

SAINT MARY SCHOOL ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Meeting remotely via ZOOM

In attendance: Magda Harrison, Monsignor Michael Rose, Tom Kennedy, Stephanie Muzzy, Brigid Carlson, Gabriel Beltran, Kristin Scheffel, Colleen Clifford, Matthew Beaton, Sonia Mahnot and Courtney Mayo

Call to Order:

Opening Prayer (Kristen Scheffel)

November 2021 Minutes reviewed. Motion by Matt Beaton to accept the minutes. Second by Kirsten Scheffel. Accepted (Motion passes unanimously).

Prayer Assignments reviewed

Committee Assignments reviewed – they seem to be in good shape. We should add Mrs. Lisa Buffone to the Marketing and Enrollment Committee. Mr. Antoine Harrison should be added to the Curriculum and Technology Committee.

Principal's Report: Mrs. Harrison shared a story about the coat drive and how students were able to see our Mission come to life in our service to others. We were blessed when one of our parents (who works at BJs wholesale) donated about 15 boxes of new coats, hats and mittens. Our families sent in a tremendous amount of bags, boxes, coats and warm essentials. We distributed these items to Catholic Charities and to two homeless shelters. The 7th graders helped load up vehicles.

COVID update: protocols have been updated and we updated the website to reflect those changes. Our school has had 21 cases to date. We've been lucky with such a small number. On Fridays, Mrs. Harrison will send out a weekly update (dashboard) to tell our community how many cases we've had, what the grade range is and how many close contacts were identified. The dashboard will start this Friday. We've added extra layers of protection since returning to school after the holidays. DESE released a statement today for schools to opt out of close contacts and contact tracing as of January 21st. We will need to discuss with our COVID committee and our nurses. We continue to do contact tracing but with our protocols in place it is making contact tracing easier. Plexiglass is up in the lunchroom between the students. Kids are spread out and we stick with assigned seating now in order to limit contacts.

Staffing: We are still in need of a preschool aide and a lunch cook. People have been floating around in preschool until we can find a permanent aide. Alumni on college break are helping for

now and the children are enjoying it! We have received some applicants and are interviewing this week. A parent has been filling in for the lunchroom and she will stay as long as we need her to.

Enrollment: as of now we have 198 students. Preschool has 22 students. There are 10 students in our 2-day program and 12 students in our 3-day program. Our PreK has 15 students. There are 19 students in Kindergarten. First grade has 15 students; Second grade has 17 students; Third grade has 21 students; Fourth Grade has 18 students; Fifth Grade has 20 students; Sixth Grade has 13 students; Seventh Grade has 19 students and our Eighth Grade has 17 students. We had a few students move away during the school year.

Catholic Schools Weeks is January 30th to February 4th. We are planning events and have committees focusing on activities. Our Open House is on the 30th of January and we are still trying to determine what that will look like this year.

Mr. Beaton expressed concern that we are leaning on vaccines as a crutch and wants us to be cognizant of the fact that anyone can catch COVID and the variant. – even the vaccinated.

Strategic Plan: Mr. Kennedy reminded members that when we meet as committees, we should review the Strategic Plan to address the areas that apply to our committees. We should determine whether any action is needed by our committee in response to the Strategic Plan.

Finance Committee: Mrs. Clifford advised that the Committee met last week and the hot topic of tuition was discussed. This is that time of year that we prepare for enrollment and tuition. We reviewed our competitor's rates and the Committee is proposing an increase in Preschool C, Pre-K and K-8 of \$300 per student. Preschool A is suggested to have an increase of \$50 per student and Preschool B is suggested to have an increase of \$100 per student. These increases will also assist us to create a technology position and give our teachers a modest increase in salary. The Committee seeks a motion to approve the new tuition rates and fees for the 2022 – 2023 school year (book fees and application fees will remain the same). Our competitor's tuition rates are all over \$8,000 and higher than our tuition rates, keeping us competitive. Discussion ensued about the letter to our community from our Chairman (with assistance in drafting by the Finance Committee). Monsignor Mike reminded the group to make sure we have the correct FACTS date to include in the information. A motion was made by Ms. Mayo to approve the new tuition rates for the 2022-2023 school year. Mr. Beaton seconded the Motion. Motion passed (unanimous vote).

Mr. Beaton asked Finance about future projections. Mrs. Clifford explained that the Committee waits until they address the budget and tuition rates first before they address the issues with projections with the Marketing and Enrollment Committee.

Monsignor Mike points out how well we were able to fill preschool and pre-K which was really exciting this year. Mrs. Dolan has received quite a few calls for preschool and pre-K for the coming year. We also had a few new students come into the 7th grade this year – which is unusual but makes sense in light of the public's schools change of schools in the 7th grade.

