



O'Malley agrees to meeting on future of school

By Marie Szaniszló

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Locked out of their school by the Boston archdiocese, many students and teachers at Our Lady of the Presentation have been forced to abruptly end one academic year without knowing where they will begin the next.

"We're going to teach somewhere. We hope it will be here," said Brenda Hendon, who taught at the school "for 14 happy years."

"We've been so committed to this place, none of us, to my knowledge, have other jobs lined up," Hendon said.

For Hendon and others at the Brighton elementary school, much is riding on [Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley's](#) meeting today with the Presentation School Foundation, which wants to buy the property at market value, preserve the school and join with the YMCA and others to add a preschool and other programs.

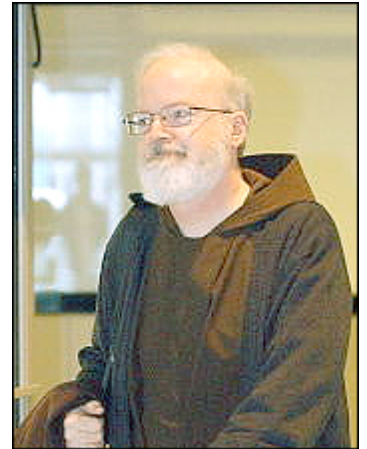
O'Malley, who had refused to meet with the group for months, agreed to a meeting Saturday after his decision to abruptly close the school was widely criticized. O'Malley said yesterday he looks forward to a "cooperative, productive" meeting.

"I'm hoping Our Lady will remain open, but I don't trust the archdiocese to do the right thing," said parent Kenna Sullivan. "I really wanted my children to have a Catholic education because it gave me a very solid foundation. But what my children have seen of the church over the last few years has been shameful."

Others are resigned to sending their children elsewhere. But some, like Tom O'Brien, want a Catholic school not under archdiocesan control. "My kids need to have closure and know where they're going," O'Brien said. "But my wife and I really feel it would be difficult to trust the archdiocese again. What they've done is indefensible."

Others hold out hope for the school. Molly Saccardo taught at Our Lady of the Presentation for seven years and will spend the summer looking for a job she hopes she won't have to take.

"Every year, I watched students go off, but they always came back to visit," Saccardo said Friday as she hugged her students goodbye. "Now, they won't be able to. And that makes me feel deprived."



Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley (Staff File Photo by Tara Bricking)

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