

Sisters to Sisters at Fontbonne, The Early College of Boston – by Maura Spignesi, Head of School, and Sister Joanne Gallagher, CSJ, Fontbonne Trustee and Alumna.

Last fall, Maura Spignesi, Head of School at Fontbonne in Milton, shared an idea with Sister Marian Batho, CSJ, and together they developed a new initiative called *Sisters to Sisters*. Similar to the spirit of National Catholic Sisters Week and National Catholic Sisters Program, this program is intended to build relationships with the Sisters of St. Joseph, who are proud sponsors of Fontbonne, and the young women there who are already steeped in the spirituality and mission of the Sisters of S. Joseph.

In early January, the Fontbonne community identified sisters who have had a connection with the school to participate in the launch of the *Sisters to Sisters Program*. On January 28, Sisters of St. Joseph who responded to the call to be part of the *Sisters to Sisters Program* joined with the Fontbonne community for their student enrichment day.

The theme for the day was *Unity and Inclusion*. During the day, sisters and students gathered in small groups, assembled in the CSJ Center for a keynote address by Sister Betsy Conway, CSJ, who spoke about the shared value of unity and inclusion saying “We’re all one. We belong to God. Oneness is not sameness. Oneness is diversity. God wants us to be messengers of diversity.” This was followed by a participatory and informative panel facilitated by Dr. Michelle Cromwell who encouraged students to turn to each other without fear of judgement. Michelle is a Trustee of Fontbonne and Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Chief Diversity Officer at Regis College, also a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph. One student respondent summed up the spirit of the day saying, “Rather than repeating the mistakes of history, we are the generation to bring unity to everyone.”

Both at Fontbonne and among the Sisters of St. Joseph, relationship is at the heart of our mission. As we look towards the future, the relationship students have with the Sisters of St. Joseph is important. Students yearn to be connected with Sisters of St. Joseph who share the school’s charism, sense of ministry, and desire for advocacy in uniting neighbor to neighbor and neighbor with God. Maura Spignesi believes that, “This relationship will empower our girls to immerse themselves more deeply in service to our dear neighbor and in the spirituality of the sisters.”

What does the *Sisters to Sisters* program look like? Two or three Sisters of St. Joseph accompany class until graduation and develop relationships through presence at co-curricular events and activities.

In the spirit of Pope Francis’ *The Joy of the Gospel* [2013] the relationship between the Sisters of St. Joseph and their Fontbonne “sisters” is one of accompaniment. All are invited into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). [see #169]. Together Fontbonne and the Sisters of St. Joseph are enthusiastic about the launch of this program as we continue to build relationships and create ways we can inspire one another to live our mission every day.



Sister Betsy Conway, CSJ, speaks about our shared value of inclusion



Fontbonne students, Ava Barbosa and Caroline Smith, with Sister Lorraine Quinn, CSJ, during small group discussion.



Fontbonne Students, Veronica Phillips and Esosasehia Owens, work with Sister Joanne Gallagher, CSJ, as they complete an evaluation of the day.



Fontbonne Students, Emma Kapetanakos and Erin Leahy work with Sister Patricia Cushing, CSJ, and faculty member, Victoria Da Costa.