

Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, 6/3/25

7:30-9:50am

In Attendance: **Patty Childs, Tony Bonta, Lisa Cordell, Kim Shields, Lauren Schell, Karen Vogtner, Brian Hershberger, Joey Nordmark, Fr. Valery Akoh, Patrick Lowther, Alexandra Balzer, Vivian Vu, Brent Herrin, Hilary Dixon, John Cryer, Brandi Kler and Brad Wilson.**
Absent: **Pam Tennell, Kevin Murray, Jennifer Prindiville.** Guests: **John Schiavone, Laura Schwartz, Ken Kenan, Sandra Cryer, Mark Beno.**

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Patty led everyone in prayer, followed by the recitation of the mission statement.

Brian Hershberger welcomed everyone to the ASAC meeting. Since there were visitors at the meeting, he asked everyone to introduce themselves.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Brian asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve was given and seconded.

- **Approval of the March 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Brian asked for a motion to approve the March 2025 ASAC minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was given and seconded.

- **OCS Strategic Plan and Planning Process: Joey & Tony**

Tony handed out packets to everyone and welcomed and thanked visitors that were present and all who have volunteered their services on the strategic planning process. He went over the two handouts in the packet which consisted of the timeline for the strategic plan and the committee and sub-committee assignments.

Joey Nordmark expressed his gratitude as well for all the work that has been done thus far to prepare us for the strategic planning process. He said the goal today is to orient committee chairs of the various sub-committees and set forth a path for them to meet a timeline which will enable us to have a completed strategic plan to present to the archbishop for approval by the end of 2025. Joey said today's focus is on the first two handouts. This will be the first 3-year plan, followed by another 3-year plan to complete the 6-year Cognia accreditation window. A lot of data and feedback were collected to determine what is needed for the upcoming 3-year period. We are asking each committee to review the data & feedback provided to set goals and determine action steps needed to accomplish these goals. Each council should meet two or three times over the summer prior to the All-School Council In-Service which will take place on August 23, 2025 at St. Pius X Catholic High School. At this event each committee will present their plan to the school councils and get feedback. The four pillars of the Strategic Plan are as follows:

Mission and Catholic Identity

Governance and Leadership

Academic Excellence

Operational Vitality Committee

The Operational Vitality Committee has five sub-committees as follows:

- Admission/Enrollment/Retention
- Institutional Advancement
- Facilities/Maintenance & Enhancement
- Financial Vitality
- Marketing

Patty mentioned that looking back at the last strategic plan will be important to see what we were able to accomplish. She said while most goals were met, there may be some that we need to double down on and continue the work for the new strategic plan. A review of these past goals will be done and sent out to committee members.

Tony went over the contents of the packet and asked Patty to explain the Nominal Reduction Process which is an exercise in developing goals for the future. This exercise was done among the principals with Diane and Patty at the December Principals' Meeting. Patty met with key student groups at the three high schools to do the same exercise in the spring of 2025. She learned through this valuable exercise that there are many commonalities across the 3 high schools.

Lauren Schell, Director of Leadership Development and Lisa Cordell, Director of Open Doors, gave updates on their initiatives which align with the goals of the Office of Catholic School. Karen Vogtner spoke on the importance and success of our principal formation program and stated that with Lauren Schell on board to mentor our new leaders through their first two years has added a valuable asset to our mission.

Tony gave directions for the committees to break out in their groups and discuss plans going forward. After the breakout session, Joey wrapped up by saying he will send out electronic copies of the handouts and contact information of all committee and sub-committee members to those that were not able to be at the meeting today.

Joey explained that as these goals are being brought forward from each committee, there may be some modifications made by the ASAC who has the responsibility of sending the final document to the archbishop for approval. He asked for patience and flexibility and thanked the committee chairs and everyone who has worked and will work on this project for the success of our schools.

- **Superintendent's Report: Patty Childs**

Patty presented the ASAC meeting dates for 2025-2026 which will remain on Tuesday mornings at 7:30am at the Chancery. They are as follows: August 12, 2025, November 4, 2025, January 13, 2026, March 31, 2026, and June 2, 2026. Training sessions for new council members have been moved to dates earlier in August (August 9 & August 13). The All-School Council In-Service has been moved up to Saturday, August 23rd at St. Pius X High School. Patty said the council will get together soon to come up with an agenda for that day.

