

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

January 19, 2017

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Rebecca Hammel, Archbishop Wilton Gregory, Augusto Elias, Robert Heilmann, Jeff Thomas, Mark Uebelacker, Brad Wilson, Marcos Arias, Craig Wade. Absent: Brian Weick, Diedre St. Julien. Maureen Schumacher and Betsy San Miguel joined the meeting by phone.

- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Augusto welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2017. Diane Starkovich led the council members in the opening prayer. Diane also asked the council to pray for Principal Brian Marks who tore his Achilles tendon while playing basketball at school with the students. He is in quite a bit of pain and is scheduled for surgery.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Augusto asked if there were any additions to the agenda. Diane requested to add the Marketing Committee report to the agenda. With that addition, Augusto asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Approval of the August Minutes**

Augusto then asked for a motion to approve the November 2016 minutes. Motion was given and seconded.

- **Review of Student Substance Abuse Policy**

Diane mentioned that at the last council meeting she presented the short version of the policy which will appear in the policy manual. The other version presented today is what will appear in the Student/Parent Handbook. Diane said the first parent meeting is scheduled this evening at St. Pius X where there will be a total of 4 meetings. There are also 3 meetings scheduled at Blessed Trinity High School and 2 more meetings at Our Lady of Mercy High School. She explained that our main purpose is not to be punitive but rather to give the students a reason to abstain knowing they could be tested at any time. After much research and feedback from other dioceses along with increased incidences on all three campuses, Diane said that both she and Archbishop agreed that now is the time to put this in place. This will be a uniform policy among the 3 high schools. The policy description provides background (why we are doing it), definitions, cost, what will happen, how we will drug test etc. Diane explained that there are two paths the schools will take when a student is randomly drug tested. One path is for those students that disclose ahead of time that they will test positive and the other path is for those who do not self-disclose and test positive. If the student chooses to self-disclose they are put on a drug/alcohol contract and this also will require counseling etc. If the student doesn't self-disclose and tests positive they are placed on a contract, required to go to counseling and there is a disciplinary hearing which is much more stringent than the other path. The company that was selected to administer the drug tests will be doing all the parent education. Diane encouraged the council members to read the policy and asked if there were any questions. Augusto asked if information on those students that tested positive would be reflected in their permanent records. Diane said the schools have both internal and external records and that our schools wait to see if the college requests these records. Diane said that all of this will be brought up at the parent meetings and invited the council

members to attend one of the meetings if possible. A very positive discussion followed regarding the implementation of this new drug and alcohol policy.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane asked if there were any questions regarding her written report. She went on to say that there will be a total of 5 principal searches this year with two searches presently active, two more to be announced in the next couple of weeks and another in February.

As far as future planning goes, Diane said once the survey results are in, town hall meetings will be scheduled to get feedback from our stakeholders on the data received. This will assist in putting our strategic plan into place.

Augusto commented on the upcoming Education Banquet. Diane thanked those who were planning to attend and said it is a great night as we recognize outstanding employees at all of our schools.

- **Comments from Archbishop Gregory**

Archbishop Gregory thanked the council for their service and commitment and expressed the importance of having an active parent or former parent's perspective on the school policies and practices that are followed at the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Archbishop commented on how proud he is of the work that GRACE Scholars has done in helping 1,000 families within the State of Georgia, who are financially challenged, take advantage of a Catholic Education.

- **Council Visits**

Marcos Arias reported on visits to Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Pius X, and St. John the Evangelist.

Immaculate Heart of Mary – The meeting was on November 10th and was run very well by the committee chair with over 20 people in attendance including the pastor. Productive discussions took place on the school's master campus plan, parish interaction, strategic plan, viability index and upcoming events. Marcos said he would consider them a good role model on how to run a school council.

St. Pius X - Marcos said that one of the interesting subjects discussed at the meeting was SAT vs. ACT and how there is a trend of more students now going for the ACT. The thought was that as more students apply to schools in the south, the ACT seems to be a better vehicle for acceptance. Marcos said it was noted that 57% of the Pius students stay in-state for college. Other topics brought up were their open house, the settlement with the neighbor behind the school, the new drug policy, drug dog visits and Sage Catering.

