

## Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

March 16, 2017

**In Attendance:** Diane Starkovich, Rebecca Hammel, Augusto Elias, Jeff Thomas, Mark Uebelacker, Brad Wilson, Craig Wade, Brian Weick, Betsy San Miguel, Paula Brosnan. Maureen Schumacher and Marcos Arias joined the meeting by phone. **Absent:** Robert Heilmann, Diedra St. Julien, Monsignor John Walsh.

- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Diane dialed into the conference call allowing Marcos Arias and Maureen Schumacher to join the meeting. Diane welcomed everyone and led the council in an opening prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Augusto asked for a move to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Approval of the August Minutes**

Augusto then asked for a motion to approve the January 2017 minutes. Motion was given and seconded.

- **Executive Summary of Catholic Schools' Survey – Marcos Arias**

Marcos Arias proceeded to explain the data received from the Catholic Schools survey while Rebecca projected on the screen the corresponding slide for all to see. He started with the background and objective slide which basically sets the stage for the purpose of this study and what we are trying to accomplish. The main objective is to look at how different targeted groups perceive our schools and to understand the key drivers and barriers for enrollment in Atlanta's Catholic Schools. The three populations that were targeted were the general population having children of school age, Catholic parish parents of school age children and parents of school age children that already attend one of our schools. There were about 1,000 responses from the general population category, about 270 from the parish surveys and about 843 from the Catholic school parents.

Marcos went on to look at the study results from the general population. It was clear to see, based on the results, that the top two areas of importance with this group were the quality of the teaching staff and academic excellence. Among those in this category who rated the quality of teaching staff and academic excellence at the top, when it came to comparing their existing school's performance with what they perceive the Catholic schools performance would be was quite astounding. The perception of Catholic schools performance was much lower than their current school which shows that we need to double our marketing efforts in selling the quality of our Catholic schools. Diane said the perception does not match the reality of our high performing schools. Brad Wilson said he feels that one of the reasons why the perception of a Catholic school education may be low is because as Catholics we strive for humility and generally do not boast about all the great things being done in our schools.

Augusto suggested that if it is possible to still manipulate the data, we should try to compare the perception of the Catholic general population (16%) against the perception of the Non-Catholic general population. In that 16%, which is our target base, 64% of them are in public schools vs. private. Diane said it would be helpful to know the grade level of the responses because as the years progress in public

school the performance satisfaction generally decreases. Marcos referred another slide that broke it down by grade level and said all grade levels show the perception of our Catholic schools lower than their current school. Marcos reiterated that academic excellence and quality of teaching staff are the top 2 areas of importance in this population. Diane asked Marcos to find out if the survey company would give us the raw data to manipulate or would they manipulate it for us and if so what would be the extra cost.

Marcos moved on to another slide (page 11) showing the receptivity toward Catholic schools in Atlanta. This is broken down by groups, i.e. religion, gender, ethnicity, education level, etc. Of course, Catholics are going to be more receptive to sending their children to Catholic Schools, but among this group the key drivers are location, transportation and tuition cost. Marcos pointed out that this is only true after the primary areas of importance (quality of the teaching staff and academic excellence) are met. Diane said the bottom line is that we have a golden opportunity here for marketing in the attempt to improve perception of our excellent schools, quality teachers and the outstanding education our students receive.

Marcos then proceeded on to the summary of the parish population (page 13), where there were only 270 responses. Rebecca added that the majority of these 270 came out of one parish. Marcos said results in this category show the same top two areas of importance being academic excellence and quality of teaching staff, adding a 3<sup>rd</sup> which is availability of faith based teaching. Marcos moved through page 14 showing the parish parents responses to perception and page 16 where it showed parish parent's receptivity to Catholic Schools at 80%. In general these parish counts were so low that it was decided not to derive any reliable conclusions from this portion of the survey. Diane said, according to the Kenedy Directory, there are approximately 50,000 students enrolled in our 100 PSR programs across the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Based on this information, it is evident how low these parish responses were and proves that our PSR population is a prime marketing target for enrollment.

Marcos moved on the next slide (page 18) which was the survey responses from the Catholic school population. He said 73% of this population responding were sending their children to an Archdiocesan Catholic Schools. Again, the top three areas in this population were academic excellence, quality of teaching staff and availability of faith based teaching.

