



School of St. Mary
Meeting of the School Advisory Council (SAC)
June 11, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Fr. Mike Nacius, Kathy Thompson, Eileen Weber, Michelle Kijek, Kate Burke, Maeve Curran, Diana Hand, Peter Hartman, John Hancir, Rob Busam, Margaret Hogan, Ashley Madsen, Courtney Bott, Sabrina Jerina, Kristina Madsen Lowery, Mandy Castle, Heidi Christen, Liza Jessen, Kathleen Brill

Council Members Absent: Clare Giannelli, Katie Feeney, Justin Fisk, Natalie Agostinelli, Jimmy Griffin, Dale Lyons, Jenny Walsh, Brittany Ruef, Chris Schenkel, Meredith Leggitt, Brian Perry, Christine Porter

Guests Present: Steve Kunkel

Agenda Highlights

1. Opening

- Chair Eileen Weber called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and Kate Burke led the opening prayer. Eileen reviewed SAC meeting norms and guest protocols.
- The May meeting minutes were approved and will be posted on the SOSM website.

2. Pastor's Report (Fr. Mike Nacius)

- Fr. Mike expressed his gratitude for both the SOSM administration and the School Advisory Council (SAC) for their continued work and commitment. He wished everyone a happy, healthy summer of rest and renewal.
- A special mass to kick off the Church of St. Mary 150th Anniversary Year will be held on Sunday, September 7, led by the 8th Grade class, with Cardinal Blase Cupich attending as a special guest. The celebration continues with a parish picnic at Townline Park on Saturday, September 14 to mark the beginning of the anniversary year.
 - Council members remarked about what a wonderful opportunity this will be for the SOSM students.

- Fr. Radley will begin a new assignment at Saint Clement Church in Chicago starting July 1. His final mass as an Associate Pastor at the Church of St. Mary will be Sunday, June 29 at 10:00 AM with a reception to follow. The Church will soon welcome Fr. Jo Andre Beltran as our new Associate Pastor.

3. Principals Report (Kathy Thompson)

- As the school year ended, students' strong sense of belonging and connection shines—rooted in kindergarten and growing each year as students progress through their educational journey at SOSM and beyond.
- Technology Update: The BlackBaud implementation is nearly complete, with active updates underway. Calendars for the upcoming school year are currently being entered. A short-term consultant has been hired to support the data input process (Allison Quackenbush), but the full-time BlackBaud support staff person has not been hired, as the approved budget for this position is not effective until July 1.
 - As with any new system, occasional glitches will arise. For example, 35 families received inaccurate 2025-26 tuition invoices on June 11. For any current issues with BlackBaud, parents are encouraged to contact Rebecca Quackenbush or Colleen Adamick for assistance.
- The search for a new Assistant Principal is underway. Three strong candidates have been identified, but no final decision has been made yet.

Father Mike exited the meeting at 7:11 PM. He had previously noted that he had scheduled a Jubilee planning meeting at the same time as the SAC meeting.

4. Election of SAC Executive and Standing Committees

- Chair Eileen Weber announced that Dale Lyons and Katie Feeney will not be returning to SAC next year. She encouraged members to reach out to Kathy Thompson and Fr. Mike Nacius with recommendations for potential new members to fill their roles, as they are responsible for appointing members.
- The Council unanimously approved the Executive Committee roster for the 2025–2026 school year:
 - Chair: Eileen Weber
 - Vice Chair: Michelle Kijek
 - Secretary: Kate Burke
- The Council also approved the Committee Term Limits and Succession Plan, as outlined in the supporting document.

5. Reflection and Future Visioning Brainstorm

During the meeting, SAC members participated in a brainstorming exercise to share their ideas for the future of the school, including short- and long-term goals. Council members were asked to consider what success might look like one year and three years from now, reflecting on measurable goals, community connections, and personal aspirations. Responses have been organized into key thematic areas:

1. Leadership, Staff, & Strategic Planning

Focus: School stability, strategic planning, and school leadership structure

Next Year Goals:

- o A long-range strategic plan in place (covering technology, infrastructure, and staffing needs)
- o 100% teacher retention and staff stability at both campuses
- o New teachers are actively pursuing roles at SOSM
- o Succession planning for school administration
- o A three-person administrative team serving both campuses

