

## Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 3-14-23

In-Person Meeting – 7:30-9:00am

**In Attendance:** Diane Starkovich, John Cryer-Chair, Maureen McAbee, Brian Hershberger, Stacy Lewis, Jennifer Prindiville, Fr. Neil Dhabliwala, **Absent:** Michelle Raney, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Beth Morrison, Brad Wilson. **Vistors:** Brent Hollers, Jacqueline Murphy & JoAnn McPherson from St. Mary's Academy.

- **Call to Order and Opening Prayer**

John Cryer called the meeting to order at 7:32am and Diane Starkovich led the council in a Lenten prayer.

- **Welcome Special Guests**

John Cryer announced that we have special guests from St. Mary's Academy to speak on Cyber Security Certification which will require the council's recommendation for them to move forward.

- **Approval of Agenda**

John asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given, seconded and approved by all.

- **Approval of the Minutes**

John then asked for a motion to approve the January 2023 council minutes. The motion was given, seconded and approved by all.

- **Mission Statement**

John led the council into reciting the Mission Statement which will be read at the beginning of each meeting going forward.

- **Cyber Security Certification – Presentation Led by Dr. Brent Hollers, St. Mary's Academy**

Diane Starkovich introduced JoAnn McPherson, Principal of St. Mary's Academy, Dr. Brent Hollers, and Jacqueline Murphy, STEM teachers at St. Mary's Academy. They will be presenting to the council the STEM /Cyber Security program offered to students at their school. Dr. Hollers said this program has two basic pathways 1.) Getting students prepared to go right to work out of high school with high level skills or 2.) Preparing students for high level colleges/university courses to continue their education in this field. Ms. Murphy added that the goal is to obtain STEM certification by Cognia for St. Mary's Academy.

At St. Mary's Academy, the program is being introduced at the Pre-K level with a progression of skill development throughout the elementary years. More specialized skills are introduced in middle school preparing the students for the upcoming 4-year progression (STEM 1-4) toward STEM/Cyber Security Certification at the end of their senior year. By the time the student gets into STEM 3 (junior year) they will be able to participate in a summer internship program where they can apply their skills they've learned in a workplace environment and get the hands-on experience. By their senior year (STEM 4) they enter a self-study course which requires them to design something. There are many specialized areas in which the student can focus based on their interests. Dr. Hollers said he has been working on

this particular progression model for many years and it is unique to St. Mary's Academy. His hope is that this model can eventually serve all our high schools in the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

At the high school level, these courses are all electives but the elementary grades will be required to take the basic courses to set them up for success to learn more in high school if they choose. Dr. Hollers said if the high school student does not start out with this as a freshman, s/he will still have an opportunity to catch up through doubling up on electives in the sophomore year or even in summer school. He said the program requires at least one semester per year to finish.

Dr. Hollers said there are wonderful opportunities for students to land a Cyber Security job right out of high school with a starting yearly salary of \$90,000. In many cases, it is preferred that they come straight out of high school because it is less likely that they have a record for security clearances. In addition to available internships in this field, there are also a number of competitions offering scholarship and grants. Kennesaw State University will hire students out of high school and give them free tuition to further their education.

Ms. Murphy explained the badging system at St. Mary's Academy which begins in Pre-K. As the student moves up they are accumulating these badges and creating a portfolio of skills they have acquired throughout their school years. This is a helpful tool for the students to showcase when applying for internships, jobs or colleges. Ms. Murphy went on the talk about the PreK-12 Robotics Extracurricular Program through VERSES Technologies and the service initiatives that can result.

Dr. Hollers opened the floor up for questions. Diane asked JoAnn to speak on the new AP distinction that St. Mary's Academy just received. JoAnn stated that the recognition was on the number of females and minorities that St. Mary's Academy has attracted to the computer science program. Diane said this was the only Catholic School in the state to receive this honor. John Cryer asked about the cost involved for these programs. Brent Hollers said they are very blessed to have been provided initially with the tools needed to run these programs and now the cost to maintain it is minimal and within the school's budget.

Another question was raised on how St. Mary's Academy markets this program. JoAnn answered that the admission's director invites prospective families to a Bobcat Breakfast to illustrate all the wonderful things the school has to offer. Part of this breakfast features a presentation from Brent & Jacqueline on all the possibilities this computer science program has to offer and then they get to meet "Sunny", St. Mary's robot mascot, which is always a big hit! Diane said she has asked the Georgia Bulletin to cover this story. In addition, there are plans to have a President in place in the fall where marketing and fundraising will be a main focus.

Diane asked Brent the status of the Notre Dame University Summer STEM internship. Brent said the interview had just occurred and they will find out on April 1<sup>st</sup> if St. Mary's was selected. If selected, St. Mary's team would go up to Notre Dame University for two weeks during this summer; they would go again in January for another visit and again next summer. This is a paid internship. Brent and Jacqueline are reaching out to other schools to get ideas on how they should operate their summer internship programs. They are also contacting local companies to determine what skillset is required to fill their paid summer internships. St. Mary's can then incorporate these lessons in their program to provide the students the skills needed.

