

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 8-22-23

7:30-9:00am

In Attendance: Diane Starkovich, Julie Broom, Stacy Lewis-Chair, Brian Hershberger-Vice-Chair, John Cryer, Maureen McAbee, Michelle Raney, Jennifer Prindiville, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Beth Morrison, Brad Wilson, Kevin Murray, Patrick Lowther, Joey Nordmark.(by phone) **Absent:** Brad Wilson.

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Stacy Lewis welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:30am. Diane Starkovich led the council in a group prayer and the recitation of the mission statement. Following the prayers all present introduced themselves and gave a little background information.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Stacy asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was approved.

- **Approval of the June 13, 2023 Minutes**

Stacy asked if there were any changes to the June 2023 ASAC minutes. Diane Starkovich said the section of the minutes entitled Council Goals should actually read School-Wide Goals. After this change, the motion to approve the minutes was given and seconded.

- **Council Goals & Expectations –Stacy Lewis**

Stacy addressed one of the expectations of the council is to assist in the Cognia District-Wide Accreditation Process. The council's participation is with the interview process. The accreditation visit is set for February 11-14, 2024. Diane said this council will be a key group to be interviewed and will take place Monday, February 12; the schedule is not yet finalized. Questions will be asked about the work of the council, how members are involved, and topics addressed at our meetings and how the Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council assists schools in improving. Diane went over the accreditation team's preliminary schedule and all they plan to cover in the 3-day visit. The team will end up interviewing a total of 200-250 people including bishops, secretariat members, council members, pastors, students, parents, teachers, administrators etc. The summary report with the archdiocesan accreditation status will be issued from Cognia in June 2024. The Catholic Schools Office is responsible for insuring that all schools maintain accreditation standards over the next six-year cycle under the requirements of district-wide accreditation.

Other initiatives for this council include:

Marketing - helping the schools with their marketing efforts and revisiting the Marketing Toolkit.

School Sustainability Sub-Committee - will help with marketing as well as finance efforts (Brian H.)

School Safety and Resource Officers

School Visits – Refer to Maureen's Sign-up Genius. Each member should sign up for two school visits.

- **Superintendent's Report**

Diane would like to move forward with the school resource officer at Holy Redeemer. The concern is the fact that the students leave the building to go to church and this is a concern with the parents. Bishop Konzen agrees and the budget for the school can absorb the position. Statistics show that officers on campus do not reduce incidents on campus but do reduce response time. There was a question about whether St. Pius has police officers on campus and Diane said the Chamblee police are there every day.

Stacy showed the council a device that teachers can wear which has a panic button in the case of an intruder. Atlanta public schools have provided this to their teachers. Diane said she has already introduced this product to the principals. A discussion followed regarding various forms of safety measures the schools have implemented to keep students and staff safe.

Diane said on the first day of school principals give us their enrollment numbers. These numbers usually stabilize after Labor Day weekend. Biggest gain in enrollment is St. Joseph Marietta. Principal, Ramon Villacura, has been asked to give a presentation at the upcoming admission directors' meeting to give strategies on increasing enrollment. Biggest loss over a two-year period has been Blessed Trinity. Several schools held steady. Diane said there is still much work to do in this area especially with increased marketing to Latinos in our parishes. John Cyser asked if there's a school that stands out in their marketing efforts on enrollment. Diane answered that St. Catherine of Siena is doing a nice job getting out there to promote the school. Also, Queen of Angels' advisory council marketing committee is very large and does an excellent job. A discussion followed on the Independent Catholic Schools' enrollment. Diane said Marist and Pinecrest are holding their own but some of the others are struggling somewhat. Diane gave an interesting fact that the number of homeschooled children enrolled in Catholic hybrids continues to challenge our Catholic schools. She added that there is possible opportunity for us to partner with a Catholic Virtual Academy. Diane said we must start thinking out of the box and added that marketing is always challenging and has many different layers. She commented that the only way we will get an equal playing field is if the State sponsors universal vouchers for school-aged children. In summary on enrollment, our numbers should be about 130 students down from last year but we will know better in late September.

Other news:

There is a GRACE Weekend set for September 30-October 1 at all the parishes. A GRACE video from the Archbishop will be shown with an appeal to donate to GRACE. School and GRACE personnel will be on hand at parishes that weekend promoting GRACE and giving out information.

Diane is giving a presentation at the Superintendents' Conference at the end of October on Teacher Retention .

There will be a Holy Spirit mass at 10am on September 5th on each one of our high school campuses. The elementary schools will join them by holding prayer services at 10am on their campuses. This is all a part of our focus on the Eucharistic Revival.

- **September 23, 2023 - Advisory Council In-Service**

Stacy reminded everyone of the September 23rd Advisory Council In-Service and encouraged everyone's participation. The day will begin at 9am with a "State of the Schools" address from Diane.

A School Safety Presentation will follow as well as individual Table Discussions. After the morning break there will be three separate sessions offered for attendees to choose from including; How to run an Effective Council meeting, Marketing and Strategic Planning.

- **Policy Manual Update - Electronic Access for Council Members**

Diane advised that the policy manual has been updated. Diane advised the council that they will soon receive the hidden link from our website allowing them to access the revised policy manual and nurses' manual.

- **New Business**

- a. Marketing Plan Review – St. Mary's, Rome

St. Mary's in Rome needs a group of people to help with their marketing strategies.

- a. Marketing Plan Review - St. Mary's Academy, Fayetteville

In addition to marketing, St. Mary's Academy would benefit from additional financial advice and assistance. Diane said that an Archdiocesan finance council member has been assigned by the Archbishop to help with St. Mary's Academy. As this process unfolds, a school advisory council member (Brian Hershberger) may be asked to join the council as well.

- b. Policy Update – Tuition Payment Plans

We need more direction on a reasonable amount of time a school's payment plan should last. It's very difficult to get funds from a family once the student leaves the school or graduates. The schools have always had discretion in this area but some schools have become relaxed with their payment plan requirements and the auditors have cited them in their reviews. Diane asked for the policy committee's help in developing a standard policy for our schools on Tuition Payment Plans while still giving the schools some local authority in hardship cases. This committee will comprise of an auditor, a principal and one or two school business managers along with this council's policy committee. This will probably take 8-10 months to complete.

A reminder was given about the New Council Member Training taking place on Saturday, August 26 from 9-11am and Wednesday, August 30th from 5:30-7:30pm. Both are here at the Chancery.

Stacy asked if there were any questions regarding items covered this morning. Joey Nordmark, who joined us by phone, asked if the schools that are at full capacity refer families to other schools that have openings, particularly in the case of St. Pius X and Blessed Trinity. Diane responded saying the elementary schools already do this but that most of the families waitlisted for St. Pius X (Catholic and Non-Catholic) are coming from public schools in the area and are only interested in that geographical location. BT is trying to address their enrollment challenges by sending buses out to different locations and the new admissions person at BT has met with St. Pius' admissions director for a review of best practices. A discussion followed regarding GRACE, School Vouchers, Universal Vouchers & 529 Plans. Lastly, Diane said the parent session and surveys for the Meitler study in Gainesville and Flowery Branch will take place in the middle of September. The challenge is finding a weekend in the parishes to conduct the parent surveys.

Adjournment– Next Meeting Date

Meeting adjourned at 9:02am. Next meeting date is Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist