

**CSC AGM
Minutes
6 February 2010
St Teresa's Mercy School**

1. Opening and welcome

Rosa Calaça welcomed all those present and Sr Lucia Allenstein opened the meeting with a prayer.

Sr Lucia mentioned that some schools had been enquiring about the appropriate age for learners to make their First Communion. She reported that she had spoken to the Archbishop and he was not too concerned as long as the children are well prepared and are ready to receive their First Communion.

2. Apologies

Neville Workman – Assumption Convent

John Gelling – De La Salle Holy Cross College

Brescia House

Mr Edwards – St Benedict's Prep

Thelma Phillips and Mike Takkos – Holy Family College

Mr Raditladi – St Matthews Primary

Robyn Picas and Aline Johnson – Sacred Heart College

Debbie Harris and Sybil Barrow – De La Salle Holy Cross Primary

3. 2009 Report on activities of Catholic Schools Council of Johannesburg

Mike Greeff, Chairperson of the CSC, presented the following report::

CSC Executive Committee

The CSC Executive met in March and April and held a planning meeting in June. During this meeting the objectives and mission of the council were outlined and a strategy developed on how to engage with the different groups of the council.

The CSC Executive met again in November to review the progress.

Principals

Strategic plan

Over 30 principals met in February with the purpose of developing a strategic plan for the next 2-3 years. The process moved from identifying current challenges in the schools to identifying what support is required, the offering of skills, identifying four key areas and the establishment of a task team to take the process further.

The four key focus areas:

1. Financial aspects
2. The Principals Group will guide all Catholic member schools to optimise their own financial sustainability and performance in their own context and will provide limited support where possible.
3. Teacher/training and recruitment
4. The subgroup of principals will work on strategies for the recruitment, retention and development of teachers together with CSO to support the process by providing the necessary data base.
5. The profile of Catholic education
6. Establish an advocacy group to raise the profile of Catholic Education by partnerships, consultation and communication and to support schools to uphold the distinctive Catholic character of their schools
7. The development of a database to assist networking in Catholic schools
8. CSO in consultation with CSB, CIE and a possible consultant to compile and manage Database so as to harness skills within the Catholic schools network to help each other

The principals will meet four times this year to report on the process of implementation.

Cluster meetings

The South West cluster of principals meet once a term under the chairmanship of Mr Deon Oerson from St Theresa's Primary in Coronationville. The Eastern cluster of principals meet regularly and are coordinated by Vivien Johnson of St Catherine's, Germiston.

RE Teachers

Workshops

Through the Catholic Schools Office a series of formative workshops were offered to RE Coordinators and Teachers during the course of 2009:

- Changes to the Mass
- The purpose of RE Departments, how they function and operate, what RE coordinators need to be doing for their RE teachers
- Spirituality for RE Coordinators presented by Fr Chris Chatteris
- Role and responsibilities of the RE Coordinator
- Use of sacred music in the teaching of RE
- Assessment in RE
- A Vision for RE in the school
- Workshop on how to involve all learners in Masses and para-liturgies

Signs of God's Presence

The RE department of the CSO assisted schools with the progress of *Signs of God's Presence*. 22 schools submitted their reports.

RE Teachers retreat

The annual Ascension Thursday RE teachers retreat was led by Julia Heaney at Bosco Youth Centre. The theme came from *Gaudium et Spes*: "The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reason for loving and hoping."

Teachers

The annual new teachers day presentation, entitled *Catholic Schools: At the Service of Humankind*, was presented by Neil Mitchell at Koinonia.

Marlene Jardine presented a workshop for high school RE, History and English teachers to teach critical thinking skills with reference to the Grade 10 and 11 philosophical strand of CORD. Teachers found it most useful as a teaching skill.

Pre school teachers

Eloise Jackson established contact with pre school teachers to encourage teachers to join the 'Little Fingers' preschools group. A limited response was received.

Board members

New board members of Catholic schools attended a workshop on how to govern in a Catholic school. Later in the year, Peter Boylan, Editor of the English publication *Networking*, addressed governors and principals. Peter shared his knowledge of governance in Catholic schools from his many years of experience in UK Catholic schools.

The CSO met with a small group of governors to strategise a way forward for the establishment of cluster groups for governors.

Other events

Gr 7 and 11 Masses were held at Regina Mundi and the Cathedral respectively.

The Veritas publication, *Sing for Life*, was launched at the annual Choir Festival held at the Linder Auditorium. The SABC recorded songs that were sung from the publication.

4. Signs of God's Presence – Sexuality Policy

The CIE has been working on a sexual education policy for Catholic schools. The draft policy was presented to the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) in January but was not yet approved.

Mark Potterton presented a proposed outline of the document.

5. Theme for 2010: Catholic Education, Quality Education: Doing the best for each child

The theme for the Catholic education network in South Africa during 2010 is:

Catholic Education, Quality Education: Doing the best for each child

The idea behind the theme is to ensure that all learners in all Catholic schools have access to quality education. Mark Potterton has written a book for schools called *Fully Alive* which is a tool for schools to use to evaluate their schools.

6. Career guidance

Linda van Meygaarden from CIE presented a career guidance programme for primary and high schools which the CIE has endorsed. The CIE is available to train schools on the programme and assist with implementation. Contact Linda on 011 433 1888.

7. Breakaway groups

1. How do you teachers see your role in:
 - a) upholding the vision of Catholic education
 - b) furthering the vision of Catholic education
2. What elements are essential in ensuring quality Catholic education in our schools?
3. What services would you like to see provided by the CSO that are not currently being offered by other education institutions?

