

Principal – to – Principal Professional Development



March 3, 2011 – Braintree. Elementary school leaders gathered on Thursday for the second in a series of professional development seminars. The event drew principals from Bradford to Framingham to Abington and included representatives from nearly fifty schools. Designed entirely by, for, and in response to the interests of elementary

school leaders, the event's theme was collaboration and peer learning. Several months ago, the Catholic Schools Office conducted an open-ended survey that asked elementary principals to recommend topics for upcoming professional development seminars. The CSO observed a recurring trend among respondents: most of the questions raised would be most comprehensively answered and fleshed out by their very own colleagues within the Archdiocese. Thus, the concept behind Thursday's peer-to-peer learning seminar was developed.

Each of the four workshops was led by principal volunteers who are veritable experts in their educational subfields. Beth Tanner, Principal of the Good Shepherd School in Charlestown, led the **Preschool Programs** workshop. Her session engaged principals with singing, dancing, and an excerpt from a student favorite, *Rumble in the Jungle*. Kathy Blain, Principal of Sacred Hearts School in Haverhill, both helped organize the event and led a **Middle School Programs** workshop. Julie DiFilippo, Principal of Bellesini Academy in Lawrence, attracted a lot of attention with her discussion of **Curriculum Mapping**. Russ Wilson, Regional Director of Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy in Dorchester, informed his peers about **Standardized Testing Assessment**. Mary Grassa O'Neill, Superintendent of Schools, thanked the discussion leaders for having the courage to speak before their colleagues. "Sometimes," she remarked, "our peers can be our harshest critics."



Each participant had the opportunity to view two forty-five minute presentations in a small group setting. Many lamented the fact they could only choose two to attend. The knowledge and expertise that was shared pertained not only to the topics at hand, but also to the shared experiences of being a Catholic school administrator. Kathy Blain was thrilled with the unity that the day encouraged. "I was so pleased with the turn-out, the positive feedback and the spirit of collegiality that permeated the whole workshop," she gushed. "We are blessed to work among so many talented principals and Catholic educational leaders. Let's build on this experience by continuing the format in the future!"

