

**St. Michael the Archangel Catholic School
Parent Organization General Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2007**

The fifth and final general meeting of the 2006-07 St. Michael School Parent Teacher Organization was held in the Parish Center on Tuesday, May 1, 2007, at 7 p.m. PTO board President Marylynn Fitzgerald, Treasurer Louis Prosser, VP of Fundraising Colleen Ueland, VP of Education Luann Wiggenhorn, VP of Social Betsy Nalesnik, VP of Volunteers Maureen Beeler, and Secretary Jennifer Butler were present, as well as school Principal Dr. Sarah Wannemuehler and Assistant Principal Molly Carlin. The recently elected 2007-08 PTO board members were also at this meeting; they are President Elect Peggy Thompson, VP of Fundraising Elect MaryBeth Brejnik, VP of Volunteers Elect Robin Evans, VP of Education Cheryl Reid, VP of Social Sheila Schlageter, and Secretary Laura Usher. Twenty-eight parents were in attendance.

Opening Prayer

The "Hail Mary" was led by Marylynn Fitzgerald

School Update

Speaker: Dr. Sarah Wannemuehler, Principal

Dr. Wannemuehler described a potential change to the lunch procedure for the 2007-08 school year. Under this new plan, the first floor after-school room will be converted to a mini-cafeteria during lunch hours. Dr. Wannemuehler explained why this will be beneficial: children will have a better opportunity to work on table manners, hallway and classroom carpets will be protected from food crumbs and spills, and it will allow parents to focus their volunteer time and efforts on PTO-sponsored events. The Kindergarten and PreK children will remain in their classrooms for lunch, as they often require additional time to eat. There will still be a need for some lunch volunteers, but not nearly as many. Dr. Wannemuehler emphasized that this change is not being made to keep parents away, as they are always welcome in the school.

Dr. Wannemuehler thanked parents for their patience during her recovery from surgery. She recently had voice-activated software installed on her computer to help ease this time of healing.

PTO Update

Speaker: Marylynn Fitzgerald, PTO President

Mrs. Fitzgerald provided an overview of all that the PTO has accomplished during this first year. She reflected on the initial PTO meeting in September, at which she had set

forth the goals and objectives for 2006-07. Since then, the PTO has facilitated numerous fundraising efforts, social events, and volunteer opportunities, all of which have been successful due to the commitment of the school's parents. Additionally, in this start-up year, the PTO established by-laws and processes for committees, as well as the board.

Next week the updated volunteer sign-up forms will be sent home in the Wednesday folders. Forms will include new opportunities for parents, such as involvement with a spirit squad to support St.MS teams, a photography committee for the yearbook, a scrapbooking committee to help document the school's history, and the creation of after-school clubs.

Mrs. Fitzgerald mentioned that the fundraising proceeds will soon be dispersed in accord with the fundraising distribution list in the by-laws. The monies raised will help provide scoreboards for the fields and new PE equipment for the athletic department. Within the technology category, "smart boards" and student laptops will be purchased.

The three outgoing board members were recognized for their service to the 2006-07 PTO. As VP of Social, Betsy Nalesnik organized all of the student dances and bowling nights, as well as a highly successful Teacher Appreciation week. In the role of Secretary, Jennifer Butler facilitated the welcoming of 80 new families to our school, the sending of cards to school families in need, and was responsible for the meeting minutes. VP of Education Luann Wiggenhorn added something completely new to the school this year by providing speakers for meetings, along with insightful presentations to help parents learn and grow as role models for their children.

Mrs. Fitzgerald then introduced the newly elected board members: President Elect Peggy Thompson, VP of Fundraising Elect MaryBeth Brejnik, VP of Volunteers Elect Robin Evans, VP of Social Sheila Schlageter, VP of Education Cheryl Reid, and Secretary Laura Usher. Louis Prosser will again serve as Treasurer for 2007-08, as he was re-elected. To enhance continuity and sustain the PTO's momentum through the next school year, PTO President Mrs. Fitzgerald will remain in office, as will VP of Fundraising Colleen Ueland, and VP of Volunteers Maureen Beeler.

