

Saint Ambrose School Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

6:00 p.m. – Community Center

Mission: St. Ambrose School provides a foundation of Catholic truths and values. Students will leave with the knowledge and skills necessary for life in the modern world.

Members Present: Julie Osborn, Delfina Dornes, Chris Brown, Abby Stephens, Dan Clasby, Paul Braundmeier, Maggie Kohl, Scott Droste. **Absent:** Sue Wickenhauser

Others Present: Bob Baird, Deacon Jay Wackerly, Fr. Steve Janoski

Opening Prayer - Chairperson Osborn opened the meeting at 6:02 pm and asked Mr. Baird to lead the group in prayer.

Approval of Minutes - Julie asked if there were any changes for the August minutes that were emailed. Chris mentioned that she made the change suggested by Deacon Jay to include Dan's report from the Finance Council. There being no further changes, Scott moved to accept the minutes as presented. Maggie seconded the motion. With no dissent, the Chair indicated that the August minutes were approved as shared.

Principal's Report (Mr. Baird)

- Reflection on the start of the school year – Mr. Baird thinks we have had a relatively smooth start—there have been some glitches, but not too many. We have not sent many students home due to possible symptoms, and parents have been understanding when it has happened. Out of 14 possible symptomatic situations, none have led to a positive diagnosis. Seven of the original 18 or 19 remote learners have returned or will soon return to in-class learning.
- Golf Tournament – Mr. Baird expressed his thanks to SAPA and the volunteers.
- MAP Testing (Measure of Academic Progress) – The diocese now requires this test, which replaces the Iowa Basics Test. Students in grades 3-8 will be tested in the fall and in the spring. There are three testing windows available, and we will be using two of them, as are most schools and as our faculty decided. The first test will be administered September 24th & 25th, with the 28th as a make-up day. The second one will be in the spring. This spring testing window is required by the diocese. There is a quick turnaround on the data (40 hours) since it will be given on the Chromebooks. The math & English tests are required by the diocese, and we will also give the science test. Julie asked if a parent could request that their child be tested at the mid-year window as well. Bob said he would check into it to see if it is feasible.
- Grading Procedures – the faculty is wanting to move away from FastDirect for grade management. Mr. Baird said that we are looking at a new SMS, but it would not be in place before next year. Grading will still be on FastDirect this year. Mr. Baird said some teachers may use the grading features in Google Classroom, but they will all post grades on Fast Direct.
- Speech services with the Alton School District begin this Friday, and Title 1 Reading is in the works. Alton does not have a Reading Specialist available at this time, but we are hoping to be able to arrange this soon.

- Madison County Health Department information is now linked on our website.
- 8th Grade Patrols were trained last week. Mr. Baird believes it is valuable and starting to work well. Bob praised Kim Wackerly for her contributions and her presence at the school. She has been a tremendous help with all the requirements. Responding to a question regarding dismissal, Bob said the front two sections are still for cars to wait, while back sections are for those who need to exit the parking lot sooner.
- “Hometown Hero” Award – Patrick King informed Bob that he and Alex Pulido (St. Mary’s principal) have been named as recipients for this month’s award, sponsored by MillerKingLLC and WBGZ. They will be featured on WBGZ on Thursday, September 17th at 10am. Bob credited the faculty with the success St. Ambrose has had with the opening of school.
- Vision and Hearing Screenings took place last week. Information/results will be available soon.
- Weekly Newsletters have been distributed through FastDirect with pertinent information.
- Upcoming calendar items: Picture Day tomorrow. Faculty Inservice on the 18th (no student attendance).
- Annual NCEA report was just submitted.
- Emergency drills have been scheduled (fire drills, lock down drills, weather, earthquake). Bob said that they will carefully address the potential situations with the children ahead of time to prepare them but will try to keep from scaring them.
- Daytime custodian is needed. Our current daytime custodian has given two-week notice. The hours are from 9am-2pm.
- Maggie asked about the security with the increase in opening windows and doors. Bob said that we are sacrificing some security with the new measures to mitigate the risk of COVID, but we are planning to install additional security measures, possibly security cameras.
- Julie asked about the possibility of getting lunches from the Alton School District like they apparently do at St. Francis/Holy Ghost (from the Jerseyville district). Julie said that normally the families have to pay for the lunches, but now due to COVID, the lunches are free. Bob said he will check with the Alton district and with Kim Wackerly (regarding Jerseyville).

Class Size Policy

Abby said our class size policy is the same as that of Our Lady Queen of Peace (30). St. Mary’s does not have policy for it in their handbook, but their website says no class size over 25. Our current policy recommends a K-3 capacity of 20 and allows a maximum of 30 students for grades 4-8.

In December the Finance Council recommended that we list the class size as 25, with additional allowance for special arrangements.

Julie said she thinks we should present to the Finance Council what we think is best for kids and see if they can find a way to make it work. Dan agreed and feels that the Finance Council would be open to this and would possibly need advice in terms of educational benefits since the current members don’t have a background in education.

Jay doesn’t see how would benefit from changing class size from the diocesan policy as long as we give the principal latitude to make adjustments.

Maggie wondered if we could get information on how much an extra teacher/classroom would cost. Bob said it costs us about \$6000 per student to educate, so we have a deficit in cost vs. tuition. The average teacher's average salary is close to \$40k when considering benefits on top of salary.

Dan motioned that we table the class size policy vote for now and have Abby write up a possible policy for our consideration at the October meeting. Bob will get more information on financials. Scott seconded. With no dissent, the motion was carried.

Abby mentioned another policy issue that may need to be revisited: school uniforms and the enforcement of the policy. Julie added that the entire discipline system needs to be looked at. Bob said the Leadership Council in the building did look over it this summer, and that policies will continue to be reviewed. The health guidelines and policies have been the focus so far this year.

Standing Committees

Policy & Planning- Abby & Sue

Finance-Dan – Michelle said contributions have been down. The diocese is planning to switch to a tithing situation from parishes. Fr. Steve said they are going to collect 10% across the board, minus school expenses, from each parish, so our amount has increased. It is based on last year's parish income.

Grant Writing & Development-Delfina

Buildings & Grounds-Paul

Reports

SAPA/Marketing -Maggie – There has not been a meeting yet this school year. From Melany Bechtold, she reports there are still positions open, and there is a meeting next week. They will be amending some bylaws for how they can meet under special circumstances. They have had some reallocation of funds. The golf tournament made money, but not as much as normal. They are looking into virtual fundraising events and other activities. Maggie said she would like to start a "Why St. Ambrose?" campaign to promote our school. We need data to be able to offer to prospective families. A discussion followed with suggestions for aspects of our school that could be highlighted (success of alumni in high school/college/careers, fine arts program, etc.).

Athletic Association-Scott --Scott asked Mr. Baird about the possibility of resuming play. Bob said he is meeting with Nick Baggio next week. The diocese says we have to follow IHSA & IESA guidelines.

Website/Technology-Deacon Jay – The new firewall has been installed, but we need to get a more enhanced license for the school. We are not satisfied with our ability to monitor our access points in real time.

At 7:26 Scott motioned that we adjourn. Dan seconded. Next meeting is Wednesday, October 14, 2020.