

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

August 18, 2016

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Augusto Elias, Maureen Schumacher, Betsy San Miguel, Paula Brosnan, Rebecca Hammel, Connie Urbanski, Robert Heilmann, Jeff Thomas, Mark Uebelacker, Brad Wilson. By Phone: Marcos Arias, Diedra St. Julien, Craig Wade. Absent: Brian Weick, Msgr. John Walsh.

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Diedre St. Julien, Craig Wade & Marco Arias phoned in to join the meeting. Augusto Elias welcomed everyone to the first Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting of the 2016-2017 year and referred the council to the binder materials left at their place.

Diane led the council members in an opening prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Augusto proposed a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Introduction of New Council Members**

Augusto addressed the new council members requesting they introduce themselves. Those present were as follows:

Paula Brosnan – St. Jude the Apostle
Mark Uebelacker – St. Jude the Apostle
Bob Heilmann – St. Clare's Catholic Mission
Craig Wade - Holy Redeemer
Marcos Arias– St. Jude the Apostle

The returning advisory council members also introduced themselves for the benefit of the new council members.

Maureen Schumacher – Queen of Angels
Betsy San Miquel – Christ the King
Brad Wilson – Archdiocese CFO, St. Jude the Apostle
Rebecca Hammel – Associate Superintendent
Connie Urbanski – Assistant Superintendent
Jeff Thomas – St. John Neumann, St. Pius X
Augusto Elias – Christ the King

- **Approval of the June Meeting Minutes**

Maureen Schumacher requested a change in the Marketing Toolkit update section of the June minutes where it reads: *Maureen is updating the social media marketing toolkit which seems to change on a monthly basis* and asked that it be changed to: **Maureen has concluded updating the Marketing toolkit. Thanks to Marcos Arias and Rebecca Hammel for input and edits. The marketing toolkit will be posted to the website; the link will be shared with our school administrators during the August meeting.**

Augusto then asked members of the council for a motion to approve the minutes reflecting this change. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Committee Assignments**

Augusto explained how all council members are assigned to work on a sub-committee. He said he has communicated those assignments to all (except Diedre St. Julien and Mark Uebelacker) prior to this meeting. These positions were given on the basis of the council member's expertise and individual interests. Augusto explained that some committees are more active than others and suggested that each committee chair give a brief description of their role and purpose.

Marketing Committee

Marcos Arias, Chair of the Marketing Committee, said this committee has the chance to work with the schools in their marketing efforts to sell the value of a Catholic Education within the Archdiocese of Atlanta. He explained how some schools have bigger challenges than others and that the Marketing Committee is there to partner up with these schools and give that extra needed support and assistance. The marketing toolkit, which is updated on a regular basis, is extremely valuable in giving marketing guidance to all the schools at whatever level they find themselves.

Marcos also said that the marketing committee needs to continue its research on trends within and outside the Archdiocese. He said it's important to be able to look out at least 3-5 years and make plans accordingly. The marketing plan needs to align with the strategic plan of each school, which also needs to align with the Pastoral Plan of the Archdiocese. Another key element that was brought up for the schools in their marketing efforts is to take full advantage of social media opportunities. Marcos commended Rebecca and Diane for spearheading the Welcome Grants this past summer.

Policy Committee

Maureen Schumacher, the Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee, will also serve as Chair for the Policy Committee. Maureen said one of the big assignments for the Policy Committee this year will be to work on the approval process and implementation of the Drug and Alcohol Policy for the Archdiocesan Catholic High Schools which will go into effect August 2017.

New School and Expansion Committee

Diedra St. Julien who had joined us by phone is the Chair of the New School and Expansion Committee. Diane Starkovich gave a brief summary in her place as the phone connection with Diedra was lost. Diane started off by giving a background that about 4 or 5 years ago this council put together a 12 step process for schools desiring to become recognized as Catholic. Since that time, Sophia Academy has become fully recognized as Catholic and we have a few more schools that have recently shown an interest. One of these schools, Ave Maria Academy, is a hybrid home school, offering a 5, 3 or 2 day option. At this time, the school shows no interest in becoming recognized as Catholic.