Speaker: Louis Prosser, Treasurer

Mr. Prosser commented on the great success of the fundraising program this year, and thanked Colleen Ueland for her leadership in this area. The auction grossed approximately \$108,000, with Angel Bucks revenue roughly totaling \$40,000. All of the figures will be subject to a final audit before any monies are dispersed.

Speaker: Luann Wiggenhorn, VP of Education

Mrs. Wiggenhorn announced that additional copies of Mary Ronan's book are now available. A limited number of DVD/book packages may be purchased in the school office as well.

Julia Taylor, a counselor at Apex Middle School, author, and national speaker, will come to St. Michael School next Tuesday, May 8th, to present to parents about “relational aggression”—gossip, rumors, exclusion, and bullying. This educational opportunity for parents will take place from 6:30-7:30 in the school music room.

This meeting’s speakers included Cardinal Gibbons High School Principal and St. Michael School parent Jason Curtis, followed by a panel of five St. Michael School teachers.

Speaker Jason Curtis, Principal of Cardinal Gibbons High School

Mr. Curtis spoke about how families may prepare for the critical high school years. It was noted that experiences involving people are generally the favorite memories of the high school period. When adults are asked what skills were learned during that time, the answers vary widely. It is the relational experience—a group of friends, a favorite teacher, and so on, that has the greatest influence on a student’s overall impression of those years.

As such, Cardinal Gibbons has three goals for the high school years: community, opportunities to develop life-long skills, and preparation for college success. Principal Curtis stressed the importance of balance for a child, as well as knowing and understanding the child’s interests, passions, and strengths. Balance, self-knowledge, and positive relational experiences will bode well for children in both high school and later adult life.

A parent asked about the future construction of another Catholic high school in Wake County. Mr. Curtis indicated that while Cardinal Gibbons has just over 1,100 students at this time, the school will be able to accommodate every family that is currently enrolled in a Catholic elementary or middle school. Ultimately, the Bishop will determine plans for building, as it requires an enormous financial commitment.

Principal Curtis was asked about the possibility of academic summer programs being offered at his school. At present, Cardinal Gibbons focuses on summer opportunities for its own student body. There has been discussion about offering additional enrichment programs, but no plans have been set forth at this time. In expanding the list of summer options, the first priority would be to provide a transition course for those middle school students scheduled to enter Cardinal Gibbons in the fall.

A parent wondered about practical ways that the faith is incorporated into the school day at Cardinal Gibbons. Mr. Curtis mentioned that a new Assistant Principal for Spiritual Life, Father Scott McCue, has recently been hired. Additionally, mass is held daily for those students who wish to participate. There is an all-school mass held in the gym. At Cardinal Gibbons, students are required to take a theology course in each of their four years. Principal Curtis noted that the community of the school is visible in the hallways

and cafeteria, and that may be one of the best indicators of the spirituality of the environment.

As Mr. Curtis indicated that nine students are enrolled for a college-level Calculus 3 class at Cardinal Gibbons, a parent asked for more information and plans for future growth in that type of accelerated education. It was noted that the school offers 24 AP classes, more of any school of its size. The calculus class was a new offering this year, and the teacher is a former professor from NC State. The school will continue to develop its academic program to meet the needs of the students.

A parent asked what changes Mr. Curtis has made at Cardinal Gibbons since becoming Principal. Mr. Curtis has worked at Cardinal Gibbons for seven years--initially as a teacher, then as Assistant Principal, and now as the Principal. The school has a history of nearly 100 years, and existed as a very small school for most of that time. As such, Principal Curtis has worked on developing the school, and insuring that new programs reflect the school's mission. The mission statement that was put forth this year is "...to form men and women of faith, service, and leadership in church and community." Principal Curtis has also concentrated on building strong relationships with the local Catholic elementary and middle schools.

A question was raised about math placement when entering high school. Principal Curtis told parents that Cardinal Gibbons does look at middle school math records and the placement test, but continuously evaluates students once they are in the school as well.

A parent was interested in our students' readiness for Cardinal Gibbons High School. Mr. Curtis stressed that social and study skills, and an ability to interact with adults, are as important as academics. He believes that St. Michael's students are well-prepared, a conviction supported by the fact that he too has chosen St. Michael's for his children.

Supplemental Presentation: Teacher panel on summer skills

Speaker: Karen Dries

Mrs. Dries is the elementary school Spanish teacher. While this is her first year working at St. Michael's in this capacity, she was the 2nd grade teacher at our school for many years. She will make a number of summer suggestions for both Spanish review and for children in the lower grades generally.

With respect to the Spanish curriculum, Mrs. Dries told parents that Spanish is "cumulative learning", so it is helpful for children to spend brief amounts of time over the summer reviewing what they have learned during the school year. Older elementary students can write an email or a postcard to a friend over the summer, and include one or two sentences in Spanish. Kids of all ages could have fiesta-themed parties, playdates, or sleepovers. Younger children are able to create Spanish bingo games. There are numerous Spanish and bilingual books available through the Wake County Public

Library System, as well as adult books describing poems, crafts, recipes, and games to keep children occupied and fresh in their language learning. Families can also go out for Mexican food and ask the children to order in Spanish. The summer goal for families should be to keep Spanish fun, and to have a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language. Mrs. Dries mentioned several websites with Spanish games and learning tools:

www.pdictionary.com/spanish

www.gamequarium.com/spanish

www.colby.edu/~bknelson/exercises/index

www.123teachme.com/learn_spanish (“Spanish for kids”)

On the school’s cybercenter link, go to “Quia Spanish”... Games—“Spanish”.

For the younger children working on math and language arts, Mrs. Dries made a number of suggestions. Children can keep a journal in the summer, which may also be illustrated. A summer pen pal is a fun way to practice writing skills. Younger children can cut out coupons and sort them into different categories. Older children can sort coupons by dollar amount. Mrs. Dries suggested that students read into a tape recorder, and send tapes back and forth with grandparents during the summer. A weather graph to predict rainy days, and/or track high and low temperatures, is a fun way to use a variety of skills. When traveling, children can look up facts about destinations, research drive time, etc. Families should try to visit at least one zoo, aquarium, or museum, and children may then create a brochure or write a review of the place visited. It is important to read everyday, and many children are motivated by reading goals and rewards. Older children can write book reviews that may then be sent to book stores, libraries, or publishers. Mrs. Dries also recommended keeping the school workbooks that are sent home at the end of the year, as these books can serve as review materials.

Speaker: Tammy Krear

Mrs. Krear is in her second year as a 4th grade teacher at St. Michael’s, and previously taught Kindergarten here. She has two daughters at the school as well.

Mrs. Krear suggested slipping in learning as frequently as possible during the summer to develop a love of learning. Children can learn from many different activities, not just pen and paper. Practicing skills throughout the summer months increases confidence and lessens anxiety when returning to school in the fall. Summer learning is easily accomplished when it is part of a routine—for example, spend a few minutes each morning using a workbook, or reading. It is important to let children know that parents are still learning everyday, too!

While the Eva Perry Library is closed until August, it was noted that there is a teacher resource section at the new West Regional Library with lots of ideas for teachers as well as parents. 3rd graders and older should read both fiction and non-fiction books. Parents can read chapter books with their children, and discuss elements of the story. A paper chain of books completed over the summer—with each link carrying the title of the book—might be a motivational reading tool. Children can write about characters and draw pictures based on the books that have been read. Young children can become

“vowel detectives”, complete with badge, to find objects around the home with a certain long or short vowel sound, or digraph. Slightly older children can write a grocery list and then put it in ABC order. While waiting for appointments children can talk about what they believe to be happening in magazine pictures, developing their ability to infer information.

Mrs. Krear stressed that the purpose behind writing exercises should be to develop a love of writing. Children can write about their experiences during the summer—the best thing that happened that week, on their vacation, etc. Letter-writing is also terrific practice, and may be used to teach proper addressing and stamping of an envelope. Older children can write a persuasive letter to their mom and dad, using lots of supporting details. Mrs. Krear also suggested that children maintain and improve their typing speed and accuracy over the summer.

Math skills can be sharpened with flash cards. Multiplication is particularly important for 3rd grade students and older. When traveling by car, parents can create silly word problems or use numbered road signs to practice math skills. When planning a party, children can work on rounding and estimating the number of plates, cups, etc. needed, as well as the cost of such goods. Children may create their own time schedule for activities. Mrs. Krear also suggested that parents point out how fractions are used in everyday life. She mentioned the following websites with learning activities:

www.scholastic.com (the child reads a short story and is asked questions about it)

www.leapfrog.com

www.mathblaster.com

our school’s cybercenter

Speaker: Tara Schultz

Mrs. Schultz is in her first year of teaching at St. Michael School. She teaches 6th grade Language Arts and 7th grade Religion. Along with Mrs. Dandurand, she spoke about keeping faith alive during the summer.

Mrs. Schultz recommends involving all family members in prayer. Some ways to do this are to rotate who leads the prayer each day, share intentions with one another, and to offer prayers at different times of the day. Families can discuss scriptures, and talk about what they would have said or done had they been present. In praying the rosary together, families can talk about the mysteries. Mrs. Schultz described prayer techniques that she uses in the classroom, such as the acronym “ACTS”, which stands for “Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication”. She also teaches students to use their fingers for prayer: as their thumb is closest to them, it represents prayer for those closest to us—family and friends; the pointer finger reminds us to pray for teachers and others who help to point us in the right direction; the tallest finger is prayer for our leaders—the president, the pope; the ring finger is the weakest, and as such demonstrates prayer for those struggling, sick, or abused; the pinky finger is the farthest away and reminds us to put ourselves last in our intentions.

Christian music is very popular with many children once they are exposed to it. Mrs. Schultz also recommends that children keep prayer journals written to God.

Speaker: Kim Dandurand

A St. Michael's teacher several years ago, Mrs. Dandurand took some time away from the school to raise her young son and start the Edge group for 7th and 8th graders of St. Michael's Parish. During this time she developed a love for middle school age children, and returned to St. Michael's School this year as a 6th grade religion and social studies teacher.

Mrs. Dandurand emphasized the importance of talking to our children about what they are going to do to get into heaven—not just college—as heaven is the ultimate goal. In middle school the students are in the “doubting Thomas” phase so it is essential for parents to be the model in living their faith. As Mrs. Dandurand told parents, “make mass a must” and “if you are too busy to pray, you're too busy”. Children can easily know about Jesus from being in school, but the goal should be to truly know Jesus.

The necessity of prayer was addressed, and children can become involved by praying for classmates, teachers, friends and relatives, etc. Some popular Christian music is specifically Catholic, and some of it is based on bible verse. During the summer families can attend first Friday mass at 8:30 a.m. and the all day Adoration from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. A “family box” may be created, to encourage family members to leave notes for one another, as well as small trinkets or treats.

There are also many opportunities for service. In the bulletin, there are needs listed for volunteers to drive a parishioner to church on Sunday, for help providing meals to those in need, and for Vacation Bible School. Mrs. Dandurand quoted Ghandi: “We are called to be the change you want to see in the world”.

Speaker: Pat Ward

Mrs. Ward has been a middle school science teacher at St. Michael's since the opening of the school. She has many years of teaching experience in other cities as well, and is the mother of five grown children.

Mrs. Ward expressed the importance of reading skills and comprehension for all students, including those more drawn to math and science. Parents should encourage children to use sentences and correct grammar when instant messaging, as we are all constantly exposed to incorrect English. Students may read certain sections of the newspaper, such as travel, arts and entertainment, science articles, and/or sports, to encourage interests and start a dialogue with parents about the information.

As a mother and a teacher, Mrs. Ward emphasized the necessity of organizational skills. Family organization is learned through household chores. Older children should be given opportunities to hone their ability to plan ahead.

In terms of science, Mrs. Ward recommends families visit museums and/or aquariums during the summer months. At the beach, parents can point out the differences in sand—sand is finer at the dunes because it has been dispersed by the wind, while it is thicker at water level. Sand may also be finer or coarser at different beaches. The types of shells vary in different locations as well. A “low energy beach” will have many more unbroken shells than a beach categorized as “high energy”. Mrs. Ward suggested that students be on the lookout for signs of animal life, such as bird nests, which may be brought to school for discussion in the fall.

Closing Prayer

The closing prayer was led by Mrs. Dandurand.

Following this prayer, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.