

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting
Tuesday, March 10, 2020
Archbishop's Conference Room – 3rd Floor

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Maureen McAbee, Michelle Raney, Fr. Jim Duffy, John Cryer, Augusto Elias, Mark Uebelacker, Connie Urbanski, Bob Heilmann. Joined by phone: Paula Bronson, Marcos Arias. Absent: Stacy Lewis, Catherine Kennedy Harris and Beth Clark Morrison.

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Marcos Arias called in to chair the meeting via phone. Paula Brosnan also called in to attend meeting. Marcos welcomed everyone and asked Diane to lead the council in prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Marcos requested a motion to approve the agenda. Diane suggested that the Finance Report be added to the Committee Reports. A motion was given and seconded for the addition to the agenda.

- **Approval of November 2019 Meeting Minutes**

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

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane provided the council with a copy of the letter which is going out to all school communities regarding our current plan on the corona virus crisis. She said she is following very closely the CDC and Georgia Department of Health recommendations. The letter references the online/virtual learning programs that will be put in place. Elementary schools will have a much bigger challenge than high schools who already have virtual learning plans in place. Diane said attendance will be monitored as usual. The CDC is recommending that school buildings stay open for teachers but all depends on the county health department and what will be allowed. Diane said this is a moving target and that she will stay on top of it and follow the necessary guidelines.

Diane gave an update on her health and said the doctor is now allowing her to work a reduced hour work week.

Connie will be in Rome tomorrow to conduct interviews for a new principal at St. Mary's. Dr. Edye Simpson has been hired as interim principal at St. Pius X and we are now actively searching for a president at St. Pius. The search for principal will resume in the fall.

Karen Vogtner is retiring as the principal of St. John the Evangelist this year. Bernadette Boisis, currently the counselor and a member of the administrative team of the school, has been hired to succeed Karen.

Marcos asked Diane for an update on the Associate Superintendent search and the Superintendent search. Diane said interviews for an Associate Superintendent are scheduled with two strong candidates and an interview committee of five. The Superintendent interviews, which were put on hold until a new Archbishop was announced, can now be scheduled. There has been no projected end date announced at this time but Diane hopes there will be enough time in June to go over things with the new Superintendent.

A discussion followed regarding the announcement of Bishop Gregory Hartmayer as the next Archbishop of Atlanta. The installation is set for Wednesday, May 6th at St. Peter Chanel Church in Roswell.

Marcos asked if there were any more questions regarding Diane's report. Diane added that she has not heard yet if the NCEA convention in Baltimore will be cancelled. She said Fr. Jim Duffy is to receive the Lead, Learn, Proclaim award at the convention along with OLM's AP math teacher, Anna DeMello. In addition, a senior student at OLM was selected as one of the top 10 Catholic school students across the country for embracing her faith and serving as a role

model to others. There will be a special mass at OLM on March 11th to honor Miss Danielle Garger and present her with this special award.

- **Committee Reports**

Nominating & Council Self-Evaluation – Paula Brosnan said that she is in the process of searching for three new council members to replace those whose terms will expire in June. Those rolling off the council are Augusto Elias, Mark Uebelacker and Paula Bronson. Fr. Jim Duffy’s term will also expire in June but the priest appointment is made in consultation with the Archbishop. Paula has received a few names from principals but asked the council to also submit recommendations they may have.

On the council’s self-examination survey, Paula will have Diane review the questions and once approved the survey will be sent out electronically right after Easter. She asked that everyone please take the time to fill it out and give feedback.

Finance Committee – Brad Wilson gave a handout to council members showing the pay raises and block grants for next year which were voted on earlier by this council. He said for the following year and beyond the new Archbishop and new Superintendent will need to decide whether to continue with this system-wide pay scale or have each school set their own pay scale. Diane said if each school sets their own pay scale, this will affect our system-wide accreditation process and each school would then be responsible for their own accreditation. Diane feels our schools salaries need to be as equal as possible and said she hopes to have a discussion with Archbishop Hartmayer regarding this before she leaves. Savannah has the same type of system-wide accreditation/salary scale, so he is familiar with this process.

