

St. Luke School Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday September 1, 2015, 7:00 PM

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

In attendance: Andy Bauer, Vernon Back, Beth Borland, Valerie Esposito, Dan Heslin, Anne Horton, Sue MacGill, Wendy Mehringer, Eileen O'Brien-Metzger, Tim O'Brien, Phil Poirier, Msgr. Schaedel, Teresa Schutzman, Suzanne Sherby, Rob Shumaker, Steve Weber.

Approval of the June 2015 meeting minutes was deferred to the October meeting due to the time lapse between meetings. The minutes will be recirculated and offered at the next meeting.

Open Forum: This portion of the meeting which allows for public comment and questions has been moved to the beginning of each School Commission meeting at the request of Monsignor Schaedel. The commission hopes that the movement will facilitate parental involvement in the meetings as there will no longer be a need to sit through the entire meeting in order to comment on school business. There were no parents present at this meeting, likely due to the fact that the change was not published, but it was agreed that the change in format will be published in QuickNotes as well as in the parish bulletin.

President's Report – Rob Shumaker

Rob welcomed new members and presented a brief review of the roles and responsibilities of the School Commission. All information is detailed in the policy manual, bylaws and handbook. These documents are to be posted on the website. Rob reiterated that the Commission's primary purpose is to serve the school and support its mission as a policy making and planning body. All policy is reviewed and ratified by the Pastor. The Commission provides oversight and support of the Principal in his efforts to achieve the goals of the school, and is largely focused on long term strategy and planning. To that end, the Commission participates in an annual review of the Principal's performance. The Commission is interested in reporting on the status and progress of the School to the Parish, and also on appropriately implementing Archdiocesan policy.

It was noted that there is one small change yet to be made to the policy manual. Tim will complete the change and circulate to all members for consideration at the October meeting.

Principal's Report – Steve Weber

Enrollment as of 8/28/15

K	58		
1	61	2	59
3	63	4	73
5	69	6	73
7	61	8	65
Total	582*		

*We lost 5 students due to out-of-state moves the first week in August. There are several applications pending as well.

Staffing Update:

Fran Snetselaar, a St. Luke graduate, is co-teaching K01 with Mrs. Rohrer, who will be going on maternity leave about Labor Day... no pun intended. Mrs. Snetselaar taught kindergarten in Colorado, Virginia and most recently worked at Park Tudor.

Courtney Glass, a Little Flower and Scecina graduate, starts her full time career in first grade, replacing Miss Kelly Moffett, who resigned over the summer.

Jennifer Forsee is our new middle school language arts teacher, replacing Mrs. Chapman. Mrs. Chapman is working two days per week supporting and challenging middle school language arts students and guiding the speech team. Mrs. Forsee most recently taught at Little Flower School. She is a seventh grade homeroom teacher.

Anne Spilbeler is our new middle school religion teacher. She is member of IHM parish and taught in HSE schools before coming to St. Luke. She replaces Mrs. Gilliam, who is now teaching at IHM School.

Kelli Bevelhimer is our new Spanish teacher. She is coming back to teaching after rearing her family. She replaces Mrs. Jones, who is working in the business world.

Beth Yaakey is working as a part-time resource aid. Her salary is funded by MSDWT through a special-ed program. She work for us last year while Mrs. Dorsey was on FMLA.

Strategic Plan Update: Here is a report on the status of our plan implementation as we enter year two.

Academic Excellence:

Goal 1: An initial curriculum review and document was produced last year and is included in our marketing materials. The teachers also met in adjoining grade level teams last year to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum integration. That material was given to Mrs. Borland. She is meeting with grade level teams on a regular basis to more clearly identify goals, strategies, and timelines in religion, language arts and mathematics. Next year we will focus on science, social studies and other related areas because new standards are being developed and promulgated in those areas. Math grouping has been expanded to third grade and Mrs. Garrison, our math resource teacher, has gone back to full time. Mrs. Chapman is working part-time to challenge and support middle school students in written expression. Mrs. Strohl continues to focus on enrichment for primary and intermediate students.

