

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 3-22-22

Zoom Meeting – 7:30-9:00am

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

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

John Cryer opened the meeting in Beth Morrison's absence and welcomed everyone to the first in-person meeting in quite some time.

- **Approval of Agenda**

John verbally went through the items on the agenda and added that we would address those members who will be rolling off the council in June along with any council visits made since the last meeting. He then asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was given and seconded. Brian Dooling suggested that everyone introduce themselves since this is the first in-person meeting in a while. After the introductions were done, John moved on to the approval of the minutes.

- **Approval of the Minutes**

John asked for a motion to approve the minutes from January. Motion was given and seconded.

- **Superintendent's Report**

COVID

Hal Plummer said this is going to be the quickest COVID report ever given from our schools. Faculty and Staff-0 cases and Students-0 cases. An applause broke out within the group. Hal said precautions are still being adhered to for large gatherings but things are looking very good. He said that he has not received any complaints about COVID in the last 2 weeks, which is a wonderful sign.

St. Mary's Academy

Hal said an open house will take place for St. Mary's Academy this week. Enrollment is going well thus far and we are on target to achieve our goal of 300. This is based on those expected to return plus current new registrations. Our Lady of Vietnam and St. Philip Benizi Parishes as well as San Felipe de Jesus Mission have brought in registrants for next year. Hiring is still going on but we have in place some great hires for next year thus far. Hal invited everyone to review St. Mary's website. New turf soccer field is completed and buses are wrapped and look great! Brian said he would send pictures.

Maureen McAbee asked how far is the outreach for bus routes. Hal said there will be six bus routes that will mainly be servicing the nearby parishes.

Leadership Transition

St. Joseph Marietta – Dr. Pat Allen will be retiring at the end of this school year and Ramon Villacura has been hired as principal of St. Joseph Marietta beginning July 1, 2022.

St. John Neumann – Dr. Julie Broom will be retiring at the end of this year. The search committee to replace Dr. Broom did not feel comfortable with any of the applicants that were interviewed so the decision has been made to bring in an interim principal. More information to follow on this.

Kellie Desormeaux will be leaving us on May 6, 2022. She is moving back to Louisiana and has secured a principal's position at her home parish Catholic school in Lafayette. She will be greatly missed by the schools and us here at the Office of Catholic Schools. We appreciate the hard work and dedication Kellie gave us these past two years as Associate Superintendent. Hal said he is looking at this as an opportunity to restructure the office and put a particular focus on serving exceptional learners.

Campus Ministers at the High Schools-Patty McCarthy, Director of Campus Ministry at BT is retiring. She worked alone with an administrative assistant. Hal said for Catholic Identity purposes there is a need for more representation in a school of that size. Therefore, going forward there will be two people hired in campus ministry at BT plus an administrative assistant. St. Pius, in a similar way, will have two campus ministers (male and female). Our Lady of Mercy, soon to be St. Mary's Academy, is a much smaller school and we have a Coordinator of Religious Programs there and are still accessing our needs at this time going forward. We are reaching out to other priests on the southside to help Fr. Desmond Drummer in celebrating mass and other activities requiring a priest at St. Mary's Academy.

Theology of the Body

The TOB curriculum starts in Preschool and goes through 12th grade. This foundational program is to teach our students that they are created male or female in the image and likeness of God. The goal is to give them an understanding of their value as a child of God so that when they are hit with the present day identity crisis and cultural pressure, they will be rooted and grounded in God, their Creator. Formal training for teachers of Theology of the Body will take place to ensure the subject is taught in the proper manner. John Cryer asked if there was a formal certification after the teachers are trained and Hal responded that he would make sure of that.

Diversity Training

Hal started out by saying that it has been a challenge to find the right program that checked all the boxes. The one he selected is a secular program but he plans to add some Catholic doctrine. He said that all school employees will need to complete the course. The Chancery and Catholic Charities employees will also be trained and will possibly be the pilot program before it is distributed to all the schools. Boston Catholic Schools have used this program and have given us great feedback. Hal said the this council will also be sent the training to complete. The program is all computer modules.

Our Diversity Discussion 3.0 will be held on April 27th here at the Chancery. All schools are required to have a representative present.

Preschool Activity

Christ the King Preschool is opening in the fall. There are 120 students registered for the 2022-2023. These students will feed right into the Elementary School. The teachers at CKS will have preference in

enrolling their preschoolers into the Preschool. Hal said there is talk about adding a daycare at some of the schools to accommodate teachers with very young children. Hal said the Chancery is also looking into this. Stacy Lewis said that Marist offers this and it is amazing!

