

St. Francis of Assisi School Leadership Council Minutes

December 11, 2025

Board Members Present:

Father Joe Pins (Pastor)
Steve Craig (Chair)
Brenda Pedersen (Vice Chair)
John Cord (Treasurer)
Mollie Mertens (Secretary)
Jennifer Tracey (Volunteer Coord)
Becky Baker (Fundraising Coord)
Adam Mullinax (At-Large)
William Downs (At-Large)
Andrew Phillips (At-Large)
Baylie Panzi (At-Large)
Sara Heddinger Pastoral Council Rep
Thomas Call (Pastoral Council Rep)

Others Present:

Jeff Lynch (School Principal)
Jodi Halligan (Vice Principal)
Wendy Henry (Preschool Director)
Jessica Hull (Auction Committee)
Melissa Mullinax (Auction Committee)

Not Present:

Phil Stover (Communications Dir)
Michael Perrin (At-Large)

Prepared by: Mollie Mertens

Called to Order: 6:30 p.m.

Adjourned: 7:35pm

Location: Zoom Meeting (due to bad weather)

Minutes Prepared By: _____

Mollie Mertens

AGENDA ITEM	DESCRIPTION/DISCUSSION	NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS
Call to Order & Opening Prayer	Steve Craig called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and Father Pins led an opening prayer. Minutes from the November 13, 2025 Leadership Council were sent out electronically before the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Andrew Phillips and seconded by Bailey Panzi and then unanimously approved.	Call to Order and Opening Prayer. Minutes of the November 13, 2025 meeting were unanimously approved.
Teacher Presentation	6th Grade Teachers: Gracie Elsbecker, Madelyn Barten and Megan Schraeger <ul style="list-style-type: none">There is a new science curriculum across the diocese. This curriculum incorporates lots of hands-on experiments. Currently working on a light and matter unit and some introductory physics now.Math- started the school year with a bit of geometry and now some budgeting and fractions and decimals. There is a school goal of improving	6 th Grade Teacher Presentation.

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	<p>fractions, so 6th grade is working on fractions daily at the beginning of class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Elsbecker- Class is reading The Westing Game and now learning about a personal narrative and parts of speech. The class is also working on enhancing vocabulary by introducing a word every Monday and using it throughout the week. Ms. Schraeger is hoping for her students to see The Bible not just as stories but ways to experience their world. Currently doing Weekly Adoration which the students love. Students can share their experience afterwards to testify with what the Lord is doing with their hearts. Right now they are discussing Genesis and Adam and Eve. Also, the classes are going over a Virtue of the week and how to apply those to their own lives. 	
Open Forum	There was no request for an Open Forum at this meeting.	
Treasurer's Report	<p>John Cord presented the Treasurer's Report</p> <p>Leadership Council Account (2422): As of December 5, 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning Balance (November 1, 2025): \$196,611.13 Ending Balance: \$185,194.89 Remaining Budgeted Expenses: \$111,139 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added SFA window graphics Added SFA Banner and stand Surplus: \$74,056 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~\$9,000 textbook reimbursement pending <p>Recent Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storage shed: \$8,500 debit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will move to the 2426 leadership council fund <p>Fundraising Account (2426): As of November 30, 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning Balance (November 1, 2025): \$98,452.07 Ending Balance: \$102,448.69 <p>Recent Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$9,620.53 transfer credit - Merchant Bankcard - Auction \$2,600 deposit - H&S Auction <p>Additional Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EOY Christmas gifts to school staff underway \$2286 remaining from 2023 Auction Fund-a-Wish (furniture fund) 	

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Fundraising and Development Report	<p>Becky Baker presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The auction committee met yesterday and reported that they have sold about 78 of the 200 candles. May sell candles after masses in January and at the upcoming All School Mass. • Sponsorship sale of one parking spot has been sold. • Floral and printing costs are being sponsored this year. • Working on budget - secured a lot of unique and fun experiences and gifts. <p>Jessica Hull presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget breakout down to specific items provided. Analyzed last year's expenses and identified areas they could consolidate. This includes having vendors take on multiple roles. • 3 Sponsorships- 1 for desserts, 1 for printing and 1 for florals arranged. • Will continue to drive interest with candles (currently a profit) and out of uniform passes have already made approximately \$2000. • Kylie has moved forward with gambling license. Tested the Square device and it did not work to just accept Debits so they will make a plan to ensure that they are only taking cash or debit for the casino and Heads or Tails. • Total sponsorship money is already over \$25,000. • Knights of Columbus will be serving the drinks again this year. • West Des Moines Police Officer will be on duty from 5:30 – 11:00 pm. • Iowa Auctioneers Council hoping to secure volunteer auctioneer. • All volunteers will be shown where the first aid kits and exits are located. Also, only two main front doors will be open. • Diane Nitzel will help boost the internet with routers and will be available on-site for any other IT concerns. 	Fundraising Report from Becky Baker.
Volunteer Coordinator Report	<p>Jennifer Tracey presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting money for the Staff Christmas Fund. Somehow the online donation system was unable to be accessed for a short period of time but it is back up and running now. • Jennifer will meet with Debbie and make sure cash is available. Sheena Brewer and Brianna Umthun will distribute the money collected on December 19th. • Battle of the Books is going well and Girls on the Run was a success. • The first run of LEGO League was great! • In the first week of January Jen will host another meeting for volunteers. 	Volunteer Report from Jennifer Tracey.