Three Year Goals:

- o A long-range strategic plan is in action
- o Stability in staff, student, and family retention
- o SAC is an empowered partner with business management and the principal and pastor

2. Finance, Fundraising, & Transparency

Focus: Budget process, fundraising, resource allocation, and communication

Next Year Goals:

- o Continued progress in transparency and accountability, especially in budgeting and fundraising (in accordance with the SAC by-laws)
- o Greater school-level input in the annual budget creation process
- o Clear distinction between investment in facilities and faculty
- o Creative and strategic use of philanthropic support
- o School needs published and promoted to engage parish support

Three Year Goals:

- o Hire a dedicated development staff member to grow fundraising efforts
- o Consider creating a school endowment fund under a 501(c)(3), with pastor support
- o Regular audit schedule (every 3–5 years) for Crusader Fund and school financials

3. Enrollment and Student Life

Focus: Growing school enrollment and supporting the student body

Next Year Goals:

- o Sustained commitment to inclusivity—say “yes” to all who want to attend SOSM
- o Increased enrollment at the UGC
- o Enhanced student engagement:
 - Goal for every student to become involved in at least one school activity
 - Heart of a Crusader Award nominations for all 1st–8th graders

Three Year Goals:

- o Expand the PGC by 60 students to increase the pipeline
- o Increased student volunteerism and service hours requirements
- o Sports team at every grade level and expanded sports offerings
- o A dedicated school bus to support transportation needs

4. Academic Excellence & Innovation

Focus: Teaching, curriculum, and technology integration

Next Year Goals:

- o Dedicated Technology Director hired
- o Strategic technology roadmap aligned with curriculum and hardware refresh planning

Three Year Goals:

- o Blue Ribbon recipient
- o Instruction that challenges students beyond standardized test scores
- o Seamless classroom technology integration that enhances learning
- o Graduates are confident and well-prepared for the digital world

5. Parish & School Relations, Catholic Identity & Community Engagement

Focus: Strengthening the school-parish connection

Next Year Goals:

- o Broaden parent involvement at the SOSM with a focus on engaging new families and first time volunteers
- o Stronger welcoming culture at the UGC front desk, mirroring the PGC
- o Tap into our strong alumni network that can tell the SOSM story
- o Deepened school-parish partnership (e.g., recognition, shared programming). Guild, youth ministry, SAC can help facilitate this

Three Year Goals:

- o Unified identity as one parish-school community
- o Stronger alumni network and teacher referral base

Guest Comments

Steve Kunkel, Church of St. Mary parishioner and Parish Finance Council member

- S. Kunkel expressed his strong support for Catholic education, stating that the school is the parish's second most important mission after the church building.
- Since the SAC had not yet met or been introduced to S. Kunkel, a few members asked him about his relationship to COSM and the SOSM. He noted he had moved to COSM from a parish in Deerfield based on his concerns with philosophies at that parish and

that he has supported children at the school, as well as being a long-time supporter of the Archdiocese. He asked why more school students are not altar servers, and the SAC noted that a majority of families with children at weekend masses are school families.

- S. Kunkel supported the development of a long-range financial plan to be brought to the Parish Finance Council early in the process so that the Councils can work together more effectively to build a working budget benefiting the needs of the school administration. S. Kunkel noted he is a Parish Finance Council liaison to the SAC to help support financial needs and inquiries moving forward.
- A Council member suggested that the Parish Finance Council include a school representative, and Steve agreed this idea should be brought to Fr. Nacius for consideration, as no school parents are currently represented on the Parish Finance Council. S. Kunkel noted that the previous Parish Finance Council chair, Patrick Cook, is no longer on the Council; it was not clear who has replaced him as chair.

Chair Closing Remarks (Eileen Weber)

- Eileen, on behalf of the full Council, thanked the Administration for their partnership, thoughtful engagement, mission-driven focus, and unwavering dedication to the school this year.
- Tentative schedule for next year's meetings is with the Pastor and Principal for approval. The next formal meeting is September 17, 2025.
- Committees will continue their work over the summer and should reach out to the SAC Executive Committee and/or the Administration as needed to advance their work.
- Michelle Kijek shared the Closing Prayer.

Meeting adjourned: 8:27 PM

Respectfully submitted by: Kate Burke, SAC Secretary