

## St. Mary Advisory Board – Beyond the Constitution

So, you're new to the St. Mary's School Advisory Board or interested in learning more about the Advisory Board than what is in the Constitution. This document is meant to provide some additional detail that hopefully you'll find useful.

If you have comments or questions regarding the Constitution or this document, please feel free to raise them with (other) Advisory Board members. By its nature, this document is meant to evolve and provide information beyond the constitution to help educate and aid the understanding of what the Advisory Board does, how it operates, and what it is attempting to accomplish.

- How does the Archdiocese impact the School Advisory Board?
  - The Archdiocese of Chicago and the Office of Catholic Schools promulgate policies and procedures that must be complied with by all Catholic schools and associated advisory boards.
- What is the Advisory Board Code of Ethics?
  - Objectivity - Advisory Board members shall strive to be objective. Alternative perspectives are encouraged and respected by all members.
  - Justice/Fairness - Advisory Board members shall conduct honest and open discussion of issues presented. Advisory Board members shall consider the greater good of the School community in all deliberations.
  - Promotion of Unity - Advisory Board members shall work to promote unity and cooperation on the Advisory Board and within the School and Parish communities. Recommendations or actions approved by the Pastor shall be supported by all Advisory Board Members.
  - Conflict of Interest - Advisory Board members shall avoid situations that present actual, perceived or potential conflicts between their interest and the interest of the School. Members shall inform the Advisory Board of any conflicts of interest and abstain from participation in associated Advisory Board activities.
  - Confidentiality - Advisory Board members shall keep all matters discussed in executive session in confidence until the Advisory Board decides that such information is no longer confidential.
- Who makes up the Advisory Board and what are their roles?
  - The Advisory Board is comprised of a leadership team consisting of the Pastor, the Principal, and 7 – 11 voting members
  - The Pastor is the Chief Executive Officer of the Parish, which includes the School. The Pastor participates in all deliberations of the advisory board and has final approval of all Advisory Board recommendations. Advisory Board responsibilities include:
    - Attending and participating in Advisory Board meetings or appointing a designee to do so.
    - Approving the budget prepared by the Principal and the School Finance Committee and reviewed by the Advisory Board.
    - Participating in School institutional advancement plans, student recruitment efforts and long range planning for the School.

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- Serving on and leading Advisory Board committees, developing committee goals and action plans, recruiting volunteers to serve on committees, and developing materials to make it easy for volunteers to quickly and meaningfully contribute and provide a foundation for continuous improvement
- Identify and cultivate potential candidates for the Advisory Board (ideally using committee involvement as a stepping stone)
- Hiring the Principal after consultation with the Advisory Board and in accordance with the Archdiocesan procedures.
- The Principal - The Principal is the chief administrator of the School and the chief executive officer of the Advisory Board. The Principal has a voice but no vote in Advisory Board Deliberations. Principal’s responsibilities relating to the Advisory Board include:
  - Developing the agenda for regular Advisory Board meetings along with the Advisory Board President.
  - Submitting policy recommendations to the Advisory Board when appropriate.
  - Informing the Advisory Board School of policy implementation practices
  - Informing the Advisory Board of Archdiocesan policies and procedures.
  - Providing educational direction to the Advisory Board.
  - Preparing the annual School budget with the School Finance Committee for the Advisory Board’s review and periodically reporting to the Advisory Board regarding School finances.
  - Acting as the liaison between the Advisory Board and the school staff.
  - Preparing annual school goals and reporting to the Advisory Board throughout the year regarding those goals.
  - Participating actively in the School’s institutional advancement plans, student recruitment efforts, and long range plans.
  - Implementing School policies and procedures
- Voting Members – Parents of School children, other parishioners, and when appropriate, qualified individuals outside the parish community may participate as voting members of the Advisory Board. Voting members advise the Pastor and Principal on relevant School matters. Through Committees, voting members lead, programs and activities to advance School goals, financial stability, and capabilities. Specific responsibilities include:
  - General
    - Modeling a faith community in a spirit of cooperation and interdependence with the Pastor and Principal.
    - Adhering to School policies as set by the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools.
    - Participating in ongoing Advisory Board in-service opportunities at the Archdiocesan and local levels.
  - Specific

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- Promoting an environment that encourages broad participation from School and Parish communities
  - Helping ensure Advisory Board and associated Committee membership is reflective of School and Parish communities
  - Leading, evaluating, and evolving Committee programs and activities
  - Directing individuals and/or groups to appropriate resources when there are conflicts
  - Evaluating and improving the Advisory Board’s effectiveness, productivity and internal operations
  - Reviewing and revising the Advisory Board’s Constitution
  - Identifying and recommending new Advisory Board candidates
  - Assisting the Pastor in the search and selection of the Principal when a vacancy occurs
  - Participating in the Archdiocesan Principal Performance Review Process as appropriate
- What time commitment should someone expect as a member of the Advisory Board?
    - Time commitment will vary by individual, but in general, one should expect to contribute 8 – 16 hours per month outside Advisory Board meetings
    - More important to a specific commitment of hours is the commitment to “make a difference.” Setting goals (e.g., Committee goals), establishing concrete plans, enlisting support from other School and Parish community members, and providing leadership accountability are important to ensuring you make a difference as an Advisory Board Member.
  - Is there a standard agenda for regular Advisory Board meetings?
    - The President and the Principal are responsible for preparing meeting agendas
    - While meeting agendas will vary, a typical agenda is as follows:
      - Opening Prayer
      - Pastor’s report
      - Principal’s report
      - Committee reports
      - New business
      - Guest comments
      - Closing Prayer
      - Executive session (as needed)
  - Are there standard procedural rules for regular Advisory Board meetings?
    - The Advisory Board may adopt any rules of procedure, including Robert’s rule of Order.
  - How does one access regular meeting agendas, minutes, and summaries?
    - The President and the Principal are responsible for preparing meeting agendas and having the agendas published for School and Parish communities. Ideally, agendas are posted in the Parish bulletin and/or on the School/Advisory Board Internet site well in advance of regular meetings.

