



In the spring of 2017, members of our SEAS family gathered in a town hall style format to discuss the finances of the parish. Those who attended were asked to write down questions that were submitted to Fr. Dave or Mr. Sullivan. Below are the questions and answers that were sent to the school. If people have further questions or comments, please feel free to contact Fr. Dave at dhennen@seasparish.org or Mr. Sullivan at tsullivan@seas-school.org.

Questions from the Town Hall

SEAS Response

Is the school closing?

NO! The parish will continue to invest in the Catholic education of our students. AS Catholic educators, we are grateful for the continued support of Catholic education in Hastings.

Is the parish committed to the school?

YES! A school is not an expense or a subsidy- it is an investment in the future of our Catholic faith and the parish itself. Fr. Dave has stated several times that he supports the school. His actions as pastor demonstrate his support for the school.

Shouldn't we be investing in the children, which is the future of the church?

Yes, we should, and SEAS parish does. Around 24-35% of the school's budget is an investment made by the parish.

How are we targeting families in the community to come to our school to bring in new money rather than shifting from parish to school?

The school is a ministry of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, and therefore our marketing is directed mainly at SEAS parish and surrounding parishes without schools.

How are we going to attract and keep young people. Mass needs to be more upbeat...Homilies are short and to the point. We need to attract young people.

Though more of a question for the parish council, as a school, our mission is to make Jesus Christ known and loved; to foster a personal relationship between the student and our Savior. If we can help grow that relationship, the beauty of the mass is revealed and attendance odds increase.

Why do people want SEAS gone? The kids at SEAS need to learn about Jesus. The kids at SEAS like the school they are at. If SEAS is gone, there is no school I would want to be at.

Some do not see the value of a parish school. SEAS is an amazing place where staff strives to make Jesus Christ known and loved, so it's no wonder that students love attending the school. Fr. Dave has stated that the school isn't going anywhere. As a school, we are dedicated to making the good works of SEAS school known to all. When people learn about all the good things we do at SEAS, we will change their hearts and mind.

Is our school even Catholic? Where are all the kids each week?

YES! Anyone who has ever entered our school or attended a Wednesday afternoon all-school mass would know that we are most definitely Catholic. All are welcomed to attend our weekly mass. As for weekend attendance, we do everything we can to stress the importance of weekly mass attendance. We expect that families will attend weekend masses. We also recognize that mass attendance is a global issue. The 10:00 Sunday mass is where you'll see most of our young disciples praying and worshipping.

Are we giving in-parish tuition to non-parishioners?

Yes and no. Out-of-parish families pay a higher rate. Families that registered prior to February of 2017 were grandfathered in at the parish rate. Some non-parish families do receive aid, but it is a small percentage. As with other ministries of the parish, we do not hold back our resources if they are not Catholic. Imagine going to Sharing and Caring Hands and only serving Catholics! Our formula for granting aid meets the needs of parish families first.

I understand that 30% of students at our Catholic school are not Catholics but they pay the same tuition as the Catholic students. Would it be possible for these students to pay a higher tuition?

For the 2016-17 school year, 14% of our students, PreK-8 were not Catholic. In fact, only 10% of K-8 did not register as Catholic. A new tuition structure has been implemented for 2017-18 that does charge non-parish, non-Catholics a higher rate.

How much tuition increase?

Tuition increases are determined by the principal and the pastor with input from the school advisory committee. Increases are determined based on incoming enrollment and staff needs. For the 2018-19 school year, tuition was raised \$200.

Has the school looked to see if Catholic colleges such as St. John's or St. Thomas, etc offer scholarships for Catholic students in middle school? If so: can the school market these scholarships to help promote and build the SEAS school enrollment?

We have reached out and received no reply. Traditionally, they focus their recruitment efforts on high school students.

If you know the grades of the 46 (for Kindergarten) children of the parish that do not go to our school, have those grades do a video of that grade with the children inviting that child (family) to come to school (reasons). Bring to the family and revisit with them or after they receive the video invite all families of the 46 and the grades for a meeting.

We do have a part-time advancement director who works to promote the school. We do reach out to parishioners to promote our school. Despite our efforts, some families do not show up. We will continue to reach out to parosh families and promote our wonderful school.

Do we have a grant writer?

We currently do not have a designated grant writer. We have applied for and received a number of grants over the last three years, totaling over \$50,000.

If we have a waiting list for classes? We should give SEAS children priority and turn away others if we have to turn anyone away.

Our current policy states that preference is given to active SEAS parishioners on any wait list.

How many students can the school accommodate in addition to the current students. Tuition \$5400 or \$3600- new students 20 or 30 can be \$104,000 additional income

What is the number of middle school kids? What is the number of middle school teachers?

What percent of parents of school children volunteer in the church?

I feel that the school should be self-sustaining; that is, raise tuition, cut a program or two, decrease staff, etc. to balance the school budget.

