

SMOTH School Commission
3/6/2012
5:00 PM
Parish Hall
Minutes

Present: Rhee Fincher (chair), Carol Fuller, Steve Hagler, Joe McBride, Fr. Jerry Ragan, Tony Ramage, Ruth Ann Vericella, Mary Davis

Excused/Absent: Charles Whatley, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Catherine Bedenbaugh, John Strelec

Meeting called to order at 5:02 PM with opening prayer.

Change April meeting – Tues., 4/10/12

Now that the School Commission has been established for a couple of years, Fr. Jerry focused the emphasis to two key areas where the Commission can optimally support the school: promotion and funding, and stewardship/ finance and marketing/public relations/development. The work of the additional existing committees remains important for SMS, but is now being handled primarily through mechanisms internal to the school.

A brief updated on the **Academic Excellence/Educational Technology** committee by Ruth Vericella follows. Committee goals for 2011-2012:

- Support the School Improvement Plan as it pertains to math and technology by:
 - Seeking corporate/private donations to help replace older video projectors (approximately 25 @ \$500 each)
 - Contact educational agencies to bring in math experts who can provide math workshops or experiences for faculty
- Contact professionals proficient in writing composition and mechanics to share techniques with faculty
- Meet with Aquinas tech person to support our technology goal and assistant principal to monitor our students' progress at Aquinas.

Ruth Ann may continue to work with Joe McBride as needed to accomplish these goals.

Stewardship/Finance – As Stuart and Catherine Bedenbaugh will rotate off the School Commission at the end of the academic year, the committee decided to ask Charles Whatley if he would assume the position of chair. Steve Hagler volunteered to help, but not to chair. The group hopes that Charles will be able to assume this responsibility since the Facilities/Infrastructure Technology Committee has completed its assessment and the parish/school personnel will assume responsibility (especially Mary Davis, Joe McBride and Jimmy Carrick).

- Fr. Jerry envisions the Stewardship/Finance Committee being more involved with talking with parents about how stewardship is the primary way school is funded than with actual budgetary issues. For the committee to focus on educating people about how stewardship formation should be done, the group felt that Fr. Jerry must be prime educator. The following was pasted from the SMS Bylaws. These are a work-in-progress and can be changed to better meet our parish's needs.

“Section IV The Stewardship/Finance Committee will be composed of at least two (2) Commission members and the principal. In consultation with the finance director, the committee will have the following duties:

1. Review a tentative budget, prepared by SMOTH finance director and school principal, and make recommendations. The revised budget will be presented to the Finance Commission for action.
2. Review tuition rates and fees with the option of making recommendation to Finance Commission
3. Evaluate the financial position of the school as requested by the pastor or principal
4. Work with the Stewardship Commission to help ensure a commitment to stewardship (time, talent, and treasure) among all school families.”

Marketing – Tony Ramage (Chris Sweeney, Mary Davis)

- Committee goal: Get more children at SMS
- The following comments and strategies resulted from a free-ranging discussion after Fr. Jerry left the meeting. We envision these points as the focus for discussion, refinement, prioritizing, and implementation at subsequent School Commission meetings
 - Marketing starts with Fr. Jerry – and the pulpit; several members felt the school needs more promotion from the pastor for the commission members to be more effective in their marketing role
 - Revise and update the SMS website
 - Discuss and improve how we market school; **how we the parish** market the school
 - Update school brochure
 - Develop forums for comments from Catholic families about why they chose Catholic education – did not discuss how, but potential mechanisms will follow
 - Survey parish members with children who do not attend SMS – why do/don’t your children come to SMS?
 - Cover letter from Fr. Jerry for survey
 - Arrange transportation solutions
 - Student car drivers?
 - Ft. Gordon bus?
 - Share bus with EDS?
 - Market the fact that the 1 year waiting period for tuition waiver for stewardship has been rescinded (with letter of endorsement from former pastor)
 - CCD engagement
 - As a one-time event during CCD on Sunday AM, invite school parents and parish parents whose children do not attend SMS to attend and mingle
 - CCD activities – Invite some SMS children to socialize with CCD kids during CCD
 - Youth group – Ask Mike Lammers to be sure that SMS/Aquinas welcomes new kids
 - Vacation bible school – positive impact
- Some key reasons why SMOTH families do not send children to SMS
 - Transportation, cost, perception that education not as strong as EDS, lack of opportunities for struggling/gifted children, extracurricular activities, social (“friends send to EDS”)

- Strategies to consider
 - Focus on families of younger children; start at baptism – send something from school to parents when child baptized
 - SMS logo t-shirt to child after baptism
 - Get parents of young children involved – focus on parents socializing together
 - Clean nursery better
 - Can only take 60/grade level – can't take all who want to come into 6th grade, but could if come earlier
 - Aim efforts at lower grades
 - Youth night and VBS as recruiting tools
 - Concerted effort from pulpit to advertise school
 - Suggested Mr. Larcher speak
 - Children make announcements monthly before mass

Rhee left at 6:13; the remainder of the group continued the discussion.

Rhee will check with Fr. Jerry to see if the next meeting can be moved to 4/10/2012 to avoid Master's Week. Rhee will try to meet personally with Fr. Jerry about the meeting's discussion before the next Commission meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhee Fincher
Chair