Diane wrapped up the presentation due to time constraints and said she wanted the council to see this presentation to get their recommendations on moving forward. She said she will send the council Brent & Jacqueline's power point presentation to look over. Diane thanked Brent, Jacqueline and JoAnn for joining the council meeting. Council members had overwhelming positive feedback on the presentation and expressed best wishes for them moving forward. A discussion followed.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Due to the lack of time at this meeting, Diane sent her report to the council members in advance to read. John asked Diane if she had anything additional to add. Diane added that Brian Dooling has accepted a position in the Office of Mission Advancement which is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of this building. Diane said she will not be filling his position at this time. We are in the process of hiring another administrative assistant who will be working with the Associate Superintendents, Karen and Julie, on graphs and charts and any other administrative needs they may have.

Diane mentioned that she has informed the Archbishop that all accreditation documents will be loaded by December 1<sup>st</sup>. This means that October and November will be writing time for Julie, Karen and Diane. Diane will be working on governance, policy and procedure. Julie will be writing on rigor and relevance in curriculum. Karen will pick up everything else and will write it all in one voice. The visit will be in February 11-14, 2024. Cognia has asked Diane to do a podcast with them which she has received permission. They also have asked her to do a white paper which she is considering if time permits. Diane said there is lots to do but progress is being made.

Diane said that she will have visited every school by the end of April. She added that a new student engagement program called "Measuring what Matters" is being introduced to all of our schools. Julie Broom will explain this at our next council meeting. She asked if there were any questions on her report. Jennifer Prindiville asked about the status of Theology of the Body in our schools. Diane said Theology of the Body, although a very good program, will not be mandated but will be listed in the curriculum as an option. She feels the program is misunderstood. Diane mentioned that the OCS has found a religion curriculum out of the Diocese of Cincinnati. The Religion Curriculum writing team (PK-12) is working very hard to give religion teachers more tools to use in the classroom. Dr. Broom is overseeing the rewriting/updating of not only the religion curriculum but also our social studies curriculum.

John asked about how the budgets are going as a result of the teacher raises and how it is affecting tuition rates. Diane said the tuition increases so far are ranging from a 5.14%-10.14% depending on the school. Many factors go into play in determining the increase needed in tuition rates. Every school has increased financial aid for those that may need it next year. Diane said so far no school has asked for help as a result of the teacher salary increases, however, the under resourced schools have not gone through their budget review yet. The schools will have to amend their budget in August but every budget has a cushion allowing them to lose up to five students and still be okay. A discussion followed.

### **New Council Member Nominations**

Brian Hershberger said that Brian Dooling had given names of five possible candidates to join the council. Brian contacted three of those and Jennifer Prindiville contacted two. After the vetting process, it was narrowed down to three candidates to recommend. They are as follows: Patrick from OLA, Lawyer; Joey, a Finance person and Kevin an operational person. It was decided to let the next meeting in June be their first so that the new members can observe how the council works. Diane said

she is working on getting a new pastor to serve on the council to replace Fr. Neil as his term is coming to an end. John Cryer asked for a motion to approve Patrick, Joey and Kevin as our new Archdiocesan Schools Advisory Council members. The motion was given and seconded. Diane asked Brian H. or Jennifer to contact the new members and let them know they will be receiving a letter from the Archbishop welcoming them to the council and inviting them to the next ASAC meeting. John thanked Jennifer and Brian for the great work on the Nominating Committee.

### **Concerns/Discussions while attending local school advisory council meetings**

John thanked Maureen McAbee for organizing the School Council Visits. Maureen stated that every school has been visited. Diane asked if there were any questions about teacher salaries or any other questions or concerns we should know about. Jennifer Prindiville said at her meeting the topic came up about full time non-contractual employees not receiving any tuition discount. Diane said she will be working on something to address that next year. It will be a struggle for some schools. Maureen mentioned that at her meeting the principal shared that since she is a smaller school and does not have a curriculum coordinator she needs shared resources from either the Office of Catholic School or another archdiocesan school. Diane explained that in the smaller schools, if they have an assistant principal, that person many times will also fill the role of a curriculum coordinator. The principals share ideas with each other at principals meetings and they can always call another principal for advice. In addition to that, the Office of Catholic Schools hosts various groups throughout the year to meet and share best practices. Brian Hershberger brought up the importance of parental involvement in the schools and asked Diane for an update on the High School President searches. A discussion followed.

### **ASAC Self-Evaluation**

Diane said that Brian Dooling has agreed to run the ASAC Self-Evaluation this year. He will send it out and we should have the results to review at the June meeting.

### **Committee Reports**

Diane said she will be attending a GRACE meeting later this day and will get an update for the council. Policy updates are in the works. Sections 1 & 2 are with the Communications office; Section 3 is with the Finance office and Section 4 is with Human Resources

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00am and Fr. Neil led the council us in a closing prayer. Next meeting date is Tuesday, June 13, 2023 (7:30am-9:00am)

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler  
Schools' Program Specialist