

Saint Thomas the Apostle Board of Education Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board on Thursday, February 8, 2018

The meeting began at 6 p.m. and concluded at 7:50 p.m.

Board Packets submitted to members on: February 6, 2018.

1/11/18- E-mail requesting input on "Who do I contact list"

1/23/18- Draft of "Who Do I Contact" Reminder for review

2/2/18- Meeting reminder and request for materials

HOMEWORK/TO DO LIST:

Committee Chairs: Please submit a report of this year's completed work and remaining goals for the year to Suzi Furtwangler by 4 pm on February 26th.

Please turn in Committee plans for next year to Christi Blum by March 1, 2018

CALENDAR ITEMS:

School Events:

Early Registration Closes: February 16, 2018

Parent Teacher Conferences: February 16, 2018

Winter Break: February 19 & 20, 2018

Bishop's Rescheduled Visit: February 26, 2018

State of the School Meetings: March 6 & 7, 2018

Next Board Meeting: EARLIER IN THE MONTH THAN USUAL: Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 6 pm

Spring Diocesan Board Summit: Thursday, April 26, 2018 at 6:30 pm at Cathedral Square

Meeting Agenda

I. **Opening Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler

II. **Pastor's Report-** Fr. Jim Chelich

Fr. Jim attended briefly to thank the Board for its work, comment favorably on the results of the Capital Campaign, and comment on how the example of Audrey Jandernoa's brief life offered a snapshot of our values and affirmed the community of faith.

III. **Concerns of Visitors-** John Schuring

a. Note was made of the slipperiness of the exit drive's slope at Children's Healing Center/ Fulton Carline and additional salting/ sanding was proposed.

b. A request was made to obtain and furnish parents with class-wide high school placement test results and/or to obtain a sense of how well the class has done in comparison to other classes throughout the diocese. The discussion also touched upon how to protect students' privacy, specifically for diverse learners within the school, and how test results should be put into context to account for all the different portions of the student population.

IV. **Approval of Consent Agenda Items-** John Schuring

a. The minutes from the prior meeting were unanimously approved without amendment.

VI. **Administrator's Report-** Suzi Furtwangler

a. **Holland Home**

The Holland Home Committee is preparing to place an offer on the small parking lot behind the school. A letter has been presented to the Bishop informing him of the desire to

secure, at a minimum, the purchase of the small parking lot behind the school. The letter to the Bishop also presented the hopes to purchase additional property from Holland Home. Holland Home continues to talk of wanting to leave a good legacy, to find a use for the property that will carry on parts of Holland Home's mission, and its willingness to collaborate with Saint Thomas—including its ongoing offer to allow Saint Thomas time pay for the purchase. The Holland Home Committee continues to work on building partnerships, identifying how the property might be shared with those prospective partners, and finding financing/ investors/ donors for these expansion efforts.

b. Diocesan Exit Survey Results for “Registered, but No Show” students.

The exit survey results provided were for 6 students who registered at Saint Thomas and then did not attend and were generated through Infinite Campus. (These were not mid-year departure exit surveys). Included in the survey results were three students who are currently attending Blandford for a year. The Board's attention was directed to two portions of the surveys concerning the effectiveness of diocesan marketing efforts and to the comments from the families. Discussion included of the results generated: a suggestion to resume new family outreach of “adopt a family” that pairs an experienced school family with an incoming one and described typical follow-up efforts by the administration when a family enrolls and/or disenrolls, and touched upon the possibility of the Board conducting exit interviews for Saint Thomas in the future.

c. Bullying/ Mean Behavior

The Board discussed whether the current policies to prevent bullying and to promote the dignity of each student are being followed as they should be. Discussion of the topic yielded the following recommendations: 1) talk about the topic/raise awareness, 2) provide tools, 3) create a paper trail, 4) consider methods to help the children engaged in bullying types of behaviors become aware of their behavior and the effects of their actions 5) involve whole classes in discussions to come together to identify behaviors and solutions, and 6) work on bringing awareness of the policy, signs of a possible issue, and possible tools to the attention of families at the start of each year. Members of the Policy and Planning Committee and Mission Effectiveness Committee agreed to collaborate on recommendations concerning this topic.

