

St. Mary of the Lake Catholic School Education Commission
Meeting Minutes – Monday, September 14, 2009

Present: Father Jim Morris, Kathleen Kelly, Mark Smith, Karla Madison, Gina Wilkinson, Patricia Carpenter, Paul Oselka, Renate Zavesky, Joe Bardusk

7:02 -- Meeting Called to Order by Joe Bardusk

Prayer by Father Jim

Minutes of the last meeting were reviewed. Mark Smith motioned to approve the minutes, Paul Oselka seconded the motion. Minutes approved.

Pastor's Report: Father Jim conducted the "Official Blessing Service" for the Commission Members. A code of ethics was read and signed by all the members.

Comments from Commission President Joe Bardusk: Joe spoke of his work experience of building construction projects and compared it to coaching and watching the youth of St. Mary's cross country meets. The building of young minds and young citizens is the most satisfying job ever. Joe extended his thanks to all present for sharing their skill, time and talents.

The meeting Agenda was reviewed and there was a motion to approve by Mark Smith and seconded by Joe Bardusk. Agenda was approved.

Financial Report: Mark Smith reported that there were no new financial reports since the last meeting. School Business Manager was not present at the meeting due to a prior commitment.

Principal Report: School Principal Kathleen Kelly reported that during the Labor Day weekend, there was an appeal for the Godparent Program at the parish Masses and \$4,400 was collected. A total of \$15,000 is needed for this year's Godparent Program. Joe Bardusk stated that this should stay as an action item. Kathleen Kelly said she would work on also doing an appeal during Masses at St. Mary's in Three Oaks and St. Ann's in Sawyer.

Members/school parents from the audience expressed their thanks to the Commission and also expressed concern and frustration about this year's loss of students/families. It was asked if funds are available for tuition assistance and why this money is not offered sooner or at registration as the current economy is probably part of the reason we have lost students. A need for an exact, annual date for registration be set was requested; in addition to the registration process being more aggressive and that the school's business manager be more present. It was the consensus of the Commission that the registration process and financial need requests go through the Principal's office so there is one central place where enrollment inquiries and registration is happening.

Committee Reports: Mark Smith reported that the *Finance Sub Committee* did not have anything to report.

Marketing Committee -- Patricia Carpenter asked that everyone present be placed on the Marketing Committee. Ideas regarding marketing the school's image, what our image is, press releases, etc. were discussed. Additional discussion occurred regarding our excellent MEAP scores and that we should have done more to advertise these results. Kathleen Kelly said she would contact the Diocese about a press release regarding our area Catholic school scores, as private schools are not included in the public school press releases that are distributed to local papers by the State of Michigan. Diane Giancaspro commented that she felt part of our loss of students was due to new technology that is being offered to the area public school students. An idea of a "Media Day" with the area newspapers, TV and radio stations was discussed. Candy VanBuskirk commented on how the teachers need to be proactive and encouraged to create press releases about innovative things happening in their classrooms.

Ideas were discussed on how to get more press coverage. Paul Oselka said he would try to find out why Harbor Country News does not do more coverage for St. Mary of the Lake School. The different themes of what our school offers were talked about -- service to the community, the feeling of community and family and faith in our school environment. We should live up to our school motto of "Education For the Whole Child." Our graduates continue to excel at area high schools in academics, athletics, public speaking and community service and we need to continue this tradition and advertise this tradition.

The Commission and members of the audience also talked about how to create a more positive feeling within the school, classrooms, faculty, administration, business office and families. It was agreed that we needed to work on a more welcoming atmosphere, which included the front office, and the entire faculty. This is a key to survival of our school. We need to band together as a whole to continue the tradition of St. Mary of the Lake School.

Grounds Committee Report: Paul Oselka thanked all who came to help with the Super Saturday before school for grounds and maintenance work/clean up. The maintenance request forms need to be revised so that it is more clear on what items need to be fixed, etc. The wires that are in the classrooms and used to hang art need to be removed. There is a roof repair that needs to be done in the older part of our school building. There is also water damage in the girl's bathroom (in the older part of the school building). A toilet in the girl's bathroom runs continuously and has been looked at. The frames of the windows in the older part of the school also need to be fixed.

Old Business: The program regarding tuition loans, which would replace the FACTS system was, discussed again. Horizon Bank would provide this possibly. Kathleen Kelly is to follow up on this program and have a representative from the bank come to give a presentation. Paul Oselka is to also assist in contacting Horizon.

New Business:

Enrollment/School Goals --

As of our August meeting we had 73 students enrolled and as of tonight's meeting we have 84 students. Counting Pre-School, our enrollment is at 106.

The importance of getting the Pre-School to grow and to involve our current Pre-School families in school activities was discussed. Gina Wilkinson commented that the Pre-School should be involved in our Christmas Pageant program.

Candy VanBuskirk shared with the Commission a program used in her teaching called "Best Practices" which helps teacher learn, accept and teach different teaching styles as all students learn in different ways (by sight, writing, memorization, etc.). Renate Zavesky and Kathleen Kelly discussed the different standards of teaching and lesson plans and maps with lesson plans referring to what you will teach and maps referring to what you have taught.

Kathleen Kelly announced that Bishop Bradley was coming to visit our school and say Mass with the students and parish on Tuesday, September 29th.

Final Comments: Kathleen Kelly and Paul Oselka both thanked the parents that were present for coming. Patricia Carpenter also asked that the meeting minutes be sent home in the big weekly envelopes after they were approved and also possibly be placed on the school's website. Patricia Carpenter and others present expressed that the need for full disclosure, openness and approachability with the Education Commission, faculty and administration needs to be worked toward and achieved to help our school's morale to increase and grow.

Motion to adjourn was made by Joe Bardusk. Motion approved by Mark Smith. This meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

The next meeting was scheduled for 7:30 pm on Monday, October 5th, 2009 in the school cafeteria.

Karla K. Madison - SML Education Commission Secretary