The second school pursuing Catholic recognition is Holdheide Academy, which has recently changed its name to St. Rita's located in Woodstock, GA. Up until last January it was a PK2-3rd grade program. Due to a lack of students in January 2016 they dropped the K-3rd program leaving only a preschool. They have re-opened this fall again with K- 3rd grade. No update on enrollment has been received. They

have received the 12 step process a few years ago and are using religion texts that are in conformity with the USCCB.

Finance Committee

Augusto asked Brad Wilson to give a brief summary of the Finance Committee. Brad listed some of the things the Finance Committee gets involved with such as Teachers' Salaries, Allocated Financial Aid (Block Grants) to each school, GRACE Scholars and Expansion Plans for the Archdiocesan Schools. Brad said that the municipal bonds that were issued for the building of 5 new schools back in the 1990's through Wells Fargo will now be taken over by BB&T. This was a national decision made by Wells Fargo.

Diane said at some point Brad will again offer a Finance Workshop with a phone-in option available to all ASAC members. This has proven to be a very helpful tool in gaining better understanding on how Finances work in our Archdiocesan schools. A discussion followed about the different forms of financial aid available to families who want to send their children to Catholic Schools but think it is not affordable.

Nominating Committee

Augusto thanked Mark Uebelacker for volunteering to chair the Nominating Committee and said that his background in sales makes him well suited for this position. The on-going job of the Nominating Committee is to help find, screen and propose candidates for the Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council. Diane told Mark that he will receive recommendations from principals, pastors and other council members and that Msgr. John Walsh will join him on the Nominating Committee. In addition to finding new members, this committee is responsible for distributing and analyzing the self-evaluation survey at the end of each year.

Strategic Planning Committee

Augusto said the very important job of the Strategic Planning Committee this year is to create and propose a new Strategic Plan for schools. Normally every 5 years a new Strategic Plan is implemented but Diane said the strategic plan we have right now is from 2008 and that most of the items on that plan have been accomplished. Archbishop Gregory had asked for a delay in creating a new strategic plan until the Archdiocese of Atlanta's Pastoral Plan was in place. The Pastoral Plan has been launched and the need for a new strategic plan is now. The marketing survey going out soon, along with town-hall meetings in strategic areas will hopefully help determine where to focus efforts during the next 5 years. The accreditation visit will happen in the spring of 2018, so Diane said she hopes to have this strategic plan in draft form by the end of this school year for Archbishop's approval.

- **Council Goals and Expectations for 2016-2017**

Maureen Schumacher reported that the executive committee met over the summer to create the goals for the 2016-2017 school year. She said they came up with the following 5 goals which will be kept in the forefront at meetings throughout the year. They are as follows:

1. Mission Statement Review – the mission statement will be reviewed and revised for relevancy.
2. Strategic Plan – (see above) Implementing a new Strategic Plan is a very important goal for this year.
3. Admission Management – The marketing team will work on strategies to obtain and retain more students in our Catholic Schools.
4. School's Policies - This year the focus is on advising, approving and executing the new High School Drug and Alcohol Policy.
5. Maintain our status as a high-performing, strong Catholic Schools' Advisory Council.

- **October 15, 2016 All School Advisory Council In-Service**

Diane stated that the All School Advisory Council In-Service is here at the Chancery, October 15, 2016 from 9am until noon. There will be an optional Mass at 8am, Hospitality starting at 8:30, an Introduction and program at 9am. There will be a marketing workshop which is always well received and generally there are presentations from a few schools that have done something different which may be of interest to other schools. There will also be time to share best practices and a survey at end of the morning before dismissal. Diane hopes to have good attendance in spite of it being Columbus Day weekend.

