

Saint Thomas the Apostle Board of Education Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board on Thursday, May 29, 2018

The meeting began at 6 pm.

Board Packets submitted to members on: September 11, 2018.

Board Homework:

CALENDAR ITEMS:

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, October , 2018 at 6 pm

Diocesan Board Summit: Wednesday, November 7, 2018 at 6:30 pm at Cathedral Square.

Meeting Agenda

- I. **Opening Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler
- II. **Pastor's Report-** Fr. Jim Chelich
 - a.
- III. **Concerns of Visitors-** John Schuring
 - a. The success of the spring musical, Peter Pan, was praised. There are plans to continue the program next year including Emily Brunner agreeing to be the director again and plans to seek funding from the Education Foundation. This segued the discussion include the plans to support more Fine Arts opportunities at school, but that people are needed to support these plans and efforts.
 - b. Praise for Mission Effectiveness and Adoration Program. The work of the Mission Effectiveness Committee was praised as "being in good hands" during the Board Information session and the Adoration program as well as all the work done by the committee was also acknowledged as being treated as if it were a vocation by other Board members during this portion of the meeting.
 - c. Additionally, plans for an Annual Report were discussed at this portion of the meeting and suggestions for other items to include in the report were made throughout the remainder of the meeting.
- III. **Approval of Consent Agenda Items-** John Schuring
 - a. Due to the later than normal dissemination of the Board Packets (due to the changed meeting time and holiday weekend), the Board agreed defer discussion of the April meeting minutes to the June meeting.
- IV. **Administrator's Report-** Suzi Furtwangler
 - a. **Enrollment** is at 349 students with more tours of prospective families scheduled.
 - b. **Holland Home-** All interested parties are waiting on Holland Home to determine if it will keep the property after all or continue to search for a buyer. Saint Thomas has made its interests known and will keep in contact with both Holland Home and/or the interested lead buyer. Suzi remains optimistic that Saint Thomas will be able to grow.
 - c. **Exit Interviews-** Discussion from the last meeting was renewed to clarify who to survey and when to conduct the surveys, especially with respect to the graduating eighth grader students. Points considered included: survey fatigue optimizing survey participation, optimizing time to gain accurate and constructive viewpoints (there was concern about gathering falsely negative feedback due to minor disgruntlement if high school plans were not unfolding as

families anticipate), whether information could be lost over time if one waits to ask about experiences for an entire family until the youngest child (especially for large families and/or families who have significant gaps between the ages of the students attending). Discussion reiterated the need to coordinate with the parish exit interviews when a family is concurrently leaving the school and the parish. Discussion also proposed considering an entrance interview to learn why families are choosing Saint Thomas. Erin Schmucker offered to work on the entrance interviews. A final discussion point recalled that the Strategic Planning process had suggested surveying families who had transferred to Saint Thomas or had out of town experiences to capture ideas. It was proposed that as a larger than normal number of families seem to be transitioning from a local school, that if those reasons for transfer could be captured as part of the surveying process, it could be informative. This idea was built upon by suggestion that since the transfers may be resulting from a change in parish leadership; it would be worth exploring the dynamics of the transition process to inform future anticipated leadership transitions at Saint Thomas.

d. **MAP Scores-** Suzi indicated that she recently received the spring MAP scores. She expressed concern that the scores, especially those for the math portion of the test, did not seem reflect the experience that our students do well in math. Suzi indicated she was searching for reasons for the possible discrepancy between what the teachers see in the classroom and the math scores. Proposed methods to address the discrepancy included: 1) additional professional development training on how to assess the students and use available assessment tools more effectively, 2) considering whether the Bridges math curriculum is teaching theory, but not providing enough opportunity for “drill and kill” type practice, (Suzi wondered if the questions are presented in a way that is unfamiliar to the students or if they are having trouble transitioning from theory to application of math concepts, 3) considering taking a monthly 10 minute assessment math test from MAP to get a progression of snapshots of incremental progress (this would be in addition to the regular “big” spring and fall MAP testing in all 4 subjects: Language Arts, Reading, Science and Math), and 4) asking Jill Annabelle, the Assistant School Superintendent for assistance in analyzing the scores and seeing if there are similar diocesan pattern (which could support the theory of to a possible curriculum issue). Suzi expressed concern that while the test may be beneficial in that it is prescriptive and adaptive, it is limited in that it only provides two “snap shots” of progress. She is concerned that snap shot nature of the test is not good for measuring where the school is, although acknowledges that it is very good at assessing where students may need help and can be linked to the IXL program to direct students to practice areas for growth.

e. **Successful alumni at Catholic Central-** Suzi disclosed that a number of former students had been recognized with various awards at Catholic Central. These successes will be included in the Annual Report.

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

a. **Board Summit Summaries**

1) Other Boards address Strategic Planning extensively at their annual retreats (2+ hrs.) and then again in bite sized intervals in a dedicated portion of at each Board business meeting.

2) Saint Thomas was cited as an exemplar in the Finance session. Overall, there is emphasis on the need for increased transparency and planning for the cost of a Catholic education, especially high school costs.

3) Safety was a new topic at the Spring Summit. Lots of time was spent at the summit discussing “active shooter” scenario preparations as well as the need and desire to constantly review best practices and apply the practices to the unique needs and circumstances

of each school. Recommendations were made at the Summit for each Board to consider having a Safety Committee. Safety issues also seemed to overlap with the Bullying efforts and concerns about safety in church too. Suzi responded by informing the Board of current safety efforts at church and school including: ongoing crisis training, various partnership efforts with the GRPD, and Fr. Jim's awareness of the topic and efforts to protect those in church. These efforts were to be included in the Annual report and a recommendation was made that the Board also consider designating a Community Relations Board member to increase community awareness of the good work already being done in numerous areas, including safety.

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

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

A written report was prepared. In addition, Betsy highlighted that the Saint Thomas Facebook page continues to grow with 1.5 K views and engagements with the site recently. She is excited to expand the Lap Time program to other Holland Home facilities in the fall.

b. **Mission Effectiveness-** Jessica Poelma

The Committee relied upon its written report due to an unforeseen inability to attend.

c. **Curriculum Committee-** Jenni Little

The Committee noted its intent to work on the exit interview process/procedure. Thanks given to the Education Foundation for funding the recently arrived Lego Mind Storm programs that the 4th to 8th graders will use next year.

d. **Finance Committee-** Matt Maczka

The Committee indicated that the April Month in Income Statement could be misleading. The bottom line is that the overall operating budget is "right where it is supposed to be", despite a misleading bottom line that appears greater than it is in actuality. The discrepancy comes from items being listed as income that are in reality outside the operating budget- such as the ESS donations. The miscalculation of the student body mix (more students at a lower tuition rate than projected) could have created a deficit, but was offset by salary savings created by the departure of the assistant principal.

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

The Committee discussed the amendments to the Bylaws submitted in tis written report and asked for thoughts on how to handle the diocesan prohibition against serving on the Board if one or one's family members are employed at either the parish or school, in light of the many varying types of employment opportunities. The Committee received recommendations to handle full time/ contractual employment as a complete bar and handle peripheral employment as a conflict of interest disclosure. Contacting the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools was also recommended.

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

The Committee reported that the cost of the updated water fountains would be \$1,000.00 each with approximately and additional \$100.00 in additional materials (like pipes) to complete the installations.

g. **Technology Committee-** Chuck Rushmore

The Committee indicated that it has sent an e-mail to the school's technology director to begin to understand existing processes and to reach out to the faculty to invite their concerns and issues. It is anticipated that the Committee will work with the director to figure out plans for both anticipated and emergency replacements and to determine whether to lease or buy is best for the school's technology needs.

g. **Holland Home**- John Schuring

The Committee relied upon the report concerning Holland Home made during the Administrator's briefing.

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

Nothing additional to report.

i. **Finance Council**- Nancy Kennedy

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

j. **Education Foundation**- Judi Serba

The Foundation confirmed that it plans to fund next year's spring musical. It plans to offer \$15,000 for larger grants and \$5,000 for smaller grants again next year, but will divide the monies into two application periods (September and January) to address needs that may arise during the year. The corpus of the Foundation is at approximately \$2,000,000 and generates \$60,000 to be spent annually. It was suggested that the school and/or the Foundation explore options like participation in a "Donor's Choice" matching funds program like the one at PNC. It was not known if being a private, religious school would preclude participation in this type of program that is essentially a reapplication of crowd funding.

k. **Boosters**- Amy Bocian-

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

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

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

VII. **Closing Prayer**- Suzi Furtwangler

