

St. Robert School Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
 October 14, 2015, 6:30 p.m.
 Room 207

Members Attending: Lauren Beckmann, John Dunn, Lisa Lesjak, Kristen Reynolds, Tom Dean, Fr. Dennis Dirx, Soley Somma, Sara Coffou, Christopher Adams, Lisa Sweeney and Mariann Willing

Members Absent: Tony Erba, Marcia Velde and Kelly Schmidt

Guests Attending: Margy Cain and SRS parents (Matt Linn, Kim Christenson, Bill Schlise, Kathy Fletcher, Jack Littrell and Joe Cincotta)

The meeting commenced at 6:35 p.m. with a prayer.

Agenda Item	Key Discussion Points	Decision(s) Reached (if applicable)	Next Steps and Person(s) Accountable
Welcome and Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Sweeney was welcomed as the new Marketing and Recruitment Committee Chair of the SAB • A number of SRS parents were welcomed as guests to the SAB meeting 	N/A	N/A
Guest Comments/Discussion Regarding Junior Docent Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to the meeting, all third, fourth and fifth grade parents had received a letter from Lauren Beckmann (attached at the end of these minutes) describing changes to the Junior Docent program this school year, including St. Robert School terminating its relationship with the Milwaukee Art Museum (MAM) as a result of the Eggs Benedict picture that it accepted into its collection; in that letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the current school year we will proceed with the changes to the Junior Docent program, as described in the attached letter, and we will re-evaluate our relationship with the MAM before the next school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Dunn will bring back to the SAB, for discussion at a future meeting, principles that might help identify significant matters that should be brought forward to the SAB for discussion and input before acting • John Dunn will calendar time at an SAB meeting before the end of the school year to re-evaluate our relationship with the MAM

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	<p>Lauren invited parents to further discuss this decision and share their views at this SAB meeting, should they so desire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Dunn began the discussion by noting that there were a couple of key items that could be learned from this matter and applied in the future: (i) the importance of employing the SAB as a sounding board to provide additional perspective as part of the process in reaching significant curriculum decisions, which Lauren as school principal has ultimate responsibility for; and (ii) while it is natural to want to wait to communicate until a complete plan is formulated, at times more agile, iterative communication with parents may be required to keep parents informed while the process is still unfolding • The parents present were then invited to share their views and a discussion ensued for more than an hour. Parents offered a number of perspectives, including the importance of the MAM to the Junior Docent program, whether Catholic clergy leadership should be given 		

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	<p>deference on this matter, and the need to consider various school stakeholder perspectives before making such a decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lauren mentioned to the group that this was not an easy decision for her to make. The June letter to the MAM was on her desk for a period of time before she sent it out. She assured the group that this decision has led her to reflect more on process and communication • Fr. Dennis had a conversation with Archbishop ListECKI at the time of the 100th Anniversary Mass. The Archbishop pointed out that we are aware of where he stands, we should do what we feel we need to do and was supportive of the decision to sever our ties with the MAM for now • Tom Dean pointed out that the MAM Board was not made aware of the donation until after the artwork was accepted by the MAM and that many organizations have been placed in similarly difficult situations as a result of the MAM's acceptance of this gift 		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRS' new art teacher, who will play a key role in the Junior Docent program this year, has an MFA and is a trained docent. Consideration is being given to continuing the Junior Docent program into the middle school grades • Most in attendance agreed that the replacement curriculum is a strong one 		
Parish/Pastor Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We held our first Family Mass at the 11:00 a.m. Mass this past Sunday. Led by Father Peter Patrick, it was a very good experience. Susan Sprenger and Brenda Feinberg do not wish to chair this program and are looking for a couple of parents who would be interested in doing so. Father Dennis and Father Patrick would be happy to work with anyone who would be interested • The recent Arise Mission program at St. Robert was very successful, with people attending from all over the Milwaukee Metro area. This and other programs are helping to put St. Robert on the map • Our two Small Faith Group programs are starting up again. 	N/A	N/A

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	<p>The one group has about 80 participants while the Catholic ID group has about 16 participants. Everyone is welcome to join either group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through our recent re-organization we are finding that we need to learn to be a “team” again. This will take time and a real commitment from the staff to do so. We are asking for everyone to help encourage them through this process 		
Principal’s Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the length of time needed for the Junior Docent Program discussion and the need to finalize our plan for the State of the School Meeting, Lauren will give her report next meeting 	N/A	N/A
Final Preparation for the State of the School Meeting on October 15 th (Final Content; Logistics; Survey Assessing Meeting; Handouts, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State of the School meeting is October 15th: 6:30 pm – Reception 7:00 pm – Meeting will start • A discussion was held to finalize the meeting plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting email reminder will be sent to all SRS parents (to include out of uniform pass information) • A State of the School survey will be developed and sent to all parents who attend the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa will put together the email reminder and send out • Lisa Sweeney will work on developing the survey and send it out to the SAB for review • Soley will work with Laurie Yingling to create a place for parents to access the State of the School materials, survey, etc.
Committee Chair Reports (due to time constraints this was a quick overview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment – Chris made a request to the board to replace the school light fixtures with LED lights. Some students are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are multiple parties who need to be brought into this discussion, including Chris representing the SAB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris will attend the next Buildings and Grounds meeting • Tom Dean will make sure Chris is on the agenda of the next

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	<p>experiencing light sensitivity to the lights in the classrooms (migraines, some working under their desks, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom mentioned that he has had a financial discussion on the lights, carpet, painting and leaky windows. What we need to do is put a package of needs together for each classroom and start a campaign for funds 	<p>Environment Committee, Peter Sorce, and the Parish Buildings and Grounds Committee</p>	<p>Buildings and Grounds meeting and that he receives notice of the meeting</p>
Adjournment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting will be November 11, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. 	N/A	N/A

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mariann Willing, School Advisory Board Secretary.

