

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 1-9-24

7:30-9:00am

In Attendance: **Diane Starkovich, Karen Vogtner, Stacy Lewis-Chair, Brian Hershberger-Vice-Chair, Maureen McAbee, Jennifer Prindiville, Brad Wilson, Patrick Lowther, Joey Nordmark, Fr. Valery Akoh, John Cryer, Cathy Kennedy Harris, Beth Morrison, Kevin Murray. Absent: Michelle Raney, Pamela Tennell.**

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Stacy Lewis called the meeting to order and asked everyone to recite the Mission Statement. Following the mission statement Diane asked for a moment of silence to pray for Julie and the Broom family. Diane led the council in an opening prayer.

- **Approval of Agenda**

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

- **Approval of the November 14, 2023 Minutes**

Stacy asked if there were any changes to the November 2023 ASAC minutes. With no changes, the motion to approve the minutes was given and seconded.

- **Accreditation Updates – Summary of Findings, Diane Starkovich & Karen Vogtner**

Karen Vogtner started off by stating that Cognia has 30 standards for the Accreditation process and we have merged those 30 standards with the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) (handouts were provided to help illustrate). Our schools used both sets of standards to prepare for the accreditation. Karen stated that we are moving away from the ACRE Assessment and are adopting a program called ARK (Assessment of Religious Knowledge). The reason for this change is so we can stay on top of the results and adjust the curriculum as needed. ARK tests every grade, every year 2-12 vs. ACRE only provides testing for 5th, 8th & 12th grades. Our ACT and SAT scores are way above national averages. Math scores are very good but are the lowest out of the high scores so we would like to see those improve to the level of our ELA scores. These scores are broken down by sub-groups and we evaluate each group to make sure all sub-groups are making progress.

Stakeholder feedback– Catholic identity and program effectiveness surveys are all above average across the board for elementary, middle, high school. Karen said what makes Catholic education so unique and special is that everyone rallies around the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church. All our stakeholders have a voice and are focused on the same priorities. We excel in providing a positive, faith-based culture of learning. How we can improve in this area is to have more educational opportunities for parents who are the primary role models and educators of their children. Also, we will continue to focus on supporting our students with their social, emotional and spiritual growth. Lastly, we will continue to focus on instilling self-discipline and self-management in our students so they can become independent learners. For teachers and administrators, we will focus on strengthening professional development in our schools and use more data management for continuous improvement. Karen concluded by saying we will not rest on our laurels and will continue to strive for excellence across the board in all our schools.

Role of the Board – Cognia is looking for this council to be engaged in continuous improvement. By visiting our schools’ advisory council meetings, members on this council represent the Archdiocese to pass along priorities and provide oversight of the schools’ strategic plans. The Cognia team will want to know policies and successful programs that have been put in place to monitor short and long-term continuous improvement in our schools and how data management has been utilized. Karen reminded everyone that the Cognia team will interview them on Monday, February 12 from 1:45-2:30pm. She expressed much appreciation to this council for their extremely important role and value to the success of our schools. Diane said the local council members are also invited to participate in these interview sessions. There will most likely be two separate interview groups for advisory council members and Diane asked this council to disperse themselves into both groups so there is representation in both sessions. On the Tuesday after the interviews the Cognia team will visit the schools that were not visited during the last accreditation visit. Four of our schools are up for STEM accreditation, these include: St. Mary’s Academy, St. Joseph-Athens, Saint Jude the Apostle and St. Thomas More. The others will need to wait until the next accreditation cycle (6 years from now) to apply for STEM accreditation. At that time, Diane hopes we will have a system-wide STEM accreditation. We will not get results from this visit until June but Diane has no doubt that our schools will be accredited. A copy of Karen’s presentation from today will be sent out to council members for their review. A discussion followed and the council gave thanks to Karen for all her hard work in preparing for this accreditation.

- **Proposed Statement of Confidentiality – Patrick Lowther, Diane Starkovich**

There was discussion about removing the word *perpetuity* in the current confidentiality statement and replacing it with *permanent*. Diane said she would revise the statement and send it out to all council members. Brian Herschberger asked if committee members should be included in the confidentiality statement. A discussion followed and it was decided to add committee members to the statement.

- **Superintendent’s Report**

Diane told the council that not only did St. John Neumann suffer from the loss of their former principal, Julie Broom, but also a PE teacher that had been with the school for 28 years and retired last year passed away over the Christmas holidays. Counselors were deployed to the school ready to help the students. Diane said that employees need help as well and that the Archdiocese of Atlanta offers an Employee Assistance Program which is highly confidential and can provide the help teachers and administrators need free of charge.