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- The Secretary is responsible for preparing and distributing regular meeting minutes and summaries. Ideally, regular meeting summaries are posted in the Parish bulletin and/or on the School/Advisory Board Internet site reasonably soon after meetings.
- Who may attend Advisory Board special meetings or executive sessions?
  - As opposed to regular Advisory Board meetings, special meetings or executive sessions are limited to Advisory Board Members and invited participants.
- May guests participate in Advisory Board meetings?
  - Guests are welcome to attend any regular Advisory Board meeting. Guests may speak at a time designated on the agenda and when recognized by the President. The following guidelines pertain to guest speakers:
    - Speakers have up to 2 - 3 minutes on matters within the Advisory Board’s scope of responsibilities
    - Ideas should be presented in a concise, Christian manner
    - While Advisory board members may ask clarifying questions, there is no discussion or debate between/among guests and Advisory Board members
    - There is an understanding that new issues raised will not be handled at this meeting, but may be placed on a future agenda, if appropriate

Ideally guest speaker guidelines, along with Common Areas of Concern – Appropriate Channels (below) are published on the School / Advisory Board Internet Site and available at each regular meeting.

- If I have a concern regarding the School, who should I raise it to?
  - The Common Areas of Concern – Appropriate Channels table below can help direct concerns to the appropriate individual(s):

Topic	Who to approach first	Who to approach if issue persists
Questions involving a teacher	Principal	Pastor
Day-to-Day School operations including discipline, curriculum, special programs, extracurricular activities, uniforms, etc.	Principal	Pastor
Athletic Programs	Coach, Athletic Director	Principal
School budget, tuition, fees	School Finance Committee	Advisory Board
School policies or School-sponsored events/fundraisers	Principal or Advisory Board	

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- Are there options available to resolve conflicts within the Advisory Board?
  - Yes, in matters of dispute between the Advisory Board and the Pastor and/or the Principal, any party may confer with the Office of Catholic Schools
- What are Committees and why are they important
  - Standing and Ad Hoc Committees represent primary Advisory Board focus areas
  - Committees are an extremely important part of the Advisory Board, they:
    - Define primary areas of focus
    - Allow Advisory Board members to “divide and conquer” and use available time effectively
    - Provide a means to broaden participation of School and Parish community volunteers, increase available resources, and further leverage the impact of individual Advisory Board members
    - Present an opportunity to more fully tap specific talents and areas of interest of School and Parish community volunteers
    - Improve understanding of what the Advisory Board does
    - Provide an excellent means for identifying qualified candidates for the Advisory Board who represent a cross section of School and Parish
- How are potential Advisory Board members identified?
  - Recently, it has been a challenge to identify qualified candidates representative of the School community, despite the fact that anyone eligible is welcome
  - Primary means to identify Advisory Board candidates include word-of-mouth communication to and between Advisory Board members
  - To ensure an ongoing pool of representative candidates for Advisory Board membership, is important for the Advisory Board to:
    - Promote the Advisory Board as a welcoming, inclusive, and representative group
    - Encourage broad-based Committee participation
    - Utilize alternative forms and avenues of communication to “get the word out,” such as:
      - Advisory Board Internet site (with link from the School Internet site)
      - Parish Bulletin
      - School take-home/online leaflets
      - School Open House
    - Poll or survey School parents to assess effectiveness of what and how we communicate
  - Hopefully by expanding Committee participation and broadening ways interested candidates can notify the board of interest – e.g., via Advisory Board email address (published in bulletin and available on the Advisory Board Internet site) – we can ensure an ongoing slate of interested and qualified candidates
- Why does the Constitution provide for selection vs. election of Advisory Board members

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- The goal of any selection or election process is to help ensure the Advisory Board is comprised of qualified members that are representative of the School community and provide a set of perspectives that will help ensure near- and long-term success of the School
- Elections have been used in the past, but voter turnout was consistently extremely low
- While obviously debatable, the nature of elections can have a chilling effect on potential candidates who do not desire to participate in a public campaign
- A major focus is to broaden significantly Committee participation from School and Parish communities. Accomplishing this will provide a ready pool of representative, committed, and qualified candidates for the Advisory Board.
- In addition, efforts to promote the Advisory Board will hopefully similarly stimulate awareness and interest and further add to the pool of candidates
- While it is the current belief that Advisory Board selection of candidates provides the best available option, other options should be evaluated on an ongoing basis, including:
  - Paper ballot elections (i.e., voting after church on a specific weekend, or utilizing take-home ballots at School)
  - Internet online elections
  - Selection by the Pastor
  - Selection by a special “Selection Committee” potentially comprised of Advisory Board members, other Parish Board and/or Committee members, selected parents, and/or selected School faculty/staff
- Why aren't there separate by laws with the Constitution?
  - For simplicity, some items typically considered by laws such as details regarding decision making are embedded in the Constitution.
  - Should the Advisory Board deem necessary, the existing Constitution may be amended and/or separate by laws added.