7.1. Teacher's group

1. **How do you teachers see your role in:**
 - a) **upholding the vision of Catholic education**

Living by example: in our language, how we speak, the tone that we use and the way in which we live both inside and outside of the classroom.
Accepting all people regardless of any differences.
Praying together daily and giving consideration to the needs of all.
Singing songs of praise for God and the world around us.
Using posters and paintings that depict our vision.
Celebrating mass weekly/special feast days/special occasions.
 - c) **furthering the vision of Catholic education**

Involving all people of all ages in our Catholic education.
Doing everyday things with Jesus.
Considering the marginalized and our communities.
Sharing what we know about our subjects and faith with others.
Demonstrating an innate ability to have faith in all that we do.
2. **What elements are essential in ensuring quality Catholic education in our schools?**

Emphasis needs to be on 'involvement of all' and 'be positive'.
More meetings and discussions such as the ones that have taken place today – possibly once a term.
The 'seven' points that were mentioned by Mark earlier.
Ongoing assessment (use of 'Fully Alive') with proof that it has taken place – possibly via a report or a visit from a representative of the CSO.

Arrange visits to other Catholic schools (teachers and students).
More communication between Catholic schools particularly those in the same diocese.
Ongoing programmes similar to the orientation programmes for teachers arriving at a Catholic school.
More involvement by High School teachers (our group only had 5 high school teachers present).
Each year all teachers should be involved in analyzing the school's mission statement and reconsidering its interpretation.
Creating a stronger 'spiritual' ethos in schools possibly through teacher reflection groups – all welcome.
Religious instruction/discussion must take place in small groups not classes of 50.

3. What services would you like to see provided by the CSO that are not currently being offered by other education institutions?

Organised retreat days for teachers – one per term.
A webpage where teachers in Catholic schools could share lesson ideas that enhance our vision/ethos.
Time restraint prevented us from discussing this point fully – could we not email this question to teachers?

7.2. RE Coordinators and teachers

1. What are your needs and expectations – what is our role so as we can help you?

Rotate the workshops, e.g. Soweto
Cluster meetings (same number of meetings but divided into clusters)
Don't need to meet more than once a term
There is a real need to share ideas with other teachers
There are lots of resources available on the internet
Send individual emails/faxes to teachers when there are nice ideas on particular themes, e.g. Lent
Brainstorm how to make Masses more meaningful
Need to combine RE with other subjects – how do we do that?
How to focus on 'whole' school spirituality

1. How do you see your role in:

a) upholding the vision of Catholic education

It is a challenge that some other teachers don't see it as important as we do
This is helped by building RE into the LO syllabus – LO rests heavily on RE syllabus
CORD is interwoven with LO
At one school the whole school does RE at the same time so its difficult to ensure quality because everyone is expected to teach it.
Look for opportunities to 'live' the faith – find a balance between content and prayer/liturgy.
Important for teachers to be well read and up to date.

2. What services would you like to see provided by the CSO that are not currently being offered by other education institutions?

What happened to the short courses that were going to be offered at St Augustine's?
Something spiritual for us – a week for a few days at a time. Or a whole Saturday.
Who do we answer to?
Nobody comes to the school to check on what is happening?
Bishops have not put their official stamp on the content.
Need for assessment.

7.3. Preschool teachers

1. How do you see your role in:

a) upholding the vision of Catholic education

Children must be made aware of the Bible

d) furthering the vision of Catholic education

At the beginning, not from a Catholic point of view but from a biblical perspective
Doctrine can be introduced earlier
We can start by encouraging the children who may never have been to church
Our Catholic children don't always have a good Catholic foundation from home.
St Matthews restricts acceptance of children to Catholic children. Many problems are
not encountered in this way.

2. What elements are essential in ensuring quality Catholic education in our schools

Timetable an RE period
Start day with prayer
Use visual symbols, e.g. crucifix, statues
Teachers who teach RE must be passionate about the subject
Non-Catholic teachers can also do this job
CSO should publish a booklet for staff in the preschool
SHC have published a booklet, can we all see it?

3. What services would you like to see provided by the CSO that are not currently being offered by other education institutions?

Upgrading of Lifebound (from 3 year old group)
Last year CDs were sold – how do we get hold of these?
A simpler version of the Mass would be ideal for reception and foundation phase learners
1 Mass per term for these children
Hymn singing

7.4. Board members group

1. How do you see your role in:

- a) **upholding the vision of Catholic education**
Ensuring achievement
Role of board to be aware of challenges facing Catholic mission and ethos
Type of children enrolled
Teachers, especially in critical positions, need to understand Catholic vision
Boards are not always consistent as they are part time volunteers which makes it hard
to tackle ethos matters on the ground
We need to live out the ethos
The Ethos Committee must continue to ask questions about how ethos is expressed. It
needs to be more than just religious celebrations and more about living out our
Christian vocation.
Ethos is difficult to define in a public school

2. What elements are essential in ensuring quality Catholic education in our schools

The Board is reliant on management for implementation
There must be a balance between human education and Catholic education
Most parents' first priority is excellent education but we need to be careful of elitism – very delicate
balance.
School is also a business but does also include teaching of values and ethos.
There is a very strong network of Catholic schools in Johannesburg
What about neglected schools? Who offers them support?
Who is going to start new Catholic schools?
We need to watch out for schools under threat of closing.

3. What services would you like to see provided by the CSO that are not currently being offered by other education institutions?

To inspire principal who is overwhelmed
Developing support for the relationship with people in the school
How do we assist schools who are falling under the radar?
Need an analysis of areas of need and tailored interventions for schools in need.

7.5. Principals' Group

The principals discussed further the implementation of the strategic plan.

8. Closing

Mike Greeff thanked everyone for their participation and asked Fr Dino to close in prayer.