- **Archbishop's 10th Annual Banquet for Catholic Education**

Diane gave specifics on the next Education Banquet which will kick off Catholic Schools' Week 2017. The date is Saturday evening, January 28, 2017 and the location is the Hilton Atlanta/Marietta Hotel & Conference Center at 500 Powder Springs Street in Marietta. This event generates proceeds which awards at scholarships to either school, parish or chancery employees who have their children enrolled in one of our Archdiocesan Catholic schools. There will be an employee from each school honored (independent schools included), along with a principal of the year and preschool director of the year. This joy-filled night starts with a Mass with Archbishop at 5pm, followed by a reception from 6-7pm and the dinner and awards presentation will be from 7-9pm. This year, being that it is our 10th annual, there will be a DJ with dancing and cash bar until 11pm. Diane asked council members to consider attending this wonderful event. We have had a table of 10 donated for council members. Please RSVP to Debbie or Diane if you would like to attend.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane brought the council's attention to their name tents in front of them, which will continue to be used for the next few meetings until all become familiar with each other. Also at their place each member received an official engraved name badge identifying them as a member of this council. Diane asked all members to wear these name badges on their school council visits. The new members received binders and existing members received updates on the policy manual as well as tabs for this year's meetings. These items will be discussed later in the meeting.

Diane gave a brief enrollment update since all schools were up and running for the new school year as of this date. She said presently we are down 81 students from last year's numbers. Diane explained that

sometimes these numbers change before the actual count is taken for the NCEA Data Bank on September 16, 2016. Diane said this decline in numbers is for a variety of reasons. She expects St. Catherine's to rebound in numbers by the NCEA snapshot date and said that they have a new principal and pastor there. Regarding St. John Neumann, Marcos has done a data analysis and has attained some valuable information which outlines many of the challenges they face. Our Lady of Mercy High School reported on the first day of school they were down by 24 but have since picked up a few more.

Diane said the schools got off to a very smooth start and reported that we hosted an orientation at the end of July here at the Chancery for over 140 new employees. She encouraged all council members to familiarize themselves with the schools web site in order to get a better understanding of the schools they represent. Diane referred council members to her written report for additional information and opened the floor up for questions.

Augusto asked if there was a way to get numbers of open seats in not only Catholic schools but also public and private. Diane said we do not have information on public schools but that our Catholic schools are at approximately 87% full capacity. She said there are published reports that give data on some of the major private schools in Atlanta. A discussion followed regarding obtaining data on drivers that are causing a drop in enrollment as well as retention data. Ideas were exchanged on how to better tract the numbers of new students each year and trends that are taking place.

- **Welcome Grant Update – Rebecca Hammel**

Rebecca Hammel said the Welcome Grant Program was debuted to the Catholic community in the Georgia Bulletin on May 12, 2016. This program was designed to recruit new Catholic families into 4 our under-enrolled schools. The four being St. John Neumann Regional Catholic School, Our Lady of Victory Catholic School, St. Peter Claver Regional Catholic School and Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School. The program is a 2 year grant that offers a \$2,500 the first year for elementary students and \$1,500 the second year. The high school grant offers \$4000 the first year and \$2,500 the second year. The application process became available on June 1 through August 1. There were 90 applicants total and 34 were accepted and awarded the grants. St. John Neumann awarded 10, Our Lady of Victory -11, St. Peter Claver – 11, Our Lady of Mercy High School -2. Students that applied had to go through the typical admission procedures and protocols in order to be accepted. The elementary schools were very accommodating in waiving all fees related to the testing/admissions process and Our Lady of Mercy High School returned the fees to those who were not accepted.

Diane commented that the Welcome Grant Program was a big success and that they plan to do it again next year. She also said this grant money is only available to Catholic families and that Brad Wilson will explain in his workshop where the grant money comes from.

