

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 1-11-22

Zoom Meeting – 7:30-9:00am

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

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

Beth Clark Morrison called the meeting to order and Fr. Neil led the council in prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Beth asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded and all were in favor to approve the agenda.

- **Approval of the Minutes**

Beth asked if there were any changes to the November 2021 ASAC Meeting Minutes. With no changes stated, Beth asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion to approve was given and seconded and all were in favor to approve the minutes.

- **Superintendent's Report**

COVID

Hal reported that he sent out a letter on January 2nd to the school communities with updated protocols based on weekly data received over the Christmas break showing a spike in Omicron cases. As of now, things are looking much better and will adjust our protocols accordingly.

Beth asked Hal to give the correct procedure if council members get questions regarding protocols in place. Hal said that if it is a question regarding local school procedures (i.e. carpool etc.) refer them to the local administrator at the school. If it has to do with decisions we have made system-wide regarding masks, vaccinations, quarantines etc., direct them to the Office of Catholic Schools.

Michelle Raney had a question about distance learning. She said it seems that many students who are unvaccinated are being pulled in and out of the classroom when a fellow student becomes infected causing much disruption with their instruction. Her question is how long will the unvaccinated students have to continue to distance learn when one of their fellow students are positive with COVID. Hal said this very topic will be discussed at the principals meeting this Thursday and we will determine where local schools would have discretion based on their individual situation. He also said the data is very confusing due to so many breakthrough cases among the vaccinated. He reassured the council that our top priority is and has always been to have our students in class at the school.

Beth offered three positive data points from a healthcare prospective:

1. We are currently in Phase 4 of this virus and as it mutates it becomes less deadly and more contagious. Therefore, this Omicron variant should be viewed as a positive indicating that COVID is coming to an end.

2. The spike in Metro Atlanta is predicted to be over by the end of next week.
3. Hospitals are not being overwhelmed by the Omicron variant compared to previous variants.

Moving on from COVID, Hal touched on some other projects the Office of Catholic Schools are currently working on:

- The accreditation process is moving along with nine of our schools scheduled for their internal review visit this semester.
- We are regularly meeting with school nurses to support them as they continue to be our front line workers during these past 2 years of COVID.
- Business Managers are meeting at the Chancery on January 19 with the main focus on budget information for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year.
- We are putting together some professional development for faculty and staff regarding Exceptional Learners. We have an expert in this area scheduled for the Principals' meeting in March and also at our Summer Institute in June 7-9, 2022. The Independent Catholic Schools will be invited to attend this year's Summer Institute. Hal also extended an invitation to any ASAC council member who might like to hear this expert on Exceptional Learners.
- We are holding an Archdiocesan Arts Festival which will include Music and Visual Arts on March 18-19, 2022 at Blessed Trinity High School. **THIS EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED.**
- Theology of the Body will soon be introduced in our schools. Two schools have already been piloting this program and we hope to have it in all our schools and grade levels by the 2023-2024 school year. Next year we will focus on curriculum training for administrators and teachers.
- Starting next year Hal would like for every employee of our Catholic schools to take an introductory online class to cover the history and basic tenets of Catholic Education. His goal is to give them a better understanding of our mission of Catholic Schools and their responsibility as an employee of a Catholic School.
- St. Mary's Academy plans are moving along. We have hired a marketing firm to help us promote the school. Administrative structure is being finalized this week and our Associate Superintendents are evaluating current teachers at both schools to determine their fitness in going forward with the new school. We are hoping to have a good idea of enrollment by March.

Hal opened it up for questions regarding his report. Maureen McAbee asked Hal about the status of the parish preschool situation at Christ the King. Brian Dooling responded that Christ the King parish will be taking over what was formerly Second Ponce de Leon Preschool. CTK has hired a director who is a parishioner. This is an opportunity to serve up to 150 students beginning August 2022. These students can then feed directly into Christ the King Elementary School.

Beth had a question about the Exceptional Learners' project and asked what our main goal is with the professional development being provided to the Principals' and teachers. He responded that many of the principals are well intentioned on this subject but have many questions regarding enrollment and whether or not they have the resources needed to accommodate these special need students. Hal said we are trying to create an environment where all are welcome.

