

SJNCS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 18, 2024

St. John Neumann Library

4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order by Chair– 4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Kelly Mechelke, Principal; Fr. Joe Reed, Pastor; Sabrina Talley, Academic Dean, Mary Marlowe, Director of Admissions; Patrick Wade, Director of Development; Jenny Hay, Board Member; Will Silverberg, Board Member; Alex LaFasto, Vice-Chair Board Member; Jessica Louthan, Board Member, Steve Eckstein, Faculty Representative; Jennifer Dzermejko, PTMO President; Stephanie Greiner, Director of Communications (Recording Secretary)

Absent: Christine Roeck, Director of Human Resources and Account Management

II. Opening Prayer by Fr. Joe Reed

III. Open Forum

A presentation by Sarah Toliver requested access to the SJNCS Directory, located on FACTS (formerly RenWeb). Mrs. Toliver expressed understanding that the directory had to be closed due to issues earlier in the school year with contact information being used inappropriately. However, she feels parents can now be expected to communicate appropriately, especially as they will be signing a Parent Code of Conduct. Mrs. Toliver feels that preventing parental access to the full school directory is a safety concern, e.g. concerning messages or behavior among students could be shared directly with other parents. Additionally, preventing access to the full directory makes it difficult for parents to arrange playdates and birthday parties for students in other classes. Per Mrs. Toliver, the Directory offers an opportunity to reach out to new parents. As parents can elect not to share information on the parent directory, it should not be required of homeroom parents or teachers to share contact information among their class. If misuse of data was to occur, Administration would be expected to handle the misuse of data.

The board discussed that the timeline for opening the directory back up has already been discussed in PTMO meetings. It will not happen this year since we only have a few weeks left. The directory will be opened back up, but we have yet to determine exactly how much access is proper. We will consult with the Catholic Schools Office to determine what is standard. The board agreed that building community is the best way for parents to connect, not necessarily by having access to each family's contact information.

IV. Open Forum Adjourned

V. Discuss / Approve previous Meeting Minutes

- Motion to approve minutes
- Vote: Motion approved by unanimous aye

VI. Old Business

The board reviewed the proposal from Meredith Reddington at the March SAB meeting to begin a School Composting Project. Members of the board suggested that this summer would be an opportune time to roll out the project using Summer Camp students. Those students could then help model the project for other students in the Fall. Fr. Joe spoke with Deacon Bo Beaty and he would be willing to be involved and potentially starting a community garden using the compost. The board discussed how the project would be funded. Per Patrick Wade, a grant could take too much time. He suggested looking for a sponsor or having PTMO fund the project. Per the proposal, the only costs would be materials. Ms. Reddington's father has offered to build the composter. Ms. Reddington has also offered to help organize an Assembly with a Professor to explain the benefits of composting to students. Members of the board agreed such assemblies would need to break up by age ranges and could potentially happen during lunch. The board agreed to arrange a meeting with Ms. Reddington later to go over those details.

- Call for Vote to approve Proposal to begin a School Composting Program
- Vote: Unanimous Aye, the SAB is in favor of the Composting Program

The board reviewed the WatchDOGS program presented by John Toliver at the March meeting. Mr. Toliver has sent out information regarding the process of beginning program. Members discussed whether the program is a feasible request considering our small community. Members agreed that while men "like the idea" of a program and a schedule with specific asks and tasks, currently there are no homeroom dads and only one dad who volunteers in the cafeteria, so it would be difficult to have dads present 5 days a week for an entire school day. Members discussed that perhaps a better alternative is to make a more deliberate effort to involve men in volunteering and being more present in the school. Members discussed potentially easing into a program by starting "Friday Fathers," where dads are encouraged to sign up to spend a Friday in the school and help where needed, before buying a program like WatchDOGS. The board determined that this feedback will be shared with Mr. Toliver, and board member Mr. Silverberg will him to put together a survey to gauge interest. The board agrees that it likes the idea of making this program our own and having it fit our specific community, similar to how Mustang Mania developed from Race for Education.

VII. New Business

The board received an Email from Sarah Toliver requesting a budget proposal to install an awning over both pre-school classrooms. Fr. Joe will ask our retained architect, Paola Martinez from Community Tectonics, if that is allowed by the Town of Farragut and what would be the cost.

The board continued the tabled discussion from the February meeting regarding Catholic Identity. Although there are areas for improvement, the board feels we are making positive changes and will continue to be proactive moving forward. Dr. Mechelke reached out to the Superintendent to ask for guidance on a particular artist, but Mrs. Deschaine does not want to be involved. Dr. Mechelke then contacted other schools in the Diocese, and it's evenly split on that particular artist. We will continue to listen to parent feedback and encourage teachers to explore more Catholic options for subject matter in the arts.

The board discussed Mr. Broussard's concern that students and teachers are not properly catechized. Fr. Joe explained the ACRE (Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education) assessment, which all students and faculty at SJNCS are required to take. This test gives us

metrics on areas of Catholic faith knowledge of all students and faculty. This allows us to identify areas of concern. Our ACRE scores at this time are not a cause for concern, but we will continue to use the data to identify areas to develop. We will continue to highlight the positives and not unfairly focus on the negatives, to encourage staff and foster growth. The board discussed ways to spotlight our Catholic identity. A board member has created a form for presenters to complete which allows them to briefly state their concern and offer possible solutions. This form will be sent to Mr. Broussard.

VI. Closing Prayer by Fr. Joe - Meeting adjourned at 5:33 pm