

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting
Wednesday, April 29, 2020 – 9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting Via WebEx

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Maureen McAbee, Michelle Raney, Mark Uebelacker, Connie Urbanski, Paula Brosnon, Marcos Arias, Stacy Lewis, Beth Clark Morrison. **Absent:** Fr. Jim Duffy, Bob Heilmann, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Augusto Elias.

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Marcos Arias was the host of the webex meeting. Several members joined by audio and video and others joined with just audio through their phone. Marcos welcomed everyone and did a roll call. Diane Starkovich led the council in a special prayer for the pandemic.

- **Agenda Approval**

Marcos went over the agenda and asked if there was anything to add. Diane requested to add Brian Dooling to the agenda if there was time to give an update on Marketing and Enrollment. Marcos agreed that we would add this to the agenda.

- **Nominating Committee Update**

Paula Brosnan said she sent out the results of the 2019-2020 survey and thanked everyone for responding. Results were very positive and Paula will discuss specific feedback with the chair of each committee to help prepare for the next school year. She said if there were any additional comments or feedback from council members, now is the time to share that.

Paula is also working to fill the three available council member positions for the coming school year. Augusto Elias, Mark Uebelacker and Paula Brosnan will be rolling off the council this year. Paula will meet with Diane and Brian this week to discuss the strategy on recruiting three new members. Paula asked council members to get with her if they have any recommendations. As always, a diverse group representing different schools/parishes is recommended.

- **PPP – Payroll Protection Plan/Cares Act**

Brad Wilson reported on the status of the schools obtaining their PPP loans. All the applications are in but the only school that has come through all the way is Blessed Trinity. Brad said Holy Redeemer is expected to go through today. The 3 big banks that are working on these are BBT/Suntrust/Truist, Wells Fargo and Bank of America. There is pushback from the banks on whether the schools qualify and Brad is confident they do as the intent of these loans were to keep people employed for an 8 week period and the schools and parishes have complied with that so he remains hopeful. Marcos asked Brad if there was anything the council could do to help in this matter. Brad requested prayers for the loans to go through.

- **Superintendent Search – Diane Starkovich**

Diane started out by saying that even though the buildings are closed there are some employees, such as para pros, cafeteria workers, after school workers who are not working but still being paid. It was agreed that we would pay these people through the end of May which is good news.

As far as the superintendent search is concerned, Diane said that Chuck is waiting for Archbishop Hartmayer to be installed before the interviews can take place. They were hoping for face to face interviews but that will probably not be able to happen in May so it looks like the interviews will be via Skype or Zoom. After the interviews occur the candidates will be ranked and the Archbishop will meet with the top two candidates to determine who will be the next superintendent. The interview committee will consist of Karen Vogtner, Bob Heilman, Andy Lichtenwalner, Maureen Smith an, Fr. Ketter, Bishop Konzen and Chuck Thibaudeau. Brad will submit some finance questions to the

committee for the interview. Diane said she hopes that a decision will be made by the end of May to allow time for the transition.

Marcos asked what the contingency plan is if no one is selected by the end of June. Diane said she believes if that were to happen, the contingency plan would be to appoint an interim superintendent for now and continue the search at a later time. She also said she would be available to help short term (30-60 days) if need be. Marcos thanked Diane for her dedicated service to the Archdiocese of Atlanta's schools and said the Advisory Council wants to be included in the retirement celebration.

- **Installation of Archbishop Hartmayer**

Diane said the installation of Archbishop Hartmayer will be held Wednesday, May 6th at 12:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of Christ the King. In addition, the Vespers will be held on Tuesday, May 5th at 7pm. Both events will be celebrated privately but will be live-streamed for the public to view. The Nuncio will not be in attendance. There will be a celebration to welcome Archbishop Hartmayer at a later date.

- **Home Learning Plans/Virtual Learning – Impact on academic progress**
- **What will next year look like?**
- **Professional Development for teachers**
- **Evaluation of improvements/adjustments to the virtual/home learning plans**

Diane said many people are concerned about the learning gap this year and how this will affect the students academically going forward into next year. She said the schools are doing a phenomenal job with the virtual learning in the high schools and the home learning plans in the elementary schools. The high schools have had an advantage because of their prior experience with virtual learning, but the grade schools have come a long way and hit their stride about week 3. Diane said virtual learning is never going to be as good as being in the classroom because you miss that connection with the student; to read their body language and to see when they are getting it or struggling. There has been talk about doing some pre-testing in our grade schools to determine where the students are. Also the teachers have an instruction of objectives checklist to mark what they have covered and what they did not cover, what they mastered and what they did not master. The lower grade teacher will meet with the rising grade teacher to go over the objectives that weren't met so that accommodations can be made. Also, there is talk of summer programs/boot camps for those that need extra help, but it looks like that wouldn't be able to happen until July. In addition, we've attended webinars on what the fall will possibly look like regarding social distancing, cafeteria use, monitoring temperatures, masks, staggered schedules, and any other CDC recommendations. Diane said her focus in the month of May and June is to come up with Plan A, B & C so that the new superintendent doesn't have to start from scratch. Several principals have offered their help in coming up with these plans. Diane said the schools are continuing to give grades during virtual learning and added that they have kept their students engaged but there will still most likely be gaps to fill.

