

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting
Tuesday, August 18, 2020
Hall B – Terrace Level – Archdiocese of Atlanta Chancery

In Attendance: Hal Plummer, Beth Morrison-Chair, John Cryer-Vice Chair, Marcos Arias, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Bob Heilmann. Kellie DesOrmeaux, Connie Urbanski, Maureen McAbee, Michelle Raney, Christopher White, Jennifer Prindiville, Brian Hershberger. Joined by phone: Fr. Neil Dhabliwala, Stacy Lewis. Absent: Cathy Kennedy Harris.

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

Beth Morrison called the meeting to order and asked everyone to join in a prayer for the start of a new school year.

- **Welcome and Introductions**

Beth welcomed all those in attendance to the first ASAC meeting of the 2020-2021 school year and asked that each person introduce themselves and give a little background information for the benefit of the new members.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Beth asked if there was any additions to the agenda that was sent out to everyone last week via email. With no additions stated, Beth asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Approval of the Minutes from the June 2020 Meeting**

Beth asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the June 2020 ASAC Meeting. With no changes stated, Beth asked for a motion to approve the June meeting minutes. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Hal Plummer thanked everyone for being at the meeting and gave a presentation on his background and experience. He attended the University of Michigan as an English/Literature major and by chance got involved in tutoring which ultimately led him to change his major to Education. He began his teaching career on an Indian reservation in South Dakota which set off a sequence of events that ultimately led him into a master's program of Theology and soon became the TA of that department where he met his wife of now 34 years. Hal has 8 children, 5 boys and 3 girls. His youngest two are at Blessed Trinity High School. One of his boys is doing missionary work in Peru and got trapped there when COVID-19 hit so he continues to serve that community. He has adult children who have settled in the Atlanta area and is thrilled to be closer to them and his grandchildren and to serve the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Hal gave a brief overview of his academic philosophy. Some key points are as follows:

- That Catholic school leaders be well informed regarding the most effective methods to pursue academic excellence and ensure students are well prepared for success in higher education and gainful employment in a global marketplace.

- That all academic informative efforts be integrated to ensure that the light of Christ's teaching illuminates everything that students come to learn about themselves, their world and others.

Hal said the mission of Catholic education is to educate the whole child - body, mind and spirit. He said our schools are a privileged environment in which we can help prepare our students to become intentional disciples to our Catholic faith. Hal's expectation for all he works with and all under his leadership is positivity. Under the circumstances we are in, he recognizes that it is an extreme challenge to stay positive, but we must continue to do our best to stay the course and be patient.

Hal informed the council that on August 19th OCS is holding a diversity training session for all our principals and counselors. Hal asked Connie Urbanski to give an overview of the diversity training that is planned. Connie said this session is to provide necessary tools for counselors and principals to engage with students that come to them regarding prejudice and racism. The three chaplains of our high schools, Fr. Desmond Drummer (OLM), Fr. Rey Pineda (SPX) and Fr. Bob Frederick (BT) will discuss questions and concerns that have been brought up and help to explain where the Catholic faith stands on these issues. Connie said our goal is to be proactive on this in hopes to ease some of the tensions that are showing up in our school communities.

Hal also asked Connie to speak on ELL. Connie said there is a growing number of students in our schools that are not native English speakers. They are coming from a variety of cultures and our goal is to instruct them in a way that is responsive to their needs. We plan to have a group come in and talk to the counselors and principals about the best instructional methods to serve these students. This is also one of our accreditation goals.

A discussion then ensued regarding curriculum, online learning and assessments. Kellie DesOrmeaux, our new associate superintendent, touched on what we are doing to address any gaps that may have occurred in the 4th quarter of last school year when we transitioned to online learning. Our schools are assessing where their students are academically and how to move forward so we can build on a solid foundation without any holes. In addition to the academic affect this change has had on our students, Kellie said it is important that we look at how being out of the classroom for 5 months has also affected their social and emotional well-being. Taking the time now, at the beginning of the school year, to address these social and emotional needs of the students as well as the faculty, will be helpful in moving forward. Hal mentioned that Kellie led a Summer Institute in July to help teachers and administrators prepare for what is to come. This event was very well received and successful.

Lastly, Hal asked Connie to give an update on the CARES Act. Connie said that all our Catholic schools combined were awarded a total of \$1.7 million dollars of services and supplies such as thermometers, hand sanitizing stations etc. There has been a national delay on receiving these services and a lot of our schools found it necessary to purchase these essential items out of their own budget and they will not be reimbursed. Connie said all non-public schools seem to be experiencing the same issue.

Brad Wilson added that all schools have received their PPP loans and will apply for forgiveness on these loans in September or October 2020.

- **Committee Reports**

Executive Committee – Beth Morrison stated that the executive committee members are Hal Plummer (Superintendent of Schools), Brian Dooling (Director of Marketing & Enrollment), Beth Morrison (Chair) and John Cryer (Vice-Chair). She said the four of them met a few times over the summer to discuss plans for the 2020-2021 school year. Planning included the New Member Training which occurs at the end of August, the All School Council In-Service on September 26th, committee assignments and other ways in which this council can serve our schools in a tangible way this year.

Marketing Committee – Brian Dooling said we had an increase in enrollment due to the in-person learning we are offering. We are hoping that the students we gain this year will love our schools and stay for years to come. The trend has been in the last several years that our enrollment numbers have been sliding downwards. This year, because of the bump, we are at about the same numbers as last year. Some of our schools are still in need of help and the marketing committee will be asked to assist in this effort. Brian said our remote learners are now right about 14% system-wide.

