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Meeting Minutes Approval

October 23, 2025 at 6:17 PM

Condensed Summary

The meeting covered several key topics related to the management and improvement of the Franciscan School, including committee updates, admissions progress, professional development initiatives, survey feedback, student conduct issues, new literacy curriculum (CKLA) implementation, safety and security upgrades, and the balance between maintaining a welcoming environment and ensuring campus security. Emphasis was placed on increased teacher engagement, use of new AI and feedback tools, and efforts to enhance student learning outcomes while supporting staff and building a positive school culture. The meeting closed with reflections on the importance of balancing security and warmth and maintaining a strong community spirit.

Meeting Overview

Opening and Administrative Updates

- Opening prayer honoring St. John of Capistrano.
- Approval of previous meeting minutes and posting protocol (parent portal & parish website).

AI Committee & Admissions Updates

- The AI committee is active; some teachers experimenting with AI tools in the classroom.
- Contact established with Cardinal Gibbons School to share AI best practices.
- Held the first virtual information session with over 20 families participating—a record attendance.
- Admissions and enrollment looking strong, aided by being named on the Raleigh Best list.
- Clarified the distinctiveness of the Franciscan School’s identity.

Service and Community Engagement

- Staff-wide campus service day scheduled.
- Efforts underway to restore pre-COVID off-campus service opportunities for students.
- Collaboration with Casey, Mary Ellen, and other faculty for service day and future events.

Staff Climate Survey Insights

Participation and Timing

- Only 23 out of ~80 staff responded (partly due to busy timing in early September).
- Survey timing is fixed by county, limiting flexibility.

Survey Highlights

- Respondents mostly experienced teachers; some support/administrative staff.
- Professional development emerged as a top staff need—budget doubled this year, external opportunities encouraged.

- Teachers hesitant to take time away from class for development but efforts are being made to shift mindsets.

Teacher Time & Duties

- Ongoing concerns about sufficient instructional time and protection from non-teaching duties (lunch, carpool, study hall).

- Balancing teaching loads, preps, and extra responsibilities is continually adjusted for fairness.

Student Conduct & Discipline

- Key challenges: student dress code compliance, academic integrity (e.g., cheating from grade anxiety), cyberbullying.

- Rising incidents of disrespect and entitlement noted, sometimes mirrored by parental behaviors.

- Cyberbullying addressed through recent parent talk with good attendance.

- Demerits and parent communication are routine responses, but parents often contest faculty discipline.

Safety & Well-being

- General consensus that the school is a safe and supportive environment.

- Parental pressure to increase church/school security, while leadership strives for a balance between safety and hospitality.

- Regular safety drills (fire, lockdown, severe weather) implemented.

- Security upgrades and campus signage improvements underway (\$188,000 for security tech, \$134,000 for signage).

Technology & AI Tools in Teaching

Staff Use and Feedback

- AI and digital tools (Flint, IXL) being piloted to support instruction and feedback.
- Flint: Particularly effective for ELA and writing skills assessment, provides detailed feedback, checks for AI-generated content.
- IXL: Used for math skills reinforcement and diagnostic correlation with test scores.
- Partnership with Cardinal Gibbons yields valuable insights and support.

Student Access & Policies

- Policies to be developed for student use of AI tools, including acceptable use agreements.
- AI is blocked on campus but accessible offsite—discussion ongoing about policy updating.
- Exploring how to "AI-proof" lesson plans to preserve academic integrity.

CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts) Curriculum Implementation

Motivation & Process

- Shift to CKLA prompted by data showing a reading comprehension drop in grades 3+.
- CKLA builds systematically on reading foundations: phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

- Selection involved research committees, reading league recommendations, and teacher buy-in.

- Investment in teacher training and material acquisition.

Student Engagement & Outcomes

- Significant increase in student engagement and reduced discipline issues in grades K-5.

- CKLA's integrated, knowledge-rich content prompts excitement and deeper learning, especially among boys.

- Teachers provided with digital assessment tools (like DIBELS) for efficient tracking.

Staff Reception & Professional Development

- Teachers engaged and supportive, despite increased workload and adjustment curve.

- Emphasis on collaborative practice, reduced silos, and consistent instruction across grade levels.

Parental & Community Communication

Teacher-Parent Interactions

- High volume of parent emails can impact teacher planning time.

- Math teachers receive a disproportionate amount of inquiry and conference requests.

Feedback and Reporting

- Ongoing consideration of ways to automate reporting and student progress monitoring.

- Need to balance between technology-driven feedback and nurturing teacher-student relationships, especially in early grades.

Facilities, Resources & Safety Updates

Facility Improvements

- Security systems and camera upgrades approved.
- Enhanced interior signage for wayfinding and emergency response.
- Maintenance work (e.g., tree pruning) to improve campus safety.

Security Philosophy

- Strive for a balanced environment: safe, but still inviting and family-like, not a locked-down institution.
- Emphasis on embracing safety without succumbing to fear-driven decisions.

Conclusions & Next Steps

- The school is excelling in admissions, new curriculum implementation, and proactive use of technology.
- Staff feel safe and valued, contributing to low turnover and high morale.
- Ongoing challenges: balancing instructional time, managing non-academic duties, addressing student conduct, and supporting professional development.
- Safety and security are continually improved, guided by the principle of balancing vigilance with a welcoming campus culture.
- The CKLA curriculum and AI initiatives are considered significant advancements, with positive early results.

- Next meetings to further develop AI policy, discuss partnership topics, and continue responding to staff and parent feedback.

Closing Reflection

The meeting closed with gratitude for the community's commitment, a focus on continual improvement, and a prayer for ongoing blessings, wisdom, and service.