

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, August 20, 2019

Archbishop's Conference Room – 3rd Floor

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Bishop Joel Konzen, Marcos Arias, Mark Uebelacker, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Maureen McAbee, Beth Clark Morrison, Michelle Raney, Paula Brosnan, Bob Heilmann, Fr. Jim Duffy, Stacy Lewis, Catherine Kennedy Harris, John Cryer, by phone: Augusto Elias.

- **Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer**

Marcos Arias called the meeting to order and introduced our newest council member, John Cryer. John gave a brief introduction of himself and expressed his gratitude for being selected as part of this council. Marcos then thanked Bishop Konzen for being in attendance at the meeting. Diane led the council in prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Marcos asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Diane asked to add Committee Reports to the agenda following Brian Dooling's report. The agenda with this addition was approved.

- **Approval of June, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Marcos asked for a motion to approve the June 2019 meeting minutes. The motion was approved and seconded.

- **Council Goals and Expectations – Bob Heilmann/Marcos Arias**

Bob Heilmann said that the 2019-2020 goals and expectations have no major changes. He said the most important thing each member of the council can do is to keep their ears and eyes open so that necessary adjustments can be made. Bob then went through each of the council goals as follows:

1. We will work to build trust among all School Advisory Councils and the ASAC by increasing communication, attending school council meetings, demonstrating leadership and providing support and advice to the Archbishop and Superintendent.
2. We will maximize our effectiveness in ASAC by our continued diligence & preparation for decisions, attendance & participation in meetings, and more clear structure on deliverables in our committees.
3. We will provide support for the approved strategic plan for Catholic schools through committee work and updating archdiocesan policies as needed.
4. We will maximize enrollment in all our schools in the Archdiocese.
5. We will continue to provide training to council members on the financing of our schools which includes the work of the finance committee to annually recommend teacher salary scales and financial aid (block grant) awards to all schools.
6. We will help the ASAC to facilitate the goal of providing Catholic education to all those who wish to receive a Catholic education which includes supporting the work of GRACE Scholars, Inc., to provide scholarships for qualifying families.

- **Review of Committee Assignments – Marcos Arias**

Marcos went over the different committees that have been put in place for this council. Diane directed everyone to the 2019-2020 Membership Roster where each member's assigned committee is listed. Diane reminded the council that until we get a new Archbishop, no new policies can be put in place. We have an Uber/Shared Ride policy on hold now as well as a committee to look at additional compensation given to staff at some of our schools, i.e. stipends, bonuses,

longevity payments, etc. Now is the time to gather facts and get legwork in place in order to be prepared for the arrival of our new Archbishop. Diane said the more pressing issue right now is the need for an ad hoc committee to explore the south side schools. First action item will be to attend a south side deanery meeting and then meet with local advisory councils at OLV & OLM. Another idea is administering surveys to that community. Marcos asked if there were any questions regarding the committees.

- **September 28, 2019 All Advisory Council In-Service**

Diane said this is a day when all councils come together for in-service and training. A segment of the morning will be devoted to understanding the financing of our schools. Brian Dooling will speak on Marketing and Enrollment and there will be other topics of interest and workshops with time to share best practices. Mass will be offered at 8am in the chapel for those interested, hospitality will begin at 8:30 and the in-service will start at 9am and end at noon. Diane asked these council members to please be in attendance and said she will be sending out an agenda soon.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane said that at this time all schools were open except Christ the King, which has a delayed start date due to construction. It has been a relatively quiet start to the new school year. This year three of our Catholic schools are receiving the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award. This will be the second time receiving this award for all three. The recipients will be announced at a later date and there will be a recognition celebration in Washington D. C. in Mid-November.

Diane recently attended the Archdiocese of Atlanta's Catechist Conference which was held at the nearby Renaissance Waverly Hotel. This was hosted by the Formation and Discipleship Office and had approximately 1500 in attendance. Many of our teachers and some administrators attended this event. Catechists must renew their certification with on-going training and this conference helps to achieve that requirement.

There was a discussion regarding concerns about St. Pius possibly being reclassified as 6A in sports next school year. This bump up is due to St. Pius' student enrollment size and their success in sports. One of the main concerns is that in 6A St. Pius will be competing against very large public schools where the potential for injuries will be much greater. St. Pius is currently playing in AAAA. The private schools that are affected by this are speaking up against it, but there may not be much we can do to prevent this from taking place.

- **Brian Dooling, Director of Marketing and Enrollment**

Brian gave out a report on this year's school enrollment and said there has been a 2% drop from last year. The school with the biggest drop is St. Catherine of Siena that is having problems with both retention and recruitment. Immaculate Heart of Mary and Blessed Trinity also dropped significantly. Diane gave her input on the challenges we face with enrollment which includes lower birth rates resulting in less siblings. Lower numbers in elementary grades ultimately impacts high school enrollment. The independent Catholic schools are also showing decreases, with the exception of Marist.

Marcos said the story that needs to be told is the excellent product being delivered to our students in the Archdiocese of Atlanta Catholic schools. With the Advisory Council in-Service coming up, he asked what key marketing strategies will be addressed to attack this enrollment issue. Brian Dooling said he would like to focus on programs that advisory councils can impact such as the parent ambassador program, asking parents to evaluate the school on yelp or google and other actions to promote their school. Brad suggested looking at the Non-Catholic population to enhance enrollment. There was discussion about the danger of saturating the market with too many Non-Catholics and thereby changing the culture of our schools. Bishop Konzen suggested that putting a percentage cap on the number of Non-Catholics in our schools may be the way to go in order to keep Catholics at the majority.

Diane said she would like to include a presentation on GRACE at the in-service. The GRACE cap was not reached for the 2019 school year, but had it been reached we would have been able to provide more assistance to the Latino community. The Latinos are more open to sending their children to Catholic Schools but many of them need financial assistance. A discussion followed.

Marcos asked for input on issues council members may have heard at their child's school that could be affecting enrollment or retention. Several members gave input. Diane said she releases the results of the AdvancED survey for Religion each year to the principals. These surveys ask students personal questions about the environment at the school. This data allows the principals to see potential problem areas at their school. Diane also mentioned that we have lost quite a few teachers this year, but in several cases, change is not negative.

Lastly, Marcos reminded everyone of their ongoing responsibility as being a part of this council and that is to be the eyes and ears at your respective school and parish and report this information back to either Brian Dooling or an Executive Committee member as well as your principal. This is very valuable information to us and the schools.

- **Committee Reports**

Executive Committee: Marcos said the number one focus is on marketing and enrollment. He went over upcoming dates for New Advisory Council Member Training as well as the in-service. He referred to the updated welcome grant information that was part of the marketing hand out. The teacher compensation sub-committee work will be postponed until a later date along with the Shared-Ride (Uber) sub-committee. However, the sub-committee on the south side schools is one of high priority at this time. Diane asked Catherine Harris and any others who may wish to serve on this sub-committee to let her know. She also asked for all committees to meet before the November 12th meeting and report on any action items or if there was no action taken.

- **School Advisory Council Visits & Sign-Up**

Diane passed around the school visit sign-up sheet. She asked for each member to sign up for two meetings. In the case of our new member, John Cryer, Diane suggested he arrange to go with another member the first time. It was also suggested to not visit the school where your child attends.

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

The binder tabs with meeting dates and the council member contact information sheet was handed out to members.

- **Adjournment – Next Meeting Date – November 12, 2019**

Meeting adjourned at 8:53am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist