

## Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 8-16-22

In-Person Meeting – 7:30-9:00am

**In Attendance:** Hal Plummer, John Cryer-Chair, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Maureen McAbee, Marcos Arias, Brian Hershberger, Stacy Lewis, Michelle Raney. **Absent:** Christopher White, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Fr. Neil Dhabliwala, Jennifer Prindiville and Beth Clark-Morrison.

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

John Cryer welcomed everyone back after the summer break and led the council in an opening prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

John went over the agenda with all present and asked for a motion to approve. Motion was given and all approved.

- **Approval of the Minutes**

John asked for motion to approve the June 2022 minutes. Motion was given and all approved.

- **Election of Officers**

Brian Dooling advised the council that John Cryer has agreed to chair the council this school year with Stacy Lewis as Vice-Chair. Brian asked for a motion to approve the new chair and vice-chair. A motion was given and all approved. Brian thanked John and Stacy for their service.

- **Superintendents Report**

Hal started out by saying that St. Mary's Academy opened its doors on August 8<sup>th</sup>. There has been much enthusiasm. Hal invited the council to the ribbon cutting ceremony at St. Mary's Academy on Tuesday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. Hal asked for any input on the website to be sent to Brian Dooling. There is still some construction work to be done with an expected completion in the next several weeks.

Hal advised that the Office of Catholic Schools has hired a Coordinator of Faith Formation, Tonya Shoemaker. The decision was made to not hire another Associate Superintendent after Kellie DesOrmeaux's departure, but instead Kellie DesOrmeaux's duties were divided up and Tonya will cover the faith formation aspect. Hal touched on how campus ministry in the high schools have increased their staff and referred them to the Georgia Bulletin article of August 4, 2022 explaining how these newly formed campus ministry teams will support the spiritual life of the high schools. Tonya will be involved in bringing these campus ministers together for quarterly meetings to share best practices, challenges, etc. In addition to Tonya, Hal said we are very close to hiring an independent contractor to help out with exceptional learners. This person whose career has been with the Fulton County Public School System is a devoted Catholic and would be a great addition to our exceptional learner's program.

Hal introduced Tonya Shoemaker to the group and asked her to speak on her plans for this new role here at Office of Catholic Schools. Connie Urbanski, Associate Superintendent of Schools, will also speak on the plans on the Policy Manual revisions.

Tonya greeted the council and said this would have been her 18<sup>th</sup> year as Coordinator of Religious Education at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic School. She said last year she was given the

opportunity to also serve as the Assistant Principal at OLA. In this new role, she is excited to help develop an even stronger faith formation in all our schools and looks forward to helping students, faculty, staff and parents have a more active role in fulfilling our Catholic/Christian faith mission.

Hal then asked Connie to talk to the council about the plans involving the policy manual revisions. Connie said that she and Hal decided it might be a good idea to get the principals involved in looking at the policy manual and receive their input. Because we have a few new principals on board this year, we thought the exercise would be beneficial. The principals' meeting format has been altered to include this review of the policy manual in the agenda at each principals meeting. The Safety and Security section of the policy manual was the first to be reviewed. This currently being a very pressing issue also gives them the opportunity to look at the safety measures in place on their campus, share ideas and ways to improve.

Connie also spoke on accreditation. She said our last accreditation visit was in the spring of 2018. Our next visit was scheduled for the spring of 2023. Because of Covid, some of our goals were affected and placed on the back burner and other priorities came to the forefront such as technology and accommodations needed for online learning. Because of this, along with a new superintendent and the start of a new K-12 school, we have been granted a deferment until the Spring of 2024. Connie said preparations are already in place and schools are putting together artifacts that will be necessary for this visit.

Brian Hershberger asked Connie what other policy manual priorities will be addressed with the principals. Connie said the principals were interested in working on instruction and working out the minutes required for each subject matter.

There was a town hall meeting at the end of July where St. Pius parents met with Hal for a Q & A session and for him to express plans and expectations for the new school year. He said the uniform issue has been resolved making the pants issue for girls only an option, never mandatory. However, the parents were asked to comply with the school's handbook when it comes to dress code and that discipline action will occur if not adhered to. The Archbishop addressed a letter to the high school communities in August regarding the absence of chaplains this year which was very helpful. A discussion followed.

Hal then addressed another issue at St. Pius, the PPP loans. Brad explained the money received from the PPP loans were spent exactly as was intended for payroll and related operating expenses within 8 weeks of when it was received per federal law. Also, loan forgiveness was applied for and given within the guidelines of this federal law. There were no illegal activities involving these loans at St. Pius or any other school. The financials are outlined on the school's website. A discussion followed.

Hal said we have started this school year with three new Elementary principals. Mandy Crock is the principal at Our Lady of the Assumption, Mike Remshik is the Interim Principal at St. John Neumann and Ramon Villacura is the principal at St. Joseph-Marietta. He added that we welcomed over 130 new teachers hired to serve our 17 Archdiocesan schools at the New Employee Orientation August 1 & 2. We continue to work on ways to retain teachers through salary increases and benefits. John Cryer asked Hal if he knew the reasons why we had such a turnover of teachers. Hal said some left for public

schools with better pay, some retired and others left the teaching career altogether. He said we need to have a better process on documenting reasons why a teacher leaves our schools.

Lastly, Hal reported that the Preschool Summer Institute was held on August 12 with over 300 parish preschool employees were in attendance at Holy Family Catholic Church. It was a very successful event.

Michelle Raney asked Hal to whom she should contact at the Archdiocese for recommendations for inspirational/educational speakers for K-8 schools. Brian Dooling mentioned that he thought Kellie DesOrmeaux was the one who arranged that speaker since she was in charge of curriculum. Kellie is no longer with the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Hal mentioned that at the upcoming Counselors meeting a presenter from Holy Spirit Counseling Center will come and speak on the subject of Depression.

Maureen McAbee asked Hal if Blessed Trinity was as concerned as St. Pius about the loss of their chaplain. Hal said that Blessed Trinity being on the same property with St. Peter Chanel Church gives them the advantage of support from the parish. At St. Mary's Academy, there are nine nearby parishes that have committed to help with masses, penance, etc. Hal referred to the letter from the Archbishop that went out to the high schools explaining parish support that is expected under these circumstances. Maureen expressed that the letter from Archbishop would have been much better received in April or May rather than August after the school year had already began.

- **Committee Reports**

Marketing Committee – Brian Dooling mentioned that he received his certificate of Catholic School Management from Villanova University. As in past years, Brian has tracked first day enrollment at our schools and plans to email that to all members. The overall enrollment total is 20 students less than last year. Some schools are up in enrollment and some are down and our focus will be on the schools who have lost enrollment. Brian said he is working with a marketing firm, Fitzgerald and Co., who has offered to help with marketing endeavors at our schools that need help. We are providing data to them from St. Peter Claver, St. Mary's Academy & St. Catherine of Siena in the hopes of getting ideas on enhancing our marketing efforts.

Brian attended the Adelante Conference this past summer at The University of Notre Dame where the theme was focused on Growing Latino enrollment. This information received could benefit many of our schools and will be shared with our Enrollment Management Directors at their upcoming meeting here at the Chancery next week.

St. Mary's Academy Ribbon Cutting will take place at 10am on August 30, 2022 with Archbishop Hartmayer. The ribbon cutting will be first right outside the main doors to the school building, followed by a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Hartmayer and then a reception and tour of the school building. Local city officials and parishes will be invited to attend as well as this council. Brian said he will forward the information by email to all members of the ASAC.

Two council member trainings will be held next Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning for all new school council members. These will be held by zoom and the information will be provided for those wishing to participate. The last Saturday in September is our All School Council In-Service. This will be in person from 9am until Noon. Please plan to attend. An agenda will be provided.

Brian asked for suggestions of potential large donors for St. Mary's Academy. The technology department needs funding to get a robotic cat to be the mascot for the school. Maureen McAbee said that Kennesaw State University has the biggest prosthetics program in the county.

Brian said we are currently participating in a study with Meitler collecting data from schools and parishes on demographics as an opportunity to enhance growth in both parishes and schools.

We had been using Peer Pal in some of our schools but this program has been discontinued due to cost and lack of interest. We will continue to have Parent Ambassadors in our schools.

Brian said he will be working more closely with Brad as he will be taking over the budget review responsibilities for the Office of Catholic Schools. This role was previously handled by Kellie DesOrmeaux. Brian said he will be tying the importance of enrollment with reaching a successful budget.

Vocations Day will be in September as an in person event at St. Joseph Catholic School. The MLK Youth Day will also be an in person event this year at St. John the Evangelist. The Academic Scholarship awards are now being processed to the winners at each of our high schools. GRACE Scholars are accepting registrations for 2023 in hopes to reach the cap earlier. The minimum for families have doubled for 2023.

The Annual Archbishop's Education Banquet will take place this coming January 28, 2023. We are in the process of securing a location for this event. More details to follow.

Hal expressed the importance of the Meitler study that Brian talked about. This study will also help to determine where the Archdiocese should consider building new churches and schools based on demographics. This study will also look at the Hispanic growth and whether or not the Archdiocese is sufficiently serving this population.

Brian Hershberger asked if we are working on recruiting any members to the ASAC. Brian Dooling said we are looking for two or three new members and have reached out to principals for suggested candidates. Maureen McAbee asked for criteria on possible candidates and if he wanted nominations from the current council. Brian said he would sent to the council areas of expertise we are in need of at this time.

Brad mentioned that the compensation packets for teachers will be determined earlier this year which will result in raising tuition rates. Brad said his goal is for our teacher salaries to be within 85% of the average public school teachers. A lengthy discussion followed.

John Cryer asked Brian Dooling about the schedule of upcoming school council visits. Brian said a schedule will go out soon. Maureen McAbee asked about the goals and objectives of the ASAC m and said she feels the council is being underutilized. John Cryer agreed and said that he also feels the council could be more effective to the Archdiocese and to local school advisory councils but that guidelines and objectives need to be discussed and communicated to the members. He suggested they meet prior to the November meeting to prioritize areas where the ASAC can be better utilized and to provide guidelines to the council members on their specific role in servicing our schools.

Maureen McAbee offered to manage the schedule for the local advisory council visits.

- **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9am. Next meeting will be Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 7:30am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler  
Schools' Program Specialist