Diane summarized a few changes/updates for the OCS. An Associate Superintendent will be hired to be in charge of School Viability. This will include enrollment and advancement. In addition, plans are in the works for Partners in Mission to come to the Chancery to hold intensive training sessions on advancement, admissions, finances etc. All schools’ advancement & admissions directors along with principals and presidents will be required to participate. The cost will be covered by the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Diane addressed the Policy for Tuition Payment Plans and said she will get the Policy Committee together on a zoom call soon to discuss. Part of this policy will include the Parish Verification Form Pastors sign off on to allow the family to receive the Catholic Tuition Rate. The pastors are given the final say to allow or not allow the Catholic rate based on the family’s participation in that parish. A new verification form signed by the pastor is required each year to receive the Catholic rate.

The Meitler Study is going into phase two and all results point toward Flowery Branch/Prince of Peace as the location for a Pre-K4 through 8th grade school. The study showed a considerable amount of interest from the Gainesville area. The earliest date for a new school to open would be the Fall of 2025. They will start out small with a couple of grades and add on each year. Diane said the principal would need to be in place for a full year before the school opens.

Plans are being discussed about the possibility of a new parish preschool at Mary our Queen Parish in Peachtree Corners. Jennifer Hughes (Director of Parish Preschools) is working with them currently.

Diane thanked John Cryer for agreeing to be Master of Ceremonies for our 16th Annual Archbishop's Education Celebration at St. Peter Chanel Church in Roswell on Saturday night, January 27. Diane invited all council members to attend. It will start with Mass at 6pm with all four bishops present. There will be an awards ceremony following mass and a nice reception afterwards in McNamee Hall.

Stacy asked Diane to give an update on the Superintendent search. Diane said that Catholic Recruiter Associates is running the search with an April 15th deadline for resumes. Diane will be involved in screening candidates.

- **Committee Reports**

Strategic Planning – Diane said she met with Michelle Raney and Cathy Kennedy-Harris and they looked at the strategic plan in place and updated it by dropping things that were already accomplished and adding in social/emotional growth, variety in assessments, and data teams in each school. Diane stated she will forward an electronic copy of the strategic plan to council members for their review. An extended discussion followed regarding the importance of a more deliberate focus on social/emotional growth of our students. Ideas were given as to how we can address this on-going concern including having more penance services and more priest/chaplain presence in our schools.

Finance – Brad Wilson stated that the Archbishop approved the recommendations for the block grants and salary scales for the 2024-2025 school year. Diane added that the budget template is complete and has been sent to the principals. Principals' salary letters are almost done and will be sent out very soon.

Local Council Visits/Council Self-evaluation and Recruitment of New Members – Maureen McAbee said that St. Joseph Athens is the only school that has not been visited at least once this school year. She has volunteered to attend their February meeting. Maureen said since she is rolling off the council this year, she'd be happy to train the new person on the Nominating Committee that will be assuming her role in keeping track of all the council visit sign-ups. Diane said the purpose of having this council attend local council meetings is to build trust, two-way communication, collaboration and work together as a system. Our annual September All Council In-service is a very valuable tool in this endeavor.

Maureen said that when the Nominating Committee met the topic of training new members came up and it was suggested that new members have a mentor assigned to them to offer support and be available to accompany them on their first local council visit. Brian Hershberger asked Diane to request from the principals any recommendations they may have to serve on this council next year. We have quite a few rolling off the council in June.

- **Update on Principals' and Presidents' Searches**

Diane gave a quick update on the Holy Redeemer principal search and said the application period is still open. By early February the search team will gather and decide who will move forward with the interview process. The hope is to have a principal selected by the end of February.

There is a letter going out to the Blessed Trinity parents announcing we have a candidate who has worked through the process and will soon be spending a day on the BT campus meeting with various constituents (faculty, staff, students, alumni etc.).

Diane said she has replaced Partners in Mission with Catholic Recruiters for the Saint Mary's Academy president search.

All principals need to advise Diane by January 31st if they are not returning next year so there may be more principal searches to come.

- **Adjournment and Next Meeting Date – Tuesday, March 12, 2024**

Stacy led the council in a closing prayer. The meeting adjourned at 9am. Next meeting date is Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 7:30am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools' Program Specialist