October 6, 2015

Dear Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Parents,

This communication is to provide information on changes to our Junior Docent program for the 2015-16 school year.

This summer, following the controversial news surrounding the Milwaukee Art Museum's acquisition of Nikki Johnson's "Eggs Benedict" piece, I made the decision to step away from our partnership with the Museum. This decision was made thoughtfully, and, as indicated in my late June letter to the Museum, with profound sadness. It was done in deference to our identity as a Catholic institution and in solidarity with the statement made by our Archbishop. To be clear, my decision was focused only on our partnership with the Museum and was never a decision to end our Junior Docent program, which has been a highly valued part of our curriculum for many years.

The Archbishop's statement on radical individualism (<http://www.archmil.org/Our-Faith/Blogs/Archbishop-Listecki/JEL-20150624.htm>) includes a sentence which has been construed by some to mean that Catholics should do whatever they want in response to the Museum's acquisition. Subsequent discussion with your children's teachers in the aftermath of information about the Museum's more recent decision to move the piece to storage for an undefined period of time surfaced complex questions and a lack of certainty about the right response. Our professional staff agreed that that we should ask the Archbishop directly and specifically for guidance, despite that it was never his intent to issue a directive.

Fr. Dennis met with Archbishop Listecki on September 18th, before our Centennial Mass. I was not present at the meeting, but I know that the text of my message requesting guidance was shared with the Archbishop. That message pointed specifically to internal lack of agreement surrounding this decision as the reason for seeking his guidance and ended with a clear statement that we would graciously defer to any recommendation he would offer. I was informed immediately by both Fr. Dennis and the Archbishop that the Archbishop affirmed the decision to withdraw our support from the Museum for the time being.

The following week, our new art teacher (a formally trained docent with a Master of Fine Arts degree) and your children's classroom teachers began collaborating on a revised plan for implementation of the program this year. Detailed planning is still in development, but the basic structure will be as follows:

Grade 3: Understanding Art

This will be an introductory year focused on investigating art through the senses. Students will explore gallery collections in two separate trips. Each trip will explore distinct elements of art: first, line, shape, and color; then space and texture. We will visit focused collections at the Haggerty Museum at Marquette University and the expansive collection at the Grohmann Museum at MSOE (home to the world's most comprehensive art collection dedicated to the evolution of human work) for these explorations. We will be guided by our art teacher and docents from the respective museums.

Grade 4: People, Culture, and History

The next level of the program will guide students in connecting with the community around them. This aligns well with the 4th grade study of Wisconsin history, culture, and geography. Our focus will be on Wisconsin history as seen through works of art depicting everyday life. We will delve into portraiture in

particular, analyzing portrait types using the elements of art as they are depicted in a historical and cultural context. We are particularly excited about this opportunity to explore the rich store of artifacts at the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Historical Society to guide our study of this theme. We will work with both our art teacher and museum docents at both sites.

Grade 5: Studying, Interpreting, and Creating Art

We will begin the third year of our program with a trip to the Art Institute of Chicago for a deep study of the history of art from antiquities to Abstract Impressionism. The students will participate in a docent-led tour of examples from key periods along the historical continuum and then continue their study of art history and elements of art at school. As in the past, after selecting a favored work from among about 50 pre-selected paintings and drawings, they will engage in research, reading, writing, and contemplation. Their next tour will be an immersion in art on a grand scale through an exploration of the Lynden Sculpture Garden. Students will participate in a docent-led tour of this renowned collection with a focus on the way the elements of art work in three-dimensional pieces. They will return to the Garden a second time to sketch a piece for further study and again for their "graduation" presentation. In the culminating experience of this year's program, students will compare and contrast their selected pieces from the Art Institute and the Sculpture Garden or weave their experiences of the two pieces together by topic or emotion. They will do this by presenting their research, their impressions, and an interpretive piece of their own creation in an interactive presentation format.

On a personal level, I understand that we may continue to hold passionate, well-intentioned opposing views on what may or may not have been the best institutional response to the Museum's acquisition. Know that I respect and honor your views and hope you will come to an appreciation that my actions have been motivated only by the highest standards of professional accountability to my role as a Catholic school leader. Know also that as a reflective practitioner, this controversy has inspired further reflection on the best way to enhance process and communications on matters of similar import in the future. Disagreements aside, I know we can come together around the common goal of giving our kids an amazing education. Our faculty is so committed to this mission that they've already devoted countless hours to designing a program that, because of its comprehensive design, more expansive exploration and deeper connections, promises to be, in the words of one of our teachers, "the best we've ever done."

Disruption is unpleasant and fear-inducing, but with the right motivation it invariably leads to innovation. I am confident that your children will benefit from these innovations in our curriculum.

If you are interested in discussing this topic further, you are invited to attend the School Advisory Board meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 14th, in room 207 of the School. We will invite parent comments and discussion on this topic at the top of our agenda. I also invite you to meet with me privately at any time.

Respectfully,

Lauren M. Beckmann
Principal