

St. Ambrose chosen for New American Academy model

As principal of St. Ambrose Catholic School, Pamela Sanders is ready to guide her institution into a new chapter.

St. Ambrose was chosen by Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien to pilot the New American Academy (NAA) instructional model May 5. The program was developed by Shimon Waronker and will start at St. Ambrose in the fall.

A statement from the archdiocese said the model uses team teaching, differentiated instruction and "hands-on learning to address the specific needs of students and apply learning to 'real world' systems."

"It's interesting," Sanders said of the various components. "It's a very exciting concept. I'm really grateful we were selected."

Waronker developed the model while working as a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

"This program has been described as a 'new approach for application in urban education' by the Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and we are extremely excited to be offering this to the children of Baltimore," Archbishop O'Brien said. "We hope it demonstrates our commitment to the kind of innovation and creativity that can help transform lives through a Catholic school education."

Harvard Graduate School of Education faculty members have been advising the New American Academy in developing and implementing training for teachers.

Sanders will train this summer in the program and then come back and then work with her staff on the program.

"It is exciting that the Archdiocese of Baltimore is spearheading innovation by taking elements of the New American model that include team teaching, 360-degree evaluations wherein teachers are evaluated by students and parents alike, and even

looping - teachers will stay with the same students for a period of years to ensure strong relationships between teachers, students and parents - a recipe for success," Waronker said.

The program will be rolled out at St. Ambrose in kindergarten and first grade in the fall. Sanders, a member of the archbishop's Blue Ribbon Committee for the future of schools, said teachers will develop academic bonds with the students and become keenly aware of their needs.

She believes the model should be popular with families as well.

"I think they will be thrilled," Sanders said. "I think they will be grateful the archdiocese has really taken an interest in our school and feel this school has potential and that these children have potential."

The archdiocese said further "announcements regarding the designation of schools to host Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), and Montessori programs are expected soon."