

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting March 12, 2019

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Marcos Arias, Mark Uebelacker, Craig Wade, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Catherine Kennedy Harris, Maureen McAbee, Beth Clark Morrison, Michelle Raney, Paula Brosnan, Bob Heilmann and Fr. Jim Duffy.
By phone: Stacy Lewis.

- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Marcos Arias called the meeting to order and Diane led the council in a prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Marcos asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Diane noted that future agendas will have Marketing & Enrollment as a separate line item. The change was approved and seconded.

- **Approval of August Meeting Minutes**

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

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane thanked everyone for being present and asked if there were any questions regarding her written report. She said that she and Brad continue to work on school budget approvals. Regarding the Associate Superintendent vacancy, the job has now been reposted as Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Marcos asked for more clarification on why the position title has been changed from Associate Superintendent to Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Diane said she was disappointed she didn't get more interest in the Associate Superintendent position and discussed this at length with Bishop Konzen. In this conversation, it was determined that the biggest need at this time is in Curriculum and Instruction. The other duties that the Associate Superintendent is responsible for will continue to be divided up between Diane, Brian and Connie. The main difference in requirements between the two positions is that the Director of Curriculum and Instruction requires less experience in Catholic Schools and the salary goes down from an E8 to E7 range.

Marcos asked about the job search process for teachers and requirements since many of the schools will soon be looking for new hires. Diane said since 2008 the Archdiocese of Atlanta require teachers to be certified. The only exception is if the teacher agrees to work toward certification and acquires it within a two year period. Diane mentioned due to low attendance in the past few years, the Office of Catholic Schools decided to not hold the usual teacher job fair this year. Connie and Brianna attended the GISA Job Fair recently and brought back 19 resumes, one of which has an offer to hire. Because we are a system of schools, GISA did not list our teacher openings as they did all the other schools that participated. For this reason, we may choose not to participate with them next year. There are some college job fairs coming up that we are looking into. We have recently posted an ad in the Georgia Bulletin soliciting teacher resumes. Many of our schools also post their openings in the Georgia Bulletin. As an added measure, Brianna will be posting our ad on social media.

- **Committee Reports**

Nominating & Council Self-Evaluation Committee – Paula Brosnan reported that four people are due to roll off the council this June. Marcos is planning to stay on for another three years and one other also plans to stay. The other two are still in question and once we know their intention, recruiting will begin. Paula will also work with Mark Uebelacker on the council self-evaluation survey. It will be an automated survey and will be sent out prior to the next meeting. The council members will receive an advance email from Paula.

Policy Committee – Beth Morrison said there are two potential policies in which she will need to obtain feedback from the council. These two policies are Self-Injury Policy and Ride Share Policy.

1. Self-Injury Policy – Beth said our elementary schools are starting to see issues of children cutting themselves (self-harm). As a result of this, one of our schools have taken the lead in drafting a well thought out policy. It addresses recognition of self-harm and steps the school should take as soon as they become aware of the problem. This is a mandatory reporting event and the parents should be notified immediately. With this issue showing up more and more, among girls and boys, it seems to be the right time to put a policy in place so that all the Archdiocesan schools will have clear direction as to what steps to take should they be faced with this issue. Diane said this policy will be added to the Crisis Management section of the Policy Manual. The parents will be strongly encouraged to seek professional counseling for the child/family. The last step before making this an official policy is to have it approved by legal counsel. A suggestion was made to provide education to all parents regarding this issue. Diane agreed and said this is something that needs to occur much like the education that has been provided to parents on internet use and drugs and alcohol. A discussion followed.
2. Ride Share Policy – Beth said that Uber and Lyft are showing up in our carpool lines to pick up students as young as 9 years old. Corporate policy for both of these companies is that no one under the age of 18 may ride alone, however, this policy is routinely ignored by the drivers. Researching other dioceses policies on ride share, there seems to be a split. Some prohibit the use of ride shares all together on campus where others leave it up to the parents but require paperwork signed by the parent releasing the school of responsibility.

Legal and insurance experts recommend that we create a policy prohibiting the use of these ride shares from campus. Research shows that some of these ride share companies do not do thorough criminal background check on their drivers. Criminal activity among drivers is on the rise and makes this an even more important issue to address. Our plan is to have a simple policy that prohibits on-demand transportation of any kind on our campuses unless a parent, guardian or grandparent accompanies the driver. This would be an item in the parent handbook where a parent signature is required, releasing the school from any responsibility in the unfortunate case where a parent ignores the policy and something bad should happen. Beth asked for feedback from the council members. Diane said it will be difficult to enforce this with the high schools, but it's a conversation that needs to occur in all the schools and parents need to become aware. Marcos thanked Diane for her forward thinking on this. Diane said they will move forward with the Ride Share Policy and that the next steps are getting Bishop Konzen and Archbishop Gregory's approval. Once that is done, it will be sent to our legal team. A discussion followed regarding the risks involved with minors using Ride Shares.

