

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan School Advisory Council Meeting

June 18, 2015

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Sue Steel, Brad Wilson, Augusto Elias, Brian David, Lou Delfino, Betsy San Miguel, Silvia Bowen, Brian Dooling. **Absent :** Tom Burns (available by phone for the first part of the meeting), Diedra St. Julien, Joe Villarreal, Jeff Gregor, Monsignor John Walsh. **Guests:** Rebecca Hammel, Fr. Michael Silloway, Gayle Ohrenberger, Rachel Braham, Frank Moore & Brian Newhall.

- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

A conference call was made to Dr. Tom Burns who listened in while Sue Steel called the meeting to order with an opening prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Sue 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 March 19, 2015**

Sue asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the March 19, 2015 meeting. With no changes given she requested a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Presentation by High Schools-Drug/Alcohol Contracts/Incidents on Campus/Q&A**

Diane said the High Schools were being represented at the meeting to revisit a very serious topic with the hopes that a recommendation will eventually be made to the ASAC committee responsible for reviewing policy. The high schools were given three questions to focus on in their presentation. 1.) What do our schools do proactively in the area of drug education, drug enforcement or drug deterrents? 2.) What do we do when there is an infraction on campus? 3.) What was this past year (2014-2015) like and how does it compare to previous years?

Diane proceeded to introduce to the council members the high school representatives present at the meeting. Brian Newhall, principal of Our Lady of Mercy High School in Fayetteville; Frank Moore, principal of Blessed Trinity High School in Roswell; and in Steve Spellman's place representing St. Pius was Fr. Michael Silloway, chaplain at St. Pius X Catholic High School, Gayle Ohrenberger, Director of Campus Ministry and Rachael Braham, Dean of Students.

Brian Newhall went first and thanked the council for allowing them to participate. Brian started off by saying the perspective from the south side is very different from the north side in terms of affluence, size and culture. He said that even though there were no incidents on campus to report at Our Lady of Mercy this year, it doesn't mean the students OLM do not engage in this kind of activity. They have had some alcohol issues in previous years, but it doesn't occur that often.

Betsy San Miquel asked if we had to apply the same rules to all three high schools regarding random drug testing. Diane answered that both the Archbishop and she would desire consistency among the school; therefore, any new policy must apply to all three. Diane also said that this is a very sensitive issue needing much review and discussion.

Diane thanked Brian Newhall and then invited Frank Moore, principal at Blessed Trinity to come up and speak. Frank started out by saying that Blessed Trinity has required meetings with all new parents and

students to go over rules and expectations which include drug and alcohol related issues. Frank said that the one thing they do that the other schools don't do is the use of "sniffer dogs". The company is called Interquest Protection K-9's. Their contract is for 10-12 visits a year and each visit is 4 hours long and cost \$400 a visit. They recommend doing a section of lockers, a few classrooms, the parking lot and the locker rooms, but they will do whatever is asked. The dogs walk around and are alerted on all types of drugs including alcohol and gun powder. When the dogs detect something they just sit and stare. The handler then brings the dog around to that location a second time and if the dog is alerted a second time, the student is approached in the presence of an administrator and is told that the dog finds their locker/car/desk interesting and is asked if there is anything in there that would cause him to be alerted and ask for permission to go through their car/locker/desk. The handlers then go through and know exactly where to look for contraband. Frank said the finding of drugs on campus has reduced from about 4 times a year when they first started with the dogs to less than once a year now.

Betsy San Miguel asked Frank if the drug sniffing dogs are received well by the parents. Frank said he gets no complaints on the dogs. Brian David asked if drugs were found, what would be the next course of action. Frank said the student would be placed on a drug and alcohol contract, which gives the school permission to breathalyze or take a urine test at any time. If the student refuses to sign the contract, he/she is either asked to withdraw or they may be sent to the discipline committee who will listen to their reasons for not wanting to sign the contract and a recommendation is made to the principal. Augusto asked what would happen if the student is found with drugs or alcohol at a school function, such as prom. Frank said if it is a school activity, it is thought of in the same way as being in school and they would be required to be placed on a contract.

Next up was Rachael Braham, Dean of Students at St. Pius X who was representing Steve Spellman. Diane mentioned that Rachael put together a summary packet for the council members. Rachael said the packet included bullet points of what St. Pius is already doing proactively to prevent drugs and alcohol use and also referred them to the Family in Action Pledge which is placed at the very beginning of the St. Pius X parent/student handbook.

Rachael said St. Pius has had a number of incidents happen this year specifically in the last 6 weeks of school. Sue Steel asked if there was a way for other students to anonymously call in and report if they see drugs/alcohol on campus. Rachel said there is that capability and the students will do that or go to a teacher, their counselor, Fr. Michael or Gayle in campus ministry.

To explain what happens when a student is placed on a drug/alcohol contract, Rachel explained that the nurse will administer the initial drug urine test. If it comes back as non-negative the parents are notified and they are sent to their doctor for further testing. Once a student is placed on a contract, they will stay on one for the remainder of his/her time at the school (which is the same for all 3 high schools). Rachel said a copy of the drug and alcohol contract was included in the packet for the council to review.

