

## Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan School Advisory Council Meeting

August 20, 2015

**In Attendance:** Diane Starkovich, Rebecca Hammel, Dr. Tom Burns, Augusto Elias, Brian David, Lou Delfino, Betsy San Miguel, Brian Dooling, Joe Villarreal, Jeff Thomas, Msgr. John Walsh, Jeff Gregor, Maureen Schumacher. **Absent :** Brad Wilson, Diedra St. Julien.

- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Diane welcomed everyone and opened the meeting up with a prayer.

- **Introduction of New Council Members**

Dr. Tom Burns introduced himself and asked everyone to do the same for the benefit of the new council members, Jeff Thomas and Maureen Schumacher.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Tom Burns asked if there were any changes to the agenda. With no suggested changes, a motion was given and seconded to accept the agenda as stated.

- **Approval of Minutes from June 18, 2015**

Tom asked if there were any suggested changes to the minutes from the June meeting. With no changes given, he requested a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Council Goals and Expectations for 2015-2016 – Tom Burns**

Tom referred everyone to the 2015-2016 Goals for ASAC. They are as follows:

1. **To build trust among all the School's Advisory Councils and the ASAC by increasing communication, demonstrating leadership, and providing support and advice to the Archbishop and Superintendent.** A discussion followed regarding visits to local advisory councils, what to look for at the meetings they attend and advice to the new council members. Tom Burns referred Maureen and Jeff (the new council members) to the school assessment form, which is a wonderful guide to assist in gathering the necessary information at the local school's meetings.
2. **Work toward reaching goals for the strategic plan in accordance with the AdvancED certification and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). This will include the development and implementation of our strategic plan and to update our policy manual.** Tom mentioned plans to form a strategic planning committee on this council to help with this implementation. The strategic plan had been put on hold waiting for the Pastoral Plan to be launched and now that it is in place, we can proceed. Diane said we will try to integrate the pastoral plan goals of "Knowing our Faith, Living our Faith, Sharing our Faith" into our strategic plan.
3. **Work to maximize enrollment in all our schools in the Archdiocese.**
4. **Continue to develop and execute our financial plan for the financing of the individual schools in our Archdiocese. This will include a plan to be both transparent and accessible in support of these**

**goals.** Brad Wilson will again be scheduling financial workshops to explain how schools are financed and how budgets are set up. Those who have attended in the past have commented on how extremely helpful these workshops have been in understanding the schools finances.

- 5. ASAC will help to facilitate the goal of providing Catholic education to all those who wish to receive a catholic education.** In continuing with last years' goal of 100% participation on committee reports, Tom said he will be sending out a reminder two weeks before each ASAC meeting asking for Committee Reports and reconfirming the date and time.

- **Committee Assignments**

Tom referred everyone to the yellow sheet which gives the member's name, address, term expiration date and the committee they have been assigned. Brian David pointed out that the expiration dates on Betsy San Miguel, Diedra St. Julien & Joe Villarreal were incorrect as they have extended their terms. Diane said she would correct and supply a new list to everyone. Diane brought up the policy committee and said their main effort this year will be to address the drug testing issue in the high schools. Diane said that she is in the process of gathering information from Catholic school superintendents across the country to see what their policies are regarding drugs and alcohol. A discussion followed mainly for the benefit of those council members not in attendance at the last meeting to recap each high school's standf on this sensitive issue. Diane welcomed anyone who would like to join the policy committee to let Jeff Gregor, Chair of the Policy Committee, know. Steve Spellman, who was out of town for the last council meeting when this topic was discussed, will be invited to attend another meeting in the near future. The goal is to have a policy recommendation to present to the Archbishop by the March 2016 meeting. The policy will be drafted in such a manner that it applies to all Archdiocesan high schools. Discussion followed regarding implementation, education and communication of the policy.

The new member committee assignments are as follows: Jeff Thomas will be on the Strategic Planning Committee and Maureen Schumacher will be on the Marketing Committee. Diane advised them that they should soon be hearing from the chair of their committee very soon.

- **September 26 In-Service – Brian David**

Brian David said that he, Tom and Diane met recently to discuss the Council In-Service which is set for Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at the Chancery. The agenda was drafted and a copy was provided to everyone at this meeting. The survey results from previous in-services were taken into consideration when building the agenda. Monsignor Lopez will be the celebrant for the optional Mass at 8:30 a.m. There will be morning hospitality after Mass and then Rebecca Hammel will open the meeting up with a prayer. Diane Starkovich will give her presentation and then Brad Wilson will discuss the Cost to Educate & School Budgets. After a quick break, everyone will select one breakout session to attend. The four being offered are as follows: Board Self-Evaluation by Brian Dooling – ASAC, Strategic Planning by St. Pius X Catholic High School, EBooks and Technology by Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School and Marketing/Marketing Toolkit by Augusto Elias – ASAC. Following the breakout sessions there will be table discussions followed by concluding comments by Brian David. All participants will be asked to fill out an evaluation form before they leave. Diane added that she hopes to premiere the new school video during her presentation at the in-service. Diane also mentioned that the Archdiocese new website is up and running.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane started out by showing the council the Cobb County local newspaper article which featured an article on St. Joseph-Marietta's first day of school and their Boo-Hoo breakfast for kindergarten parents. Diane said this was great marketing for the school and commended the development director at St. Joseph's and also our videographer who captured the Boo-Hoo breakfast in our Schools Video.

