

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 11-15-22

In-Person Meeting – 7:30-9:00am

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, John Cryer-Chair, Brad Wilson, Brian Dooling, Maureen McAbee, Brian Hershberger, Stacy Lewis, Michelle Raney, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Jennifer Prindiville, Beth Morrison, Fr. Neil Dhabliwala, Julie Broom. **Visitor:** Brenda Leslie. **Absent:** Christopher White.

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

John Cryer called the meeting to order and led the council in an opening prayer.

- **Welcome and Introductions**

John welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all to introduce themselves for the benefit of some familiar faces (Superintendent, Diane Starkovich) as well as some new faces (Julie Broom, Associate Superintendent and visitor Brenda Leslie, AoA Controller, in attendance at this meeting.

- **Approval of Agenda**

John explained that the majority of the meeting time today will be allotted to a presentation on the Archdiocesan 2023-2024 teacher salary scales given by Brad Wilson and Brenda Leslie. The goal is to get the council's approval on these recommendations and then pass it along to the Archbishop for his approval. To allow time for this the Superintendent's Report and Committee Reports were sent out in advance for members to look over before the meeting and present any questions they may have. John then asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Approval of the Minutes**

John then asked for a motion to approve the August 2022 minutes. Motion was given and seconded.

- **Questions/Discussion on Superintendent's & Committee Reports**

Diane Starkovich addressed the council and thanked them for their attendance. She said her focus is on reaccreditation through Cognia, which has changed its cycle of accreditation to 6 years. This puts us at 2024 for the next accreditation visit. Diane said there is a lot to be done in the next 20 months. Cognia has dropped the Private/Catholic School model and has gone to a government/public school model, however, it will allow us to integrate the National Standards and Benchmarks for effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools. In addition, we have requested a Catholic leader evaluator and an on-site visit which have been approved. An electronic copy of these standards will be sent to each council member for their review. The plan is to devote a big portion of the upcoming principals' meetings for the next year to gathering data showing growth in our schools.

Regarding the teacher compensation package that will be presented by Brenda & Brad, Diane said it is aggressive and bold. Brad and his team have been working hard on this for months and Diane said she supports the plan. High School and elementary school scales will merge so that we have one standard and common scale for our teachers. The principals have agreed to the changes which will result in equity among and between our teachers across the system. Also in the proposal, we plan to offer a 50% reduction in tuition to any contractual employee that has a student enrolled in any of our Archdiocesan Schools. This bold move is to address a teacher shortage in our country in hopes in keeping our

outstanding teachers while attracting new teachers to join us. If the council approves this compensation package recommendation today, Diane said she believes the Archbishop will also approve.

Diane said she will be relying on the council for a lot of help as we move through this accreditation process. The accreditation visit will be in person and this council will be interviewed. In addition to that she said we will need a nominating committee and chair for the purpose of vetting new ASAC council members. Also, the bylaws and policy manual need for schools will need to be updated. In addition, a plan for financial assistance (via a grant application) will need to be established to assist several of our schools that may struggle reaching the new salary increases.

John Cryer asked Diane about our strategic plan status. Diane said we had one when she was here last but it has since expired. She said when she sends the council the copy of the NESBECS, she will also send a sample of a strategic plan that aligns with these standards that can serve as an exemplar. Also, during Catholic Schools' week in late January, all our school employees, students and families will be given a Catholic school satisfaction survey which will be repeated six months later in order to show our baseline and then our growth. This will also be a great source of data and information as we update our strategic plan.

Fr. Neil asked Diane if growth in enrollment was part of the growth that the accreditation team will be looking for. Diane said they are looking for growth in all areas (enrollment, perceptions, viability index, etc.) and said that there are many areas in which we will measure growth.

Diane then asked Brad and Brenda for their presentation and encouraged questions.

- **Teacher/Employee Compensation Package Proposal and Review**

Brad started out by saying that he and Brenda met with BT & St. Pius school advisory councils to speak about tuition increases. Schools will probably need to raise tuition at levels higher than in past years to meet these new salary and benefit recommendations.

Brad presented the Catholic tuition rate vs. inflation for each school. Brad explained to the council that we have three types of schools; parish based, regional and those under Catholic Education of North Georgia, Inc. (CENGI). The schools in green will be able to handle teacher pay increases without any difficulty. The two schools in red are the most fragile and will need financial assistance to handle the new teacher pay scale.

