

SMS School Commission (SC)

8/20/2013

5:00 PM (Parish Hall)

Minutes

Attendees: Rhee Fincher, Steve Hagler, Fr. Avery Hanna, Mary Beth Mitchell, Sarah O'Neill, Ruth Ann Vericella

Excused: Mary Davis, Mike O'Neill, Fr. Jerry Ragan, Tony Ramage, John Strelec, Charles Whatley

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM and began with prayer led by Fr. Avery.

Principal's and Assistant Principal's Update

- The first-ever (and first annual) **school retreat** that included St. Mary's School (SMS), Immaculate Conception (IC), Our Lady of Peace, and Aquinas was held on August 13, 2013 in the SMOTH Parish Hall. The event, facilitated by Jerry and Cricket Uell, secular Franciscans, focused on the theme of unity and was well received by the faculty. The unity theme concentrated on unity both within school and enhancing personal relationships with Christ. The principal outcomes relate to more effective working relationships: the principals already working together more and camaraderie increasing among teachers as they know each other better. The next combined meeting will be the DEI (WHAT DOES THIS STAND FOR?), held in February, for all Catholic school teachers in the deanery.
- **Start of school** – Thursday, 8/15, 2013, went well except for hard rain that resulted in bathroom flooding and slippery floors. Otherwise, Joe and Mary Beth were both very pleased with the start.
- The 14-passenger **bus**, purchased by SMOTH to transport children from Columbia County to SMS, is already transporting 12 children from St. Teresa's, 7 of whom attend SMS. Liz Burn is the bus driver. Five of the 7 children, all from Columbia County, are new to SMS. The plan is to expand the bus service over time to include a wider geographic area, including children from SMOTH. The cost to families is \$100 for the first child/ month and \$25/month for each additional child.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to School Commission planning for AY 2014. The following ideas were discussed specifically.

- **Marketing and enrollment, including enhancing the pipeline**, will be a major emphasis for AY 2014. All members should continue promoting SMS through their personal connections, such as: Welcome Committee (Alisha Ramage), reach out to CCD (attend events where CCD parents are invited – e.g., coffee/doughnuts in vestibule during CCD time on some days provided by the school), invite SC members to fall/spring PTO meetings to mingle. In general, SC members should be school ambassadors – answer questions; convey information.
- **100 years of Catholic education on the Hill** celebration will be held on October 19, 2013; all School Commission members encouraged to attend celebration. Get a copy of the events as soon as possible and distribute to the SC members.
 - The commission unanimously endorsed initiating the award of s St. Joseph Medal annually to someone who has contributed greatly to the school over a substantial

period of time. The inaugural presentation will be at the 100 years celebration; Bishop Boland will present the medal at Mass. After discussion, the Commission members unanimously endorsed the recommendation of Sr. Laura Ann Grady who taught for many years in several deanery schools and was principal of Aquinas.

- As one element of developing **Catholic identity**, the group discussed and endorsed naming each classroom for a saint. Each class (i.e., 2/grade) would collectively identify their saint, perhaps beginning with grade 8 and moving down. Each classroom would be highlighted a framed image of their patron saint. Donors (patrons) would be sought to give a framed image of the patron saint analogous to “giving” a pew in the church. The group suggested advertising the idea this fall, announcing the patron saints of each class during Catholic Schools Week in February 2014, and then seeking donors.
- **Pre-K initiatives** (E.g., Mother’s Day Out) – There was extensive discussion about the importance of the continuum of Catholic education, beginning with the cradle, and how the nursery and Mother’s Day Out programs are disconnected currently from SMS. The following recommendations were made:
 - Nursery – The nursery should be easily accessible, clean, well run (with nursery, church staff, and school staff knowledgeable about the program), and staffed by a paid adult woman. She could be assisted by teens who are earning hours of service for confirmation. The goal would be to provide quality child care during Masses and to develop a relationship with parents to facilitate their deciding to send their children to SMS.
 - Mother’s Day Out (MDO) – The members need to learn more about the program, but observations included that the building not set up well for MDO activity (could renovation help?), there is a lot of turn-over of teachers (not desirable), many heard anecdotes of people who have had negative communication experiences with/about the MDO program. Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 programs seem desirable. The group will take the following steps to learn more: Visit the nursery (Ruth Ann volunteered), visit MDO (Sarah volunteered), and invite a person involved with nursery and MDO to attend the next SC meeting to learn more about the programs and discuss how we can collaborate to create a continuum.
- The following ideas for SC focus were not specifically discussed:
 - Additional topics for Marianite
 - IT at SMS – e.g., new i-Pads – For learning at school and home; Smart Boards
 - Cutting costs – improving quality (feature Jimmy Carrick)
 - Promote accomplishments/opportunities to support SMS
 - Advertise additions such as Smart Boards and i-Pads (provided by donors)
 - Patron saint concept presented above
 - Mary Davis to speak about how SC can help with fund raising for school

Dates of School Commission meetings for AY 2014 – Please put these on your calendar and let Rhee know if you have a conflict: August 20, 2013, October 15, 2013, December 17, 2013, February 18, 2014, April 15, 2014.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rhee Fincher, Chair