Brian indicated that with the help from the Archdiocese, our schools are in pretty good shape despite many Catholic schools around the nation closing. All of our schools keep a tight budget which helps to prevent them going into large debt. Enrollment is a huge factor in achieving financial health in our schools, so the more they boost enrollment the better off they will be financially. Brian said we are working on new ways to target growing our Latino market. He will attend a conference next summer on this topic at Notre Dame University. In addition to that market, we are also trying to meet the needs of millennial families by making sure our websites are up to date, using more videos, virtual tours and social media. Brian said we are looking at dual enrollment programs in order to stay competitive with the public and charter high schools. We continue to make our schools affordable with financial aid, GRACE Scholars, Welcome Grants and keeping the tuition rates as low as possible.

Future events coming up - New Advisory Council Member Training and the All Schools' Council In-Service. Both of these will be virtual. Brian said the ASAC marketing committee will be available to help individual schools as needed.

There is a video forthcoming from Archbishop Hartmayer addressing the school community. Brian continues to have monthly meetings with the Advancement Directors and Admissions Directors to share best practices, which are all virtual for the time being.

Hal spoke on data and statistics and summoned the council to provide Brian with any data/stats they may find from our high schools that would help in promoting our schools and the long-term payoff in obtaining a Catholic education. A discussion followed regarding admissions, school tours, ELL, etc.

Beth asked if there were any questions on the Marketing report. With no additional questions we moved on to the Finance Committee.

Finance Committee - Brad Wilson gave a brief update on the Catholic Education of North Georgia (CENGI) which owned 6 Archdiocesan schools in Atlanta (Blessed Trinity, St. Pius, Our Lady of Mercy, Our Lady of Victory, Queen of Angels and Holy Redeemer). In 2007, the construction debt on these six schools totaled \$77 million. Since then, part of the School Assessment has been used to pay

down the debt and at the end of the last school year, only \$29 million remained. This debt was for BT, HR and QoA. Several years ago the old Chancery building at 680 West Peachtree in midtown was sold by the Archdiocese of Atlanta. There was a profit of about 18 million dollars from the sale of that property. This 18 million is now being allocated to pay down the debt of \$29 million which still exists with these three schools. The remaining debt will be taken over by these schools and paid over a 30 year period by instituting a practicing Catholic/Non-Catholic rate in all of these schools starting in the 2021-2022 school year. The students that started at any of these schools this year will be grandfathered in for their remaining years but going forward into next school year new students will be have 2 rates; Practicing Catholic Rate and Non-Practicing Catholic/Non-Catholic rate. This change takes a huge burden off of the pastors, who have been paying a hefty school tax to help pay off these CENGI bonds. This change will not impact any of the practicing Catholic families' tuition rate. The Pastors are the ones who determine what families are practicing or not. In other words, the Catholic subsidy will only be offered to practicing Catholics.

- **Council Goals and Expectations – John Cryer**

John Cryer indicated that the goals we had in place last year also apply to this year with the recognition that we have a new Archbishop and a new Superintendent. John read through these goals, which are 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**

Brian Dooling announced the ASAC committee assignments for the 2020-2021 School Year as follows:

Executive Committee – Beth Morrison (Chair), John Cryer (Vice-Chair), Hal Plummer, Brian Dooling
Policy Committee – Marcos Arias (Chair), Beth Morrison, Brian Hershberger
Strategic Planning Committee – Cathy Kennedy Harris (Chair), Bob Heilmann, Michelle Raney
Nominating Committee – Bob Heilmann (Chair), Stacy Lewis

Finance Committee – Brad Wilson (Chair), Brian Hershberger, Stacy Lewis, Fr. Neil Dhabliwala
Marketing Committee – Maureen McAbee (Chair), Jennifer Prindiville, Christopher White, John Cryer,
Brian Dooling

- **New Council Members' Orientation Sessions**

For the benefit of our new ASAC members as well as all new school council members, there are two training dates being offered. Option #1 is Thursday, August 27th at 5:30pm and Option #2 is Saturday, August 29th at 9:30am. Both of these will be via Zoom and will last approximately 90 minutes. Zoom link will be sent to those who have signed up for one of these sessions.

- **Virtual All Advisory Council In-Service**

The annual All Advisory Council In-Service will be held on Saturday, September 26 from 9am-Noon and will be virtual. The agenda is still being developed, but Brian said he was hoping to have a keynote presentation and at least 3 breakout presentations. He is also hoping to have the breakout sessions recorded so that members will be able to go back and listen to the ones they missed. Beth urged all ASAC members to attend in order to make connections with the local school council members and to obtain the same training and best practices that they will be receiving at the in-service. Marcos made a suggestion that after the breakout sessions are completed, it might be helpful to bring all attendees back together again for closing remarks.

Before adjourning, Beth mentioned that the sign-up for local council visits will happen at the next ASAC meeting in November after we determine the schedules and how they plan to conduct their meetings during this pandemic. The main rule in signing up is that it be a school other than the one your child attends.

- **Closing Prayer and Adjournment**

Beth asked Fr. Neil to lead the council in a closing prayer. The meeting adjourned at 9:02am. Next meeting date is November 10, 2020 (7:30-9:00am)

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist