



ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council

2022-2023

By-Laws of the St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council, LC

Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston – Houston: Call young people in holiness to holiness and prepare them to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In collaboration with families, we teach the values of our faith and tradition, serve our community, and ensure academic excellence. Our schools are committed to the evangelizing mission of the church to educate and form witnesses who transform the world.

This mission statement calls forth beliefs that affirm the missionary dynamics of all Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. They are:

Foster a Catholic Identity: We call young people to holiness and prepare them to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as they bring Catholic teachings and values into their lives and the global world.

Invest in Community Building: We are committed to building a communal spirit that is the heart and reality of Christian formation.

Provide Quality Education: We teach knowledge and critical skills so that students function fully as citizens within a changing technological and multicultural society.

Encourage Moral Formation: We lead by example in teaching moral values that encourage respect and responsibility.

Appreciate Families: We recognize the family as the basic faith community in which all members work together as active participants in the educational process.

Support Parish Life: We believe that the school contributes to the parish through the formation of students as active participants of the parish community.

Share Governance: We seek support and participation from those who share a common vision, mission, and philosophy.

Seek Equitable Distribution: We are challenged to determine how to be the best stewards of the resources and to equitably share in their just distribution so that there is quality and affordability to families and our Church.

St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council, LC

The purpose of the St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council is to support the school's mission, vision, and philosophy:

St. Mary Catholic School Mission Statement

The mission of St. Mary Catholic School is to develop the whole child's spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth and well-being in a Catholic environment.

St. Mary Catholic School Vision Statement

The vision of St. Mary Catholic School is to offer a rigorous curriculum with highly motivated, certified, and innovative teachers. Our school educates students with long-standing and proven educational principles combined with technology initiatives that challenge our students intellectually. Our learning environment is family oriented and is based on a strong Catholic identity. St. Mary Catholic School is a welcoming Christian community where children from all religious backgrounds come together for their total educational and moral formation. At St. Mary Catholic School, children enter to learn and leave to serve.

St. Mary Catholic School Education Philosophy

St. Mary Catholic School is an expression of the educational mission of the community of St. Mary of the Expectation Catholic Church. Its focus is on the individual child's spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, cultural, and physical development. In an environment of mutual respect, dignity, and appreciation of one's giftedness, students are challenged to develop and grow. It is the goal of St. Mary School to prepare its students to be productive members of society, to be living examples of the Catholic Christian truths and values that are taught, to be able to respond to the needs of the community and to have a global perspective of the needs of our earth.

Purposes and Functions

Catholic School Boards are advisory to the principal and Pastor in Parish Schools. The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council assists the principal and Pastor to recommend policy, identify and articulate the educational needs and aspirations of the school and school community and engage in long-range strategic planning. These goals become the basis for program objectives, policies, and action plans for the educational program. The driving force behind discussion and planning is the SMCS mission, Section 1: The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council shall be consultative to the principal in all school matters for which the principal seeks The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council's advice and expertise.

Section 2: The principal is responsible for the financial health of the school. A major task for the council is to provide advice and guidance regarding finances. Approving tuition rates and salary increases for the staff is the Pastor's decision in Parish schools. The Pastor will rely upon the solid information provided to them by the principal and the council's finance committee to make the most prudent decision. The finance committee will work closely with the principal to create budget drafts for the Pastor and Designated Pastor and their school Boards. All proposed school budgets must be balanced. All questions from the committee members shall be addressed at the meeting where the budget is presented and finalized.

Section 4: The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council shall be involved as advisors in issues and written policies that further the mission and goals of SMCS and are subject to the approval of the Pastor. Policy guidance from the Catholic Schools Office will assist in determining policies and regulations.

Section 5: The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council will research, develop, and communicate for itself and the school specific actions and strategies located in the SMCS Strategic Plan. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

Section 7: St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council members shall be actively involved in the fundraising efforts of the school.

Duties and Responsibilities

Policy development responsibility lies with the Archdiocese, Catholic Schools Office, and the Texas Catholic Council of Bishops Education Department, TCCBED. School boards recognize the importance of adherence to given policies from these institutions.

Members of a School Board shall show their acceptance of responsibility as members by regular attendance and participation at meetings and activities sponsored by the Board.

Board members will be asked to sign and adhere to a confidentiality agreement. Members shall furthermore participate in at least one training session a year that is specifically designed by the Archdiocesan School Council. Training is scheduled in June. The Executive Committee must provide an orientation detailing the work of the Board for all new members.

It is extremely important to understand that Catholic school boards are NOT like public school boards. Public school boards hire and fire, approve expenditures and mandate the implementation of policy, procedures, and programs. It is important for council members to understand that a council member's role is to give advice and not to become involved in the day-to-day operation of the school. In addition, members may be called on to assist the Pastor in Archdiocesan Parish schools and the Designated Pastor in Archdiocesan Regional schools in hiring of a principal through service on the search committee coordinated by the Catholic Schools Office.

The SMCS Council must strive to reach consensus on all issues, and voting should not ordinarily occur. However, healthy discussion on issues can and should take place. Consensus does not imply one hundred percent agreement, instead consensus means that all members will support the decision reached by the council (as a whole). When consensus is attained, everyone agrees to the recommendation presented to the Pastor and principal. Members are asked to take ownership of and support the final decision of the Pastor and principal. Consensus is achieved when there is general agreement or accord among the members of the group. This is an approach to group decision-making. It presents an opportunity for all to be heard and avoids a "win/lose" posture that voting promotes. Consensus results in growth and is instrumental in building community within a group.

Membership

Serving on a Catholic school council is a ministry. Members provide a service for the Catholic school community. Boards will seek members committed to Catholic education with specific areas of expertise, and only a few positions ought to be filled by current parents. Members should never be motivated to serve on the council for the purpose of accomplishing personal agenda items. A member who offers to serve needs to be open-minded and use data to make informed decisions. The members must keep in mind the overall good of the school as the basis upon which to make decisions. A council member has no authority as an individual. Only when The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council meets as a group, does the person function as a council member. Council members do not serve as conduits to the administration for parents/guardians who have questions, complaints and/or concerns. Council members must always refer such calls to the appropriate person. An explicit chain-of-command must be followed, or parents/guardians will not be communicating with the appropriate school representative.

Persons in the following categories may NOT be considered as candidates for the Council:

- Employees of the Parish and/or school, whether teaching or non-teaching personnel
- Spouses, children or siblings of employees of the parish/school
- More than one member of an immediate family at a time

Membership of the Board should be at least five members and no more than eleven. Generally, there are 5 members on the SMCS Council. The Board should reflect the cultural diversity of the school as much as possible. The Pastor in Parish schools will serve as an ex officio member of the Council, and he possesses the right of approval or the right of veto

in administrative decisions. The principal serves as an ex officio member and school administrator for the council.

Ordinarily the process of discernment should be used when choosing members. Discernment is a process associated with the virtue of prudence, by which we try to decide what God wills us to do in particular circumstances. Discernment should be used as an operating principle for appointing members. Discernment is a formal process for filling Board seats whereby those with knowledge of the work of the Board and its long-term goals select the new members based on the school's needs.

Those eligible for service on The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council:

- Are members of St. Mary Parish or any other Catholic parishes or non - Catholic faith communities that are representative of SMC's student population
- Have an interest in and commitment to Catholic education and the philosophy and mission of St. Mary Catholic School
- Are available to attend meetings regularly and participate in activities sponsored by the St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council
- Shall participate in committee work
- Shall maintain a high level of integrity and confidentiality.
- Council must attend an orientation training once per year.

Term Of Office

Each selected member may not serve more than two terms of three years (totaling no more than 6 years consecutively). The terms of the members should overlap so that a maximum of no more than one third are leaving the council at any one time. This allows for stability and continuity of the council. A resigning member's uncompleted term should be filled through discernment. First consideration to fulfill an uncompleted term should be given to prospective members previously discerned and favorably received, but not selected to serve. Council members who serve are subject to removal by the Pastor in parish schools.

Officers

The officers of The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council should include a President, Vice-President, and Secretary. Any members of The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory

Council are eligible to hold office. The process of discernment is recommended for the selection of officers. Officers are subject to removal by the Pastor.

The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council President presides at all regular and special meetings, works with the principal to prepare the agenda prior to all meetings. The President performs all duties incident to the office of a Board President ad such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him/her by the Pastor in parish schools. The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council Vice-President, in the absence of or at the request of The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council President, performs the duties and exercises the responsibilities of The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council President.

The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council Secretary is responsible for recording accurate minutes of the meetings. A current roster of local council members will be submitted to the Archdiocesan School Superintendent for review. Existing or revised by-laws and/or school Board constitutions should be submitted to the Archdiocesan School Superintendent for review at the beginning of each school year, in August.

Meetings

Monthly meetings are planned by the principal and School Council President. Meetings last no longer than one or two hours. The entire council meets four or six times annually, with the committees meeting for the other months. Committee agendas and minutes shall be sent to the principal and the St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council President prior to the next full council meeting.

Meetings are held at a regular time and place each month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or Principal. Council members should contact the principal ten working days prior to the scheduled meeting to include agenda items. The principal or her designee will post the agenda, and all related information seven working days prior to the scheduled meeting.

Council meeting agendas follow the structure: Opening Prayer, Approval of Minutes, Old Business, New Business, and Adjournment.

Agendas and previous meeting minutes are readily available at the school's office. A copy of these minutes should be gathered for school accreditation during the self-study year. Minutes must be filed and kept with Accreditation Documents for the Self Study.

Executive/Closed Session: that the Pastor, principal and/or The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council President call an executive/closed session. Should the Pastor and The St.

Mary Catholic School Advisory Council President accept the request for an executive/closed session, then the item will be scheduled on the agenda.

When an executive/closed session is called, the regular meeting is adjourned, all guests are asked to leave, and the executive/closed session begins. Any conversation or written submissions that are part of an executive/closed session are confidential and are not subject to disclosure unless required by law. Any breach of confidentiality may result in removal from The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council by the Pastor. The minutes simply reflect that a discussion was held in executive/closed session and no specifics are recorded.

Members of a School Board shall show their acceptance of responsibility as members by regular attendance and participation at meetings and activities sponsored by The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council. Members shall furthermore participate in at least one training session a year that is specifically designed by the Catholic Schools Office.

Boards must strive to reach consensus on all issues, and voting should not ordinarily occur. However, healthy discussion on issues can and should take place.

Consensus does not imply one hundred percent agreement, instead consensus means that all members will support the decision reached by The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council as a whole. When consensus is attained, everyone agrees to the decision and is willing to take ownership of that decision. Consensus is achieved when there is general agreement or accord among the members of the group. This is an approach to group decision-making. It presents an opportunity for all to be heard and avoids a "win/lose" posture that voting promotes. Consensus results in growth and is instrumental in building community within a group.

A person may address The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council provided a written request is given to the Principal and Board President ten (10) working days prior to a scheduled meeting and is accepted for inclusion on the agenda.

Presentations to The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council should:

- Have a time limit; and
- Nothing of a confidential nature should be addressed, such as **discipline problems or personnel issues**. The Pastor or Board President in Parish schools may at any time stop the presentation if it is of a sensitive nature.
- No discussion with the presenter will follow the presentation.
- A written response from the School Board President will be sent to the presenter within five (5) working days of the presentation.

Committees

The school council will recommend the establishment of committees, as it deems advisable to the principal and Pastor. Approval and establishment of school committees are based on the authority and approval of the Pastor and Principal. Members of the committees may be drawn from council membership and from the community at large. The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council may need only two or three "standing committees." The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council may appoint "ad hoc" (temporary) committees when the need arises.

Strategic Planning Committee

The various committees and The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council as a whole should be actively involved in assisting the principal in the role of short and long-term planning. The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department requires each school, under the direction of the local governing body and leadership, to have a written site-based long-range strategic plan.

Strategic Plan process

- is a process to develop both long-term vision and goals for the school with specific interim steps to match the goals
- Flows from both the Catholic Schools Office mission and vision as well as the school's mission statement
- Encompasses a period of 3-5 years
- Outlines realistic operational and strategic goals. Involves an annual review of the plan's goals and action steps, with any necessary adjustments being made including goals. These plans will provide a road map for all involved in the Parish /school community.
- Addresses areas such as Catholic identity, enrollment, personnel, curriculum, facilities, development (including marketing and public relations), ownership, governance, administration, finances, and any other needs specific to the school community
- The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council plays an important role in many aspects of the long-range strategic planning while school administration develops other aspects of the plan

Finance Committee

The principal is responsible for the financial health of the school. A major task for the council is to provide advice and guidance in the area of finances. The Council Finance Committee will work closely with the principal to create budget drafts for the Pastor. All

proposed school budgets must be balanced. All questions from the committee members shall be addressed at the meeting where the budget is presented and finalized.

The principal, in consultation with The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council Finance Committee, will prepare a balanced school budget in terms of expenditures and revenues with a rationale that justifies any major or capital expense requested. A copy of the budget will be sent to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools for review.

School accounting requires a separate school bank account from the Parish account. The principal and pastor in Parish Schools are the only authorized school check signatories.

- To monitor the current year budget and to develop and propose to The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council a budget for the next fiscal year
- To prepare, update and monitor long-range financial plans for the school

Marketing and Advancement Committee

- Promote the school's value and achievements to the community
- Build a strong image in the community
- Publicize the value and benefits of Catholic education
- Support/enhance advancement efforts and maintain and increase enrollment.

Archdiocesan Grievance Issues

Any concern brought to a Board member by a parent or employee should be sent to the principal in order to follow subsidiarity and the process as outlined by the Archdiocese and Catholic Schools Office. Board members should be clear that these issues are handled by the school administration and not by school or an advisory school council. Discussion of any grievances is in violation of the policy, procedure, and confidentiality that all members are asked to uphold. It is important for members to understand the following procedures for both parent and employee grievances as follows:

A. Student/Parent Complaint Process. Although the Archdiocese endeavors to establish a harmonious Christian atmosphere within the schools, the Archdiocese recognizes that misunderstandings or differences of opinions sometimes occur. Ideally, such matters can be resolved informally by a parent or guardian meeting with the immediate authoritative person. If, however, the matter is not then settled to the parent or guardian's satisfaction, the parent or guardian may make a formal complaint. A formal complaint form will be obtained from the principal and guided by the Catholic Schools Office.

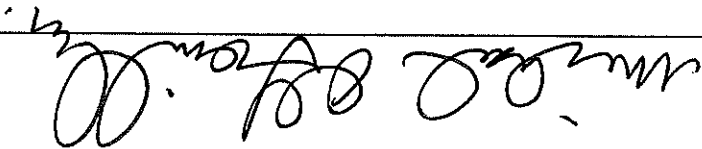
B. The Archdiocesan Appeal Process for Employees. Employees may grieve any dispute pertaining to the application or interpretation of policies relating to employment, including any dispute pertaining to the application or interpretation of a formal employment contract, if one exists (excluding not being offered a new contract). Nothing contained herein shall be construed to vary the terms of any such employment contract or the employment-at-will relationship.

The intent of this policy is to resolve employment disputes at the lowest possible administrative level and in a cooperative Christian atmosphere. The process is not intended to be adversarial in nature. To that end, prior to using the steps set forth, the employee shall meet with his/her immediate supervisor to discuss the dispute and attempt conciliation, if possible. Additionally, neither the employee nor the employer shall be represented by legal counsel during any phase of the conciliation or grievance process. An Archdiocesan Uniform Appeal Process Form may be obtained from the principal.

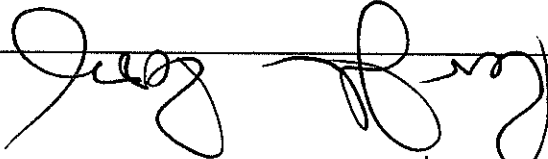
Amendments

An amendment or revision to the by-laws requires two readings by The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council. The by-laws may be amended or revised by consensus of The St. Mary Catholic School Advisory Council and are subject to the Pastor's expressed approval

The Bylaws of St. Mary Catholic School are hereby ratified by:

President:  M. J. O'Connell

Date: 5/17/2022

Pastor:  Greg Berg

Date: 5/17/2022