Diane said Enrollment has dropped again this year, with a net loss of 179 students. Three of our schools, Our Lady of Mercy, St. Joseph (Athens) and St. John Neumann report a combined loss of 115 students. Diane mentioned that last spring she had surveyed exiting families from three of our schools with dropping numbers. The schools surveyed were St. John Neumann Regional, St. Joseph School in Athens and Our Lady of Victory. We received about a 40% response rate from the St. John Neumann community and despite the continued decline in enrollment, the results from these surveys were quite positive with a few areas of concern regarding the academics and discipline. Diane met with the teachers and shared these results and trends with them and also shared some private comments with the principal, Alex Porto. Regarding academics, Diane stands by the Archdiocese of Atlanta's curriculum which she said is very strong and focused. St. Joseph Catholic Parish School in Athens was built to accommodate 400 students and the present enrollment is about 175. Our Lady of Victory enrollment this year remains in the 200 range. St. Thomas More and St. Joseph Marietta have smaller kindergarten classes this year. St. Mary's enrollment numbers are holding, while St. Peter Claver's enrollment increased. In summary, Diane stated that much of this is out of our control, but she plans to continue to give the Archdiocese of Atlanta schools the support and resources they need for growth and retention. Diane hopes to communicate in the Fall OCS (Office of Catholic Schools) Newsletter the role of the Office of Catholic Schools and share our goals.

Diane thanked Tom Burns, Brian David & Rebecca Hammel for assisting with the advisory council training for new council members. A total of 31 new council members were trained in the three sessions. Diane was very impressed with the many strong skills these individuals will be bringing to the school councils and expressed her gratitude in their willingness to serve.

Lou Delfino asked Diane the reason for the falling numbers in our schools. Diane said there are many reasons, but the main reason seems to be Finances, followed by transportation to the schools/convenience. A discussion followed regarding GRACE scholarships, financial aid, etc. Diane commented that in some cases it is not that the family can't afford our schools, but that their priorities have changed. Father Walsh agreed and said that many families are choosing other things over sending their children to Catholic schools. He suggested that maybe we need to do a better job of highlighting the value and benefits of a Catholic Education. Suggestions were given on marketing strategies to better promote these lifelong benefits through films, testimonials etc. Diane added that this is also the future of our church and that we need to continue to keep our schools as academically strong as possible and most importantly we must maintain strong Catholic Identity.

- **St. Pius X Catholic High School – President/Principal Model**

Diane briefly explained the President/Principal model to be implemented at St. Pius X Catholic High School in the fall of 2016. With the eventual retirement of principal, Steve Spellman, within the next couple of years, we are taking this opportunity to put into place a leadership model that splits academic from operational responsibilities in the high school. The President will be an Archbishop's appointment, but both the President and the Principal will report to the superintendent of schools.

- **Binder Tabs/Council Member Information Update**

Tom Burns brought to the council's attention this year's binder tabs for the returning council member binders. Diane added that also given out are the updates to the policy manual which is in the back of each of the binders. The new council members have received a binder equipped with this year's tabs and an updated policy manual.

Diane mentioned the handout entitled National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools. Loyola University produced this document as the result of 2-year collaboration among Catholic educators across the nation. This publication gives the Catholic community a common framework of universal characteristics of Catholic identity and agreed upon criteria for Catholic school excellence.

- **Sign-up for Local Council Meeting Visits/New Business**

Tom Burns asked if everyone had a chance to sign up for an upcoming school advisory council meeting and advised that we will need a few to sign up for two meetings. Tom then asked if there were any ideas for new business. Brian David said he was approached recently by a parent with the question of what our schools were doing to beef up security in light of the recent school shootings happening around the country. Diane answered by saying that GEMA, as well as Catholic Mutual and Catholic Construction go out to all of our schools each year for an inspection and evaluation. She said there is a crisis management plan in place at all of our schools and provide drills in order to be prepared in the case of an emergency. Brian David also brought up recent hazing incidents that occurred at a local public school. Diane stated that we have a hazing policy in place as well for on and off campus school sponsored events.

- **Adjournment and Next Meeting Date – November 12, 2015**

Meeting adjourned at 9:05a.m. Next meeting is November 12, 2015 at 7:30 a.m. at the Chancery.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler  
Schools Program Specialist