



School of St. Mary
Meeting of the School Advisory Council
January 15, 2025, Minutes

Council Members Present: Kathy Thompson, Clare Giannelli, Fr. Mike Nacius, Eileen Weber, Michelle Kijek, Kate Burke, Katie Feeney, Dale Lyons, Justin Fisk, Maeve Curran, Diana Hand, Rob Busam, Meredith Leggitt, Chris Schenkel, Brian Perry, Brittany Ruef, Mandy Castle, Sabrina Jerina, John Hancir, Kristina Madsen Lowery, Ashley Madsen, Jimmy Griffin, Heidi Christen, Natalie Agostinelli, Margaret Hogan, Liza Jessen, Courtney Bott

Council Members Absent: Peter Hartman

Meeting Highlights:

1. Opening

- Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Eileen Weber.
- Opening Prayer led by Vice Chair Michelle Kijek.
- Approval of November SAC Meeting minutes motioned by Meredith Leggitt, seconded by Brian Perry. Minutes approved and will be posted to the SOSM website.
- Chair reviewed meeting norms and guest comment protocols.

2. Pastor Report (Fr. Mike Nacius)

- **Recent SOSM Highlights:** Greg Richmond, the Superintendent of the Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic Schools, visit and Parental Participation award presentation, student sacrament preparation, and the Daddy/Daughter Snowflake dance. Encouraged envisioning new opportunities for SOSM's growth.
- **Parish Contributions:** Emphasized the importance of discussing family contributions, noting that parish donations support both church and school.

3. Principals Report (Kathy Thompson & Clare Gianelli)

- **Catholic Schools Week (CSW):** The schedule for CSW (January 26-February 1, 2025) was distributed, highlighting a series of engaging events at both campuses for parents and students.
- **5th Grade Schedule Updates:** Plans are underway for a modified departmentalized schedule, with students rotating among three teachers to enhance subject specialization and middle school readiness. Hiring a math teacher for 2025–2026 is a key priority, as the Archdiocese introduces a new 80-minute math requirement.
- **Foreign Language Program:** Actively seeking a Spanish teacher for next year; interim instruction provided by parent volunteers.
- **Capital Improvements:** Updates to the UGC locker rooms, including painting, tiling and the addition of mirrors, purchasing new risers, and upgrading technology with new teacher laptops and iPads for grades 1 and 2, generously sponsored by the Parents Association Crusader Annual Fund.
- **Personal Donations:** Recent contributions funded science materials, 5th-grade classroom furniture, and new library books. Thank you to the generous SOSM community for continued financial support of the school.

4. PGC and UGC Teacher Reports (Natalie Agostinelli, Margaret Hogan)

- Expressed gratitude to parents on behalf of the entire SOSM faculty and staff for holiday gifts and bonuses.
- Upcoming Events:
 - i. Muffins with Mom event and an event for moms and sons at the PGC this spring.
 - ii. UGC spelling, religion, and geography bees during Catholic Schools Week.
 - iii. 7th-grade bake sale fundraiser for Los Angeles fire victims.

With no visitor comments on non-agenda items, the meeting moved to individual Committee Reports.

5. Development Report (Maeve Curran, Diana Hand)

- **Corporate Sponsorships:** The committee has updated marketing materials and completed the first phase of outreach, raising \$17,000. Next, they will engage SOSM ambassadors to connect with new potential corporate sponsors.
- **Cause Marketing:** Brooke Hall will lead monthly Shop and Dine events.
- **Future Goals:** The committee aims to develop a Case for Support document, improve donor data tracking, and create a strategic fundraising plan for 2025-2026.

6. Marketing & Enrollment (Mandy Castle, Brittany Ruef)

- **Enrollment Update:** Current enrollment: 402 students for 2024/25 and 235 students for 2025/26. About half of the school is re-enrolled, which is typical at this date. Re-enrollment and retention efforts are underway and focused on Kindergarten, 4 and 5th grades, with a suggestion from a council member to include 6th grade as well.
- **Potential Student Tours:** Ongoing tours address parent questions about student-teacher ratios, security, retention, discipline, and technology balance.

7. Family Retention Report (Sabrina Jerina)

- **Retention Roadmap:** Focus on in-person events, advanced communication, and keeping parents informed.
- **Transition Initiative Ideas Include:**
 - i. Early connections for current 3rd graders with 4th-grade teachers.
 - 1. Principals noted a “Teacher Swap” day is planned for February with this purpose in mind.
 - ii. Consider a “Fly-Up Day” for parents with UGC tours and teacher meet-and-greets.
 - iii. 3rd-grade Shadow Day for immersive experiences.

8. Technology (Ashley Madsen, Kristina Madsen Lowery, Jimmy Griffin)

The Committee is focusing on both software and hardware updates:

- **Software:**
 - Considering Blackbaud Learning Management System (LMS): This system centralizes enrollment, communication, events, grading, and administration into one platform. It reduces administrative time and integrates with Google tools, making it a "one-stop shop" for teachers. It also manages clubs and athletics and allows personalized communication with students and parents.
 - Committee Recommendation: Develop a business case for the LMS, hire an outside consultant for implementation, and create a change management plan that includes staff and parent involvement for success.
 - Council member noted the opportunity to assess this platform and its integration with area high schools.
- **Hardware/Devices:**
 - The team is reaching out to other Catholic schools to assess technology ratios and is gathering feedback from SOSM teachers on what works and what needs improvement.
 - The goal is to evaluate and prioritize updates to the STEM lab, smart devices, robots, and other advanced tech, considering costs and refresh cycles.

9. Finance (Rob Busam, Meredith Leggitt, Chris Schenkel)

- **Monthly Budget Reporting Timing:** The Committee noted that providing recommendations has been challenging due to the timing of budget updates and details, as financials through November were made available on January 16. Father Nacius acknowledged the opportunity to provide reports in a timely manner, and moving forward, the Pastor and Committee will work together to ensure that the necessary information is shared in a way and time that allows the Committee to provide meaningful input.
- **2025-2026 Budget Planning Process:**
 - i. Budget assumptions will be provided by the Archdiocese on Friday, January 31, covering 85-87% of the total budget. The final budget is due by the end of April.
 - ii. A meeting with the Parish Finance Council is scheduled for February 10 to begin discussions for the 2025/26 budget.
 - 1. The Committee emphasized the need for clearly defined financial requests. Conversations with the Principals will focus on reviewing line items not dictated by the Archdiocese.
- **Teacher Retention:** The Committee is evaluating the school compensation structures of other schools inside and outside of the Archdioceses to enhance recruitment and retention. A preliminary framework is being developed and will be reviewed by Pastor and Principal once complete.

10. Legislative Report (Brian Perry)

- Monitoring legislative updates, particularly ISBE policies and teacher certification changes.

Additional Information

Full reports from all committees, including non-reporting ones, were emailed by the SAC Secretary on January 11, 2025. Contact committee leads for any further clarification.

11. Guest Comments:

- **Kelly Graham (SOSM Parent):** Highlighted the importance of parent engagement during PGC to UGC transitions.

12. Next Steps

- **SAC Meet and Greet:** February 6, 6:30–7:30 PM, before the PA meeting.
- **Monthly Newsletter:** Launching to provide SAC updates for SOSM parents.
- **Committee Work:** Committees to continue independent tasks and request resources as needed.
- **Next Meeting:** March 19, 2025. Pre-meeting packets with committee reports will be emailed in advance.

13. Meeting Assessment

- Chair Weber commented that she is appreciative of the thorough reports in advance so committee members can be fully present and engaged in discussion. The group's collaborative efforts for the betterment of the school community exude positivity and success.

Closing Prayer led by Sabrina Jerina.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:55 PM

Minutes Prepared By: Kate Burke, SAC Secretary