

Diocesan Catholic School Board (DCSB)  
Cathedral Square Center - Room D/E  
Minutes  
Tuesday, September 18, 2018

I. **Prayer** offered by Dave Sipka.

II. **Roll Call:**

**Present:** Jill Annable, Andrew Blum, Rev. Tom Cavera, Dave Faber, Jo Jones, Rev. Godfrey Onyekwere, Sr. Rosita Schiller, Dick Schneider, Dave Sipka, John Vande Guchte, Leah Wareck

**Absent:** Rosa Fraga, Phil May

**Others Present:** Shelley Hofmann, Luzia Tartari

**Communications:** How has/will the recent reports of clerical abuse in the Church impact the Diocese of Grand Rapids in our schools and parishes? What other questions do we as DCSB members have? We need to ensure that all DCSB members have all diocesan communications to effectively answer questions of people with whom they interact in parishes, in our communities, etc. Should the diocesan communications be shared with all of our board Google groups? The DCSB recommends that all diocesan communications regarding the reports of clerical abuse in the Church and the position of the Diocese of Grand Rapids be shared with our school board members via our Google groups and with school staff and families via Infinite Campus.

Our principals are equipped to answer parent questions about what we are doing to protect our students in our schools. It is important for parents to see their pastor and principal as a team.

Can we mandate that the "Protecting our Children and Youth" flier be put in enrollment packets? This communication needs to be shared openly and widely. Timing is important. Multiple channels should be utilized to get the message in front of parents and parishioners as much as possible. However, we need to make sure we are not seen as "making excuses" for what happened. Communications must focus on what we are doing to ensure it won't happen again. We also need a 30-second spiel that Admissions and School Staff can use with new families.

Should this topic be presented at the Board Summit in November? How can we help guide our boards by giving them some talking points? Can we give suggestions of how to use communications?

Do we have a statement from Bishop on his stance? As an advisory board, we have the ability to make suggestions to Bishop.

III. **Approval of June Minutes:** The June minutes will be approved at the October meeting.

IV. **Discussion Topics:**

**A. School Feature – Corpus Christi Catholic School – Jo Jones**

**"Embracing our Bicultural Catholic Identity in Action & Truth: Building Dual Language**

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**Immersion Programs”**

Corpus Christi’s dual immersion program was initiated by a group of parents five years ago. During a Latino Enrollment Institute presentation at the University of Notre Dame, Fr. Joe Corpora shared that the Catholic Church does not have enough bi-lingual priests in the United States. The United States has a Latino population that is under-valued and under-served in our Catholic Church. Latinos have a gift of language that can be used to help expand the Catholic Church and that can be used to embrace the bicultural mission of the Church. We need to increase the number of bi-lingual speakers in the United States to advance the mission of the Catholic Church.

There are multiple models that can be used to implement a dual language immersion program. Early childhood studies show that preschool students become more fluent in dual languages at an earlier age. Ideally, dual language immersion should start in preschool. One of the theories behind a dual immersion program is that a student’s level one language is elevated as a gift, and the students’ languages/gifts are shared in a dual immersion program.

The goal of a dual language immersion program is that each class has eight students with Spanish language as primary language and eight students who speak English as primary language. There is a valuable opportunity to use parents and family members in this program to serve as classroom aides which enriches the culture in a school. The Office of Catholic Schools is hoping to have a school in the Grand Rapids area start a dual language immersion program.

Why is this a value-add to any Catholic school? A dual language immersion program takes a marginalized culture that is rapidly becoming the majority population of the Catholic Church and puts it on an equal basis. Does it increase cost? Yes.

Has it increased enrollment? Yes. Nationally, there is an 8% increase in enrollment year over year in this type of program.

The board would like to continue to have a school and/or program featured at each board meeting.

