

Diocesan Catholic School Board (DCSB)
Cathedral Square Center - Room D/E
Minutes
Tuesday, December 4, 2018

I. **Prayer** offered by Fr. Tom Cavera.

II. **Roll Call:**

Present: Andrew Blum, Rev. Tom Cavera, Dave Faber, Rosa Fraga, Sue Haas-Williams (Advisory), Jo Jones, Phil May, Rev. Godfrey Onyekwere, Sr. Rosita Schiller, Dick Schneider, Dave Sipka, John Vande Guchte

Absent: Jill Annable, Leah Wareck

Others Present: Conrad Cuncannan, Shelley Hofmann, Cindy Thomas

Communications: Dave shared a copy of the CLC (Christian Learning Center) Network newsletter. Four of our schools have new partnerships with the CLC Network.

III. **Approval of October Minutes:** Approved as written.

IV. **Discussion Topics:**

A. School Feature: Arrowsmith Program at St. Stephen (Cindy Thomas, Principal)

Cindy shared an overview of the Arrowsmith Program at St. Stephen. Arrowsmith is a program to help students with learning disabilities. These are students who cannot process regularly and need to retrain their brains. The teacher will assess the student's disability, identify weak cognitive capacities, and develop an individual learning plan to strengthen those cognitive capacities. The Arrowsmith Program focuses on rebuilding the learning capacity of the student by repairing or creating new pathways in the brain. Typically, students spend 5 of 8 periods during the school day in the Arrowsmith Program. However, they do spend time in the classroom and participate in regular activities, including Mass, with their regular ed peers. The Arrowsmith Program enables students to become more self-directed and confident. Arrowsmith students are transitioned back into regular ed classrooms as they are ready.

The program is based out of Toronto, and St. Stephen School is one of two schools in Michigan who offer the program. On average, St. Stephen has about eight students participate each year. Typically, students participate in the program for 2-3 years. To date, St. Stephen has had about forty students participate. Current tuition for the Arrowsmith Program is \$9,200 for parishioners, and \$10,200 for non-parishioners.

B. BCSI Update – GRACEAC Athletics Update (Conrad Cuncannan)

• **Football**

We had nine teams who participated in Northern Rocket Football League this fall. We had about 210 players, which is comparable to previous years. Overall the model is a great example of our alliance in action. However, there are some opportunities for improvement. We surveyed parents and coaches and have a good understanding of how we can make improvements. We need to re-evaluate the league in which we are participating. Ideally, we would like to get into a league where 7th graders play 7th graders

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and 8th graders play 8th graders. Equipment inventory and storage is a new challenge. We need to better utilize the school ADs to assist in the Catholic United model. Questions were raised about the greatest challenges of the program which Conrad explained to be the growing concern for sustaining all the responsibilities of what he described as the traditional role of the GRACEAC commissioner that assists in the organization of school teams with the growing and more direct responsibilities of being the AD of the Catholic United teams. A board member shared the thought that this is a structural issue that needs to be addressed.

- **GRACEAC Handbook**

The GRACEAC Executive Committee has hired two consultants to rewrite the GRACEAC handbook, which has not been updated in over 20 years. We need clarification on roles, especially under the new Catholic United model. In the past, each school's AD handled a lot of the GRACEAC duties including equipment management; however, a lot of this responsibility now falls on Conrad under the Catholic United model. The role of GRACEAC Athletic Director has changed significantly since it's inception.

- **Winter season**

Basketball has started. We have 100 teams and estimate about 1,000 players in our basketball program. Basketball operates under the original GRACEAC school model in which individual schools, or a combination of schools, field their own teams and compete against one another. Games are played Monday through Thursday evenings and Saturdays.

C. NCEA Market Research on Catholic Schools

All board members should have received a copy of this study. The Diocese of Grand Rapids is one of eleven dioceses featured in the research. We are highlighted as one of the trailblazers in admissions and enrollment through our Bishops' Catholic School Initiative.

D. DCSB Summit Feedback

Each time we conduct a summit the feedback is overwhelmingly positive. There is a strong desire for more information among local school board members. Although many local board members want and need more direction for certain areas on the school boards, they are grateful for time to share ideas with each other. There is a great desire for more board training from a diocesan level, more guidance on best practices, and more local level sharing of ideas and practices. There was lengthy discussion on how we provide new board members with more training. A suggestion was made to encourage boards to incorporate two training sessions throughout the year in place of two meetings. A checklist of topics for school boards to cover in each quarter would be helpful. Another suggestion to host a training session in August for board chairs and new board members was discussed.

Based on the bylaws, school board roles do not include experts in curriculum or assessment, because each school employs a whole team of educators. Board members do, however, have a role in the overall mission effectiveness of the school. Recognizing the complexity of

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maintaining this balance, we need to continue to work hard to ensure boards have the right membership to address the appropriate responsibilities of the board. The DCSB should be a model for local school boards.

V. **Committee Reports**

- A. **Admissions Committee:** no report.
- B. **Finance Committee:** no report.
- C. **Strategic Planning Committee:** Sue gave an update on the feasibility study for a new classroom/school in the north/west deaneries. There are four parishes under consideration for a WINGS (World knowledge, Individualized, innovative learning, Nurturing, family environment, God-centered, Supportive technology) classroom/school. Sue asked DCSB members to review and give feedback on the "Interest Inquiry". This draft study is in the earliest stages. Board members were reminded that the draft and initial demographic data still need to be shared with the parishes and their leadership before information can be shared.
- D. **Executive Committee:** Sue has agreed to serve as an advisor to the DCSB. In addition, Sterling Moss is a potential candidate for the DCSB. Sterling is a member of NCEA's (National Catholic Education Association) Development and Advancement Department. In one year's time, he doubled NCEA's corporate sponsorships. Sterling brings an expertise that would be beneficial to the DCSB and our local boards. He is an African American and non-Catholic. As with the provision at the local school board level, Bishop approved of appointing non-Catholic members as long as they do not comprise more than 10% of the board. The DCSB bylaws will be amended to allow for Sterling to make application and to be considered for appointment. The bylaws will also be amended to include the Development Committee which was inadvertently not included. The DCSB votes on any bylaw amendments.
- E. **Mission Effectiveness Committee:** no report.
- F. **Marketing Committee:** no report
- G. **Development Committee:** report included in the packet was reviewed.

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

The question of how wide the Superintendent's Report is circulated was raised. The report along with the entire DCSB meeting packet is emailed to pastors, principals and board chairs in addition to the DCSB members. It is the pastor's, principal's, and board chair's discretion to share with their board members. This item can be reviewed at the training session with board chairs.

The issue of whether the DCSB meeting minutes accurately reflect the discussion in the meetings was raised. DCSB members were asked to provide feedback on items in the minutes

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that need further description. Going forward, the minutes will further reference where there was “healthy” and “lengthy” discussion of a particular item.

VII. **Action Items:**

1. Plan to show the DCSB the Accreditrac system at a meeting this year.
2. Address governance model and the relationship between school boards and the Superintendent.
3. Vote on amended bylaws at January meeting.

VIII. **New Business:** no new business.

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

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.

Next meeting is Tuesday, January 22, 2019.