

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan School Advisory Council Meeting

November 12, 2015

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Dr. Tom Burns, Augusto Elias, Brian David, Lou Delfino, Betsy San Miguel, Brian Dooling, Jeff Thomas, Msgr. John Walsh, Jeff Gregor, Brad Wilson, Diedra St. Julien

Absent : Joe Villarreal, Maureen Schumacher, Rebecca Hammel

- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Dr. Tom Burns welcomed everyone and Diane Starkovich began the meeting with a group prayer at 7:32 a.m.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Tom asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Diane added that at everyone's seat there should be her Superintendent's report, the Elementary & High School Teacher Salary Scales and the Block Grant worksheet. With no changes or additions, the agenda was approved and seconded.

- **Approval of August Minutes**

Tom asked if there were any questions or changes to the August minutes. With no changes or questions, the minutes were approved and seconded.

- **Committee Reports/Recommendations**

Finance – Brad Wilson introduced the 2016-2017 teacher salary scales and said that over the last few years the goal has been to shrink the gap between the grade school and high school salaries. With that in mind, he proposed the high schools receive a 1.5% increase and the grade schools a 3% increase. Diane explained the formula used to base our salary scales by taking the average of the 10 metro (RESA) districts and aiming for 80-85% of that average. Our grade schools are right at the 80-85% range and our high schools are between 90 - 105% of the public school scale average. When you our health & dental benefits are included, our compensation package is very competitive. Brian David asked if the Archdiocese of Atlanta will pay for a teacher to earn a higher degree. Diane said that either through an endowment the school may have or through the Federal Title IIA program, usually about 80-90% of the tuition cost should be covered. The salaries for teachers are based on the number of years of experience along with the degree they hold. Diane explained that the grade school principals may go two steps up in the scale (with Diane's approval) for Science and Math Teachers. This is due to the competitiveness which makes for a smaller pool of applicants in these specialized areas. Brian David asked for a motion to approve the proposed 1.5% increase for high schools and 3% increase for grade schools. The motion was approved and seconded. Diane and Brad will now present the increases to the Archbishop for final approval.

Brad reviewed and explained the Archdiocesan Financial Aid by School Report. Diane clarified that this block grant funding is only available to Catholic students who qualify for tuition assistance and have provided a signed parish verification form. Brad specifically addressed the increase in the hold back line on the report. Diane added that while hosting the Superintendent's Academy in October she was able to network with superintendents from across the country. In speaking with the superintendent in

Omaha she learned that in its effort to fill some of their empty seats they established and funded a two-year transfer grant which was not based on need. The schools were given an option to participate in the program. The grant would give each child that transferred into one of their Catholic schools \$1,500 the first year and \$1,000 the second year, with the hope that by the third year the child would stay and the family would pay full tuition moving forward (if it does not qualify for financial assistance). They are now in their 3rd year of this marketing endeavor and thus far the program is showing early success. The one big difference between Omaha & Atlanta is that their grade school annual tuition rates are much lower than ours at about \$3,500. Diane said she will ask the Marketing Committee to take a look at this for our Archdiocesan schools where we have vacant seats. If this looks like a feasible program for us, the funds held back would help defray the costs and if it does not look feasible, the money in reserve will be used for emergency school situations. Brian David asked for a motion to approve the Financial Aid Report. The motion was given and seconded.

Marketing – Augusto Elias said that a review of the Marketing Toolkit and enrollment strategy was presented at the Advisory Council In-Service day, September 26, 2015. From the comments made in the survey taken, attendees thought the information was useful but would like to see more. Secondly, Augusto mentioned that there was a PSR enrollment orientation session offered at St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church but no parents attended. Lastly, the marketing team had a kick-off planning session on October 14 to focus on top priorities for the next year. These three top priorities were determined:

1. Divide and conquer. The 4 or 5 neediest schools will have their own representative/mentor from the Marketing committee to help support and counsel that school. Augusto said that Diane & Rebecca were asked to discuss this with the principal of each school that will be offered this service.
2. Request a data study by a marketing research company that would be willing to do pro-bono work or work for a very low cost. This study would be to pinpoint barriers and drivers for enrollment in our schools and how to turn things around on a macro level, as well as by specific school. A draft is being prepared now to present this to a research agency in order to get an idea of the minimum cost and feasibility of this project.
3. Update the marketing toolkit regarding enrollment.

Policy Committee – Jeff Gregor distributed his report which included the results of the parental survey that was given out to the high school parents for feedback on the subject of mandatory random drug testing. Jeff and Diane met in September to put together an action plan. The first step they decided on was a survey in determining whether the parents believe there is a significant drug problem or presence in their school and would they support mandatory random drug testing. The Archdiocese of Atlanta high schools presently have policies in place regarding Substance Abuse which includes that when a student gets caught with drugs or alcohol they immediately get put on a drug and alcohol contract. Once the child is on this contract, they remain on it until they withdraw (future infractions) or graduate. Students on a drug and alcohol contract are randomly drug tested per the contract. In the case of attempting to sell drugs on campus, students would be expelled immediately. There are good policies in place now, but we need to do better in the way of education and communication on an on-going basis, especially to the parents. We are working toward a unified policy, one that is the same for all three high schools.

Diane recommends that we implement a policy with a clear statement supporting those actions taken currently and then moving forward with a policy containing progressive options, with the last and most aggressive option being mandatory random drug testing. Jeff Gregor mentioned that a possible 2nd step in progression could be the drug sniffing dogs that is already in place at Blessed Trinity. Diane will address this topic and the proposed plans in the OCS newsletter which will go out to all school families in December. A discussion followed regarding this very complex and sensitive subject.

Executive Committee – Tom Burns referred everyone to his report and said he attached a copy of the goals as a recap and felt the council to be right on target.

Nominating Committee – Brian Dooling said four individuals have terms expiring in June 2016 which include; Tom Burns, Brian David, Brian Dooling and Jeff Gregor. Brian said he will be reaching out to these individuals to see if they would like to extend or vacate their position. Once we have an accurate number of openings we will begin the process of receiving nominations. The Nominating Committee is also responsible for the Council's annual self-evaluation. A presentation was given at the recent in-service to review the results of our most recent self-evaluation, along with some best practices for conducting self-assessments of school councils and committees.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane wanted to highlight a few things from her written report. Due to the age of our principals, we could be facing several principal retirements in the next few years. Diane said we are in discussion right now with the University of Dayton to offer a master's program for educational leadership with a possible 10-12 of our teachers in a cohort program. We would most likely hold this on one of our campuses and it would be an 18-24 month program. We have 12 teachers signed up now for the principal formation program which starts in January. This is a 30 hour program which basically shows them what it is like to be a principal. The next step would be to encourage the attendees to pursue a Master's Program to become certified as a principal. Diane also wanted to advise that she will be in Rome, Italy the week of November 16th. There are 700 Catholic delegates from around the world, 70 from the United States, gathering in Rome for the 50th anniversary of the Vatican documents on Catholic Education. This is an effort to bring Catholic educators together to discuss the blessings/challenges facing us today in Catholic Schools. Diane also mentioned that the President position at St. Pius will be posted right after Thanksgiving. In addition, she anticipates at least two principal vacancies for next year.

- **Survey Results**

Advisory Council In-Service, September 26, 2015 – Brian David said that based on survey results the Cost-to-Educate presented by Brad Wilson was overwhelmingly the most popular topic and probably one that we should continue to address. The Archdiocesan Schools video, as well as the Matthew Kelly video were very well received. Marketing is always a hot topic for councils and the E-Books session was most helpful and also well received. The table discussions among other school councils seemed to be valuable to them in sharing ideas and best practices. Chair training was also very valuable. Brian said attendees did not like the wrap up at the end and some suggested a closing prayer would be more appropriate. Future topic suggestions were: more involvement with the clergy, marketing Catholic values, trends in education, fund-raising & best practices. Generally speaking, comments were very positive and the attendees seemed to enjoy the morning.

- Local Advisory Council Meetings – Due to time restrictions, Tom Burns asked if this agenda item could be postponed to the next meeting.
- Future Business – Diane said the Strategic Planning Committee needs to meet after the first of the year. Diane advised the council that Holdhiede is private school in Woodstock, GA that wants to become a Catholic School. The head of the school has been given the 13 steps to become Catholic, which will be a 12-18 month process. Diedra St. Julien and the New Schools/Expansion Committee will be assigned to this once the process has begun.
- Adjournment – Next Meeting is at 7:30 am at the Chancery on January 21, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools Program Specialist