St. John the Evangelist – Well run meeting. There was discussion about the capital campaign and an expression of concern about their sizeable debt. Marcos was given a tour of the new gymnasium and was very impressed with the facility. He said they are doing things right in so many ways.

Marcos said another huge strength for St. John the Evangelist is its location and the easy access to Interstates 285, 75 and 85. He added that it has a regional feel because many students come from other

parishes and areas. The school has maximized on this strength by actively reaching out to other surrounding communities and parishes. Marcos said the St. John the Evangelist Annual Auction will now be referred to as the Annual Jubilee and will be marketed each year with a different theme. Also discussed was the preparation for their accreditation visit on March 27 & 28. The committee broke up into smaller groups for the last 35-45 minutes to discuss different goals etc.

Mark Uebelacker asked Marcos if he had the opportunity to introduce himself at the beginning of the meeting to explain why he was in attendance. Marcus said he did and explained his role, offered his support and assistance and thanked them for their service.

- **Committee Reports**

Marketing Committee – Augusto asked Marcos to continue on with the Marketing report. Marcos said the Archdiocesan-wide Research project vendor has completed the general population survey and the parish survey and data processing and analysis are now in progress. He said the final draft should be done by the end of next week at which time Linda Cavalli will review. Linda will then pass it on to Diane and Rebecca for their initial review to see if there are any questions or requests for the project vendor. Once we have the information we can be data based driven moving forward. We received about 1000 completed general population surveys and another 250 from the parishes. In addition to this, Rebecca Hammel said there were about 850 received from parents in our schools. There was a very low response from Atlanta's Hispanic Community and Archbishop commented that culturally many Hispanics believe Catholic Schools are only for the wealthy and therefore biased for that reason. Diane said this data is most important for our strategic plan and although we believe the perception of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Atlanta to be quite positive, there is always room for improvement and this data will help in determining that.

Marcos said the Marketing committee continues to work with St. John Neumann. He said there is good energy from the new admissions director who is making visits to feeder preschools and surrounding parishes. Diane added that there are also parent ambassadors who are helping to spread the word among their fellow parishioners. Marcos said they already have 18 applicants for kindergarten which is a higher number than last year. Marcos said St. John Neumann's open house will be January 29th and their gala is set for February 11th and they have exceeded their sponsorship targets. He said the product at St. John Neumann is in very good shape and that although Principal Alex Porto is leaving at the end of the school year, he remains very much committed and supportive of the school.

Diane mentioned that the St. John Neumann parents have recently requested religious sisters at the school for next year. Diane said it's a complicated process with many facets and would take several years to implement. Archbishop said the fact that they see the value and importance of religious sisters being in the school is a positive thing, however, the down side is that it is being driven by images that are no longer operative

Lastly, Marcos mentioned the social media piece of the marketing toolkit which needs updating. Next steps: Paula Brosnan has started the toolkit review and will identify two schools with which to work social media metrics. Augusto thanked Marcos for all his great work.

Nominating Committee –Nothing to report

New School and Expansion Committee – Nothing to report

- **Council Self-Evaluation - Mark Uebelacker**

Mark asked Diane if he should reach out to Brian Dooling for help with the self-evaluation. Diane said Brian had offered to help. Diane added that since Mark is also chair of the nominating committee he will need to determine how many people are rolling off this council in June and start recruiting for new members. Diane said she continues to lobby for more Southside representation as well as more female representation.

- **Future Business**

Town Hall meetings need to be scheduled after we get all the data from the surveys. The goal is to have a 4 to 5 point strategic plan in place to present to Archbishop by September. The new strategic plan will guide us for the next 3-5 years.

- **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:00am. Next meeting - 7:30a.m., Thursday, March 16, 2017 at the Chancery.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools Program Specialist