

School Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2014, 6:30 p.m.
Room 207

1. Call to Order and Prayer

Members in attendance: Lisa Lesjak, Lauren Beckmann, Jane Connell, Laura Maly, Marcia Velde, Kristen Reynolds, Tom Dean, Matt Hietpas, Kelly Schmidt, Molly Gallagher, Kathy Wyatt, and Fr. Dennis Dirx

Members absent: Marion Gottschalk, John Dulmes, and Fr. Kevin McManaman

Guest: Karen Rapp

2. Guest Comments

The Field Trip Policy was discussed at this point in the meeting. Over the years, there have been three methods for collecting money to cover the cost of field trips. The first method used was to collect a fee each and every time a student went on a field trip. Not only was this an inconvenience for parents who had to write checks on a frequent basis, but it meant a lot of work for office staff to keep track of these payments. The second system was developed to alleviate both of these issues. Before the school year ended, the teachers were asked to submit their projected field trips for the upcoming year to the office. Then, Mrs. Rapp would contact vendors, such as bus companies, to try to calculate the total cost of all field trips by grade level in order for parents to pay for the field trips in advance on Forms and Fees Day in August. This made it easier on parents, but not much easier on Mrs. Rapp. Therefore, the current system was developed. The purpose was to spread out the total cost of all field trips for the school evenly across all students in the building. This would make it easier for parents to anticipate what the field trip costs would be each year. Also, it would eliminate the high field trip costs associated with certain grades, such as eighth grade, which can easily total hundreds of dollars. So, for the vast majority of families that spend their entire school years at St. Robert, the current system spreads the costs of all field trips over the span of up to 10 years. Because of the noted benefits, the SAB agreed to continue using this system. The cost per student for this past school year was \$80.00.

In addition, another area being considered for this streamlining process, includes other miscellaneous expenses, such as assignment notebooks. Mrs. Rapp maintains a huge spreadsheet for this purpose. The SAB is considering developing one dollar amount for all students to cover these expenses as well, similar to how field trips are handled. It is thought that \$20.00 per student would cover these expenses. So, for \$100.00 per student, all of these extra expenses would be covered with one payment. It may be best to simply add these costs into the amount parents pay for tuition. This would allow parents to spread the cost

out over the 10 month payment plan option, instead of submitting checks on Forms and Fees Day. Plus, next year, up to \$5,000 of tuition expenses for elementary school will be a new deduction for your Wisconsin State Income Tax. It would make sense to include as many expenses as possible in the tuition, instead of assessing extra fees.

This needs to be messaged well to parents. A question will be added to the upcoming Parent Survey to solicit parents' opinions. The SAB supports this idea but will wait to see the expected tuition rate for next year before moving forward with it.

We will be dropping FACTS as our tuition collection vendor and adding TADS for next year. The new vendor will allow us to add the financial aid application process. In addition, we have the option to add some additional features in the future, namely, admission and enrollment procedures.

3. Parish/Pastor Report – Fr. Dennis Dirx

Tom Dean has been nominated by Fr. Dennis to be a Parish Trustee. There will not be a conflict of interest between his duties on the SAB and with the Parish. Not only will his position infuse the Parish with a new perspective, but it will increase the SAB presence on the Parish Council.

St. Robert will be getting a new associate pastor. Hopefully, the announcement will be made soon, possibly during Easter week.

The Parish is working on their budget for next year. The first draft will be presented at the April 29th finance meeting and then approved at the May meeting. The budget will maintain things as they are this year.

4. Tuition Set and Parishioner Letters – Tom Dean and Matt Hietpas

Not much has changed since the last meeting. Tom emailed the SAB members a fourteen page document prior to the meeting containing pertinent budgets, spreadsheets, enrollment projections, etc. The recommendation is to increase tuition 5% for all students, both parishioner and non-parishioner, for next school year.

There was a lengthy discussion of projected enrollment and tuition. Due to diminished contributions, the Parish is no longer in a position to absorb the maintenance costs associated with the school at this time. Therefore, the short range goal is for the school to pay for these expenses. The recommended tuition increase does not fully cover the projected shortfall in the budget. The shortfall is estimated to be about \$300,000. Of course, the more students that we can get to enroll here, the smaller the deficit will be. Mrs. Beckmann said she is working on a plan to address this financial situation but is unable to reveal details at this time.

In the meantime, the school will need to draw money out of various accounts to cover the shortfall, but this cannot go on indefinitely.

The SAB recommends instituting the tuition increase along with streamlining field trips and miscellaneous fees and adding that to the tuition bill. We realize that we need to communicate this to parents in the best way possible. Tom will write a column for Family Matters and a letter that will go in the registration packet to parents. It was also suggested that small, informal group discussions be held with groups of parents to discuss the financial needs of the school. At this point Fr. Dennis suggested that if we were to improve our discipleship, there would be less of a need for stewardship. He cited examples of other parishes where this platform was successful.

5. Principal's Report – Lauren Beckmann

The teacher compensation package has been changed in the last year. It is part of a new plan that includes three components. The first component is a new salary scale that is aligned with responsibilities and contributions toward the school instead of just being based upon credentials and years of experience. They developed five levels on this scale. The first two levels, Apprentice and Novice, which last two and three years respectively, allow teachers to progress through them automatically. But, a teacher may apply to advance beyond these two levels earlier, with the appropriate evidence. The next level, Professional, is where people may spend the bulk of their careers. The final two levels, Master and Leader, are available for teachers that exhibit exemplary responsibilities that benefit the greater school community, such as coaching other teachers or providing professional development. Last year, Mrs. Beckmann had to place all of the existing staff on this new scale. In some cases, some teachers received a significant increase in salary due to their high levels of responsibility and contributions to the school. If a teacher was currently paid more than they should have for the level they were assigned, they did not receive a decrease in pay. They are allowed to remain where they are, but are encouraged to increase their responsibilities toward the school.

