

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School

Advisory School Board Meeting

May 14, 2025

Advisory Board Members Present: Steve Doecker, Nick Mehdikhan, Mike Niezer, Karen Nazareth, and Zach Schortgen, and Andrew Schroeder

School Administrators Present: Lois Widner, Chris Schuhler, and Stan Liponoga

Clergy Present: Father Terry Coonan and Father Jake Schneider

Guests Present: Elizabeth Schenkel, HASA Representative

Called to Order: 6:33 PM

Agenda

Prior Minutes: The minutes from the April meeting were reviewed by all members present. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Andrew Schroeder and seconded by Zach Schortgen. Unanimous approval followed.

Pastor's Report: Fr. Terry shared that he had no major updates since the last meeting due to travel and other obligations. He noted the school seems to be running smoothly, with no significant concerns reported. He praised the joyful energy of students seen during recess and prayer activities like the Rosary Rally. No questions were raised by the board.

Principal's Report: Lois opened by celebrating the success of the recent Rosary Rally, held outdoors with a guest speaker who added a special dimension to the event. She expressed gratitude for the positive atmosphere and smooth operations throughout the year, and proposed a discussion on board member commitments for the upcoming year. Board members are encouraged to confirm their intentions to continue by early June to allow for planning and transitions.

Lois also acknowledged strong collaboration between board members and school staff, which has been well-received by teachers. The administration emphasized the importance of staggering board term limits to ensure continuity.

Chris reported on spring assessments, noting that ILEARN scores are gradually coming in and looking strong. Second-grade IREAD retesting is underway. Some challenges were noted in science and computer science, and the team will analyze these areas further.

Board members expressed interest in benchmarking results against other Catholic and private schools statewide.

Strategic Plan Progress Reports: Each member shared their updates relative to their committee meetings from April.

- 1) Curriculum – Steve recapped his participation in the latest curriculum committee meeting. The group discussed vertical and horizontal alignment, particularly in writing instruction. Professional development efforts around writing and reading were praised, with many teachers participating in summer training.

Steve emphasized a renewed focus on individualized student growth over comparative rankings. He praised the staff's commitment and shared positive anecdotes about supporting advanced learners by allowing them to explore independently.

- 2) Catholic Identity – Nick reported on future Catholic Identity planning based on Lois' distributed goal sheet. Key themes include strengthening Spirit Pals, using the Hallow app, continuing service projects, pre-scheduling religious celebrations, and deepening the implementation of the Virtues = Strength program.

Stories shared from parents and students illustrated the strong impact of the "Faith with Father" initiative and the overall Catholic culture in the school. Several board members commented on the richness of faith formation and the importance of maintaining high standards, particularly in eighth-grade sacraments and formation milestones.

- 3) Safety, Facilities, and Capital Improvements – Mike reported that teachers submitted end-of-year maintenance and technology requests. These will be prioritized and reviewed. Key summer projects include:
 - a. Installation of 80 new two-way radios
 - b. Relocation of the radio antenna for better building-wide communication
 - c. Converting all exterior doors to badge access (removing key-based entry)
 - d. Investigating cost-effective interior door lock upgrades

Concerns about power outages and access control were raised, and the team will review backup protocols. The board discussed long-term needs around crisis response and ensuring multiple trained personnel can control building security systems.

- 4) Marketing – Karen shared that while her and Jean were unable to meet last month, there has been good progress made. Board members praised event photos and various social media posts continue to build a strong presence and sense of community on social media. Efforts to showcase events photos such as sacraments, the Rosary Rally, and talent shows are helping reinforce the school's strong Catholic values.
- 5) Discipline – Stan shared that The PowerSchool discipline tracking system went live on May 1. Parents received a simple, one-page notification explaining the change. About 40 logs have been entered so far.

Stan and Chris have trained teachers on the new system, including defining major vs. minor incidents and associated actions. Teachers have responded positively, and the system allows for real-time communication with parents and consistent documentation.

- 6) Technology – Chris discussed the piloting of a Securely-powered digital bathroom pass system in middle school. Initial feedback is positive, helping reduce hallway congestion and improve supervision, all without disruption.

Badge use for all students and staff is now standard. Although some issues with the children's consistency persists. Discussions are underway to explore using cards for automated lunch and attendance (bathroom breaks) tracking in the future.

Additional Reports:

- 1) Finance – Andrew presented the ongoing challenge of a projected \$50,000 shortfall in the cafeteria budget due to the loss of federal pandemic-era subsidies and changing interpretations of reimbursable staff time. Key strategies under review:
 - a. Reallocating staff time definitions.
 - b. Automating lunch account communications.
 - c. Potentially increasing volunteer support.
 - d. Exploring private donor support with Parrish Finance Committee awareness.

Breakfast service has already been eliminated due to low participation. More detailed analysis will be presented at the upcoming Finance Committee meeting.

- 2) Policy Changes – An update to the school's AI usage policy is in development. The goal is to help students learn to use AI responsibly under teacher supervision. The new policy will be included in next year's handbook. Teachers and staff are currently using AI appropriately for communication and lesson development.
- 3) Athletics Report – The sixth-grade girls' soccer team won their championship. Monica, the Athletic Director, continues to be a strong leader, establishing clear roles and expectations for coaches and families. End-of-season activities for tennis, track, and softball are wrapping up. Plans are being made for potential St. Elizabeth - hosted cross-country teams. Gym renovations this summer may limit access for sports camps.
- 4) Monthly Success Story – The Art Show and Talent Show were major highlights. The glow-in-the-dark art exhibit was praised for creativity, and student performances left a lasting impression. A special thanks to HASA, for their help procuring the lights and to both Mrs. VanBrunt and Mr. Claudy with the planning and execution of the showcase. A daytime showing of the talent show is planned for next year so more parents can attend.
- 5) HASA Sponsored Summer Reading Program – Elizabeth shared plans for a summer reading incentive program. Students can log 800 minutes of summer reading for a chance at prizes like Culver's coupons and a Kindle. This breaks down to 20 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Participation will be optional but encouraged, with visual pinwheels displayed outside of the school to show collective progress. A goal has been set for 20% of students to participate and complete the challenge. There will be more to come as teachers help to solidify grade appropriate structure and book choice.

Closing: Fr. Terry concluded with a prayer and a thank-you to board members and staff for a successful school year.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:54 PM