Diane said this pandemic has raised the need for a lot of policy changes and additions. One in particular is a need for a pandemic travel policy regarding families and employees traveling to hot spots and coming back to school. A 14 -day quarantine will need to be put in place for families and employees. In discussion with the principals on how the fall will look when schools open again, one suggestion was to put live stream cameras in all the classrooms and alternating half of the in-person attendance every other day allowing for smaller classroom size and the ability to social distance. On the days the students are home they would attend the live stream class.

Professional development for the teachers is greatly needed before school starts up again and it has been proposed that teachers and administrators should come together in July to debrief and share what worked best for them and what didn't work so well. This virtual way of teaching is new to all teachers no matter how much teaching experience they have and is getting them to the point of exhaustion after 9 weeks of this. Diane reiterated that she will spend the majority of May and June gathering information from other dioceses and following the guidelines of the CDC to put some plans in place for the fall. Diane opened the floor up for questions or comments. Beth Morrison offered her help with any of the policies that need to be made. On the subject of cameras in the classroom, Beth said the way around the

privacy issue is parent consent. Also, placement of the camera is key to focus in on the teacher and not the students. This would protect the student's identity.

Diane briefly touched on Phase 3 of the CARES Act which provides funding to private schools that can be used in 12 different categories. She said the guidance on how this will be implemented is still forthcoming but Diane wants the principals to look at what they need in the way of cameras or other equipment and be ready to move on this once it goes into effect. In addition to the CARES Act, Diane mentioned that there is another allotment of grant money coming in to the states from Secretary Betsy DeVos reserved for technology. Although the majority of our schools are in good shape, there is a huge need for professional development on virtual learning for our teachers. Diane wants our schools to get their equitable share of what they deserve and stresses the need to be vigilant and on top of this when it does come time to act. Beth warned that many times government grant money comes with strings attached that we may not be comfortable with. Diane said she is very aware of these entanglements and will turn away anything that weakens our Catholic identity. She also said that the USCCB lawyers can help us in this regard.

Diane mentioned that Connie is working with AdvancEd/Cognia on sending out a survey to our school parent community to get their feedback on their student's virtual/home learning program experience. In addition, we hope to survey students from 4th or 5th grade up to also get their feedback. Diane said that we have a good idea as to how things went but want to hear it from their perspective. Some families have expressed concern about meeting tuition payments due to job layoffs etc. Diane has asked principals to calculate the savings that may have resulted from not being in the buildings and reallocate this money toward more financial assistance to struggling families. A discussion followed addressing other concerns with students and employees returning in the fall and measures that will need to be addressed before we can open. There are so many potential scenarios and Human Resources is working with legal counsel to come up with a plan. Diane said we are all doing the best we can to prepare for what's ahead.

- **Marketing Update**

Brian Dooling said that he has checked with all the schools to see where they are in admissions for next year. Most of schools are pretty close to what they projected in their budget. He said there is concern on what the fall may bring and whether families will question the value of sending their children to a Catholic School vs. Home Schooling/Hybrid.

The Welcome Grant program has been announced for this coming school year. This grant is an incentive offered to Catholics who are not yet enrolled in any Catholic School and would like to give our schools a try. It's a 2 year program which allows tuition assistance of \$2,500.00 the first year and \$1,500.00 the second year. The difference this year is that the welcome grant is open to all of our schools. Our Lady of the Assumption and Christ the King have already given their allocation back to distribute among schools with greater enrollment need and expects more will follow. Brian said he expects these grants to be in great demand this year and hopes they will be utilized in the best possible manner.

I Give Catholic fund raiser is Tuesday, May 5th. Many of the schools are deferring donations to other organizations such as St. Vincent de Paul due to the current circumstances.

Brian said that he has been reaching out to other dioceses to get a pulse on how their home learning programs are going and said we are doing very well in comparison to others. He has also been attending many webinars on marketing and enrollment and best practices from NCEA, Partners in Mission and many more. Brian continues to send out weekly tips to the marketing and enrollment directors and he has been encouraging them to update their website regularly with pictures, graphics etc., to show off their school as best they can during this time when no physical tours are taking place. Brian also suggested virtual tours of the school on their website. Brian said communication is critical right now and we need to show a sense of community and at the same time demonstrate the excellence of our learning programs. Parent ambassador programs are also essential during this time.

Brian gave an update on the new website design and is currently working with the contractor on the final steps to promote the new website. He has also been working to expand social media presence and followers on Facebook, Twitter etc. He has zoom meetings scheduled with Advancement & Enrollment Directors.

Diane commented that she along with Brian and Connie when meeting with school administrators will ask for ideas on how to engage the school community to assist in providing things like masks, hand sanitizer etc. Marcos asked if there were any additional comments or questions on Brian's marketing report. Paula thanked Brian for all his hard work and said to reach out to the council if he needs assistance.

- **Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting**

Marcos mentioned that we are still scheduled for our June meeting but it will most likely again be virtual. Diane said she would prefer to meet in person and another option would be to postpone the meeting to the end of June. She said hopefully by then we will have a new superintendent and that person could be included in the meeting. More information on that to follow. Marcos thanked everyone for attending this added meeting and thanked Diane for her service to this council and to all the schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler, Schools Program Specialist