The second component involves the school adopting a new rubric-based teacher evaluation system, such as the Charlotte Danielson model. The Archdiocese is currently working on this model, so we will wait until this is completed to proceed.

The third component involves being held accountable for student growth. Students are being given common assessments periodically throughout the year. The leadership team is evaluating the data. Teachers are working as grade level teams, not in a competitive fashion, but rather in a collaborative way, to ensure success for all students.

These three components illustrate a major culture shift and will take a numbers of years to fully implement.

6. Committee Reports

a. Education and Formation Committee – Kelly Schmidt

They are working on getting statistics from the various high schools concerning how many of St. Robert graduates are on their honor rolls. This would be great information to share with prospective students. Lisa mentioned that this is something she has been meaning to get to for years and is thrilled that it is being handled by this committee.

b. Environment – Matt Hietpas for John Dulmes

This committee is working on finalizing the budget for various projects. There is about \$45,000 in investment funds slated for building improvements. This could be used to fund the three projects dealing with security upgrades. These include: key access for doors, security cameras installed in various locations, and a new phone/PA system. Coincidentally, these three projects cost about the same as the available funds mentioned above. It was suggested to ask the Athletic Association if they are willing to pay for the key access to the gym to help lessen the total cost of the project. The SAB approved spending the money to get these projects done this summer. Even with our budget shortfall, the SAB agreed that the safety of our students could not be compromised.

c. Marketing Committee – Molly Gallagher

She shared a report compiled by Kramer-Crasselt after they worked with two focus groups earlier this year. Brian Ganther, an employee of the firm, and Karen Parr assisted with this endeavor. This report included ideas for a new marketing campaign, with new slogans, radio ads, etc. In addition, they are going to redesign the web site, so it stands alone, separate from the Parish, to assist people when searching the internet. Lisa distributed the current enrollment numbers for next year, which are ahead of last year at this point.

d. Policy Committee – Kristen Reynolds

A hot lunch subcommittee has been formed and has been meeting for a few months. Some people will be touring Holy Family's lunch program on Friday to investigate that option. They use a different vendor that puts an emphasis on fresh and local foods. Their lunches cost an additional \$.95, plus they offer a gluten free lunch option for \$1.00 more. We will add some questions to the upcoming parent survey asking parents for their

input on this issue. One thing to remember is that if we change to this other vendor, we would no longer be part of the federally subsidized lunch program. This allows everyone to pay less for lunch as well as allows some students to pay a reduced amount, or even to pay nothing for lunch. Currently, there are about 18 students that qualify for free or reduced lunch. We will need to decide at the next meeting if we want to switch vendors. We should have answers to the parent survey by that time.

e. Development Committee – Lisa Lesjak

Lisa distributed a copy of her spreadsheet illustrating donations. She made a comment that a number of past donors have died and they are not being replaced by other donors. Another area of concern is current school families. Only about 25% of them have contributed to the Annual Fund. After analyzing past donations over \$500, Lisa feels confident that about another \$31,000 could be raised. Marcia and Kathy will be visiting the eighth grade classes to speak to them about using some of the money they have made fundraising for a donation to the Annual Fund. It is a good idea to plant the idea early that everyone needs to do their part to keep this school operational.

f. Home and School – Laura Maly

There are no numbers available yet from the Emerald Auction. They are currently dealing with finalizing volunteer commitments for next year. Also, they are working on revising their by-laws. Plus, they approved the formation of a VP of Communication for next year. It was suggested that the SAB may want to consider adding a similar position.

g. Parish – Kathy Wyatt

There was no report given at this time.

7. Uniform Policy

This topic has been on our Tot Lot for a number of months. After some discussion, the SAB recommended to allow families to purchase uniforms from Dennis, the manufacturer of our former uniform styles. Lauren will investigate getting an account with Dennis so people can order items online. In addition, because these items are once again approved uniforms, they can be sold at the used uniform sale. A concern was raised that because Home and School gets money from Lands' End from all purchases, that there would be a significant decrease because of this change. But it was thought that people would still purchase other items from Lands' End, so hopefully, there would not be a significant change. After all, people will have the option to continue purchasing uniforms from Lands' End, too.

8. Parent Survey

Lisa created the survey on Google, and it didn't cost anything. It will be made available for parents after Spring Break. Families will be notified more than once about the survey. The results will be shared at a future SAB meeting. In the future, we need to communicate with families that we are taking action based upon the results of the survey, such as installing the gates on the playground due to concerns raised by parents in a previous survey.

9. New Business

Some members of the SAB will be leaving the board at the end of the school year because their terms have expired. We need to consider obtaining replacements for these positions. The two people leaving are Jane Connell, Secretary, and Marcia Velde, Development Committee Chair.

A suggestion was raised concerning the Science Fair. It was suggested that more notification be given to families about the date of the Science Fair. It takes a lot of time to fulfill all the steps of the project, including choosing a topic, obtaining any necessary supplies, conducting the experiment, organizing your results, and creating your display.

9. Remaining Meeting Dates

The SAB will continue to meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., with the exception of July, when no meeting is held. Therefore, the remaining meeting dates are:

- May 14, 2014 – Laura will provide snacks and prayer
- June 11, 2014 – Tom will provide snacks and prayer

The meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jane Connell, School Advisory Board Secretary.