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Old Business	<p>Steve Craig presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign to encourage school parents to increase contributions to parish/school – Next steps? Tithing cards should be received by every registered Parishioner. Will follow up with parents via News and Notes. • November 22, 2025 6th Grade Student Family Mass – 31 students attended. • Promoting Faith Night Presentation on Safe Social Media Use: Ben Tracy on 1-14-26 at 7 pm Parish Hall. Flyers will be distributed once they are received from Ben Tracy. • The Mental Health Committee has resumed meetings – Mollie Mertens participating. 2nd Monday of every month Mental Health Mondays will be incorporated back into the school. • Quarterly Leadership Council Chairs Meeting with Regional School System Leaders held 11-19-2026. Steve Craig shared what was discussed at this meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tim Schulte discussed how tuition decisions were made for next year including a 5% tuition increase. Still hoping to get all schools on the same tuition schedule in the next 1-2 years. ◦ Finnane Committee – Audit for 2024-2025 involving all seven participating schools was completed and no issues identified. ◦ IT 5-year Plan for network and infrastructure updates developed. Comprehensive cyber security plan also being developed. ◦ Compensation Committee in charge of determining pay and benefits for teachers and staff. Survey done in the fall and 280 teachers completed the survey- newer teachers focus more on salary and seasoned teachers focus more on retirement plan. The committee is working toward setting salaries at 95% of market average and developing a uniform retirement plan. ◦ Donna Bishop shared the Catholic Schools Office Annual Report. CSO is making NSBEC site visits to each school in the region that address Mission and Catholic Identity, Governance & Leadership, Academic Excellence and Operational Vitality. Saint Francis will be visited in February 2026. • Lego League for SFA School Students – Success in Year 1! Two teams- 1 had 10 and 1 had 9 students. This time the theme was around archeology. One of the team's innovation projects came in first of 24 teams. 	Old Business discussion led by Steve Craig.

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Pastoral Report	<p>Father Pins presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas Mass- come with open hearts. Four Christmas Eve masses and one Christmas Day mass will be offered. • Confessions will be occurring for all students prior to Christmas break. • First Confessions for 2nd Graders start next week. Families are encouraged to attend and participate as well. • Capital Campaign- Rebuild My Church. This will move our preschool to the kindergarten and first grade section of the school and under the same school security system. • Reminder- Father Pins on Sabbatical 1/1 through 3/31. Father Larry Hoffman will be filling in and may attend a future Leadership Council meeting. 	Report from Father Pins.
Report from SFA Preschool Director	<p>Wendy Henry presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration for next year is going well. Parishioners started signing up December 1 and class lists will be generated in January. • Christmas prayer service next week. 	Report from Wendy Henry.
Report from SFA School	<p>Jeff Lynch presented the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation for 3, 7, and 8 grades will happen tomorrow. • Only one family is not returning to SFA next year due to moving away. • Working on calendar for 2026-2027 that will collaborate well with Dowling and other schools in the diocese. • Three of four planned Christmas concerts completed. 5th Grade concert canceled due to weather and will be rescheduled • Met yesterday with another security company and are waiting on a bid from one other. The lock company also came in and gave a bid to reissue locks for all the doors in the school. The Auction Committee can advertise that proceeds will be used for security upgrades at the school. Final decision on which security upgrades to make still being considered. • Jeff addressed a question about Carline- are there still helpers to get kids out of the car? Yes. Volunteers are not currently being utilized. If a parent needs to pull a car over to drop off a student on the north side, they should come all the way up to the front. On the south side pull up closer to the bike racks. 	Report from Jeff Lynch and Jodi Halligan.

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	<p>Jodi Halligan presented the following information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Tuesday 12/16 is the band concert. • Winter FAST assessments – working to develop a more consistent schedule for this testing. Elementary students will start these assessments on January 12th. Middle school will start the week of January 19th. Will use related arts teachers to help students with 504 and IEP accommodations. 	
Update from Committees	<p>Steve sent out a report in advance of the meeting with notes from LC members who attended parish or school committee meetings as LC reps since our November 2025 meeting. No questions were raised about this report.</p>	<p>No questions about the Report from Parish & School Committees sent to LC members in advance.</p>
New Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th & 1st Grade Mass scheduled on Sunday December 21 @ 11:30 am – volunteers to help at reception- Jennifer Tracey and John Cord will help. • Christmas Music Concerts and Seating Challenges- are we able to consider using the Church for future concerts? Mr. Lynch said this, and other options are being considered. • Registration of New Students at SFA School- First look at parishioners - amount of time they have been parishioners, etc. Typically, parents will hear back by mid- late January. • Microphone and cords used for concerts need an upgrade- can consider buying new ones as Leadership Council has funds for this. 	<p>New Business.</p>
Executive Session	<p>There was no call for Executive Session at this meeting</p>	<p>No Executive Session was requested.</p>
Closing Prayer and Adjournment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no other new business to discuss so the meeting was adjourned at 7:35. • Father Pins led a closing prayer. Steve Craig then asked all meeting attendees to extend their hands and help pray over Father Pins that he has a wonderful sabbatical experience and comes back in April 2026 renewed and refreshed. 	<p>The next Leadership Council Meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2026 at 6:30 pm.</p>