

**Diocesan Catholic School Board (DCSB)  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 30, 2021**

I. **Prayer** offered by Patty.

II. **Roll Call**

**Present:** Andrew Blum , Damon Bouwkamp, Cheryl Butkus (virtual), Dave Faber, Sarah Grey, Sr. Colleen Ann Nagle (virtual), Patty Schrand, Tim Thimmesch, Leah Wareck (virtual)

**Absent:** Sue Haas-Williams, Rev. Darrel Kempf, Kristina Martinez-Precious, Sterling Morse, Rev. Godfrey Onyekwere

**Others Present:** Conrad Cuncannan (virtual), Shelley Hofmann

III. **GRACEAC Update**

Conrad Cuncannan addressed questions about his written report.

A question was raised about how the virtue of docility was selected. The virtues of the month are usually selected to coincide with what might be happening at that time of the year. The focus for docility was a willingness to learn new things. It was noted that more people are reading and responding to these virtues of the month which is encouraging.

IV. **Approval of October Minutes:** approved as written.

V. **Committee Reports: Questions from written report**

A. **Mission Effectiveness (ME)** - Sr. Colleen Ann shared a brief update for the ME Committee. The Theology of the Body (TOB) presentation by Mary Jo Thayer at the fall Summit was well received. The committee shared significant discussion on how much more education on TOB is needed especially on a practical level. The committee also identified the need to educate parents on TOB. Sr. Colleen Ann explained that most people do not thoroughly understand TOB.

Sr. Colleen Ann is going to contact some principals to find out what they need from the ME Committee. The committee has also identified additional topics such as contraception, same sex unions, and gender fluidity for which people need further education. It was noted that education on these topics needs to be done in a safe environment to ensure people feel comfortable asking questions.

In regards to the committee's development of a "Profile of a Catholic school parent, a question about next steps was raised. Does the ME Committee need assistance from the DCSB? Sr. Colleen Ann will discuss further with the committee at their next meeting. The board discussed whether schools should be encouraged to adapt the

profile to fit their local needs or whether the board should consider having this profile be universal for all schools within the diocese.

**VI. Superintendents' Report** - there were no questions from the written report. Mask orders will expire after Christmas break. Overall concerns have diminished, but there are some concerns about what will happen in January.

**VII. Discussion topics**

**A. Update on schools and COVID**

As of today, we have had 341 cases in our schools, since the beginning of the school year. The highest percentage of cases are in Kent and Ottawa counties. The cases consist of about 80% students and 20% staff. The vast majority of cases are not contracted in school.

Dave asked DCSB members to keep school leaders in their prayers as leaders endure the time-consuming work associated with COVID-19, contact tracing, etc.

Can EANS funds be used to staff reporting requirements such as contact tracing? Yes. It may be challenging for an outside consultant to do contact tracing, however, there may be other ways a consultant could assist with reporting.

**B. Summit Feedback**

1. **Building and Grounds** - The session went very well. The group will meet quarterly to start prioritizing the long list of ideas generated during the Summit. One opportunity that has already been implemented is the creation of a Google shared folder where resources can be added for all members to use.
2. **Finance** - The session had about fourteen participants. The topic was well received. Participants appreciated getting materials in advance, and the salary survey was particularly helpful. The discussion on the *Bridging Faith & Future* strategies was more challenging with having some participants in person and some virtual. The committee has already identified a topic for the spring Summit.
3. **Marketing and Admissions** - Feedback on the Customer Relationship Management system portion of the session was that this part of the session was not needed. Participants wanted more information on marketing materials and more time to interact with each other.
4. **Mission Effectiveness** - The presentation was well received, and it led to good discussion on what more is needed. It was challenging to facilitate discussion with having some participants in person and some virtual.
5. **Development** - All participants wanted the virtual option.

Some additional thoughts included:

- Overall, the feedback was mixed between wanting in person participation and a virtual option.

- Can the DCSB ask Bishop Walkowiak to share his vision for Catholic education as the introduction for the fall Summit? This might help get more people to participate in person.
- Do we keep two Summits per year? If so, should we move the spring Summit earlier?
- Should we invite Bishop Walkowiak to a DCSB meeting in order to hear more about his vision for Catholic education? DCSB members are very receptive to this idea. It would be helpful to understand his highest priorities for Catholic education, so the board can determine how these priorities impact the strategic plan.
- It would be helpful to hear Bishop Walkowiak's vision and priorities for the next 2-5 year, 5-10 years, and even 20 years (recognizing he may no longer be the Bishop at that time).
- Do we need to develop a longer term (10 years, 20 years) strategic plan?

### C. *Bridging Faith & Future Refresh*

**Feedback tactical so far?**

**Meeting with Principals on Jan 4**

**Present Draft Tactics in Spring**

The feedback received so far on the *Bridging Faith & Future Refresh* has been tactical in nature. The next steps for the refresh include:

- Office of Catholic Schools review in November/December
- School leaders review during their January 4 meeting
- Present new draft tactics at the spring Summit
- May need to adjust some strategies based on Bishop's feedback

### D. **Committee work**

What should committees be thinking about in terms of their work plans?

