

St. Joseph School Batavia school to become regional

By PATRICK J. BUECHI
 Staff Reporter

St. Joseph School in Batavia, which just celebrated its 150th anniversary, is about to make a big change. The only Catholic elementary school in Batavia will become a regional school sometime this fall. This will allow the school to reach out beyond its parish boundaries to serve students from the surrounding area. It seemed like a logical step for the school.

“We kind of have been a regional school for a number of years,” said Principal Karen Green. “When we look at how our school is laid out in regards to the kids that we pick up from multiple districts in Genesee, Orleans and Wyoming counties, and all the parishes our students come from. So, we felt like we’ve been a regional school due to that, but it will certainly be beneficial to us as we transition into that regional school to have that kind of funding model, it will be a little more assistance for our students and our families.”

Parish schools are owned and operated by one parish. Funds come from tuitions and subsidies from that community. Regional schools, which are designed to serve in larger areas, receive support

from the many parishes they serve.

“It would be more difficult for a single parish to support a school with very few children. So, you create a regional school that gives an opportunity for people to come to a school and create an educational environment that’s much more healthier and productive and rewarding for the students to attend,” said Dr. Michael LaFever, superintendent for Catholic Schools.

Another difference between the two school models is that a parish-based school is overseen by the pastor, who has the final say in major decisions. A regional school has a canonical administrator appointed by the bishop. Father Daniel Serbicki, pastor of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Corfu, has been named as the priest leader of the school.

Father Serbicki has already begun attending board meetings and familiarizing himself with the school.

“I’m looking forward to the chaplaincy side of it, which is going to be doing Mass with the kids once a week and being present in the classrooms,” Father Serbicki said. “I’ve been working with families that have been parishioners in my parish and have been going to school there. They have always been enthusiastic about it. They’ve talked a lot about it’s

strong academics, the bonds that students form there that connect them to each other, and the Catholic identity, of course, is so important to them. Their families are really committed to the parish, committed to being Catholic. Having a young priest there has them really excited too.”

The school had hoped to make the transition over the summer, but the inability to meet with the Board of Regents in July caused a delay. The next meeting will take place this month.

“We don’t anticipate any problems with the charter moving forward, it is just a matter of having the approval of that board,” said Green. “As we make the transition and we receive our charter from (New York State Education Department), the teachers, basically, will be rehired under a new employee identification number. That transition will have to take place when that happens also.”

So, when St. Joe’s opens this year, it will still be a parish school, but the change to a regional school will probably go unnoticed by students or parents.

“When we open our doors to St. Joe’s this year, it will not look different to anyone else. The school will open as usual. It will still have all the teachers and staff. Really, from our families’ stand point, it won’t look all that different,” said Green.

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