Catherine Kennedy Harris asked Hal which diversity/inclusion training will be offered at the Archdiocese. Hal responded that the name of the program is Triliant. He said that the council will become familiar with it once it is launched.

Jennifer Prindiville asked if the Theology of the Body will just be intergrated only in the Religion Curriculum or will it be a part of the full Curriculum. Hal said it will be placed in Religion but all teachers will be trained in the program. Michelle Raney said that there is a parent component to the TOB curriculum as well. The parents are informed of the lessons that will be covered in the TOB class. Hal informed the council that he plans to meet with counselors on Thursday to discuss Gender Disphoria. A discussion followed about this very sensitive topic.

Committee Reports

Marketing Committee – Brian Dooling

Brian gave an update on the Archbishop's Education Mass and Awards Ceremony that took place on January 29, 2022 at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church. The dinner portion of the night was cancelled due to Covid. The honorees are also being recognized on social media. The Spelling Bee occurred here at the Chancery on February 1st. The Religion Bee and Theology Bowl also took place here at the Chancery on March 1st. Vocations Day was changed to be a Virtual Day at the individual schools which is taking place this day, March 22nd. The Oratorical is coming up at the end of April which will take place at Blessed Trinity. The Peer Pal program is being utilized at eight of our schools to help attract millennial parents. Brian encouraged the Council members to participate in their parish Synodial session. He said it is an excellent opportunity to let your voices be heard on various topics within the church and provide ideas and suggestions. GRACE Scholars still need donors to reach their cap and Brian asked the council to spread the word about GRACE. Brian will be following up with the schools to see how they stand on enrollment for 2022-2023 SY. Brian said the community aspect of our schools are returning back to normalcy with the Covid cases in decline. Brian mentioned he would email a list of local advisory council meetings still on the calendar for this year and asked if anyone has not attended a school advisory council meeting yet to please consider doing so. Brian said this is a great way to learn the different cultures at our schools. . A discussion followed regarding enrollment in the different schools and marketing efforts being made to enhance those schools under enrolled. Brad Wilson gave a different perspective on how many of our schools are doing enrollment wise and said we need to step up our marketing efforts because there are too many empty seats in our classrooms and the word is not getting out. He said we have a great product to offer but the seats are not getting filled. Michelle Raney said many parents feel that they can't afford a Catholic Education for their children. They seem to be unaware of financial aid/scholarships that may be available to them. Maureen McAbee commented that it is a matter of choice and priority among many other parents. It's a financial sacrifice that many are not willing to make.

Nominating Committee –Brian Dooling

Brian advised that three members will be rolling off the council after the June 2022 meeting. We wish to give sincere thanks to Bob Heilmann, Marcos Arias & John Cryer for their dedicated service and commitment to the Archdiocesan Schools Advisory Council. Brian asked for nominations from council

members to fill these three positions. He will also reach out to the principals for suggestions/nominations.

Finance Committee – Brad Wilson

In addition to the previous comments on enrollment from a financial perspective, Brad said we are now accepting crypto currency of all kinds as donations. It is on the Archdiocese website under “make a gift”. The issue of teacher pay increases was brought up and the fact that there is a major teacher shortage. A discussion followed.

Benefits Committee – Brian Hershberger

Brian said the committee put together recommendations for the Finance Committee to look at that had not yet been discussed. Several topics that affect all schools were studied such as tuition discounts to employees, extended day care benefits, Christmas bonuses and other bonuses. Things to discuss among others is how some high schools give longevity bonuses while others schools give nothing for longevity. Christmas bonuses vary greatly as well. Tuition discount benefits range among the schools from as little as waiving registration fees to as high as 60% off tuition. The goal is to have more equitable benefits across the board to lessen the competition between our schools. A discussion followed.

Policy Committee

In Marcos Arias’ absence Hal Plummer announced that concerns regarding the policy have been reviewed by the committee. It has been suggested that someone from the Office of Catholic Schools be involved in revising the policy manual. Hal said this person has not been determined yet due to a restructuring of the OCS. More information to come on this in the future.

Adjournment – Next Meeting Date

John Cryer offered a closing prayer and the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting date is Tuesday, June 14th at 7:30am in Grand Hall A of the Chancery

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools’ Program Specialist