There were questions regarding the Theology of the Body Curriculum and whether it may cause controversy. Hal responded that Queen of Angels is in year 3 of this pilot program and it has been overwhelmingly popular. Michelle Raney, who has a child at Queen of Angels, said it has been a fantastic program for her student who started with this curriculum in 2nd Grade. Fr. Neil commented

that the title of the program tends to mislead people into thinking it is all about human sexuality when in fact it is very much age appropriate and focuses on the dignity and respect for the human body and God's Creation. Middle School and High School will incorporate more of the human sexuality aspects but will be introduced at the appropriate age. Hal said more details regarding this will be forthcoming.

Hal reported that three principals have given their notice of retirement after this school year. They are as follows:

Julie Broom – St. John Neumann Regional Catholic School
Lisa Cordell – Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic School
Pat Allen – St. Joseph Catholic School, Marietta

Brian Hershberger asked Hal when he hopes to fill these principal positions and would there be any local involvement with the search/screening process. Hal said there will be a national search and advertisements are presently being put in place. He said he has yet to talk to Monsignor Walsh regarding the St. Joseph principal's search. OLA may not need to do a search as there is already a person of interest. Hal said his hope is to have the searches completed by Easter.

- **Committee Reports**

Marketing Committee – Brian Dooling

- I GIVE CATHOLIC was a big success, raising over \$1 million locally. St. Pius X, Queen of Angels and Blessed Trinity were the big winners.
- MLK Youth Celebration will be a virtual event this year due to the surge in the Omicron variant.
- The Archdiocesan Spelling Bee will be in Person at the Chancery on February 1st.
- The Education Banquet will be in person for the Mass and Awards Ceremony at St. Catherine of Siena on January 29th. We have decided to cancel the reception afterwards due to the virus.
- A Peer Pal program has been implemented at 8 of our elementary schools and all 3 high schools. This is a parent ambassador on-line program. We are closely monitoring its success.
- Catholic School week is January 30th through February 5th.
- Religion Bee will be an in-person event at the Chancery on March 1st.
- Bishop Konzen recently wrote a great article in the Georgia Bulletin on "Why to consider Catholic Schools." It's a great tool to promote our Catholic Schools.
- GRACE Scholars 2022 contributions will remain open until the cap is reached. Please continue to promote GRACE.
- Brian will be sending out reminders on scheduled meetings and advise of any openings that still need to be filled by the end of this week.

Finance Committee – Brad Wilson

Brad said he sent the proposed raises out to this group of council members. For the 2022-2023 school year there will be a flat \$2800 raise across the board for all teachers. Archbishop approved both the raises as well as the block grants. Brad said he looks forward to the new budget season coming up. Beth said it is a huge challenge to keep salaries up with inflation this year. Brad added that tuitions will need to be increased by at least 5.9% to reflect current inflation rates. Bob Heilmann asked about health insurance contracts and Brad said we are doing well with just about a 3% increase due to being self-insured.

Policy Committee – Marcos Arias

Marcos said the committee will meet this Friday, January 14 but asked for additional support from other members or recommendations of candidates that might be able to help with this very important project.

Benefits Committee – Brian Hershberger

Brian said his committee will meet again this week to put together recommendations for tuition discounts, free extended day program and Christmas bonuses for faculty and staff at our schools. He said the tuition discounts among the schools range from 5%-50% and some just waive the registration fee. Most schools give free extended care for students of faculty and staff. Christmas Bonuses range from \$5.00 - \$600.00 at the different schools, with one school not offering a bonus at all. He said the goal is to make it more equitable across the board without taking away the school's marketing ability for local recruitment. Beth asked how these recommendations will be implemented and whether they will be only suggestions or requirements. She also asked if all the schools are being made aware of what other schools offer. Brian said once the committee has finalized their recommendations, they will be present them to the finance committee and Hal and it will be up to them how restrictive they want to be. The information collected on discounts/benefits from each school was an internal research project for only this committee's purpose and have not been made public knowledge. The information gathered thus far has only been for Elementary Schools. High Schools to follow. Maureen McAbee asked if we have looked at what other dioceses have done in this regard. Brian said as of now they have not looked into that but thought it may be worth thinking about.

Executive Committee – Beth Morrison

The Executive Committee met on January 4, 2022 to plan the January ASAC meeting and discuss progress on new and pre-existing initiatives and issues.

Adjournment – Next Meeting Date

Beth thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 8:34am. The next meeting date is Tuesday, March 15, 2022. We will advise everyone closer to this date as to whether the next meeting will be in person or on zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist