

**Advisory Board Minutes**  
**Thursday, November 21, 2024**  
**St. John Neumann Library**  
**4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.**

I. Present: Kelly Mechelke, Hiram Morales, Bailey Broussard, Patrick Wade, Jenny Hay, William Silverberg, Alex Lafasto, Taylor Locke, Steve Eckstein, Mary Marlowe, Jessica Louthan, Andrea Gentile

Presenters: Beau Broussard, Lisa Sinclair

II. Call to Order 4:00 p.m.

III. Opening Prayer by Dr. Mechelke

IV. Presenter's

A. Beau Broussard – Library Concern

1. What about the subcommittees that have not been formed that families were told would be?

2. There is not a process for a library audit. Mr. Broussard states that other libraries have audits and that we should as well.

3. Why are not all families notified of books that reach the Advisory Board/Subcommittees for review?

4. What happens to the book when it is taken out of the library?

Discussion about Mr. Broussard's presentation:

Thank you for your time, compassion, and concern.

#1 The subcommittees have not been formed because the need we initially anticipated did not come to fruition. We did have a small committee to review a few library books, which was made up of individuals from the Advisory Board. We did think at some point we would need more families to be a part of sub-committees. That may happen at some point. Right now, it does not feel necessary, but we are always open to forming sub-committees when needed in the future. This Advisory Board is relatively new and we are growing with each meeting. The book review is not just Dr. Mechelke, Father Joe, and the Librarian. There is a process followed outlined in the SJN Library Policy. We have also started a student and family group that is auditing/reviewing middle school books as a small group before they are entered into the library.

#2 Dr. Mechelke will visit with Ms. Nygard and Father Joe regarding a library audit. The Advisory Board discussed options for implementing an audit. One option was to select sub-committees to review a list of the books that have been checked out yearly and report back to the Advisory Board. Another option was to create sub-committees that would look at all the titles in the library and report back to the Advisory Board. Another option was to have faculty be involved in an in-school audit and report to the Advisory Board. This will be on the January agenda, since December will be a Christmas gathering thanking the Advisory Board for their service.

#3 The Advisory Board members commented that those interested in books that are challenged should pay close attention to the Advisory minutes as that will let them know about the results. We could look at who has ever checked the book out and notify those families. However, those not ever affected by that book we did not feel it was necessary.

#4 Books that have been ruled to be taken out of the library are disposed of. We do not donate or keep in the school. We discard them.

B. Lisa Sinclair – Disciples of Christ – Education in Virtues

1. I want to share with you an exciting opportunity for our school to deepen its commitment to authentic Catholic education through a comprehensive program called Education in Virtue by Openlight Media. Developed by the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, this program offers an integrated approach to character formation that aligns beautifully with our Catholic identity and mission.

**Why Education in Virtue?** Education in Virtue is more than just a curriculum—it's a lifestyle program grounded in the rich tradition of Catholic teaching, specifically drawing from the wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas. It provides resources for both students and educators to understand, practice, and live out virtues such as prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. At its core, the program follows a three-part model: Learn, Live, and Witness. Students are guided not only to understand virtues intellectually but also to integrate them into their daily actions and decision-making processes. This cultivates a school environment where virtues become part of our shared vocabulary and lived experience. (*share examples with handouts*)

**A Personal Testimony** Last year I ordered the Virtues Chart Packs for personal use and began discussing them with my own children. To my surprise, they were not only engaged but also excited to learn more about virtues. They even expressed interest in taking the *Virtue Strengths Survey* to discover their areas of strength and opportunities for growth. This kind of enthusiasm from my own teens speaks volumes about the program's ability to inspire genuine curiosity and desire for virtue formation. ([Explore the survey here](#))

**Aligning with Our Catholic Identity** Integrating Education in Virtue allows us to weave our Catholic faith more intentionally into every aspect of our school life. It provides our educators with practical tools and a shared language to nurture students' spiritual and moral development. This program supports our mission to form students who are not only academically excellent but also strong in character, rooted in faith, and ready to be leaders in their communities.

**Catholic Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)** Another compelling aspect of Education in Virtue is its approach to Catholic Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). We understand that many schools are incorporating SEL programs, but there is a growing concern about aligning these methods with a Christian worldview. The Catholic SEL from Openlight Media seeks to ground social-emotional learning in Christian anthropology and virtue education. Rather than focusing on behavior modification alone, Catholic SEL aims to develop the whole person—integrating the intellect, will, and emotions in harmony with our faith. This approach aligns with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1774), emphasizing the importance of forming both the mind and the heart in accordance with God's design for humanity.

**Practical Benefits and Support** The program offers extensive resources, including a School Starter Kit and professional development for our educators. Openlight Media provides training and ongoing support, ensuring that the program can be implemented successfully and sustainably. This support empowers our teachers to model and teach virtues confidently, enriching their own professional growth while positively influencing our students.

**In Conclusion** In adopting the Education in Virtue program, we have an opportunity to strengthen our Catholic identity, provide a consistent and faith-filled approach to character formation, and integrate social-emotional learning in a way that honors the dignity of the human person as created in the image of God. I invite you to consider the profound impact this program could have on our school community—creating a culture where virtues are not only taught but lived, guiding our students to become the saints of tomorrow. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to discussing how we can take this next step together in forming disciples of Christ. **Show video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cosQMaKWC0&t=91s>

In response to Lisa's Education in Virtues. Thank you for your polite and sincere presentation. We appreciate your time. We will certainly consider this program as we continue to work finding the best SEL support curriculum program for SJN.

Our Knoxville Diocese does look at one subject area each year, including Religion, and guides the choice of curriculum used to meet the Diocesan standards. Each individual school adds supplemental programs, such as the above to fill in the gaps that are often present, since no curriculum is as complete as one would hope. However, sometimes no supplement is necessary. Social Emotional Learning is a part of our Religion curriculum because it is character building, which Jesus taught us. Our current Religion curriculum program is rooted in learn, live, and witness.

Whenever curriculum is purchased, the company provides professional development, which we provide to our staff when implementing any new curriculum or practice. In addition, SJN provides staff on-going monthly professional development opportunities.

Dr. Mechelke just wanted to address this line from Lisa's presentation. Lisa stated, "We understand that many schools are incorporating SEL (Social Emotional Learning) programs, but there is a growing concern about aligning these methods with a Christian worldview." Dr. Mechelke would like to add that she has been in Catholic Education for 22 years and Catholic Schools have ALWAYS incorporated teaching SEL. This is the only school she has ever been at that families haven't trusted the professionals to teach social emotional learning rooted in Christ's teaching no matter the curricular program they chose. Since last year's revolt, major misunderstanding, and mistrust she has been looking at what to invest in addition to our current Religion curriculum which covers SEL along with our current Virtue supplement.

We have always taught Social and Emotional learning naturally in the classrooms during Religion classes and other times during the school day using Christ's teachings. Christ's teachings are applicable on the playground, in the lunchroom, during breaks, at Mass, learning in all other subject areas because we can and do talk about Christ as much as possible working to instill the love of Christ and his Social and Emotional teachings in everything we do. We teach the whole child, mind, body, and spirit.

Last year SJN continued to use Virtues in Practice from the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation, based out of Nashville, TN.

<https://www.nashvilledominican.org/apostolate/evangelization-and-catechesis/virtues-in-practice>

/ Teachers are to be adding this into their Religion lessons. We announce the Virtue of the month every day on the morning announcements, followed by a definition of that Virtue and a Bible verse. An Advisory Board member commented that she has worked with the program that Mrs. Sinclair has brought forth and it utilizes the same virtues as our current Virtue program. Mrs. Sinclair's program is a newer version if you will of presenting these same Virtues we currently utilize.

After last year's stressful, hurtful, and confusing time Dr. Mechelke has reached out to the other schools in the Knoxville Diocese to inquire about what they utilize to strengthen SEL. They use the above Virtues in Practices, as well as Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional

Learning. SJN has been cautiously looking into adding that program to our curriculum. We can also consider the program Lisa Sinclair is bringing forth.

As much as we welcome people sharing curriculum, we want you all to rest assured that SJN does have professionals hired to find appropriate and current best-practice curriculum in all areas to meet the standards set forth by the Diocese of Knoxville. As a reminder SJN has and continues to teach Catholic faith. SJN employs only educational professionals that care about Catholic identity and teachings; some of whom also select and choose curriculum. One of them being Dr. Mechelke who holds a master's degree in curriculum from a Catholic University-Viterbo University in La Crosse WI and has had experience in Catholic Education for over 20 years. In addition, Our Knoxville Diocese puts together a group each year, as stated above, to address a curriculum area each year to ensure standards are being met and curriculum utilized is in-line with our Catholic faith.

C. No spectators

V. Old Business

A. News/Update from Town of Farragut Education Committee-No additional information from Sarah Toliver. Bailey Broussard did mention that the Canned food drive is a good project to send Mrs. Toliver the results so she can share at the next Town of Farragut Education Committee meeting.

B. Dr. Mechelke and Mrs. Broussard worked on getting this position into the bylaws of the PTMO so that we can continue to have representation on the Town of Farragut Education Committee.

C. Approval of October Meeting Minutes

D. Photo/Bio from SAB Members for website

1. Mr. Locke and Mr. Lafasto need pictures for the website.

E. Traffic Update/News from Jenny Hay-

1. We do need to pay for 4 hours at a time for a traffic officer.

2. The Town of Farragut is not going to provide that.

3. SJN Administration feels it is safer for our current officer to stay closer to the school rather than direct traffic.

4. At this time there are no funds to pay for a 4-hour window of time for a traffic officer. Please drive safely growing in the Virtue of Patience. We all continue to grow in Virtue our entire lives.

F. Library Committee

1. *Not The Worst Friend in the World*, by Anne Rellihan

a) Father Joe has ruled SJN will follow the recommendation to keep the book with the stipulation of 5th grade through 8th grade check-out only.

VI. New Business

A. Open Forum

1. Mission and Catholic Identity

a)Canned food drive – Spirit Week

a.We send money and cans collected to LaFollette Food Life Services. This tradition has been yearly for 10 years.

Leadership council delivers money collected and food.

b)SJN considering CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) for a SEL curriculum program support to our Religion series we currently have. The areas CASEL has for SEL are: 1-Self-Awareness 2-Self-Management 3-Social Awareness 4-Relationship Skills 5-Responsible Decision Making 6-Catholic Identity ..\SEL Catholic Identity Wheel.docx Other schools in our

Diocese use this curriculum program to support the Virtues that are taught in our Religion series.

c)Some of our classes are writing to the Seminarians. The poster is hung in the hallway near the school entrance. An email was also sent to all faculty.

## 2. Governance and Leadership

a)Mrs. Baker went to the two-day National Council for Teacher of English convention in Boston.

b)Dr. Mechelke continues to send professional articles to staff monthly. These come from the Catholic magazines that SJN subscribes to and often Seton Reflections.

c)Per your recommendations we have moved the newsletter to coming from Dr. Mechelke, with our new feature Mechelke Musings.

d)Mrs. Lafasto is going to lead Zumba for staff Wednesday, Dec. 11

## 3. Academic Excellence

a) First Honors for Middle School, which is students with all A's were:

- a. 5<sup>th</sup> grade 15 students 36% of the class,
- b. 6<sup>th</sup> grade 9 students 20% of the class,
- c. 7<sup>th</sup> grade 15 students 36% of the class,
- d. 8<sup>th</sup> grade 12 students 29% of the class.

When you add in the Second Honors which is A's & B's

- a. 5<sup>th</sup> grade is 15 more students 36% of the class,
- b. 6<sup>th</sup> grade is 22 more students 49% of the class,
- c. 7<sup>th</sup> grade is 17 more students 40% of the class,
- d. 8<sup>th</sup> grade is 18 more students 43% of the class.

When added together making a grand total of

72% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade,  
69% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade,  
76% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade,  
72% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade

had only A's and B's in first quarter! All well over half of the students!

b)Because we know that academics and behavior go hand-in-hand it is important to report about our behavior as well. When class is disrupted so is learning.

a.72% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 73% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 43% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 38% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade have had 0 demerits this semester!

b.Of the 28% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade the average demerits were 2 points in total. Of the 27% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade the average demerits were 3 points in total. Of the 57% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 62% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade of students that have demerits the average is 4 points over the entire first four months of school! (When taking out the top 5 most demerits in 7<sup>th</sup>

and 8<sup>th</sup> grade)

That is really excellent and shows how most of our students are diligent in following directions, being kind, and respectful.

c)Emphasis on Math Facts grades 2-4. K-1 will follow Fall 2025. Dr. Mechelke has been providing professional development to the staff on how to implement Rocket Math. Rocket Math is a curriculum supplement program that helps students to memorize math facts utilizing two math facts and the reciprocal until all facts have been memorized. This program is individualized to meet each student where they are and move them forward. This program has addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts.

4. Operational Vitality

a) The Finance Council met just recently. Things are going well.

b) We had a donor that gave enough for us to get 62 new Chromebooks.

c) Will have more to report in January/Feb about school addition

Other: Decided to have a Thank you meeting December 12 from 4:00-5:30 and cancel Dec. 19 meeting due to Dr. Mechelke being out of town.

VII. 5:30 p.m. Closing Prayer by William Silverberg and Adjourn