Goal 2: School communication resources are utilized to share parish religious and community activities as much as possible and school activities are also shared in the parish bulletin,

Goal 3: We have developed and disseminated our Covenant. As noted earlier, a simplified curriculum scope and sequence was developed last fall. It is in the process of being updated and expanded as curriculum mapping is completed.

Goal 4: Latin was introduced to grades 3-8 last fall. We did learn that having grade 5 & 6 students take both Latin and Spanish was confusing. The decision was made to teach Latin only in grades 3-5 with students in grades 6-8 selecting either Latin or Spanish. Each of those grades identified one teacher to provide instruction in Latin. The foreign language teachers are discussing the possibility of having one semester of Latin and then one semester of Spanish in sixth grade and then make the decision for seventh and eighth grade. This idea does fit the

middle school model of exposing students to different options. Right now there are two sections of Spanish and one section of Latin in each grade 6-8.

A question was asked regarding how we track the information with regard to how many students are able to pass out of either first year Latin or Spanish in high school. Steve stated that our data regarding pass rates is anecdotal as of now, as we are relying on people who take and pass the test let us know about their favorable results. Several members stated that they would like to see actual data as it will be impossible to evaluate our real success without.

Goal 5: We use each of our faculty meetings to share practical examples of lessons targeting our school improvement goals. We coordinate with the other Catholic schools in the North Deanery for professional development. This year we will meet over fall break for targeted professional development and content and grade level sharing of ideas and resources. Six of our teachers were able to take specific Orton-Gillingham training this summer. One of our teachers took specific training on supporting English language learners at Notre Dame. She has been sharing ideas at our faculty meetings.

Goal 6: Staff and committee members visited several schools last fall. They identified various areas of strength that may work at St. Luke. We have adopted some new materials, Rod and Staff math for grades 3-4, Memoria Press Latin program in 3-8, and some literature resources. Grades 3-8 now use Loyola Press “Voyages in English” to support our English program. We continue to operate under the description of “progressively traditional.”

Technology: We did expand bandwidth for the school side of the building from 7mbps to 30mbps and we can expand up to 100mbps. That has resolved most to the connectivity issues. We purchased another MacAir lab with 24 laptops. The older MacBook units were split between the upper floor and the music department. We are still struggling with full implementations of the iPad labs. It turns out the problem was with Filewave management system internally. That should be resolved soon. We are also bringing new admin software online. When fully implemented it should be able to handle all major functions, including online forms, cafeteria, communications and more. We will soon have a parent app available. A question was asked as to whether the new software will allow for push notifications to parents whenever a grade falls below a certain threshold. The answer was not known, but Beth will follow up and share the information with parents.

Many questions were raised as to why the process of getting the i-pads up and running has taken so long. In general, it was felt that there is a serious failure somewhere in our process, and that we should reconsider the policy of using our computer teacher as the IT professional for the building. Phil stated that the peer school visits completed in the previous school year highlighted that other schools have found this to be a failed model. Vernon mentioned that many successful companies both small and large use outside companies to handle their IT and suggested that we consider doing the same. He stated that most IT contractors are able to handle a large percentage of all needs remotely. Phil seconded this idea and said that IHM had been looking to hire an in house IT person to handle both parish and school needs but that their experience and research led

them to contract in the way that Vernon discussed. Steve said that the new deadline for completion of this project is Labor Day.

A question was also raised about the usage of 1:1 computing and concern expressed about children in 5th and 6th grades should be using screen based devices for a good portion of their day and whether it is possible to express as a percentage of school time whether there is a threshold. Steve said they plan to view it as just another tool in the arsenal and mentioned several uses for the i-pads. It was mentioned that many studies show that taking notes by hand offers greater retention of the material in question. It was also mentioned that although Chatard has 1:1 computing, there are strong restrictions on when students can use their devices and that many classes require handwritten notes.

Strong frustration with the pace of our technology projects was expressed by all, including the administration. The consensus seemed to be that given the many delays and problems in this area, we must not have the right resources in place. Rob recommended that we turnover discussion and research on this issue to the Technology sub-committee. A request was made that Steve send an update to the Commission after Labor day to let everyone know if the deadline was successfully met so that further thought and possible action can be taken before the October meeting.

Facilities: The parish did contract for a daytime custodian, who does clean entry areas, restrooms and the cafeteria during the school day. This summer many facility improvements were completed.

- 1) South gym floor replaced with rubberized surface.
 - 2) Under stage storage doors reconfigured for safety and ease of access
 - 3) A new large motorized screen was added over the stage.
 - 4) The closets in grades 1 and 2 were replaced and the 6 rooms were painted.
 - 5) Grades 5 & 6 got new desks and chairs, as did the teachers. The Shelving units in 501, 503, 602 and 603 were replaced and painted.
 - 6) The lower 4 feet of the interior hall wall on the lower level was tiled, the rest of the wall was painted and display boards were reinstalled.
 - 7) The doorframes in the lower hall and fine arts area were painted and the music rooms were also painted.
 - 8) We reclaimed most of a room that had been used for athletic storage for a small group classroom. The room was cleaned, painted, new carpet, white board and student tables set up.
 - 9) New double-key, lever handled, security locks for doors of grades 1-4
- Projects to be completed.

- 1) Contracts have been let for removing storm damaged trees and other dead ash trees.
- 2) Pot holes in the parking lot and recess area will be patched.
- 3) Completing the closet upgrades and painting for grades 3, 4 and rooms 801, 802, 701.
- 4) Continue repainting of doorframes and trim in MS wing and upper hall.
- 5) Complete lever lock for all rooms w/o interior locking option.

6) Our PA system was replaced about 20 years ago. While it works, it is getting harder to get repaired and replacement parts. We have been reviewing other system options.

Development

Steve specifically requested that the School Commission get more involved this year in moving our goals in this area forward.

Goal 1: We did not establish a formal Marketing Committee this past year. It should be a goal for this year. We do send our “Good Grad News” to parents through newsletters and when possible through the bulletin. Mr. Duggins will work with Mrs. Borland and Mrs. Miller from the parish on marketing ideas.

Goal 2: We do not get regular updates on new parishioners. I will make the request at our next parish staff meeting.

Goal 3: This is our second year of working on the RamQuest model to welcome new families to the school. We are learning how to do it better each year. Verbal feedback from new families is that it is a very positive experience. The PTO has been having difficulty getting enough “mentor parent” volunteers for each new family.

Schedules: While not an identified part of the plan, feedback on class schedule issues brought about significant work on revisions this summer. The new schedule assures both teacher planning and prep times and a predictable special class pattern. It seems to be working at this time. Steve and Beth mentioned that many teachers have said this is the best schedule they’ve had in a long time. He also said that despite stating the intention to drop block scheduling last year, they were unable to make that happen in the Middle School. Beth said that only one middle school teacher had expressed a dislike of the block scheduling.

Business Items

School Commission Calendar for 2015/2015: The proposed schedule for meetings was approved with the knowledge that there are several meetings which will be decided closer to the time of the meeting based on need.

Budget: Wendy shared the following

2014/15 Budgeted Parish Subsidy:	\$450,000
2014/15 Actual Parish Subsidy:	\$352,000

Wendy said that while the Finance Committee is pleased that we have controlled spending, they have asked us to consider our predictions much more carefully for this year so that planning for the entire parish can be more effective. She noted that several changes to the budgeting process are already underway which should provide for greater accuracy in our predictions. It was noted that the surplus allowed for many of the significant improvements made in our facilities in the previous year. She also noted that our expenses were actually close to the predicted amounts, but that our revenues were actually higher than expected, which contributed to the reduced need for parish funding.

Strategic Planning – Sue MacGill

Sue stated that her belief is that the real value of Strategic Planning is that it encourages a deeper look at what we're trying to accomplish and how we're planning to get there. She stressed that the plan was not meant to be a rigid guide, but more a meaningful way to take a long view of goals and objectives. Committee assignments were reviewed and updated, with new members being added to sub-committees. The make-up of the committees was discussed as follows:

- Academic Excellence: Vernon, Valerie, Tim, Phil, Teresa and Suzanne
- Technology: Phil and Dan
- Facilities: Andy and Sue
- Development: Wendy

As President of the Commission, Rob spans all sub-committees. Rob will be tweaking the membership of these committees and the liason responsibilities in the coming weeks.

Academic Excellence Update - Teresa: At the close of the last academic year, the Academic Excellence Committee made several recommendations. Chief among them were that the School undertake a thorough curriculum review and mapping process and that significant changes be made to the daily schedule for all grades. To date, we have met with Beth and Steve, and plan to hold regular meetings with Beth in the coming months to understand and support the mapping effort. We are concerned with the planned timeline, as our original hope was that the mapping process would begin over the summer months and be largely completed by the end of the coming academic year. Our current understanding is that for the 2015-2016 school year, the scope of the project is limited to Language Arts, Mathematics and Religion.

It is our hope that the curriculum map we are striving to develop will **not** be simply a formal listing of what we currently do, but that careful thought will be given to best practices, with excellence as the ultimate goal. In short, status quo should not guarantee nor deny inclusion in the curriculum. We believe the ultimate goal is to realize a fully integrated curriculum in which there is consistency and accountability within each grade level and that each grade builds a firm foundation for the next grade. To that end, we reiterate our initial recommendation that we consider bringing in a consultant for some portion of this effort and that the timeframe be reevaluated.

With an over-arching goal of seeking excellence, the committee plans to focus its effort on the following areas in the upcoming academic year:

1. Support the mapping project
2. Examine how accountability of academic progress will be included in the curriculum map.
3. Continue peer school visits in search of the very best academic practices and proven curriculum that meets our progressive yet traditional academic desires here at St. Luke. . (We may already possess some of those here at St. Luke.)
 - We intend to research literature programs and selections at peer schools, and again looking for a comparative idea of best practices. This effort would obviously be intended in conjunction with the faculty.
 - Peer visits would allow us to examine what policies regarding resource and enrichment are working well in other school, with an eye to best practices. We plan to work with the

administration and faculty to better understand our resource and enrichment offerings to be able to more clearly communicate these offerings to parents.

4. Examine how curriculum is chosen and implemented. Many successful schools have a curriculum coordinator due to the heavy burden teachers have with teaching, grading papers, extra-curricular activities, and their own family duties. Additional textbook selection and adoption transparency would also be desirable.
5. The committee would like to see a comprehensive and accurate Scope and Sequence available to parents by the end of the year to provide an “at a glance” view of St. Luke Academics. Included in the scope and sequence would be an accurate picture of the literature program. This of course would require the completion of the mapping project.
6. Finally we believe St. Luke should be able to clearly articulate how and why we group kids. A clear and honest policy in this area can increase parental confidence that we are always striving to do the best thing for each child. Assurance that their child has the ability to be moved up or down depending on needs is also important.

This committee greatly appreciates Msgr. Schaedel, Steve Weber, and Beth Borland’s continued help and support.

Technology Update – Phil: Last year, the bulk of our efforts grew out of a visit the Academic Excellence committee made to Immaculate Heart of Mary. One of the attendees from IHM was a member of the School Commission who also sat on the parish's newly formed Technology Commission. That Commission was formed because they found that the previous model, in which the parish business manager attempted to manage technology among all of his other duties, wasn't working well. The Commission is responsible for managing all technology and supports both the parish and the school. IHM seems to be significantly ahead of us in many respects with respect to implementing technology and therefore it was felt there were significant lessons to be learned from their experience. The two primary lessons they shared were: You must do technology really well or you should not do it all, and that it is a bad model to try and use a computer teacher as the primary IT resource. IHM initially sought to hire a full time IT professional to be shared between the parish and school. However, we have since learned that IHM has concluded that contracting with an outside company would be the most effective way to address their needs. The IHM commission member, Mike Gin, the Principal and I had a meeting in the spring, and it seemed to me that our school's technology needs fell into three specific areas: physical infrastructure and new technology (e.g. bandwidth, implementation of new systems such as iPad rollout, etc.), support of legacy equipment (e.g., PA system, specific lightbulbs for old projectors, etc.) and IT support for response to immediate needs (nonfunctioning classroom technology, etc.). As far as goals for the year, the Technology Committee will focus on researching an outside support model and will coordinate with Parish Council through Rob.