d. Administrative Update and Succession Planning

Three State of the School meetings are planned between March 6th and 7th. The Board chair will attend the meetings to support the principal and promote the Board. Suzi requested that the Board Committees submit a list of work done to date this year as well as work in progress for the remainder of the year to present at the meetings. It is anticipated that parents will present questions about physical space and the multiage program. A suggestion was made that the presentation on the multiage programs may benefit by offering background information on both what the traditional grade by grade program offers as well as what the multiage program offers and to develop comparison and contrast points about the offerings of the two programs.

e. Spanish Teacher/ Middle School Foreign Language

A substitute middle school Spanish teacher for the remainder of the year has been found. The teacher was found by asking Dave Faber about recent graduates who may be looking for jobs and then presenting those candidates to GRPS for approval. The departure of the GRPS middle school Spanish teacher revived the question: Is the turbulence of participation the GRPS Share Time Program worth the budgetary savings of not paying for a Saint Thomas teacher? Additional questions raised during the discussion include: 1) Should Saint Thomas continue offering Spanish or consider allowing students a choice of languages, possibly Chinese? 2) What type of curriculum would provide our students for a) successful learning and b)

continuity into high school? 3) Is a traditional classroom teacher required? 4) Or is an innovative virtual learning program possible and prudent? 5) Should Saint Thomas explore virtual methodology used at West Catholic and investigate other technology based options? 6) Should Saint Thomas ask Saint Stephen's School for what makes its Spanish program successful? 7) Why does Saint Thomas offer a language program? (Answered: due to parent demand and because all other schools do.) and 8) Is Saint Thomas offering a quality language program?

The Board wants the school to make sure that whatever language option is chosen, that it is one that well serves our student population: both in content and in implementation. The Board affirmed that if something is worth offering, it should be **done well**. As with any proposed changes to middle school curricula, possible scheduling issues are anticipated, particularly for the students engaged in advanced math classes. The Curriculum Committee agreed to research middle school language options.

f. Education Support Services- ESS

The Board requested additional clarity on the services currently offered through ESS, identification of any gaps in services offered and those sought by school families, and identification of ways for the program to grow.

VII. **Board Deliberations-** John Schuring/ Suzi Furtwangler

a. **2018-2019 Budget Process Overview-** Matt Maczka

The Budget will remain in a highly fluid state until enrollment numbers are received and hiring plans for a Spanish instructor and/or Assistant Principal are clarified. The budget will be the focus of the March meeting.

Early enrollment is in progress. Any current family who has not enrolled by 2/16/18 will be contacted. New families' enrollment packets have been numbered and dated in case of oversubscription to a class. The Pre-school and Kindergarten Roundups were "packed." Additionally, families, including some from other Catholic schools, have been touring the upper grades. Enrollment appears to be on track for the current projected budget.

b. **Strategic Planning Implementation-** Erin Schmuker

The Board had a condensed discussion of proposed extra programming to best meet the needs of the community with the goal of identifying whether any of the proposed programming could or even should be enacted for the 2018-2019 school year.

Comprehensive before and aftercare, while highly desired, was nonetheless in-actionable at this time due to space constraints and the uncertainty of what will happen with the Holland Home property. Likewise, implementation of alternative daycare models: either an early learning Montessori style or a multi-generational approach with seniors was deemed in-actionable at this time for the same reasons. Other proposals included a continued revamping of the Volunteers in Partnership program (VIP). Goals of the revamp include moving from a paper model to a databased model to capture a wider pool of applicants and a greater variety of talents/ services. Hopes include providing continuous, real time, responsive requests for volunteers and expanding the calls beyond the parent population to include: extended family (grandparents, etc.), alumni, parishioners and neighborhood partners. Initiatives to expand academic clubs were tabled at this time. The clubs are plagued by a lack of continuity when parent leadership transitions away. The administration wants to guard against possible faculty and staff burnout from asking them to increase duties to run the clubs. It was thought that perhaps the revamp of the Volunteer program might assist in the goal of adding clubs in time. The final topic discussed was Board engagement. The discussion centered on how to get interested parties to serve, while simultaneously addressing

Board needs for certain key committees that lack leadership due to a lack of necessary knowledge in the proposed areas. Discussion also talked about the need to strengthen Board committees by having actual committees (beyond just the Director/Member) that can accomplish the identified work of the Board. A recommendation was made to have anyone interested in joining the Board as a Director/ Member be required to serve on a Board committee for one year prior to joining the Board as a Director. Erin offered to assist in creating a Board profile to begin recruiting additional Directors/ Members for the 2018-2019 year. Continued discussions on strategic planning at the next meetings will address physical space.

c. **Adoption of Restated Bylaws-** John Schuring/ Christi Blum

The model of Bylaws provided by the Diocese of Grand Rapids was adopted to serve as a baseline governance document for the Board. The Board expressed a desire to amend some of the Bylaws to more closely reflect practices at Saint Thomas. Amendments to the Bylaws are allowed as long as the Amendments do not conflict with Diocesan policy. The Policy and Planning Committee agreed to draft proposed Amendments for the Board's consideration in response to the topics raised primarily: composition of the Board, meetings, and limits upon the Board's authority/ oversight.

VIII. **Committees and Organizations: Reports and Action Items**

a. **Outreach & Development Committee-** Betsy Edgerton

The committee discussed its enrollment efforts as part of the Budget Process Overview.

b. **Mission Effectiveness-** Jessica Poelma

Relied upon the written report.

c. **Curriculum Committee-** Jenni Little

The curriculum committee committed to assisting the Administration with its exploration of strengthening middle school foreign language. The committee wants to continue its focus on Art and STEM programming.

d. **Finance Committee-** Matt Maczka

The committee's work was discussed as part of Budget Process Overview.

e. **Policy & Planning Committee -** Christi Blum

The committee's work was discussed under Adoption of Restated Bylaws . The committee will also help with a review of current policy touching upon "bullying." Please turn in committee plans for next year to the Policy and Planning Committee.

f. **Building & Grounds Committee -** Tracy Bandlow

The committee requested input concerning ways to best serve the community while the Holland Home Committee does its work. A discussion about possible development/use of a long term maintenance plan, development/use of a maintenance cycle, and the challenges of funding a maintenance cycle followed.

g. **Holland Home-** John Schuring

The committee's work was discussed as part of the Administrator's briefing.

h. **Fundraising/ Development-** John Schuring

The committee is the information gathering and formation process.

i. **Education Foundation-** Judi Serba

The Foundation will be meeting on Tuesday to award the mini-grants to applicants.

h. **Boosters-** Amy Bocian

The representative requested to be excused from the meeting due to other obligations.

j. **Home and School-** Amy Ziemer

The representative requested to be excused from the meeting due to other obligations.

IX. **Closing Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler

ATTENDANCE:

Voting Members

President, Board Effectiveness Committee chair, John Schuring: Present
Vice President, Finance Committee chair, Matt Maczka: Present
Secretary, Policy & Planning Committee, Christi Blum: Present
Development & Outreach co-chair, Bryan Rellinger: Excused
Development & Outreach co-chair, George Sharpe: Present
Mission Effectiveness chair, Jessica Poelma: Present
Curriculum Committee chair, Jenni Little: Present
Curriculum Committee, Stacy Slomski: Present
Policy & Planning Committee, Joanne Swan Jones: Excused
Building and Grounds Committee chair, Tracy Bandlow: Present
Finance Committee, James Leonard: Excused
Fiscal Charitable Giving Committee, Erin Schmuker: Present
, Chuck Rushmore: Present

Non-Voting Ex Officio Members and/or guests

Additional Attendees: Nancy Kennedy
Principal, Suzi Furtwangler: Present
Development & Outreach Dir., Betsy Edgerton: Excused
Home & School President, Amy Ziemer: Excused
Co-coordinator of Finance, Marie Miller: Absent
Pastor, Fr. Jim Chelich: Present
Assistant Principal,
Education Foundation Pres., Judi Serba: Present
Boosters President, Amy Bocian: Excused
Dir. Religious Formation, Patti Reynolds: Absent

Proposed Schedule of Topics for the 2017- 2018 Year

August 30 -Retreat
September 14 -Facilities planning and annual goal setting
October 18(W) -Vote on Adoption of Strategic Plan
November 9 -Diocesan Board Training/ Board Summit at Cathedral Square
December 14(W) -Implications of Holland Home Move discussion
January 11 -Visit from the Superintendent of Catholic Schools
February 8 -Setting the tuition rate for the 2018-2019 school year
- Initial 2018-2019 Budget Discussions
- Ongoing Holland Home Property Discussion
-Continuing Strategic Planning
March 1 - 2018-2019 Budget Planning
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April 12 -
May 10 -
June 14 -Year-end wrap up