

School Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2011, 6:30 p.m.
Room 207

1. Call to Order and Prayer – Lauren Beckmann

Members in attendance: Lisa Lesjak, Peter Christenson, Lauren Beckmann, Jane Connell, Liz Haas, Nancy Knight, Dan Davis, Trish Ognar, Karen Hunt, and Catherine Mercuri

Members absent: Laura Maly, Fr. Dennis Dirkx, Marcia Velde, Fr. Kevin McManaman, and Michele Weinschrott

2. Principal's Report – Lauren Beckmann

The school is moving away from the traditional grading system in English/Language Arts for grades 1-5. The middle school students will keep their current grading system. The current system is inadequate for our new programs. When report cards come out this week, we will get a snapshot of their reading level, the strategies used and how they are doing. We will also get a word study level, which will be a reference to a grade level. This will be an alternative to a spelling grade. Also, it will be a benchmark of how students are performing right now. There may be some surprises for some parents. They may find that their children are a grade level behind in spelling, for example. Most children are behind, but they are making great gains already. In Reading, the focus is shifting to non-fiction instead of literature.

The school purchased two iPads that are now ready for circulation out of the resource center. There is a lot of research that supports the use of iPads and how beneficial they are for many children, especially those with special needs, because they are so adaptable to their needs, such as auditory or visual impairments. The hope is to be able to purchase a class set of 24 on a cart for use throughout the building.

3. Parish Council – Nancy Knight

There is nothing new to report, according to Nancy.

4. Discussion Item – Sustainability

In keeping with the suggestion offered last month to change the format of our meetings, we will focus on one topic tonight, sustainability. All committees will not need to share reports each month, only if their committee has something to offer related to the topic.

Catherine is already starting to make budgetary forecasts for next year. Lisa shared some preliminary enrollment information. Siblings of current students that may be in K-4 for next year total 16. Last year that number was 18. Currently, we have a higher percentage of K-4 students that are non-parishioners than in past years. We are looking at a slightly smaller number for next year. Lisa asked these families which option they prefer for their children for K-4, either half-day or all day. So far she has received two responses, one response for each option. Lisa is also working on developing a firm number as an enrollment goal for next year. She does this by rolling all the current students into the next grade and assuming the next upcoming K-4 class will be the same size as the current one.

Health care costs continue to go up. This is a constant issue each year when the budget is developed. Two more teachers were added to our insurance plan this year. Catherine said the Parish Finance committee has agreed to allow her to obtain some bids from other vendors for our health insurance carrier. She acknowledges that there are some soft costs for employees associated with switching health care providers, such as possibly changing physicians. She indicated that Fr. Dennis said that this is the last year that employees with single coverage will be excluded from paying a portion of their health insurance premiums.

Catherine shared a comparison chart between the Catholic elementary schools in the immediate area. One of the things being compared on this chart was teacher salaries. Our starting salary is extremely low when compared to the other schools. In addition, we are still trying, but not succeeding, to pay our teachers at 80% of Shorewood's pay schedule. And, we are still using an old pay scale for this process, while Shorewood is currently drafting a new salary scale. Mrs. Beckmann said we may need to develop our own philosophy for compensating our staff, one that is more in line with their professional development plans. This new schedule could reward staff for their training and performance, not just their college credits.

Tuition Management Services (TMS), the company St. Robert uses to collect tuition, has been sold to FAX. Therefore, we have the option to be released from our contract and are free to choose another vendor. There are three companies under consideration. There are additional options available from these vendors, such as the ability to collect other fees or lunch money, and combing this all onto one statement.

Due to the burden placed upon Lisa, Lauren and other employees, during the registration process, we are considering ways to encourage families to register their children for the upcoming school year in a timely manner. One suggestion was to institute a sliding schedule for registration fees, one that provides a discount for early registration. The sooner we can get families to

commit to next year, the sooner we can make crucial hiring decisions, for example.

This year we will have a projected deficit of \$14,000, and we will once again have to dip into our M&I fund to cover our expenses. The revenue created by the approximately 20 extra students enrolled this year is being used to pay for the increases in health care costs. That is why controlling this expense is so crucial. A rough estimate was provided that said each students' tuition would need to go up about \$150 just to cover the deficit, a month of health insurance premiums that were rolled over to this fiscal year, and the additional health insurance premiums for the two additional staff members. Catherine will update our budget and send copies to the SAB members. A compensation committee will begin to discuss these issues again.

Scholarship money will be needed again this year. As tuition rises, and it will in order to cover our increasing costs, so does the need for scholarship money. At the Emerald Auction for the past two years, a request was made to those in attendance to contribute to this fund. It was felt that you cannot continue to make this same pitch to this audience every year. They are considering changing the request to include specific amounts of money needed, such as saying we have five students that need to be sponsored at \$2000 per student.

The letters to current parents for the Annual Fund were mailed recently. The amount pledged is \$21,820, and the amount actually received is \$17,820. The gifts range from \$5-\$3,000. In this mailing, Lisa included a special explanation to new families of what the Annual Fund is and why it is so important.

5. Marketing and Recruitment – Trish Ognar

Trish passed around a beautiful card that was designed by Karen Parr with pictures of crosses created by second graders. This card, along with a St. Robert onesie, will be given to all babies baptized at St. Robert.

The committee is looking to purchase a mailing list to use for the upcoming Open House in January. It was also mentioned that St. Robert is on Facebook and we should do our part to promote ourselves using this vehicle.

6. Environment – Dan Davis

The garden on the north fence of the playground will be moved to another location for next year, possibly next to the gym or on the fence surrounding the tot lot.

Dan is in the process of getting bids for the fire alarm system.

The process of replacing the light fixtures in the building must be moved up ahead of schedule because it is impossible to purchase certain replacement light bulbs. They are deciding whether to replace the entire fixtures, or just the ballasts. Hopefully, there are some energy grants available for this if they can complete it before the end of this year.

The planters on the west side of the building will be removed soon. They are falling apart. They may put something else in their place in the future. It was mentioned that possibly some college students may wish to design some options for that space that could include some flexible planter options.

The committee is still considering the installation of a card access system for the entrances of the school. And, finally, the closet that is in Mrs. Liebenthal's classroom will be removed over Christmas break.

7. State of the School Meeting

Some reflection from the meeting held on October 20th, was offered. Thirty-four percent of the students were represented by a parent at the meeting, which is down from last year, which had 51%. The seventh grade had the highest percentage of parents in attendance, and therefore, earned an out-of-uniform pass. The meeting ran from 7:04-8:21 p.m. Fr. Dennis spoke for 14 minutes. Both Lauren and Lisa received numerous compliments after the meeting and via email, expressing appreciation for the information that was shared. The decrease in parental attendance prompted the consideration of another avenue for sharing this information. Lisa mentioned that she could communicate this meeting to the new families. Also, it was suggested that the host families make an effort to contact the new families.

8. Old Business

Here is a review of the remaining snack schedule:

December 14th – Peter
January 11th – Jane
February 8th – Michele
March 14th – Catherine
April 18 – Marcia
May 9th – Dan
June 13 - Laura

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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