Facilities Update – Andy Bauer: Efforts last year focused primarily around cleanliness and making the environment desirable for school children and faculty. One of the primary successes was the implementation of a dedicated Porter, which has received a very positive response all around. In terms of long term planning, a study was begun last year to examine the footprint of our facilities and to begin thinking about whether there might be better ways to use space as well

as to contemplate possible expansion. Andy has worked closely with Patrick Jendrasik on developing this space planning effort. It is important to note that there are no plans for expansion at this time, the effort is simply an attempt to plan long term and think strategically. Rob congratulated Andy on the significant progress that was made last year. Andy acknowledged both Sandy Miller and Patrick Jendrasik as having been very helpful and enthusiastic.

Development Update: It was acknowledged that the Development effort has been floundering. Efforts will be improved in the year to come.

Committee/Liaison Reports

- **Finance** – Wendy Mehringer –
- **Nominations** – To be assigned by Rob
- **Faith Formation** – Teresa Schutzman – No report.
- **Buildings and Grounds** – Andy Bauer – In addition to agreeing to act as liaison for B&G for the upcoming year, Andy offered the following report: B&G changed out all classroom locks over the summer so that there are no more safety concerns. A keycard solution was investigated but determined to be cost prohibitive (60-90K) due to the fact that it requires a complete re-working of all parish and school facilities. The idea was tabled for the time being. Lots of energy has gone into looking at solutions for parking lot lighting and a decision will be made soon.
- **Stewardship** – To be assigned by Rob
- **PTO** – Anne Horton – The year is off to a good start thus far. There are 32 members and 218 dues paying families. A paper copy of the Buzz book will still be published as feedback indicates families still desire it. PTO will continue to bring a service focus to all activities for the kids, and will also be planning monthly teacher appreciation activities. They will be attempting to build a stronger mentor family, particularly for new families with children in later grades. PTO contracted with a new spirit wear company this year. Sales are closed for now but will reopen prior to the holiday season. Anne noted that more than half the PTO board is new this year, so to some extent, they are still finding their feet, but overall doing well.
- **Pastoral Council** – Rob Shumaker
- **SLAC** – To be assigned by Rob
- **Parish Communications** – To be assigned by Rob.

A list of concerns raised by parents in recent months was prepared by Tim O'Brien. Rob noted that there is an outline of how such concerns should be addressed in the handbook. The policy requires that all concerns be elevated through faculty and admin and that the exec committee can be involved only in an emergency or other extreme when all other options have been exhausted.

Pastors Comments -

- Monsignor seconded Rob's comments that with regard to parental concerns, the chain of command as outlined should always be followed.
- Monsignor feels that the year is off to a good start. He has decreed that all school staff and faculty must attend mass. There will be no more tutoring or other activities permitted during mass.

- Monsignor cautioned that in everything we do, we must remember the “human factor” and trust that everyone has good intentions. He stressed that for every parent who feels we should limit technology and focus on traditional methods, there is another who thinks we should be embracing it 100%. He noted that it’s not possible to please everyone, as evidenced by the fact that some people think Steve Weber is the greatest thing since sliced bread while others think he is the devil incarnate. ☺
- Monsignor said that he very much wants to see the Development Committee activated this year. He believes we should start with the SMRE kids and should be looking to understand why parishioners who live close to our school choose other options.
- Monsignor mentioned that a small committee has been formed to investigate the possibility of a preschool at St. Luke. There may be discussion about this after the Christmas holidays.
- We finally obtained the home behind the playground when a generous parishioner stepped in and acted as middle man. The seller ended up netting about 50K less than the church originally offered.

A closing prayer was said, and the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The session was then closed to all but voting members for the annual evaluation of the Principal.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne Sherby, School Commission Secretary