Conversations are just beginning on another potential policy regarding service vs. comfort animals. We presently allow service dogs for students with diabetes and those that experience seizures. These dogs are highly trained to recognize when the student is in trouble. Diane said we will continue to accept these service animals but the issue of concern is the increasing requests for various types of comfort animals.

Marketing and Enrollment Update– Brian Dooling reported that the school zone statuses (Red, Yellow or Green) have remained the same since the beginning of the year and the number of applications are consistent with what we saw last year. The plan is to continue to monitor this and look for ways to get more interest in our Catholic Schools. Brian said he is working with individual schools on a case by case basis to address specific marketing and enrollment issues and opportunities.

There were two successful meetings – one with Admissions Directors and one with Advancement Directors, where many new ideas were shared and an increasing amount of peer collaboration took place. Brian said he is researching welcome grants and will be looking to put in place a more effective awards process in order to optimize impact and assist with enrollment.

Brian shared with the group links to three video promotions that have been created recently to promote a couple of our schools. There is a billboard advertising St. John Neumann Regional Catholic School on 1-85 South in Gwinnett County. There is also talk of adding a billboard to promote St. Peter Claver Regional Catholic School. Brian said the schools have been asked to track where applicants have heard about our schools so that we know how effective these marketing

investments are working. Brian has created a series called “Tuesday Tips” which goes out to all admissions directors and principals weekly. This is a sharing of best practices on different areas of enrollment.

Brian informed the council that he is working with an outside firm to create a new website for the Office of Catholic Schools which will be more user-friendly and millennial friendly. He provided links to other dioceses websites to show examples of what others have done.

Parent Ambassador Programs have proven to be very effective for a few of our schools that have implemented it (BT & SCS). Brian is introducing this program to other schools in hopes that they will follow suit.

Brian is Meeting with Pastors, Preschool Directors and Advisory Councils on a continual basis to develop relationships and receive input and feedback on what we can do to promote Catholic Schools more effectively. He shared a couple of fast fact sheets that were created for St. Joseph-Marietta and St. Joseph-Athens. Brian also acknowledged that some schools could improve their website design.

Executive Committee – Marcos briefly spoke on the south side schools viability and the need for a sub-committee to look at what models are possible to ensure their success. A discussion followed regarding getting the word out on the quality of our south side schools.

- **Visits to Local School Council Meetings**

Marcos acknowledged that there were many school council visits since the last meeting and Instead of going through each one he asked if there was anything significant that stood out about anyone’s visit they would like to share with the council before moving on to the next agenda item. Michelle Rainey spoke up and said she visited St. Catherine of Siena. She reported they have a fairly new chairperson and that they did not have committee reports at the meeting but said they are in the process of working on them. Much discussion was had on their new enrollment team and how they are reworking their focus on strategic planning. St. Catherine showed much appreciation for this council’s help.

Mark Uebelacker said he attended a prayer breakfast at Holy Redeemer with Brian Dooling recently where a father spoke on distracted driving and shared his story on how he lost his son. Mark said this was a powerful presentation for anyone to see and expressed how wonderful it would be if we could have him speak to our high schools students. His fee is \$2,500.00 and the money goes into a foundation. A few ideas were discussed on how this could be funded. Mark said he would look into booking him at our high schools. Diane said around prom time would be ideal. It was mentioned that this would be a great opportunity to educate parents on this subject as well.

- **Council Discussions**

Marcos asked the council for healthy discussion and input as Diane introduced the topic of Individual School Benefits for Employees. Diane said the elementary vs. high school teacher salary scales is one issue that she has been keeping an eye on and has been working toward closing the gap. It’s a slow but steady process and will take years to accomplish. Diane is also monitoring the number of employees that transfer from our elementary schools to high schools (when their children transition into one of our high schools). A few of our high schools offer 60% tuition reduction for employees with children in the school, along with other perks like free lunch and longevity bonuses. Diane said that generally the elementary schools can only afford to give a 10% reduction in tuition to employees. Also, Christmas gifts can vary from school to school where one school might give their employees a \$600.00 check and another can only afford to give a \$10.00 gift card. Diane said that in preparation for the new payroll system which begins July 1, 2019, many issues have come to the surface which should not have been taking place such as paying stipends to employees for work being done during the regular work day.

Diane realizes that this cannot be solved in one meeting and expressed a need for a committee to work on these issues which will carry over into next year. Bob Heilmann will be assigned chair for this committee. Fr. Duffy asked if individual parish taxes help to support all the schools. Brad assured him that they do. There was a discussion on the distribution of the funds coming from parish assessments which helps with outstanding mortgages on OLM and the three northern schools as well as financial aid awarded to families with financial need at all the schools. Diane asked council members to advise her if they would be

interested in serving on this committee. She said it should consist of 4 or 5 people and would like it to include a few parents outside of this council and an elementary school principal.

- **Adjournment and New Meeting Date**

Meeting adjourned at 9:15am. Next meeting date is Tuesday, June 11, 2019 at 7:30am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist