

## **Saint Thomas the Apostle Board of Education Minutes from the Second Regular Meeting of the Board, Thursday, October 13, 2016**

The meeting began at 6 p.m. and concluded at approximately 7:45 p.m.

**Board Packets submitted to members:** Minutes sent on October 10, 2016. Principal's Report & Packet sent on October 12, 2016. **E-mails to members:** September 20, 2016 concerning diocesan enrollment, October 5, 2016 concerning meeting reminders.

**HOMEWORK/TO DO LIST:** Nothing to note.

### **CALENDAR ITEMS:**

**School Events:** Giving "Too-sday" on November 29, 2016, Advent by Candlelight on December 2, 2016

**Next Board Meeting:** Thursday, November 10, 2016, 6- 7 pm

**Next Committee Meeting(s):** Please provide this information to Christi for inclusion in next month's minutes. The Board is considering asking its Committee Chairs to present information at Tuesday Talk sometime after January. The Chairs would provide a brief explanation of the ongoing work of the Board of Education's Committees and how parents can participate in Committee work.

### **TAKE NOTE ITEMS:**

Members were asked to consider whether Strategic Planning should be a stand-alone committee that includes parents and/or parishioners and to consider heading said committee.

### **CARRY OVER ITEMS:**

Strategic Planning discussions have been tabled since September due to time constraints.

### **Meeting Agenda**

- I. **Opening Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler
- II. **Visitor Communications-**
  - a. Dave Faber, Superintendent of Schools presented a report concerning the Bishop's Bridging Faith and the Future Initiative and briefly discussed the results of some diocesan year end surveys from May 2016 as well as speaking to the new accreditation process and results. He also provided various pieces of literature including: 1) School Board Online Training Instructions; 2) an Invitation to Round II Discussions for Catholic Schools: Bridging Faith and Future, a Draft Plan for the Bridging Faith and Future Plan for Catholic School Vitality including a Glossary of Terms; 3) results of the diocesan Superintendent Assessment from May 2016; 4) the diocese wide results from the Catholic School Board Assessment (white survey results); and the 5) Saint Thomas specific Catholic School Board Assessment (green survey results) which he mentioned had only 3 responses and was therefore not enough responses to form a valid sampling of responses at the Saint Thomas level.

### 1. **Bridging Faith and the Future discussion:**

The Bishop sees schools as a way to implement the New Evangelization. The future of church attendance has been statically linked to a child's attendance at a Catholic school at some point in the child's education. Those with no Catholic schooling only attend Mass at a rate of 5%. Only 15% of the 41,000 baptized Catholic children in Grand Rapids are using Catholic schools. (25% when religious education programs are included.)

Lessons learned: Many parents won't send children to Catholic unless invited to do so. Dave spoke on the invitational outreach efforts to attract parents to Catholic schools and indicated the response to the outreach has been favorable, even from individuals who are not interested in pursuing a Catholic education for their children.

Grand Rapids was leading the trend in Michigan in *disenrollment* prior to the Bishop's Initiative. Since the Bishop's initiative, (2 years), Grand Rapids is now the only diocese showing growth. This year there are 140 new preschoolers enrolled diocese wide.

Welcome Scholarships are working: 84.7% retention rate overall. (Lowest retention point is preschool as many never intended to attend Catholic schools beyond preschool. 88.8% retained at the grade school level, 91.6% retained at the high school level.)

The Welcome Scholarship program began at \$3 million to be used over 3 years.

Program is being extended to 4.7 years due to: 1) success based on use and retention statics, 2) four families added an additional \$675,000 to the fund, and 3) less funds being used than projected. Faber mentioned that the Welcome Scholarships have generated income for the schools and ideas on how to continue getting money to fund the scholarships are sought.

### 2. **Superintendent Effectiveness** survey results discussion:

Dave Faber mentioned that although he is the diocesan superintendent, that schools also have a local superintendent in the pastor. Faber is trying to increase his visibility in response to the survey findings. He spoke on the Better Together Alliance of Catholic Schools to expand the ministry of Catholic Schools. He spoke on efforts to communicate more with teachers and school boards. The survey also revealed that school board were requesting increased support from the superintendent's office.

3. He presented that the Bridging Faith and Future was in the second phase of a three year plan, and that the current phase is seeking feedback on a draft plan for the vitality of schools. He issued a copy of the draft plan to the Board. He suggested using the **Diocesan Plan for School Vitality map and modifying it for individual schools as each seeks to implement its own strategic plan.** The next phase will be presenting the plan to the boards, pastors and principals.

4. He spoke regarding the **new accreditation system.** The new program is designed to be challenging with "intense rubrics" and to give even the best schools impetus to strive for additional growth and improvement, i.e. "up their game." Ten of the diocesan schools have been reviewed under the new standards. The highest scores in the new system are reported to be extremely hard to obtain and low scores are apparently to be expected. The results for Saint Thomas were characterized as "very good." The Board was asked to keep aspects of the report confidential until a formal announcement is

made. Discussion also held about looking beyond Grand Rapids to establish benchmarks of Saint Thomas' performance. Discussion that principal's attendance at NCEA sessions could be one informal way to acquire benchmarks of other schools, but that tracking is not a built in component of the new accreditation system and might be inconsistent with Catholic practices as it could unfairly place a school at the bottom when it does not have the resources that are available to other schools that received stronger scores- don't want to ostracize schools. Discussion held about the discontinuation of Schools of Distinction designations and whether something similar would be implemented.

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

- a. Board Minutes were amended to reflect that the Principal (and not the Board as printed in the minutes) was to identify the 5 areas from the accreditation survey to be addressed. A chart of the 5 areas identified was presented to the Board as part of the e-mailed meeting materials. Otherwise the minutes were approved.

IV. **Principal's Report-** Suzi Furtwangler

- a. Relied largely upon the materials submitted via e-mail with presentation. Mention made of a donation made that is to be dedicated to S.T.E.M. expenses. Mention made of Sue VanderZee's retirement- a loss of 15 administrative hours per week. The Board received an update on hiring/use of GRPS teachers with respect to Spanish (hiring Mrs. Perdue for middle school) and the technology teacher (trying to hire Mr. Spooner since a GRPS salary for a substitute will not support his family). Mention also made of the uncertainty about dates and processes in the diocesan mandated transition between PSAS to SMART Aid to determine tuition assistance.

V. **Committee Reports:**

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

Grandparents' Day planned for October 21, 2016. Representatives from the school, parish, and Education Foundation will be featured.

Children will be introduced to National Giving "Too-sday" for November 29, 2016.

Explanations will be given of volunteerism, prayer and financial contributions as ways of giving. Children will be encouraged to give can return receipts and/or change to support the Children's Healing Center.

Advent by Candlelight will be held on December 2, 2016 and feature Amanda Winn.

There are hopes to reschedule the family Movie Night that was cancelled due to weather.

- b. **Mission Effectiveness Committee-** Jessica Poelma

The Board received continued reporting concerning the proposed adoption of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) as the primary religion curriculum for Grades 1-5. Discussion centered on how the extent of the program, the catechist(s), and the children, have to grow through participation in the program from level to level. The curriculum is different in that it is Montessori based and requires catechists to have been trained in and then to have taught all the levels up to and including the level for which they would provide instruction. (There are three levels: Level 1 is for ages 3-6, Level 2 is for ages 6-9 and Level 3 is for ages 9-12.) While there are many catechists

trained at the lower levels, there are perhaps only three Level 3 catechists currently in the diocese at large, including Annette Whitely and MaryAnn Bridge (Saint Thomas Kindergarten teacher). A question is whether Saint Thomas would need to hire a catechist to teach the curriculum at the higher levels (2&3) until other teachers who were interested could undergo the time consuming and costly training process. There was also a question of whether having a catechist teach would be off putting to current faculty members who enjoy teaching at a Catholic school because they want to teach religion. It is thought that children in the program would need about 6 classroom hours of instruction per week (there are considerations of how to block/schedule this for maximum learning) and that the hiring need might therefore be 15 hours a week to teach multiple sections or multiple grades. In addition to possible salary costs, there are costs to purchase the curriculum and costs for teacher training. Foreseen benefits of the change include the children having a better encounter of Christ and keeping up with the religious offerings at peer Catholic schools in Grand Rapids. Teachers still need to be consulted. Parent education about the program would need to be provided. A decision should be made on this soon. The Tuesday Talk for October 25<sup>th</sup> featured a sample lesson from the pilot Theology of the Body program.

c. **Finance Committee-** Matt Maczka

The school is working with Marie Miller, the new parish Finance coordinator. The budget process will be fairly cut and dried as tuition is largely determining by enrollment and expenses. A check will be made as to what other diocesan schools are doing with regards to tuition and a statistical report requested from the diocese. Additionally, talk was made of continuing Dawn's prior work about breaking costs down for families at each tuition price point.

d. **Curriculum Committee-** Jenni Little ***On 11/7/2016, committee chair, Jenni Little, proposed the following summary of her report in lieu of the previously provided secretary's summary.***

*The curriculum committee has been tasked to research K-8 curriculum materials that align with Next Generation Science Standards. All Catholic schools in the Grand Rapids Diocese will be aligning their science curriculum with these standards. Holly Lake met with the curriculum committee to provide background information on Next Generation Science standards. Teachers are looking for the school to purchase "kits" that will allow for more experiments and scientific inquiry in the classroom. It was recommended the committee look into Battle Creek Science Center and Pearson Education.*

VI. **Board Deliberations and Committee Action Items-** Suzi Furtwangler

- a. Strategic Planning Process- This topic was touched upon briefly as the Board was asked to consider whether it wished to address this topic as an entire board, or create a committee (possibly with parent and parishioner involvement) to address Strategic planning. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to table discussion of Strategic Planning until the November Board Meeting.

VII. **Closing Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Voting Members:**

President, John Schuring: Present  
Vice President and Financial chair, Matt Maczka: Present  
Secretary, Christi Blum: Present  
Development & Outreach co-chair, Bryan Rellinger: Excused  
Development & Outreach co-chair, George Sharpe: Excused  
Policy & Planning chair, Stacy Slomski: Present  
Mission Effectiveness chair, Jessica Poelma: Present  
Curriculum Committee chair, Jenni Little: Present  
Joanne Swan Jones: Excused  
Tracy Bandlow: Present  
Development & Outreach member, Betsy Edgerton: Present

**Non-Voting Ex Officio Members:**

Additional Attendees: None	Pastor, Fr. Jim Chelich: Absent
Principal, Suzi Furtwangler: Present	Assistant Principal, Liz Peters: Present
Co-ordinator of Finance, Marie Miller: Absent	Home & School President, Amy Ziemer: Absent
Education Foundation President, Judi Serba: Present	Director of Religious Formation, Patti Reynolds: Absent

**Proposed Schedule of Topics for the 2016- 2017 Year**

August 27	-Retreat
September 8	-Strategic planning begins
October 13	-Budget process begins
November 10	-Propose tuition for 2017-2018 year
December 1	-Proposed social meeting
January 12	-MAP results, -Possible class/ teacher configurations, programming, and marketing,
February 9	-First reading of the proposed budget, -Plan State of the School presentation
March 9	-Review Board term charts, suggest and contact possible new Board candidates establish Executive Committee for following year -Begin review process for principal (to be complete by May Board meeting) -Second reading of the proposed budget -State of the School meetings for parents
April 19	-Approve budget
May 11	-Vote and welcome new officers and Board members -Year-end wrap up