

School Board Meeting May 15th

Board members present: Fr. Tom, Ms. Anderson, Mr. Doug Butera, Mr. Matthew Carey, Mrs. Jennine Cullen, Mr. Jeremy Doran, Dr. Denice Franco, Mr. David Morosky, Mrs. Debbie Stolz and Mrs. Jennifer Vos.

Board members excused: Dr. Gus Mantia, Mrs. Lucy Kenton

Fr. Tom opened the meeting with a prayer.

Jennifer Vos- President: Introduction of the Board members, Mrs. Virginia Portanova, our Parish business manager and Mr. Brendan McGovern, our Parish Trustee

Principals Report- Ms. Anderson

If anyone is interested in becoming a board member, please reach out to Ms. Anderson. You must be an active member of the parish.

Enrollment numbers: 177 students were registered in May of last year. We currently have 180 enrolled. Ms. Anderson discussed numbers for each grade and how they affect tuition.

Ms. Anderson also discussed the importance of promoting our school, through social media, and outreach to neighboring parishes. This year we had several successful events; two local parades (Kings Park and St. James), open school tours, and social media promotions- "Smithtown Moms".

Ms. Anderson discussed the Centennial events and the funds raised (BBQ, Comedy Night, Anniversary Journal, Gala) altogether made \$71,000. All these proceeds will go to the school to help defray our operating deficit for this year.

Tuition will be raised to \$7500 for one child K-8 with significant savings for families with 2 or more children. Our tuition rates are competitive with other local Catholic schools.

There will be a 2% discount for those that pay by Aug 31st. Tuition is paid in 10 monthly payments.

Financial report- Virginia Portanova and Brendan McGovern

A brief financial update was given to school families at which time the school's budget was discussed. Teacher Salary will increase by 10%, and this is the reason for tuition increase.

There is an ideal goal to have 204 enrolled students which would help keep the school on solid financial footing. We currently have 156 students enrolled for next year, this does not include any possible students that may enroll. We continue to give tours of our school to new families. The budget is based on actual numbers for those who are enrolled for next year. Any increase in enrollment will help close the deficits in operating the school.

Our tuition only covers the base salary of the teachers, not including any benefits. The Guild fundraising and parish contributions pay for the operating expenses of the school and allows the school to expand their technology and curriculum.

The school needs at least 16 students in each grade to cover the base salary of that teacher, not including benefits or any aides in the classroom. Last year, the school operated in a deficit because we only had 180 students instead of 204 kids. This is the first year we operated in a deficit.

The parish wants to see the school succeed and is open to all ideas on how to increase enrollment. While 204 is ideal, each class needs at least 16 students to cover the cost of that teacher's base salary.

Our student retention rate is very good, particularly in the academic grades. We have had more success recently in enrolling students in the grade levels 1-8 in the last year, whereas usually we rely primarily on Nursery and Pre-K enrollment to help boost enrollment numbers.

The idea of incentivizing new families to enroll by offering a limited number of students in each class a tuition discount at the end of their first school year was raised. This is a possibility but will need further discussion on how to exactly implement any incentive program.

It's important to know we are trying to be as proactive as possible regarding our current enrollment downward trend.

The decision to close a Catholic school is made by the diocese and education department.

Chair report-Jennifer Wos

We have a 3-prong approach to further our reach into the Community: Social Media, Community Parish Outreach, and Fundraising

1-Social media campaign: To better spotlight our school on Instagram and Facebook, we need families to create various posts that are ready-to-share for Instagram and Facebook. Some

examples of these posts would be a family spotlight or a student testimonial. We'd love to see pictures of your children in their uniforms, participating in SSPJ activities, and doing community service. In addition, we simply need people to comment and share school postings.

We plan to do more Facebook and Instagram ads as they have been shown to boost recruitment, and they are relatively inexpensive.

Ms. Anderson has had a few families tour the school after hearing about us from a Facebook group called "Smithtown Moms". If you belong to that group, or any other Community group on Facebook, please post on these sites about our great little school!

We have links to three websites where parents can leave a review of our school: Facebook, Google, and Great Schools. Your positive comments can have a big impact on parents who are trying to find a good fit for their child.

If anyone has a deeper knowledge about marketing or social media algorithms from your profession or personal life, please let Ms. Anderson or a school board member know. It would be helpful to have your input.

2-Outreach to other parishes: We have a list of about 12 parishes in the surrounding community that do not have a parish or regional school. Would you be willing to speak with the Pastor or contact the Rectory to find out if you or someone from our school could:

- Speak at the end of a family liturgy
- Hand out information about our school after mass
- Leave some information about our school at the back of the church
- Add a school flier to their bulletin

Any one of those things could really help to get our school's name out to practicing Catholics! The Diocese has hired someone to help connect Catholic schools with other parishes, and Ms. Anderson has already done this at Infant Jesus Parish. We need more of this!

3-Fundraising: School parents are automatic members of the school guild. There are many great fundraising events throughout the year.

- Would you be willing to run an event?
- Or really promote one of the existing events by reaching out to a favorite local business or two for raffle basket donations?
- Or sell extra raffle tickets to the big school raffles we have?

Every little bit helps move the needle to meet our fundraising goals. This year, with enrollment a bit lower, we will need all hands-on deck! Many long-lasting friendships and fond memories have been created by running guild events.

Do you have contacts or think any business would help our school with a large sponsorship or endowment? We are looking to have sponsorships for the drama production, and possibly the bigger clubs to help bridge gaps in our funding.

The school board will be speaking with a fundraising consultant at our next school board meeting to help widen our reach in the Community.

Q&A Session

Lots of wonderful ideas were brainstormed:

- Maximizing exposure of our school at the Family Festival by advertising the school and trying to make contact with local newspapers or News Channel 12.

- Monthly Bingo hosted by each class, this is a community builder and could help increase fundraising capabilities.

- To get more families involved in school guild events the idea was mentioned making participation mandatory. In past years this was part of a parent commitment. This will be something discussed further.

We will have more frequent open school board meetings to help build community and further transparency.

Many new Fundraising ideas were mentioned: Splish Splash Day, 5K run, Golf Outing, Casino Night