There was significant discussion about the complexity of the BFF map. The board suggested creating an executive summary of the map including the top 3-5 priorities and the plan for achieving these priorities. It would be helpful to include how as a school board member or as a parent, one's role will help to achieve these priorities. We will need different forms of communication for different audiences. It will also be important to incorporate "Emerging from COVID" themes.

### E. **Catholic Schools Week / Mass / Welcome Scholarships**

1. **Catholic Schools Week** - Catholic Schools Week is celebrated across the country in late January/early February and is a celebration of local Catholic communities. NCEA added "Discover Catholic Schools" week, held in November, and "designated to help schools connect with prospective families, donors, educators and other community members. It's an opportunity to help Catholic schools showcase what makes them the best when families are looking to find the right school and to focus on the marketing efforts for Catholic schools."

2. **Mass** - During Catholic Schools Week, we invite schools to bring up to 25 representatives to a Mass celebrated by Bishop Walkowiak at the Cathedral. The Mass this school year will take place on February 1 at 10:00am. Following Mass, we usually host a luncheon to show our appreciation for community partners, DCSB members, and priests who support Catholic education.
  
3. **Welcome Scholarships** - Dave has recommended to the diocesan finance office that we offer Welcome Scholarships to new preschool and Kindergarten students. Welcome Scholarships have led to greater retention of families in our schools. Welcome Scholarships were also a way to welcome a larger group of families who can afford tuition. In the past, about 80% of families who received a Welcome Scholarship did not need additional financial assistance. The cost to maintain Welcome Scholarships next year will be between \$125,000 and \$130,000. The Welcome Scholarships are funded by the diocese. Has there been any evaluation of recipients on whether they would have chosen Catholic education if they did not receive a Welcome Scholarship?

What is the traditional retention rate from preschool to Kindergarten? It is statistically more than 100% because kindergarten is an entry level for many families. There are three groups (3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and DK/Y5 students) factoring into this level when determining retention to Kindergarten, so it is a challenge to do a statistical analysis. It requires a manual count of all families and makes it difficult to track. We do know that more than 70% of our Kindergarteners were preschool students in our schools.

Are we following these students into first grade and beyond? Could we track long-term retention among the Welcome Scholarship recipients all the way through eighth or twelfth grade? We are hopeful that the new CRM may be able to help us track some of this data. This retention data may be useful for future conversations with donors who may be willing to fund more Welcome Scholarships, the CRM system, etc.

Will the CRM allow additional demographic information to extrapolate information on families with more than three students, etc.? For example, how many of our larger families have we lost and why?

Another question not related to CRM or Welcome Scholarships was asked. Can we utilize group purchasing for benefits? Yes. All Catholic schools and parishes in the state use the same package of benefits offered through the Michigan Catholic Conference. Costs are determined by where the school/parish is located. Local schools/parishes determine the percentage of single/family benefits paid.

There are significant discrepancies among salary ranges and tuition discounts for employees. How do we ensure high quality education while balancing efforts to

increase enrollment with providing competitive teacher salaries/benefits at the local level?

**F. Feasibility Study for new school in northwest deanery**

Dave has obtained Bishop's approval for the feasibility study process. Dave has not yet had the time to reach out to the priests, but he will do so soon.

There was additional discussion about a topic raised at the last meeting. How can we benchmark our academic scores against national averages of schools with similar demographics? More to come on this.

Dave provided an update on Catholic schools in another diocese of our similar size and demographic and how they achieved success with multiple Blue Ribbon Schools. There are three specific reasons that had an impact on their achievement including: 1) schools were located in more affluent communities, 2) Their schools took the Terra Nova assessment as opposed to MAPS assessments. The Terra Nova assessment was noted to be easier to score at the levels needed to qualify for Blue Ribbon status, and 3) they don't take the assessment at every grade level. They have since moved to taking the NWEA Maps assessment and are recognizing the difference.

**VIII. Action Items** - none at this time.

**IX. Closing Prayer:** Prayer for *Bridging Faith & Future* was prayed by all.

**X. Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.

**The next DCSB meeting is on Tuesday, January 18 at 6:30 p.m. at Cathedral Square.**

**2021-22 Meeting Schedule**

~~September 14, 2021~~

~~October 19, 2021~~

~~November 3, 2021 (Fall Summit)~~

~~November 30, 2021~~

January 18, 2022

February 22, 2022

March 29, 2022

May 3, 2022 (Spring Summit)

May 10, 2022

June 14, 2022

**MISSION**

We prepare students to seek and fulfill God's plan for learning and life.

**VISION**

Be a collaborative and strategically focused body delivering leadership, mentorship and expert

recommendations that enhance the quality and growth of our Diocesan schools.