Sebastian School commemorated its 100th anniversary in 2013, the parish community celebrated the strong academics, faith and family involvement that has kept the school a model of urban education.

Those same values are encompassed in a new archdiocesan initiative, Seton Catholic Schools, that will include St. Catherine School this year and St. Sebastian in the future. According to the [website](#), Seton Catholic Schools will focus on providing administrative support, staff development and faith formation.

Open Meeting

In late June 2016, more than three dozen interested parents, parishioners and neighbors attended a listening session to learn more about the project aimed at providing “the highest caliber academic and spiritual formation programs for all students.”

The meeting began with an explanation of the Seton Catholic Schools model and the options for St. Sebs, followed by a session for parents and parishioners to ask for clarifications or express concerns.

At the meeting, Father Larry Chapman noted that Seton assures that Sebs is a strong model for success, and the organization wants to encourage all schools to keep what's working. He said he feels that there will be value added in the support Seton will provide to promote high-quality teaching and efficiencies to improve our financial stability, while maintaining the things that currently make us a model school within the network.



The Seton Way

A parish fact sheet highlights these features of Seton Schools:

- Structure – Remove the many administrative tasks from the principal/administration to focus on instructional leading of the school.
- Increased Academics – Data-informed student instructional tools, instructional coaches to work with our teachers, increased student collaboration, focus on English Language Arts and math, peer teacher collaboration, increased and intensified teacher professional development, additional academic programs to help struggling students grow and shine, challenges for our high-achieving students.
- Support – Staff to help with procurement, both quality and cost savings; Business staff including budgeting, financial collection, recording and auditing; Human Resources including recruiting and vetting teacher candidates, legal mandates regarding personnel, and managing staff like aides, lunch, custodial and child care; Marketing and School Recruitment; Development including grants, annual funds and foundations.
- Strong Staff Development – Leadership leverage, focused teacher professional development, teacher effectiveness training, principal effectiveness training, talent development, longitudinal data and SMART goal planning.
- Faith Formation – Daily prayer, weekly mass/prayer service, intentional Catholic Identity and spiritual themes.



Talks Continue

"Since Saint Sebastian will not enter into an agreement with Seton Catholic Schools for at least another year or two, there is time for further discernment as to when to join the network and the terms that will suit the culture and specific needs of our school and parish. This meeting was the beginning of that discussion," said Carole Poth, cluster administrator.

"Everyone was pleased to have a chance to talk directly to Father Larry, who made it clear that there would be frequent communication with parents and parish members," said parent Jen Ohlendorf. "The communications will be as transparent as possible, which is important, especially with new principal Heather Grams starting soon. It was valuable information for all who attended."

The Sebs Finance Council currently is examining viable plans to maintain our current tithing model as we move forward while ensuring that the school and parish's needs are met. In addition, the pastor will establish an ad hoc transition team to work on requests for the agreement that will be drafted with Seton.

People with questions can contact Pastoral Council member Stephen Dodridge, School Committee chair Brent Nistler, or Father Larry.

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