Diane then asked Rebecca to address the question that was brought up in one of the marketing committee meetings regarding certification of teachers. Rebecca said in one of her phone meetings with the marketing committee there was a concern shared regarding middle school math teachers. This concern was that we may be losing middle school students because of claims that the middle school

math teachers may not be certified to teach that level. Rebecca said that she researched this with the principals and each verified that their middle school math teacher was certified to teach math at the 6-12 level. Rebecca asked for the council's help in expelling any concerns/rumors in this regard. Maureen asked if this was possibly related to competition with the STEM programs that are on the rise now in other schools. Diane mentioned that there was a great article in the Georgia Bulletin last year on the introduction of our middle school STREAM curriculum which is comparable to the other STEM programs with the addition of Religion and Arts. Rebecca said that these are new Science Standards and that the middle school science teachers are working very hard at incorporating this hands-on approach into the classroom. She added that it does require more time and resources.

Augusto mentioned that he was asked recently about why we do not make our curriculum available to the public on our website. In response, Rebecca said that it is not made public because we write and copyright our own curriculum. Diane said if a parent wants to see it, there is a copy in every school's library. A discussion followed regarding the pros and cons of making the curriculum available to the public online. For the time being, it will remain unchanged with a copy in the library should a parent wish to view the curriculum.

- **Drug Testing Policy Draft**

Diane said over the past 18 months there has been discussion about implementing a random drug testing policy in our high schools. Archbishop's one request from the start has been that we have the same policy in place for all 3 high schools. There was a survey that went out last year to all high school families and with approximately 600 responses, 2/3rds of those were in favor of random drug testing. Diane said there is a policy in place now mandating testing with reasonable suspicion that a student is using drugs/alcohol. Maureen Schumacher will chair this committee and Jeff Gregor, former council member, has agreed to continue his work on this policy along with Principal Steve Spellman. Diane said the hope is to have a policy written by January 1, 2017. A letter will need to go out to all high school parents before admissions informing them of the new drug/alcohol policy beginning with the next school year. Diane advised the council members that an electronic draft of the policy would be sent to them for final approval with the next minutes.

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

Diane brought the council's attention to the roster of members, binders, binder tabs and policy manual changes at their place and asked them to let her know by email if there are any changes or corrections to the roster.

- **Sign-Up for Local Council Meeting Visits**

Diane explained especially for the benefit of the new council members the purpose of visiting local school councils. She said these visits are to better our communication with the schools, answer any questions that may come up and to let them know we value all their hard work and dedication. Diane said it is important that they know we operate as a system of schools and not 18 independent schools running on their own. Diane asked existing council members to share their experience to the new

members regarding council visits. Augusto responded with advice to go with an open mind and let them run the meeting. The most important thing is to show the will to better understand the school and become aware of their struggles and success stories. Augusto said by visiting the various school councils, you get a more accurate/holistic view of the school system in general and not just your child's school. He recommends to not sign up for your own school.

Diane passed the sign-up sheet around and said that all schools are listed except for St. Catherine of Siena and St. Mary's and said that those dates/times should be available next week. She asked the experienced council members to sign up for 2 meetings if at all possible. Diane also asked new council members to sign up for meetings that occur after the 1st of the year in hopes that by then they will have had time to hear reports and get familiar with what to look for and report on in the meeting. If new members wish to attend an earlier meeting they are welcome to accompany an experienced council member. She said once everyone has signed up, she will contact the principal a week or so in advance of the meeting to let them know who from this council will be attending.

Diane shared that while serving as a lead evaluator on an accreditation team in another diocese last year she learned about an interesting practice from their diocesan advisory council. This practice was that each year 3 or 4 schools from the diocese were selected to come before the council and give a 10 minute presentation on their strategic plan and express their goals and efforts. Diane asked the council if they would find that helpful and said with 4 more meetings this school year, she could probably arrange presentations from three schools. Augusto and Marcos gave positive feedback with this idea and Diane said she would start working on making this happen.

- **New Business**

With no new business to report, Augusto called to adjourn the meeting.

- **Adjournment and Next Meeting Date**

Augusto asked for the chair of each sub-committee to submit a report before the next meeting date which is set for 7:30a.m., Thursday, November 10, 2016. Meeting adjourned at 9:03a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools Program Specialist