**B. BCSI Update – Admissions Enrollment Update (Luzia Tartari)**

- **Current Enrollment** – Enrollment is currently down 62 students from this time last year. Our final count day is this Friday, September 21. Our alliance has the largest preschool class since 2000. We also have the largest Kindergarten class since 2013. 71% of our Kindergarten class comes from our preschools. This is positive trend for future enrollment.
- **Enrollment Highlights** – Luzia presented highlights of enrollment. There are 16 schools who have tied or exceeded their enrollment from the previous year; and 4 schools who have not grown in last 3 years, grew enrollment this year. In addition, we have a strong enrollment of international students. Some factors affecting lower enrollment growth include: school financial health/tuition debt, no parish support for families not participating in the parish, change in leadership in schools, and significant changes in faculty.

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- **Scholarships** – We have about \$10,000 left in Bishop’s scholarship available for distribution. The Admission Advocates have reached out to schools to let them know of additional available funding for families who may need a little extra help. Welcome scholarships are still being awarded. We have used about 90% of the budget.
  
- **OCS Outreach** – The Admissions Advocate Team has been busy not only helping schools and new families with enrollment, but also has done a lot of communication with current families and collaboration with schools to assist with retention. A suggestion was made to look at a 12-month tuition payment option, so as not to have families experience a lapse in payments. If the payment is automatic each month, a family may be less likely to disenroll.
  
- **TIP Initiative** – The Admissions Advocate Team received lists from 35 parishes (up from 15 parishes last year and 11 parishes in 2016-17) and reached out to 3,308 families who had participated in sacraments at those parishes. We have about 7.1% of those families who are prospective school families. Next steps include: follow-up with the real prospects, Christmas emails and cards, Easter emails and cards. The Admissions Advocate Team is looking forward to getting all of this information into Razor’s Edge which will make tracking much more efficient. All of these efforts help to expand the top of the funnel.

How do we share actions of pastors that have proven successful in growing enrollment in their schools?

**C. Bridging Faith & Future Progress Communications Planning**

Dave Faber and Sue Haas met over the summer to develop a plan to communicate progress on the *Bridging Faith & Future* Strategic Plan. Vision metrics were created for each strategy, and Dave will present updates on these metrics in meetings with pastors, principals, boards, and decision makers. In addition, the principals asked for homework on *Bridging Faith & Future* strategic plan. They will track their progress on a Google doc. Finally, the Office of Catholic Schools will update the diocesan efforts on each tactic in a similar Google doc.

**D. Tour of New Curriculum Standards/Testing Update**

Our curriculum standards are now shared publicly on our website ([www.catholicschools4U.org](http://www.catholicschools4U.org)).

The standards reflect our Catholic identity and faith in all content areas. Schools will decide how evaluation of these standards are shown on their report cards. We need to determine how to share this story of collaborative effort with our parents. How will we evaluate the best teaching method for each of the standards? Two years down the road is there something in place to encourage the schools who have not adopted the best practice teaching methods and whose test scores reflect this? Can we define and share with schools the accountability factors for all Catholic schools? We are continuing to provide opportunities for our teachers to dive deeper into test scores, set goals for students, etc.

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V. **Committee Reports**

- A. **Admissions Committee:** no report.
- B. **Finance Committee:** no report.
- C. **Strategic Planning Committee:** no report.
- D. **Executive Committee:** no report.
- E. **Mission Effectiveness Committee:** no report.
- F. **Marketing Committee:** no report.
- G. **Development Committee:** no report.

VI. **Superintendent/Asst. Superintendent Reports (questions addressed):**

Please direct any questions to Dave or Jill.

VII. **Action Items:**

1. Add to October 16 agenda – discuss communications for crisis in the Church at Board Summit.
2. Construct a message of suggestion to offer Bishop.
3. Plan to show the DCSB the Accreditrac system at a meeting this year.
4. Fr. Godfrey suggested designating a time keeper for future meetings.

VIII. **New Business:**

IX. **Closing Prayer:** Prayer for Enrollment Growth was prayed by all.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 9:17 pm.

**Next meeting is Tuesday, October 16, 2018.**