Patty advised of changes in leadership at some of our schools. St. Pius X and St. Thomas More will have interim principals for next year. New principals have been hired at St. Joseph-Marietta, Queen of Angels and St. Mary's in Rome. A president has been hired for St. Mary's Academy. St. Mary's

Academy now has a full-time chaplain. Patty said marketing continues to be a challenge. A discussion followed.

Patty asked Brad and Mark to give a report on the zumBrunnen analysis in our schools. ZumBrunnen is a company that Catholic Construction uses to assess our facilities and project future costs for replacement and enhancement. Mark said four of our schools (BT, HR, QA, and SPX) use the zumBrunnen analysis as a planning tool to identify the amount of CAPEX funds that schools need to set aside for repairs, replacement, and restoration of their property. The other twelve AoA Catholic schools are on board to have this same analysis done. The goal is to have zumBrunnen complete all the school reports by August to assist with the OCS Strategic Plan and reviewed by the Facility and Financial Vitality Subcommittees.

Patty announced that we have registered with Catholic Virtual. The name chosen will be Sacred Heart Online Academy. It will not be ready to open up this fall as there is much work to be done to make this a successful program. Initially, it will only be offered to high school students. A discussion followed.

- **Nomination Committee & Membership: Brian Hershberger**

Brian Hershberger recognized and thanked John Cryer for serving on the ASAC council for many years. He has served in various roles from marketing to co-chair and then chair and his hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated. Due to lack of time Brian suggested the council meet virtually during the summer to discuss candidates for new membership.

- **New Business: New Independent School Presentation – Chesterton Academy of Atlanta**

Patty said that a few months ago her and Andy Lichtenwalner, Director of Evangelization and Discipleship, visited Chesterton Academy. The school is located at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Kennesaw where Fr. Neil Dhabliwala is pastor. They came today to present their case in hopes to be recognized as an Independent Catholic high school in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Fr. Neil introduced his team which consisted of Charissa Saenz, co-founder of Chesterton Academy of Atlanta and vice-chair of the board of directors and Mr. Taylor Bettencourt, headmaster of the school. Fr. Neil handed out a brochure of the school and gave background information of the Chesterton model. Charissa explained why they chose Chesterton Academy and how their goal was to offer an alternative high school unique from what is already offered in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. The classical approach to learning, which is what Chesterton offers, focuses on the Humanities integrating our Catholic faith in everything they do. Taylor shared some memorable experiences over the last two years since Chesterton opened its doors. He said that the students go to mass daily and participate as lectors and altar servers. This past year enrollment was at 31 students offering only 9th & 10th grade. 11th grade will be added for the 2025-2026 SY and they are projecting another 20 students to enroll. Charissa added that their plan is to remain small with a maximum enrollment of 190 in order to maintain their identity and culture. Chesterton will always be a 5-day, full day, in-person school with no hybrid option. There was further explanation regarding the classical curriculum and how all subjects fit together resulting in a set schedule with very little room for electives. Charissa said that the Chesterton approach appeals to a good percentage of St. Catherine's families and is a very natural and complimentary partnership with the elementary school even though the elementary school is not labeled "classical". A question and answer session followed. Patty thanked them for their presentation and said the council will discuss what has been presented and make a recommendation to the archbishop.

Patty addressed the council saying that Chesterton has met all the requirements to become recognized as an independent Catholic school. They offer an alternative which is not for everybody and doesn't compete with our other Catholic high schools. The tuition cost is low because there is no cost for the use of the building and the teachers are all part-time, so they save on benefit expenses. A lengthy discussion followed regarding different aspects of the school's presentation.

Brian asked for a motion to approve Chesterton Academy as a recognized Independent Catholic School in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. A motion was given and seconded and all approved. Next step – Patty will send the recommendation to the archbishop.

- **Finance Report – Brad Wilson**

Brad went over the financial status of each school. All budgets were approved. Almost every school will need to submit a revised budget in the fall based on actual enrollment and other issues not anticipated when initially approved.

- **Adjournment & Closing Prayer**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:50am and Fr. Valery offered a closing prayer and blessing.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler
Schools Program Specialist