Marcos moved on to page 26 which outlined conclusions and recommendations of the study. Based on the three populations surveyed, it is apparent that the perception of our product does not reflect the high quality that it is, leaving a tremendous need to market the value of our product. Diane said the 2015-16 annual report gives impressive statistics showing our ACT/SAT scores, the number of AP exams and credits earned along with our Iowa testing averages. She said this information is on the Archdiocese of Atlanta's website but apparently is not reaching the majority of the Catholic population. A discussion followed.

In conclusion, Marcos said the data received from this survey is solid enough for him, along with the marketing committee and the rest of the team, to put together some recommendations in moving forward. Also, he said, that Diane has valuable information in moving forward with the Strategic Plan.

Diane agreed. Marcos expressed an interest in sharing this information with stakeholders and asked for ideas on the best way to accomplish that. Diane mentioned that the All Schools' Fall Advisory Council In-Service would be an excellent time to share this information with the schools advisory councils. In addition to that, we are entering into an accreditation year which affords an opportunity to meet with stakeholders. Diane would also like to share this information with the Secretariat. Rebecca suggested presenting it to the principals at the June Principals' meeting so that they can use this information in shaping their marketing efforts for following school year. Diane expressed the need for an outside marketing consultant to take this data and design a plan. Augusto thanked Marcos for his presentation of the survey results.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane said she didn't have much to add to her written report, but asked if there were any questions. She said she was very pleased to announce that principals have been hired at Our Lady of Mercy High School and St. John Neumann Regional School. Queen of Angels' principal interviews were going to take place later that day and the search is still on for a principal at Our Lady of Victory in Tyrone and St. Joseph's in Athens. A discussion followed.

- **Committee Reports**

Nominating Committee – Mark Uebelacker stated that he would be taking over Brian Dooling's role in facilitating the Council's Self-Evaluation. He said he has received all the information from Brian to start the process and will send the evaluation over to Diane to see if any changes are needed. Once that is done all will receive the survey and have a few weeks to complete it. Once completed, Mark will tally the results and put together a report for the June Advisory Council meeting. Mark said the most important thing is for everyone to respond and to be honest in their assessment. The survey is anonymous and the hope is to have 100% participation.

Diane mentioned there will be some members on the council whose term will expire at the end of June and asked all to send any candidate recommendations to Mark for consideration to fill these positions.

Marketing Committee – Diane asked Marcos to give his marketing report. Marcos said in addition to the school's survey summary (see above), he wanted to give an update on the schools. St. John Neumann has 30 kindergarten applications, they are hoping for 40 to fill 2 kindergarten classes. Based on the number of returning students and the total applications in all grades, they are looking at 258 versus the number budgeted of 255. Other items the marketing committee is working on with St. John Neumann are new signage at the school, continuing the PSR push with the development director and an updated website. Marcos said the school is concerned about the transition taking place and fear this will result in loss of enrollment. He said the school expressed a desire for more communication and presence from the superintendent. Diane mentioned that she and Rebecca were there the previous week for interviews and there was no indication of concern, but she did say she is planning to have an evening meeting with the Home & School Association at St. John Neumann soon and will of course be there again to introduce the new principal. A discussion followed. Marcos said the Marketing Committee is

also working with Melissa Reder at St. Mary's. He feels things are going in a positive direction there and will have more on that progress at a future date. Rebecca added that Maureen Schumacher is presently working with St. Catherine of Siena. Lastly, Marcos said that Paula Brosnan is working on social media tactics and reporting with Christ the King.

- **Visits to Local School Council Meetings**

With limited time left in the meeting, Augusto asked if anyone had questions regarding the visit feedback forms that were submitted. Diane inquired to those who have made school visits if they were received well and were they able to introduce themselves and explain the reason for their presence at the meeting. Positive responses were given. A discussion followed.

- **Future Business**

Rebecca made an announcement that Diane will be honored as a recipient of the Lead. Learn. Proclaim award at the NCEA convention in St. Louis on April 18, 2017. The Lead. Learn. Proclaim award recognizes outstanding efforts, contributions and achievements on behalf of Catholic school education. Congratulations and kudos to Diane on receiving this prestigious award!

At the June meeting there will be an Election of Officers and results of the Advisory Council Self-Assessment.

- **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:00am. Next meeting - 7:30a.m., Thursday, June 15, 2017 at the Chancery.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler  
Schools Program Specialist