Brad went on to say that the gap between our teachers pay and that of the local public school systems continues to widen. In working with the schools on their budgets, Brad said at this time our pay scales do not seem to be affecting teacher retention. He said this may change if the gap continues to widen even more. Diane said many times our rich benefit plan at the Archdiocese of Atlanta is overlooked as a vital part of the teacher’s total compensation package. In summary, Marcos said we have a good story to tell on our teacher benefits but at the same time will need to keep a watchful eye on the salary gap between us and the public schools.

Diane said that budgets are currently being approved for next year and the average teacher salary raise is 3%. Since tuition pays for teacher salaries, everything depends on enrollment. Diane said she proposed at a recent Secretariat meeting that a new Strategic plan on schools is necessary. Our last one was in 2008 and times have changed. With a new Archbishop and Superintendent in charge, this is the perfect time to put a new plan in place starting with a vision and mission statement from the Archbishop. Diane said our biggest competition is 9,000 students who attend hybrid home schools. In addition there may be two more independent schools trying to open. The question is how do we relate to these entities in the new plan? Will there be more regulation going forward? Is distance learning in our future? If we have an empty school, should we offer a hybrid in that space? These are big questions that need to be considered for the long-term future. A long discussion followed regarding hybrid home school models and why some families are choosing this over traditional Catholic Schools.

- **Marketing – Use of SSAT Testing Data – Brian Dooling**

Brian said there has been emails going out from SSAT that are linked to other private schools as a marketing tool for high school admissions. Brian will look into the cost involved with this to see if this would be something feasible for our Catholic Schools. More information to follow.

The new website is up and running. The task now is to drive traffic to the site by making sure the site comes up when searching for schools in a particular geographical area.

Our last group advertisement was in the Atlanta School Guide’s fall/winter print and online issue. Brian said we have not seen much traction from this type of advertisement and therefore will go back to having the schools do their own ads. There may be certain times in the future where group advertisement makes sense and those will be addressed as

they come up. Brian said in his opinion the best marketing/enrollment tool is having a parent ambassador program. The schools that have this should continuously engage them on creative ideas to spread the word.

Brian said he will be attending a conference in the summer on targeting the Latino community. He is hoping to bring back tips and suggestions on how to equip our schools to be ready to tap into that large segment of Atlanta's Catholic population. Diane mentioned that this is one of our accreditation goals but we need to make sure that we can accommodate these students if there is a language or comprehension barrier. Marcos asked if our high standard of acceptance would be lowered to enroll immigrant students. Diane said we would not lower our standards but if there is a reasonable hope of student success based on the initial placement test required, we should register them and try to accommodate financially or where needed if the school is equipped to do so. A discussion followed.

Brian said he is in the process of doing website audits with all the schools with the goal of making them more user friendly. In addition, he is encouraging promotional videos and virtual tours of the schools on their website which especially appeals to the millennial generation. There was a question on how school admissions are going thus far for next year. Brian and Diane gave a brief breakdown on elementary and high school enrollments. The lowest number of applications in most of the elementary schools are in kindergarten and first grade.

- **School Council Visits**

Maureen McAbee reported on three council visits which included St. John Neumann, Our Lady of Mercy High School and St. Thomas More. All three were excellent visits. Mark Uebelacker visited Christ the King. Meeting was very positive, high energy and well attended with Monsignor McNamee present. Enrollment applications are up with a waitlist. Mark commented on the beautiful new Hyland Center where Christ the King plans to hold their gala.

- **Unpaid tuition at year's end – Income to the parent under IRS guidelines**

Diane said our schools have an audit each year and it was brought to our attention that the families who end the year with an unpaid tuition balance need to be issued a 1099 and report that amount as income to the IRS. The auditor is working with Michael Warren to come up with verbiage to be placed in all the schools' handbooks. We will also need to put this in the policy manual. This policy, along with others, are waiting on an approval from Archbishop Hartmayer once he is installed. A short discussion followed regarding delinquent tuition.

- **Committee to review compensation for school employees**

Diane said once the new superintendent gets settled, a committee to review total compensation for school employees needs to be put in place. In addition to this, the committee should review the long-term sustainability of several of our schools.

Future Business

Election of Officers will take place at the June Meeting. Diane reminded everyone to be on the lookout for the survey from Paula and asked that all participate.

- **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:05am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler, Schools Program Specialist