



SAN JOAQUIN MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT MINUTES

August 24, 2019

Media Center

BOARD PRESENT

Susie Byers '88, Chair
Neil Angelillo '83, Vice Chair
Fr. Robert Borges
Steven Campos
Edward Fanucchi '86
Frank Hambalek
Michelle Kusch '87
Kathryn McDougal
Michael Thomason '88
Mona Faulkner, Superintendent (ex-officio)
Msgr. Robert Wenzinger, Rector (ex-officio)
Michael C. Burke, Head of School (ex-officio)
Pete Dalena, Faculty Rep (ex-officio)
Lucina Myers, Secretary

BOARD ABSENT

Jerry Laval
Ralph Muñoz '85
Anthony Smith '82

GUESTS

Lisa Cameron, Director of Guidance & Counseling
Anthony Goston, Assistant Head of School for Student Affairs
Michelle Sani, Assistant Head of School for Academics
Kenyeh Williams, Director of Advancement
Maria J. Ribera, Catholic School Management Consultant

Fr. Borges said the opening prayer.

Maria J. Ribera is Senior Executive Consultant with Catholic School Management. She has been associated with Catholic education since 1992. She has been a classroom teacher in the Catholic K-12 setting and has held administrative roles as Assistant Principal/Dean of Studies, Interim Principal, Academic Technology Coordinator, College Counselor and Academic Counselor. In addition, she has training and experience in the design and marketing industry as a graphic designer and in visual merchandising.

A Day of Strategic Conversation

Catholic School Management has been part of the Memorial planning process for many years; they were here when Lisa Nilmeier was here. The objective for today is to identify the most significant priorities on which focus must be placed as a first step in a process through which to conduct a thorough strategic analysis as a prelude to strategic goal development.

The overview for the day is to discuss the following: 1) what are we; 2) where are we today; and where are we going.

The key objectives are:

- To ensure that strategic planning is mission driven;
- To refer to relevant data for demographic, enrollment, financial and other benchmarks;
- To discuss accomplishments and lessons learned from the existing strategic plan;

- Use the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools as a starting point for strategic conversations;
- To identify key strategic priorities for the school's future aligned with the four domains for the *NSBECS*

Strategic planning relies on developing a clear institutional mission, supporting goals and objectives, a sound strategy and appropriate implementation.

Ground rules include:

- Mission-driven with all discussions;
- Reflective listening
- Focus on the big picture and looking forward;
- Commentary is generative not tactical;
- Focus on priorities, not goals;
- Avoid problem solving;
- Equal participation by all;
- Concern for the common good.

What are we?

The National Standards & Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools were developed in 2012 by Loyola University in Chicago, Center for Catholic School Effectiveness to ensure the value of Catholic education be known and understood nationally.

Each domain considers key planning areas.

Mission and Catholic Identity includes mission, Catholic identity and faith formation.

Governance and Leadership includes ownership/governance/administration.

Academic Excellence includes curriculum and programs; student life; and technology integration.

Operational Vitality includes enrollment and marketing; facilities and infrastructure; finances; development and communication; and human resources.

In answering **Who Are We**, the following must be taken into consideration.

- A statement of **Mission**, or why the school exists and whom it serves (it should also answer why should I enroll my children here, why do I work here and why should I donate here);
- A statement of **Philosophy** that speaks of what the Catholic school is called "to be" as an institution: to integrate elements of faith with the learning process and typically to educate the whole child, educate for Gospel values, educate for global awareness, and educate for justice;
- A statement of **Vision** which proclaims the ideal state that the school would achieve several years into the future under the best of circumstances (this should not be a restatement of mission);
- A **Graduate Profile** which describes the anticipated outcomes of a Catholic education as seen in the graduate from various perspectives: academically, physically, spiritually, religiously, and socially.

Where are we today?

Focus on the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 accomplishments: Catholic Identity, technology infrastructure and integration, student engagement, Capstone program, safe environment. This is a great opportunity for a press release announcing the start of plans for the next strategic plan. The new plan should dovetail the findings of the WASC report.

The question came up as to who owns the strategic plan. Michele Sani, Assistant Head of School for Academics, expressed a lack of communication to staff and teachers. The Board and administration should drive the strategic plan (do the work), but it is actually the Board that owns it. The Board needs to clearly define its role in management.

Board Chair, Susie Byers, would like to have more clarity as to the role of the Board. The strategic plan takes the Board to a higher governance role, out of the day-to-day grind of actually doing things. This will have an impact on the way Board meetings are structured.

The purpose of the Board is to sustain the long-term viability of the school.

CSM consultant, Maria Ribera, encouraged the Board to develop an annual operating plan for the Board with a timeline. Timelines should be seen quarterly and reviewed. As a Board, committing to that goal is very important. She further encouraged the Board to take a defined role in overseeing the strategic plan.

From the Office of Catholic Education

The story told about the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fresno is that we are communities where Bishop Brennan is very passionate about Catholic education. He is very data driven and results-oriented. Letters have gone to some schools about areas they need to work on.

Specifically, the goals of the Superintendent of Education, Mona Faulkner, are:

- The teachings of the Catholic faith are followed, lived and evident;
- The academics offered are rigorous and supportive of all students;
- There is faithful stewardship of financial resources; and
- Relationships with parents are built on compassion, justice and honesty; not wealth or favor.

The week before school started, all the high schools were on TV about starting later in the day. We were already doing that but we weren't on TV. If we add a program that integrates God and science, many families would go for that, but we have to tell our story. Sister Lucy has had her share of hard stories, yet she is in the paper or on the news every week. Even when the pastor at St. Anthony Church in Reedley was put on administrative leave, the enrollment increased at St. La Salle School. No child does anything without getting his/her name in the paper. Everyone in Reedley supports the school.

How do we teach religion and live our faith and make it evident so that our high school students don't leave the Catholic faith. 43% of our young people (ages 15-25) are leaving, according to *Going, Going, Gone*, a report based on the comprehensive national study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown and Saint Mary's Press.

She mentioned areas in our schools that need more help:

- Integrate God with science. Donna Smith is talking with science and religion teachers to come up with ways to do this.
- Vision for academics. All schools need a supportive services department that can work with students with disabilities. They are a great blessing and enlightenment to other students.
- Budgeting and financial management of the schools. Joan Bouchard is putting together a report on this; Superintendent Faulkner will report more on this at the January meeting.

As a Board, we have to be careful what people are saying to us, especially when they say, "I can't send my kids there because I can't afford it."

Our greatest strength at this time is that many of our students are part of a generational family. The greatest struggle is with enrollment, families perceive they do not have enough money to send their children here. Most partner schools are full at the lower ends, with a struggle during the junior high years.

Something she would like the Board to consider is having a Catholic junior high at the Memorial campus. This would be for those schools that can't find the staff and don't have facilities not enrollment to support the junior high level. This would seek to encourage the K-12 premise for Catholic education.

Board member Steven Campos would welcome having a junior high at Memorial. Msgr. Wenzinger asked about the tuition rate (per Superintendent Faulkner, more than elementary but not as high as high school.

Director of Advancement, Kenyeih Williams reviewed the Admissions report. Enrollment is at 504 (Domestic, 478; International, 26). The emphasis has been on personal relationship building; more visibility at games; one-on-one approaches with one school at a time coming on campus. There will be a fall and spring open house.

Head of School, Mike Burke expanded on this. There will be an enrollment funnel with fewer leads to walk them all the way through the pipeline making sure no one falls through the cracks. This is super labor intensive, always personal. The leads will come from referrals, from elementary principals, 8th grade teachers, pastors and current parents. There is no money for advertisement. Instead, we will spend time and energy educating our community.

He talked about the Stockdale Paradox: Confront the most brutal facts of your current reality whatever they might be. Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties.

He addressed the decreasing enrollment, going from 590 in 2015-2016 to an anticipated 513 for 2019-2020. At the same time, the international student count went from 56 to an anticipated 28. When we started the international program, it generated a lot of revenue and we stopped looking at what was wrong. What is the optimal enrollment today? What number allows us to meet our mission? We can be a great school at whatever number we decide.

Partner schools have seen a similar drop in enrollment. The pool is getting smaller. Just to maintain our numbers, we have to get higher percentage of the students enrolled in the partner schools.

Cost of tuition has gone up 45% in the last 5 years. Once we are 11% of the income, we put ourselves out of the market. Financial aid has stayed flat.

Advancement has gone up (annual appeal and auction), though we have way too many events.

The budget has been maintained by using savings and endowment, but we recognize that this is not sustainable.

In spite of all of these statistics, kids are having a great experience.

What is our value proposition? How does financial aid fit into this? We have to figure out what's stopping people from wanting to come here via a combination of program, finances, marketing, and pricing. We need to create demand. This will be done by keeping tuition stable while making it more affordable for families to send their children here. We need to figure out how to get more partner school kids, the national average is 45%. We then need to reach out to students in the public school system.

The tuition rate for the international school (boarding) is comparable to LA and SF; the home school price is driving kids away from the dorm.

We have control over tuition assistance. It is based on need. Should we start looking at Leadership Awards, based on the recommendations of principals and pastors, for families that can afford \$10,000, but not \$13,000?

How can we communicate better with our partner schools? Many people just assume they can't afford to come. Board member Steve Campos suggested having a summary page of the different programs available for aid. Superintendent Faulkner said that in the past, schools were able to receive loans from the Diocese; the Diocese is no longer in a position to do that.

What data is still needed?

What is the tuition rate the people of the Central Valley value enough to pay for a Catholic education? What do people want to spend their money on? What's impacting the value proposition?

Fr. Borges stated most of our partner schools have family discounts; Memorial does not. When families have more than one child, the change in tuition rate of one person going on to high school is huge. Superintendent Faulkner would like to know from principals what people are saying about Memorial. Demographic, enrollment, financial and academic data needs to be collected. Board member Frank Hambalek asked if the Diocese has the ability to canvass parents of the intentions of where their children will go for high school. Superintendent Faulkner replied in the negative. Father Borges asked if the discount given to Memorial staff could be extended to other Diocesan employees?

It is not always financial when families decide not to send their students to Memorial. This brings back the conversation back to the value proposition. Much data is needed to understand the environmental assumptions.

- What will be the underlying beliefs about conditions that will exist in the next three to five years?
- Define as best as possible the planning landscape and environment that will impact the school's ability to establish and achieve its planning goals.
- Are research-based and backed up by facts & data.
- Respond to potential questions in key areas: economic, demographic, financial, general/programs.
- Underpin the strategic plan and support development of goals.

Strategic conversations: Process

- Surfaces collective intelligence of a group.
- Inspires conversation and collaboration.
- Weaves common threads.
- Encourages participation by all.
- Facilitator leads discussion and recorder captures key data and ideas.
- Individuals participate in four shared conversations based on NSBECS domains.

Strategic Conversations: Objectives

- To identify strategic priorities aligned with the identified domains for planning;
- To ensure equal participation of all constituents in each planning discussion;
- To engage all participants in each discussion;
- To identify trends and effectively bring conclusion to each discussion;
- To have discussion leaders provide a summary of trends to report to the full group.

Strategic conversations: Big Questions

- Given the background information and data, what are the priorities to be addressed in the coming three to five year period?
- Where does San Joaquin Memorial High School want to be in the coming three to five years?
- What will be different, better or created?

Themes resulting from Strategic Conversations

Mission and Catholic Identity

Need greater clarity - who are we? Catholic mindset is embedded in fabric of school life. Explore possible partnership with Christian Brothers. Maintain and continue to grow service opportunities and retreats. Explore having Bishop Brennan allow having Confirmation at Memorial. Need more effective communication of our Catholic identity - who are we as a Catholic community? Define what it means to be a Catholic.

Governance and Leadership

Clearly define the role of the Board (responsibilities, training, effectiveness). Be transparent. Communicate structure to parents and all stakeholders (including students), with two-way communication. Ensure organizational structure to fulfill the mission (overburdened staff, analysis needed).

Academic Excellence

Provide professional development and spiritual development for all. Define metrics to measure academic growth and publicize academic goals. Define where we excel and communicate it. Pursue partnerships. Have ongoing evaluation/monitoring of all programs.

Operating Vitality

Have comprehensive approach to enrollment (recruitment, right programs, retention, keeping happy families). Strengthen partner school relations and commitment (consider them when making decisions that affect their schools). Review tuition and tuition assistance (pristine financial aid to support our partner schools and parishes). International program – have clear focus and purpose, intentional outcomes, clear promulgation and clear policies. Are we willing to go on record to say to partner school students, if you want to go to Memorial, we will do everything we can to make that happen? Reevaluate the facility master plan. Address marketing (communication plan and staffing). What is our message? How do we tell our story? Strive for excellence of our teachers (recruitment and retention).

What comes next?

CSM consultant Maria Ribera recommended establishing a planning committee of Board members and others to start addressing the areas of high priority, starting with the gathering of the data. Possibly have another session similar to what was covered at the retreat, with more people. The process needs to be incredibly participatory and collaborative with students, parents, teachers, partner school leaders all being invited.

Possibly investigate the idea of having junior high on campus. SJM can't make this decision on its own. Father Borges said some partner schools have worked hard at building their junior high program and wouldn't want to see that work undermined.

She was surprised the international school did not come up in the discussions. Do we really have an international program or is it there just to help meet the budget?

Head of School, Mike Burke said it was started because we wanted domestic and international students to mix and grow together. That has not happened. The program needs to be integrated into all aspects of school life. It needs to be about the kids and the value they bring to the school, with the financial part it contributes to the school being secondary.

What happens next?

Board chair, Susie Byers would like everyone to take time to synthesize the vast amounts of information covered today. Board Vice-Chair Neil Angelillo asked how could we best achieve those goals of the strategic plan effectively?

CSM consultant Maria Ribera stressed the importance of communicating with our parent community what was done at the retreat and why. It is time to bring the current strategic plan to a close, celebrate its accomplishments and start discussing the need to build a new plan that would be ready for the next school year. Start by gathering data, asking the big questions. Who do you serve? Where could you expand in the future?

Maria will provide recommendations provided in report form to assist with identifying strategic priorities and a process for development of strategic goals. Further data collection and participation of a broader sampling of the community is desirable and encouraged.

Next Board Meeting: September 25, 2019.