Diane asked Brad, for the benefit of new council members, to explain how CENGI School's originated. Brad said CENGI schools were paid for by municipal bonds, have a separate board of directors and are under the direction of the CEO (Superintendent of Schools) and the Archbishop. St. Pius X became a CENGI school when improvements were made at the school with the same funding strategy. The regional schools are under the leadership of the Superintendent of Schools and the parish schools work under the leadership of the Pastor of that parish with dual reporting to the Superintendent of Schools.

Brad said the question from the schools is "How do we pay for this?" He said if you balance the budget the current students are paying for it. If you borrow money, the future students are paying for it and if you use what is in reserves, the former students are paying for it. Each school is unique in their own budgeting process and Brad said we will work with them to make sure they have enough left in capital reserves.

A discussion was held on the effect enrollment has on schools' budgets and the challenges they face with marketing and enrollment. Brian Hershberger said he loves the bold steps being taken in teacher salaries/tuition and suggested that bold steps also be taken in the area of Development to get more donors/annual funds etc. He proposed that each school should have a Development Committee in order to have accountability on meeting goals and raising funds. Diane said financial aid will need to increase and we need more GRACE donations. A new Director of Mission Effectiveness for the Archdiocese has been hired and we will look to him for assistance in this area. Maureen McAbee commented on how Catholic Schools take pride in being affordable and therefore hesitate to ask for donations. Diane said we have a lot of work to do in this area.

In trying to determine a reasonable gap between the public school's salary scales and ours, Brad researched what Marist is doing. Marist pays 90% of the public school scale with a one-year lag. Brad then turned the floor over to Brenda so she could show what it would look like if we go with 85% across the board for elementary & high school.

Brenda said she was given the task to crunch the numbers and to come up with a proposal. She showed the council a graph of where we currently are compared to the average of the five surrounding counties. In order for the Elementary and High Schools to be equal the salary raise for Elementary teachers will need to be a lot more. To get to 85% of the counties average, the elementary salary scale would increase an average of \$8,500 per teacher and the high school salary increase would be less. Brenda said just to cover this increase alone the tuition at most of our schools would need to increase between 5-6% depending on the school. Brenda said they are still working on the Specialists and Doctorate levels of the scale and that this presentation only reflects Bachelors and Master's degree level increases. A question was asked about non-contractual employees. Diane said that HR compares our salaries for these positions against the Atlanta and Catholic market and it has been determined we are already in range for those particular positions. As far as principals' salary increases, Diane is still working on these. After these increases go into effect, it will just be a matter of keeping in that 85% range of the current county average with the one-year lag.

Stacy Lewis indicated that communication is key in how we approach families with the news about increased tuition. Diane assured the council that a letter would be going out to the parent community at the end of December or early January. Finance is looking into ways in which they can be more generous with financial aid. Brenda gave examples of how this might be accomplished. Diane said this will surely help to keep families but hopes there won't be a decrease in enrollment as a result of the higher tuition. A short discussion followed regarding parish verification form procedures.

Brenda then gave a summary of what she just laid out to the council and explained that this has not been made public yet. John Cryer then asked the council for a motion to accept the proposed 2023-2024 salary increases for contractual employees which is 85% of the average county scales with a one-year lag. The motion was given, seconded and all approved of the proposal.

- **Other important Items of Interest**

John asked Maureen to speak on the status of the Local School Council Meeting sign-up sheet. She said she has sent out the sign-up sheet along with the feedback form for them to fill out with the request that

each ASAC member attend two meetings within the current school year. Diane commented that she finds this practice to be very valuable especially to get feedback on where schools are struggling.

Diane said we are in need of a nominating committee chair by the January meeting so that we can hold a vote and have them in place by the March meeting. Anyone interested in being chair should contact John Cryer. There are three openings at present and the chair of the nominating committee would be in charge of vetting these new members. Diane stressed that she would like diverse geographical representation.

Other areas of need as mentioned before are revising by-laws and policy manual; finance committee to set up a financial assistance fund for several of our schools; and strategic plan. Brian Hershberger asked if there was a policy on exit interviews. Diane said there is a policy in place but many of the schools do not use the form provided to them. A discussion followed.

- **Adjournment – Next meeting date – Tuesday, January 10, 2023 (7:30am – 9:00am)**

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist