

**Old St. Mary's School Board
February 24, 2021 Minutes**

Welcome and opening remarks

Julie welcomed everyone on the Board and the guests who joined and shared that as the incoming Board Chair, Laura will be leading the meetings for the remaining of the year. Before moving to the agenda, Julie asked Father Brad to lead us in an opening prayer.

Opening Prayer Father Brad shared a video from Pentatonix singing Amazing Grace as the opening prayer.

Strategic Plan: Future State

A couple of years ago we went through a strategic planning – led by teachers and board members, this is where we identified our strategic pillars. Some of the discussions, essentially that we don't need to overhaul the plan – but consider a gap analysis. Question was asked regarding opportunities that are unique to us today or items that we didn't prioritize that still need to be reviewed/considered. Julie mentioned that back when Governance & Leadership started their work, they did consider the importance of looking at the building/facilities short and longer terms needs of the school. Other areas of G&L were prioritized and now with COVID the situation has evolved and perhaps it's time to prioritize a review of our space. Jose asked the Board if we want to wait for some more certainty. We don't know what enrollment might look at in terms of COVID and fluidity. Put it off until there is the new normal. Do we want to have a sense of certainty before we proceed. Paula – from this point forward, may have an expectation of a level of online learning – amping up technology. What are other schools doing? Is this the new way of learning? Training teachers and students to pivot. Laura asked the Board for anyone who is interested in leading a gap analysis of our strategic plan as we move forward – asked Board to keep our eyes and ears open. Would Jose be willing to help us refresh the strategic plan. Jose will lead a small group. Fr. Brad suggested asking the Task Team leaders to get input. Addressed the short terms goals – need to look at longer term and talk about succession planning.

Strategic Plan: Task Team updates

Academic Excellence – Chris gave an update. On the prioritization front, the Blue Ribbon fund with leadership of our parents has had success with stipends for teacher leaders. To support above Arch payscale. That work will never end. As we dug deep into COVID, need to reinvigorate this committee, with COVID, challenges of curriculum. Matt/Kimberly (with three board members) and 17 people volunteered - about 12 people come to the initial meeting in 2021. Welcome new people to join, asked the parents who were guests on the Board call and others to share if they are interested in joining this Task Team. Having an Academic Open House is being explored. This would be a “State of the Union” of where we are as a school. Ranking, peer group analysis, quantitative and qualitative. Kurt has data from following students from St. Ignatius in terms of how we prepare our students for HS and beyond. On one of the calls, Diana shared that curriculum was fractured, not cohesive year to year. Different third party people to help deliver that curriculum describing to parents how math was being

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taught. What are the different tenets – launch academic open house by cohort (middle school) K-5th grade and teacher leaders who can describe what is happening to parents to help to understand where we are headed. Helps to have a vision to where we are going and how we are going to get there. Priority to get this launched and delivered in the next few months. Working with OSM leadership on improving academic rigor. Not teaching to test scores, but identifying where weaknesses may be. HS preparedness and what ways can parent support. Third pillar – develop a parent/family resource modeled after Academic Booster Group that was modeled at York. Helps to see the students and families supporting those students to visualize where they can get support and getting it on paper. Teachers at last meeting felt it was engaging to have some foresight into what they are doing through the next semester. With input from the Teacher Leaders. Chris asked that we keep this on our agenda going forward. Ask Matt and Kimberly to present at the next Board meeting. Jose asked about accreditation – there is no cohesiveness – Diana is working hard to address this.

Catholic Identity – good example of discipleship and to give witness. People who attended were appreciative. Refreshing as Catholics – we don't have anything going on for Lent that is school and parish, started last week. Jen spoke to faith formation – had a handful of people join last night and a book club tomorrow – God and You as a personal relationship – that is the book that is starting tomorrow and leading up to Easter.

School Spotlight

Mentors have been assigned with new teachers – good meeting and positive. Focused on attracting, supporting and retaining good teachers. Good group. Admissions – enrollment, in the middle of it right now, closing in on final numbers. Naomi enrollment director moved. Maria and Wilson picked up the bookkeeping and Diana taking prospective families on tours which can only be given after school days. The virtual open house – put together a video of what it's like to be in Preschool and Kindergarten at OSM – see the love and excitement and despite masks and shields – very engaging, big selling point. With Enrollment trends, we have three large classes (1, 2, 5 – very large this year) implications for Diana and the admin team to think about staffing and classrooms. Numbers in preK look good. Lost some families in PreK, decided to pull out during COVID and it made up for that. Many families are continuing, a few families moving to suburbs, and bringing in two families into mid-stream because they left mid year. Any trends in terms of transfer requests – seeing this. Heard from the city on a change in travel guidelines anyone past 14 days past 2nd vaccination is considered fully vaccinated. Arch accepted this. Nearly every teacher can now travel and come right back to school. This does not change for families because kids are not vaccinated – so any travel over spring break, for example, would need to follow quarantine rules.

Parish Report

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Fr. Brad reminded us that we are in Lent and working with RCIA getting them ready for Easter Vigil. Last year we invited people to watch Cathedral liturgies, but we have them, under Arch guidelines, at Old St. Mary's. Ash Wednesday had 90 people signed up and had 60 people attend. and across masses it shifted and they were able to accommodate everyone. One way to increase attendance, might be a classroom coming to a weekday mass – in a separate area of the church, separate from the other participants. If people don't want to participate, they can stay in a classroom. Talking to reopening committee – includes Beth Toth, OSM School Nurse and figuring out our way forward and how to invite people in. A tradition – the Chili Cook-off, it got cancelled last year, parish council is thinking of new ways to come together. Considering a virtual chili cookoff and sending ingredients and prepare it together. Maybe brownies too. Bishop Lombardo has asked us to put together a peace plan – a little competition and collaboration. A sub committee meeting on this. How can we think bigger? Dispensary conversations were helpful, want to think about additional ways to open up that conversation to build that community across the Chicagoland area.

Family School Association

Jen provided an update. Missed an opportunity – the Fr. Tolten talk – Sonja and Mark have put this together, bridging DEI, Catholic Identity, parish and school. Sonja – idea started with idea to celebrate Fr. Tolten and faith sharing, would like people to come together, know who Fr. Tolten is and come together in a casual discussion tonight to learn about him and talk with one another.

In addition – after the Sunday update, got a good update. Several people have expressed interest in AE – Jen sent names to matt/Kimberly. Monthly team for families to participate in volunteer opportunities – Mary star of the sea for families to clean up the school. Like sock drive during CSW – donated over 4,000 socks. Merchandize sale. Looking at more virtual events – smaller and older children (for march) community events. Blue Ribbon Bash – hoping to host something in person, that would need to follow guidelines, to see if we can do in person vs. Virtual.

Mary Martine Lowe and Mike Hurley leading a team to consider – end of April signature event.

Open Questions

Grateful for chili cookoff – as Jen mentioned, they are looking at social committee – don't want to conflict. Fr. Brad thought March would be good time, this is traditionally when we did it in the past.

Question on elearning rule after travel and quaranting – Diana spoke to this. From the beginning, talked about following CDC and Chicago depart. Of public health., but Arch makes the ultimate rules and we have to follow those guidelines. Acknowledges that it's hard for parents. Rules change so quickly, and city guidelines and map changes week to week. Changes on rule with testing and if that applies. Arch does not require that when a family is

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quarantining that the schools need to supply elearning. At OSM we have provided that, we have tried to be open to that and families had options – elearn/in person – most back now. And nearly every staff member will be back next week. Gets confusing when travelling. Nothing to qualify without a quarantine if crossing state lines – 1/20 guidelines, all out of state required a 10 day quarantine. Families with vacation homes – Arch only includes primary residence to be permitted to live in another state and drive here – not secondary homes. Skiing and visiting relatives. A teacher when to northern Wisconsin for an emergency = the Arch said no. the question that comes up, are we going to continue to provide elearning to families who choose to vacation for a weekend, the answer is no – it is strenuous for teachers. It's a lot of work for teachers to teach synchronously to kids in the room and at home. There is a difference between long term elearners and those who go back and forth. There is a real difference – long term elearning have a ritual, a desk/table, materials. Students going back and forth don't have that. Other schools have not offered elearning, we have done this, but they cannot be login in and out of zooms because they vacationed. We have been clear to allow after spring break because a lot of families made plans a year ago – other than that, skiing, weekend trips, will not provide it.