Why doesn't the parish openly and proudly promote our school?

I am concerned that if tuition is raised you will lose students.

How many of the SEAS students serve as altar servers vs. non-SEAS school kids?

Perspective for the school- South Washington County District 833 receives \$10,581 per student K-12. SEAS deficit of \$266,386 if enrollment is 240 students equate to a subsidy of \$1110 per student per year.

In Hastings' Public Schools, we have seen a decrease in enrollment over the last 10 years, which has led to huge budget cuts. In SEAS School, have similar trends been seen in enrollment? Has there been adjustments in spending/budgeting to match how many students there are? Not just teachers, but programming, sports, etc?

Maybe we should require parish members to send their children to our Catholic school or have them pay more per year. Is it fair that I pay over \$800 for 3 kids a month to support our parish and school and they only pay \$80 a year for faith formation? Maybe instead of cutting school they should pay more!

Teachers should not be paid to coach sports.

Are all students members of SEAS? If not, could tuition be raised for those students?

How many non-Catholic students? How much more tuition do the non-Catholics pay? Are we just a quality private school to these people?

It may be helpful for school families to know, as they see tuition increases, how our tuition compares to other schools.

What is the history of having non-parish pay more?

Once confirmed, is there any noticeable difference between the private school and public school kids in the way they practice the faith?

At capacity, the main campus could hold 360 students and the ECC could hold 122. For 2016-17 we had 245 K-8 and 68 in the ECC. We can accommodate more. There are enough school aged children in the parish to fill the school, however, many choose not to send their children to SEAS. If the issue is tuition, we will work with a parish family to ensure their child receives the best Catholic education in town.

The number of students varies each year, with a ten year average of 86 students. There are currently six middle school only teachers who teach a variety of subjects. Students move from different classrooms throughout the day. Many of our middle school staff also serve in administrative roles, such as technology coordinator.

This is a parish question, but we can state that many students volunteer in the church as altar servers, greeters, and other age appropriate areas. Every class at SEAS, including our preschoolers, completes at least one service project a year.

To be self-sustaining, tuition would need to be close to \$6000 a year. All but a handful of families would be able to afford tuition. Cutting staff would lead to larger class sizes and a loss of the personal attention each student feels. Our goal is to continue the strong Catholic presence in Hastings, and keeping SEAS school the spiritual and academic institution it is takes resources. We are grateful for the parish investment in the mission of the school.

While more can always be done, we feel that that parish staff does promote the school. Our best advertisement is word of mouth from parents and students who have benefited from our amazing school.

It is a concern for the school as well, however, if a family wants a quality, faith filled education for their child, we will find a way to make that happen. No parish family should deny their child a Catholic school education for financial reasons.

Currently, there are 27 altar servers. Of the 27, 22 are either current or former SEAS students.

There are two things that need to be clarified in this statement. The deficit in 2016-17 was not all school related. It was the combined deficit of the school and the parish. Second, the parish contributed over \$600,000 to the school, which with 300 students, is a subsidy of approximately \$2000 per student.

In the last ten years, SEAS enrollment has been as high as 327 (2013) and as low as 285 (2015). We average 305 students over that time period.

Adjustments are made on an annual basis to reflect the needs of the school and ensuring that we are offering the best Catholic-faith based education around.

The school is one of several ministries of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. SEAS offers a variety of ministries to help its parishioners have a real and personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

All our coaching positions receive a small stipend. Anyone who has completed the Essential 3 training is eligible to apply to be a coach. We also have many parents who donate their time and talent as coaches in a volunteer capacity.

No, all students are not members of SEAS parish. Many come from surrounding parishes without schools, some are here for the challenging curriculum and small class sizes. Starting 2017-18, non-parishioners who do not come from neighboring parishes are charged a higher rate.

During the 2016-17 school year our total K-8 enrollment was 250 students. Of the 250, 63 were not from the parish and 26 were not Catholic. Non-parishioners choose SEAS because of our outstanding academic program and small class sizes. Starting in 2017-18, a new, non-parish rate was instituted.

A study of fiscal year 2015-16 by Catholic Finance Corporation places our tuition rate for that year, \$3500, at slightly below the average of \$3741 for the Archdiocese. Tuition rates range from \$172 to \$8419.

There was a letter circulated by a member of the Archdiocese several years ago that suggested an out-of-parish rate may lead to a lawsuit. Many parishes, SEAS included, dropped the non-parish rate. The claims of the letter are highly disputed, therefore, many parishes with schools adopted an out-of-parish rate. SEAS Parish invests a substantial amount of money in the education of our students. A non-parish rate asks for the actual cost of educating a student or at least a partial part of the investment generously made by the school's parish.

That may be a better question for parish staff, but many of our alumni are lectors, altar servers, and more. A number of our families are second, third, or even fourth generation at SEAS.