

St. Joseph School
School Board Minutes
August 11, 2008

Members Present: Todd Gregoire, Todd Rogers, Joan Boddicker, Christian Miller
Ex-Officio Members: Maggie Smith, Bonnie Delaney

Call to Order 6:30
Closed Meeting
Open Meeting 7:00

1. Opening comments by Todd Gregoire

- Reading of Letter from Father Larry
- Pass out comments from Tony Kirsch
- Hand out class schedules for 1st 2nd and 5th grade

2. Open Comment Time

- **Tony Kirsch**
 - * Concerned about part time teachers in some classes. Concerned about having 30 students in the 7th grade class.
 - * Core subjects are taught in a large group except for Math.
 - * Was told there would be 2 full day classes and one half day. Now there is one full day. How can we be open to new families?
 - * Is the Spanish curriculum sufficient if some 8th graders can't pass out of the Spanish class offered in high school?
 - * Advancement Committee. The recommendation was for full time, and reporting to Father. It has been changed to a part time position reporting to Mrs. Smith.
 - * Where is enrollment? Have we shut the door on Kindergarten?
 - * Used to have 44 students in the 7th grade. Why are we losing students to Clearwater?
 - * Does the current operation fit with the mission and vision?
 - * Who represents the parents at the school, how do they make an effective change when the school board is advisory?
 - * Individual meetings between parents and administration are not sufficient to address these issues.
 - * Demonstrated failure of the administration to work with the parents to address their concerns.

- * How does the administration respond to recommendations by the school board?
- * Why are school board members resigning out of frustration?
- * Decisions made by the school board need to be transparent.
- * Learnia testing – how do we measure ourselves against the other schools?
- * We need to get rid of Learnia and use MCAs again.
- * Does the school board represent the parents?

- **Parent comments**

- * When I told my son there were going to be 30 students in some of his classes he said – “oh my gosh, we are going to be in so much trouble!”
- * My daughter’s class has 33 kids in two sections this year. Will there be 33 kids in her one class next year?
- * My child was falling behind last year and the teacher said they just can’t take on more. How can they take on more students in their classes?
- * I didn’t give my older kids a Catholic education and it shows. You just can’t put a price on having a faith based education.
- * I agree that a faith based education is important, but you can only give up so much to get it.
- * My daughter got all E’s and S+, and then I found out at the end of the year that the student was below average for Learnia.
- * We need to get Learnia results from the Archdiocese so we can use it as a marketing tool.
- * We aren’t doing the right marketing things to promote the school. The school board is doing good work with a down enrollment cycle. The school board did a good job being fiscally responsible. They do need to do a better job making parents happy so they can talk up the school. We need to go back to MCA testing so we can compete against the public school. We have to work to make this place better.
- * I have a lot of concern about how the kids are going to do on the tests that they have to take to graduate.
- * Several parents – Why is one of the classes being split the Spanish class?
- * I challenge everyone to bring 2 more families to the next visioning meeting so we can get more people involved.
- * I had cancer just six months after coming here. The 1st grade said a decade of the Rosary every day for me. I’m getting good reports now. You can’t get that kind of support in other schools.

3. School Response to the Comments

- **Todd Gregoire response**

- * If you have an issue, talk to the teacher, then to the principal, then to Father. The Archdiocese has determined that the school board should be advisory.
 - Two parents explained that they had talked to Maggie and Father about these issues.
- * There was \$104,000 shortfall on the budget when we got the enrollment this spring. 78% of the budget is salaries and benefits of the teaching staff.
 - If we want to get back to 2 sections per class, it will cost \$450 per student.
 - We couldn't talk about possible staff reductions until we made the decisions because of legal constraints and didn't want all teachers to be up in the air waiting for months to find out what was going on.
- * Marketing
 - Because the parish did not want to have the advancement director, Father suggested that the Advancement Director be a school employee and report to the Principal.
 - Advancing the Mission committee withdrew their support when they found out that we had financial problems that were going to affect class sizes.
 - The Advancement Director was going to be funded strictly through the fundraising. We talked to various sources who said that would be reasonable.
 - The Advancement Director position is now on hold.
- * Board members are now invited, generally from those who apply, but are not elected.
 - Father Himmelsbach first started it by just picking a name from a hat.
 - Father Blake wants to interview candidates to get board members with different strengths.
 - All school board members have children in the school, so they do represent interests of the parents.
 - To be on the school board you need to attend meetings each month, keep sensitive issues confidential, and support the decisions made by the board. You can't be so tied to your own ideas that you won't support the board when, as a whole, it reaches a different conclusion.

- **Mrs. Smith and Teacher Response**

- * We haven't received Learnia results from the Archdiocese schools.
- * Research shows that class size is not as important as one on one time between the teachers and the students. Our teachers are those kind of teachers who will make the effort to spend time with their students.

- * All of the part time positions are filled except for 5th grade, and there are lots of resumes submitted for that position. It is very rare to get a teacher who leaves midyear, so that shouldn't be a concern.
- * Spanish class is split so students can get more time speaking Spanish.
- * We were told by Waconia public that the St. Joe's students would automatically be placed in Spanish 2, but we cannot have placement tests to see what will be covered. Holy Family has not commented.

- **Other Teacher Comments**

- * We currently have 20 students in full day Kindergarten, and 6 for half day. The Kindergarten class is not closed to new students.
- * We asked other school teachers how it worked to have half day and full day mixed and they said it was ok, but they weren't very positive.
- * For socialization issues, kindergarteners are together for music, phy ed., and Spanish. They will also have the "lunch bunch" offered for the half day students to stay for lunch and recess with the full-day children.
- * Both Waconia public and Holy Family will begin teaching geometry for 9th grade in the 2010 year. We will prepare this year and have everyone ready for the change in standards. We are using the same curriculum as Waconia public schools. Holy Family approves of our curriculum and says students can transition well from it to their program.
- * I think having social studies with all 30 students is great because we can keep all the kids on the same page. I am looking forward to being here.
- * Teachers take care of getting people into special needs. So even with Mrs. Gluck gone, teachers will get help for children who need it.
- * I like having all 30 kids together. It's easier to keep the kids on the same page. We will be splitting them for media center so that there is time to have one on one interaction with the students.
- * I like having all the students together. I have had 37 students in a class in the public school. You can find studies to say small classes are best, but you also find some that say it doesn't matter.
- * I think the second grade students will do fine. Mrs. Philp will teach science and Social Studies. She developed that curriculum when she was a 2nd grade teacher before, so she is familiar with it.
- * Mrs Gluck taught faith, reading, and math, and those subjects will be taught by the new teacher as well.

4. Jay Steele Comments Regarding the Visioning Process

- Explanation of the model for visioning
 - * Prayer, mandates, statistics

- * Core values
- * Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
 - Based on demographics, we have unbelievable opportunities
- * Key strategic issues
 - One is communication
- * Everyone comes with strategies. We need to determine if that strategy addresses the problems.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30.

The next meeting will be September 8, 2008 at 6:30 in Room 211.