

Catholic Schools Office cultivates future leaders. Published 10/21/2016

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Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Kathy Mears, interacts with participants at a gathering of aspiring Catholic school leaders at the Pastoral Center in Braintree Oct. 17. Pilot photo/Gregory L. Tracy

BRAINTREE -- Experienced elementary school educators from 13 school and parish communities gathered

at the pastoral Center Oct. 17 to discuss what leadership in Catholic education looks like in the Archdiocese of Boston, and also explored opportunities for their personal development.

The event is part of an initiative by the Catholic Schools Office to retain and develop promising leaders from within Catholic schools. The attendees were nominated by their school principal or pastor because they show promise as aspiring leaders.

"The aspiring leaders were nominated by their school leaders -- we believe they are intelligent individuals who are passionate about education and dedicated to the Catholic Church and its teachings. We would be remiss if we did not cultivate the leadership skills that are already blossoming in classrooms across the Archdiocese and I am excited to get to know everyone better," said Superintendent of Catholic Schools Kathy Mears.

Martha McCook, associate superintendent for mission effectiveness at the Catholic Schools Office, planned the event. She explained, "School leaders today must be equipped to motivate and inspire teachers and students in new and different ways. Leadership in Catholic schools takes many more different forms than it has previously and pathways are needed to prepare instructional coaches, technology-digital learning specialists, and lead teachers, as well as assistant principals and principals. We designed this program to help educators become prepared for a variety of leadership opportunities in our Catholic schools in the years to come."

Gathered in the room were 27 attendees that hold a variety of positions at archdiocesan schools and parishes, with a combined 179 years of teaching experience and 13 years of ministry. Though their backgrounds were diverse, the attendees all shared a common thread: a passion for Catholic education. The director of technology at St. John the Evangelist School in Wellesley, Michael Timberlake, attended the meeting. When asked why he enjoys his job, Timberlake said, "I love working behind the scenes in the vineyard, helping to form the future."

Lisa Soper, a second grade teacher at South Boston Catholic Academy, appreciates the opportunity to talk about her faith and live it day-to-day. "I look forward to helping children develop in their faith in my classroom, and I have a passion for fostering Catholic identity and faith formation within schools."

Merijke Coenraad, a Spanish and history teacher at St. Columbkille Partnership School in Brighton, relishes the opportunity for growth, both for herself and for her students. She said, "I want to do everything I can do to improve education and our educational system." She continued, "I believe that education has the ability to transform lives, and to create limitless opportunities for each student."

Caitlin McCorkle, the assistant director of operations at the Lynch Leadership Academy, also presented during the event. She said, "The Lynch Leadership Academy is excited to partner with the Catholic Schools Office to support sitting school leaders and develop aspiring school leaders at the Archdiocese's vibrant Catholic schools." McCorkle continued, "We are always looking for promising new leaders and the fellowship at the Lynch Leadership Academy is the perfect training ground for educators."
