Diocesan Catholic School Board (DCSB)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 22, 2022

I. **Prayer** offered by Damon.

II. **Roll Call**

Present: Andrew Blum (virtual), Damon Bouwkamp, Cheryl Butkus (virtual), Dave Faber, Sue Haas-Williams (virtual), Sr. Colleen Ann Nagle (virtual), Tim Thimmesch, Leah Wareck (virtual)

Absent: Sarah Grey, Rev. Darrel Kempf, Kristina Martinez-Precious, Rev. Godfrey Onyekwere, Patty Schrand

Others Present: Shelley Hofmann, Sarah Toepfer (virtual)

III. **Marketing and Communications Update**

Sarah Toepfer addressed questions about her written report.

A question for clarification on movie trailers was asked. Our online streaming vendor places ads in movie trailers as a form of advertising. At this time, we are only putting a small investment of $1,000 toward this method of advertising because people are still getting back into going to movies. We are able to select the theaters and the movies during which our ads will show.

One other item Sarah shared is that we have had an additional media story based on our enrollment growth. Jan Bigalke, principal of Ludington Area Catholic, did a radio interview with Ludington Catholic.

Dave shared his appreciation for Sarah’s creativity with this year’s theme of “Raise your eyes and look about.” (Is 60:4)

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

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

A. **Admissions** - Damon shared his appreciation for Luzia and the great job she has done in hiring her team. Dave shared that Luzia reviewed enrollment data since our September “count day” to find that we are up 3.9% in enrollment. This revelation is causing us to rethink our marketing and admissions strategy to focus more on retention. How can we support schools’ retention efforts to retain these new families?

B. **Building and Grounds** - Tim offered to do a “building and grounds walkthrough” for any interested schools.
C. **Finance** - Patty summarized a chapter from a book about strategic financial management that was shared with the finance cohort to use in conversations with their school finance committees. Dave is also sharing this summary with school leaders, school pastors, and school business managers, along with some other information for a teacher salary study. This information includes salary benchmarks for local public school districts in areas in which our schools reside. NCEA is publishing a brand new financial report in early March. This will include national salary data for Catholic school teachers. All of this information will be helpful to schools as they look at their own staff salaries.

D. **Mission Effectiveness (ME)** - Sister Colleen Ann shared that the ME cohort feels it is important to get feedback from young people in the synod listening sessions. Dave shared some resources with Sister Colleen Ann.

VI. **Superintendents’ Report** -
Dave shared three additional items:

- The 2021-22 Annual Statistical Report will be published this week.
- A finance email with salary study results for schools will be sent this week. This email will contain lots of information to help our schools determine staff salaries.
- Child Care Stabilization Grant: It has been determined that diocesan schools are able to take advantage of these dollars as long as they follow the restrictions carefully. These dollars will greatly benefit our child care and preschool programs in seventeen of our schools.

Dave addressed questions from board members.

- **What is the bogey goal for enrollment for 2022-23?** The bogey is to keep the 3.9% additional students who enrolled after the September count day. Of course we would like to see a par or birdie and do even better, but that 3.9% has become our new bogey goal.

- **Are tuition increases being discussed?** We are empowering local schools to make those decisions because they know their families and the potential reaction to tuition increases in their communities. Tuition has to go up in the next year or so to address teacher compensation and inflation. It will be important for schools to communicate future increases if they are not setting an increase this year. Schools may need to start minimally with a tuition increase based on inflation. There is concern that increases beyond inflation may deter families from re-enrolling.

VII. **Discussion topics**
A. **Update on schools and COVID**

- The number of cases in the community and in our schools has come down significantly, and local health department efforts to reduce restrictions on schools have been very welcome. We will want to consider how to track this data now compared to where we were in the beginning of COVID. There is a new variant of Omicron, but hopefully the vaccine will be effective.
B. **Review committee work plans**

Each committee chair discussed his/her committee’s work plan and answered questions from board members.

- **Admissions** - Have you had any luck recruiting committee members? Damon is working on this.
- **Building and Grounds** - Tim gave an overview of the Building and Grounds work plan and goals of the committee.
- **Development** - The committee’s primary goal is to partner with the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan. Dave and Andrew are working to recruit a new committee chair.
- **Finance** - Sue read through the finance work plan. There were no questions.
- **Marketing** - We would like to re-engage the committee to brainstorm ideas beyond social media. Dave suggested asking Greg Ghering to join the committee. What are the particular talents the committee is looking for? Any marketing experience beyond social media talents.
- **Mission Effectiveness** - The committee is in the process of updating its work plan. This will be the focus of the committee’s March meeting. The goal will be to put more focus on specific areas of the broad scope of mission effectiveness. Dave shared a need for parent education around Theology of the Body (TOB). We need to encourage schools to open their TOB parent events to a wider group.
- **New Members** - Cheryl is in the process of updating the work plan.
- **Planning and Policy** - Sue reviewed the committee’s work plan.

Sue asked board members to do the following:

- Recruit committee members
- Revise the date on your work plans to ensure we have the most current version
- “Prepare session for fall and spring summits” should be on all work plans
- Review and update committee charge language for diocesan school board. Some committee charges are still written in language applicable to local school boards.

C. **Bridging Faith & Future (BFF) Refresh**

1. **Next steps** - The strategic planning committee will meet to begin revising tactics.

   Sue noted that next fall the DCSB will revise its strategic plan based on the refreshed BFF.

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

Dave thanked Sue for agreeing to serve as the project lead for this feasibility study.

Sue shared her thoughts on the meeting with the pastors of the parishes involved in the potential study. The level of enthusiasm from the pastors was beyond expectation. Father Andrew Ayers shared a positive yet realistic overview of his experience with WINGS. He also shared how he supports his school’s principal which helped the two pastors to better understand what their involvement in the school might require.
Dave and Sue received approval from both pastors to move forward with the study. Both pastors shared many names of potential study committee members. The next step is to meet with the potential donor.

E. **Let MI Kids Learn Petition Drive** - Dave shared his appreciation to Cheryl for assisting Dave in leading this drive for the diocese. Dave and Cheryl attended a session last week with MANS and representatives of the Let Michigan Kids Learn campaign. Dave articulated concerns about the number of signatures needed in the tight timeline. There have been significant delays in getting materials. There was also some concern about the letter going home to parents being too political, so MANS is revising the letter. The superintendents agreed that sending the letter home with students is not a good idea. Schools will invite parents who would like petitions to sign up.

The campaign committee has stated that “Failure is not an option.” Whatever signatures are not collected through the petition drive, the campaign will use canvassers to gather the remaining signatures needed.

F. **Spring Summit - May 3**

Final topics are due at the March 29 meeting. The DCSB suggested asking Bishop Walkowiak to share his priorities for Catholic education in the next five years and to express his appreciation to teachers and boards. We will need to think through the logistics of having Bishop present live and then move groups to breakout sessions. We will also need about thirty minutes for the BFF refresh.

A question was asked about spring MAPS testing results and a comparison of demographic data with Catholic schools with similar demographics.

VIII. **Action Items** - finalize committee work plans and plan spring summit sessions

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

X. **Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:27pm.

The next DCSB meeting is on Tuesday, March 29 (Prayer: Cheryl) at 6:30 p.m. at Cathedral Square.

**2021-22 Meeting Schedule**

March 29, 2022
May 3, 2022 (Spring Summit)
May 10, 2022
June 14, 2022

**2022-23 Meeting Schedule**
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.