Fr. Michael Silloway addressed the council and asked if he could draw their attention to the contents of the packet provided by St. Pius. Included were the 3 questions the high schools were asked to address, the family in action pledge, the drug and alcohol contract and the ACRE data. In the ACRE data (on page E of the packet) where students self-report about life in a Catholic School, there is a section referring to drugs and alcohol. Fr. Michael said they are not out to catch and punish students, but instead to find out the best way to serve them. The objective here is to get to the root of the problem as to why they are using drugs in the first place and what longing in their heart is not being fulfilled to make them succumb to this peer pressure and jeopardize their future.

Fr. Michael said he believes that if mandatory random drug testing were to become a policy where anyone, anytime can be called in to be given a drug test, it gives the students that “out” and the opportunity to consider the consequences of their actions which adds another layer of prevention against peer pressure. Fr. Michael stated that in his opinion mandatory random drug testing would be the best and most successful approach to prevention, coupled with education to best help these students.

Betsy San Miguel brought up the issue of parental expectations and asked if there was something that could be done to press upon parents the need to place expectations on their children regarding drugs and alcohol. Diane requested that a committee of the council be assigned to this issue next year and most likely the high schools will be asked to return at a later date to discuss further.

- **Committee Reports**

Ad Hoc Committee: Silvia Bowen has nothing to report.

Executive Committee: Diane, Tom, and Augusto presented the 12-steps and the Marketing toolkit to NCEA on April 8th, 2015. There was extensive discussion and met with participants after the meeting.

Excellent interaction and the ASAC was well represented. The breakout session was attended by approximately 40 of the conference attendees, including administrators, clergy and teachers.

Finance Committee: Brad said that new business managers have been hired for SJN, SPC and OLV.

- **Superintendent’s Report**

Diane referred everyone to her written report and informed the council that Joe Villarreal was in the hospital. A plant was sent to him at the hospital on behalf of the ASAC.

- **Council Self –Assessment**

Brian Dooling said he sent out the assessment and because it was the same one used last year a comparison could be made. Brian said he highlighted in green those areas that scored better than last year. Those areas scoring lower were highlighted in yellow. Brian thanked everyone for their 100% participation in this assessment and said over all the council seems to be improving. Also included were comments made and he thanked everyone for their effort and said all comments are treated confidentially.

- **Nominating Committee**

Brian Dooling said that there were 5 individuals that had terms expiring in June 2015 – 3 of those individuals have elected to continue serving on the Council, which are Betsy San Miguel, Diedra St. Julien and Joe Villarreal. Joe has advised that although he is remaining on the council, he wishes not to serve as chair of the marketing committee. Brian said there are two viable candidates to fill these openings and their names are Maureen Schumacher from St. Peter Chanel Parish/Queen of Angels and Jeff Thomas from St. Lawrence Parish/St. John Neumann. Both of these candidates have a strong passion for their faith and for education and have a desire to serve. Brian asked for a motion to approve the candidacy recommendation of Maureen Schumacher and Jeff Thomas to serve on the council. The motion was given and seconded. Diane said she will present the recommendations to the Archbishop. Sue Steel commented that she liked the template Brian designed to interview the candidates and suggested that it be kept as a best practice moving forward.

Diane mentioned that it was time to begin the process of a strategic plan for our schools and requested assistance from the council. The last plan was done in 2008 and now that the pastoral plan has been published, it is time to begin an updated plan for the Catholic schools.

- **Election of Officers (2015-2016)**

Brain Dooling said the nominations were that Tom Burns continue as Chair for the upcoming year and that Brian David serve as Vice-Chair. They have both agreed to serve and Brian recommended that we have a motion to approve these candidates. The motion was given and seconded and congratulations were given to both.

- **Council Meeting Dates, New Council Members' Training & Advisory Council In-Service**

Diane asked the council to look at the suggested dates included in the packet for the 2015-2016 council meetings, new council member training and the Advisory Council In-Service, as well as the date and new venue information for the next Archbishop's Education Banquet. All agreed to these dates.

- **Future Council Business**

Sue Steel asked Diane to address the future business regarding **drug and alcohol policy review**. Diane said she would like this issue to be charged to the Policy Committee. Diane said that Diedra will need another person to help her and that a few principals will be assigned to the Committee. This is going to be a project that will take several months and include research of practices in other dioceses.

Sue asked Diane what committee would be responsible for the **strategic plan**. Diane said she would like to talk to the Executive Committee about this. She said it will have to line up with the goals set by AdvancED and also fit within the Pastoral Plan. An ad hoc committee may be the best direction.

- **Recognition of Departing Council Members**

Diane thanked Sue Steel and Silvia Bowen for all their hard work and dedication and presented them with a departing gift. The council applauded their work and said their good-byes.

- **Adjournment and Next Meeting Date**

The meeting adjourned at 9:10am. The next meeting is set for August 20, 2016 at 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools Program Specialist