Curriculum and Technology: Mr. Beaton advised that the Committee met last week. The focus of the meeting was technology and likely will remain for the remainder of the school year. (Mrs. Harrison wishes to assess the curriculum dynamics before making additional big moves). The Committee discussed technology upgrades (we need to purchase a white board in lieu of buying three projectors for the first floor). The Committee talked about different boards that could be purchased but considered the wants/needs of the faculty. The Committee talked about the possibility of buying one board on wheels to make it mobile and could be used if embraced by staff. Pricing ranges from \$3,100 for a clear touch board whereas a google board is closer to \$5,000. The Committee also discussed chrome books. We just received the sixty-two chrome books that we purchased last year. Sean McLoughlin has been great in getting them set up. Google has a 5 year license on the chrome books. We currently have 164 total. Sixty-two were purchased last year. Twenty-five are for faculty. Fifty have expired. Some are leased. Mr. McLoughlin has been working with a vendor and the updated quote with insurance, software, taxes (63 more) is approximately \$22,000- \$23,000 for chrome book updates. Some money is available through Grants and walkathon funds. The Committee is looking at a total of \$31,000 in need for technology. We have been advised that a very generous donor will provide the \$31,000 for the Committee to purchase the equipment needed for technology. Mrs. Clifford and Mr. Beaton discussed a line item in the budget for technology and forecasting needs in the future.

Mr. Beaton gave preliminary information for 70- 80 new chrome books along with the white boards.

Mr. Kennedy asked if teachers would participate in the white board demonstration to see if we can have buy in. (Mrs. Ethier, Mrs. Collins and Mrs. Johnson may be willing to test it out).

Mrs. Harrison stated that she would love to pilot one of the white boards to have training on the board to make sure teachers can use the equipment and get comfortable with it.

Mrs. Muzzy asked about the curriculum technology in coordination with the new equipment.

Advancement Update: Mrs. Scheffel advised that the Committee met on January 11th. The Fund for Saint Mary School is currently at \$55,000 which is made up of 82 individual gifts. This is 122% to goal. One gift was made in memory of someone that died (a grandparent of the School) and the Committee thought it might be nice to purchase something tangible with the gift and update the family as to how their gift was utilized by the School. (Mr. Beaton suggested being focused on specific asks going forward to be more successful in fundraising).

Our Tuition Raffle will run from April 18th to May 9th (post Easter but before the Walkathon). Only 250 tickets will be sold max. We will use Venmo for our community to purchase along with checks. We could allocate the funds to technology. The Committee will talk to the Technology Committee to discuss a more specific need to use the funds for. Tangible items go a long way in fundraising.

Giving Tuesday was November 30th. We received \$3,300 from 20 gifts. These gifts included some new donors. We sent handwritten gratitude notes to certain donors.

Our “Share the Love” event is coming up in February. The Committee would like it to focus on gratitude and while there will likely be a “donate now” opportunity, there will not be an express ask to donors.

Marketing Update: Mrs. Muzzy advised that the Committee met in December. Catholic Schools week is coming up. The theme is a National Theme and is “Catholic Schools: Faith, Excellence and Service”. It fits with our Mission Statement. We will promote the activities through the week including an Open Housing, activities for our students and events for faculty and staff.

We updated the sign on Main Street and changed our banner for the website. Our Open House is from 1pm to 3pm on January 30th and is still being finalized. Advisory Board Members are always welcome to participate and meet our visitors.

The Committee discussed developing a group of Saint Mary School Ambassadors. It would be nice to give prospective parents an opportunity to speak with parents who have children in those grades and hear about personal experiences. The Committee members are going to put a list together to span the grades. Mrs. Carlson suggested opening it out to our community at large to maybe bring in families who may not otherwise participate who may want to serve as Ambassadors. We are hopeful to have a diverse group of Ambassadors because representation is important in our community.

Shrewsbury Public Schools data: projecting 300/ 303 Kindergarten students coming into the system.

Upcoming Events:

- Catholic Schools Week Mass- January 29 @ 4:30pm
- Open House & Registration begins- January 30, from 1:00-3:00pm
- Catholic Schools Week January 31-February 4
- MAP Testing- January 3- February 18 (it was extended)
- Red, White & Pink day- February 14- Out of Uniform
- Winter Break – February 21- 25
- Ash Wednesday- March 2, 8:30am mass

Open Discussion: The Board collaboratively discussed keeping a positive dialogue within our community and encourage parents with concerns to speak to administration and address their concerns.

Mrs. Mahnot wanted to thank Mrs. Harrison for bringing in SYFS to our school. Mrs. Mahnot has heard good feedback and the benefit is much needed/is being utilized by our school families. Mrs. Harrison reported that she has requested two counselors for next year.

Motion was made to adjourn by Mrs. Scheffel.