

**Catholic Schools Council of Johannesburg
Report of the 2007 Annual General Meeting
3 February 2007
St Vincent School for the Deaf, Melrose**

Present

Cecilia Koebe, Julia Matsoso, Theresa Sephula, Maurine Tsoagomo (Assumpta); Dominique Byrne, Neville Workman (Assumption); Beverly Holzinger, Val Thornton (Brescia); Pat Fitzsimons (CBC); Br Gabriel, Debbie Harris, Mary Hyam, Sr Roswitha Pelle, Anthony Swanson (De La Salle Holy Cross); L Hendricks, Rosalia Motha, Lorenzo Orru, Mike Thiel (Dominican Belgravia); B Bapela, F Mahlangu, L Mahoete, S Mankayi, Dudu Motaung, C Yantolo (Emaromeni); Patience Lenye, Fiona Wallace (Holy Family); Jean Bailie, Anne Dalvit, Sharon Meyer, Laraine Roberts (Holy Rosary); Matilda Dube, IHK Makoena, George Mbonde, D Moekwa, Zama Ndlovu (Immaculata); Jenny Potgieter, Br Thomas Sheehy (La Salle), Girlie Kheswa, Meriam Letuka, Puseletso Maanganye, Zacharia Mazibuko, Maria Mgabi, Doreas Myeza, Zoleka Qwasha, Amanda Sehoole, Sibusiso Sithole (Lourdes); Carla Casasola, Angeliqwe Durand, Gary Norton, Tish Pritchard (Marist Brothers Linmeyer); Quentin Davids, Elizabeth Redmond (Maryvale); Amalia Filiantris, Sabie Makgothi, Tracey Normand, Janet Spring (Mayfair); Sr Imelda, Nicky Humphreys, Amelia Lyall (McAuley House); Dino Miotto (Michael Rua); Heather Blanckensee, Robyn Picas, Shona Smith (Sacred Heart); Sr Monica, Mosa Ndzonga (St Angela's); Conrad Cleary (St Catherine's Florida); John Gelling (St Catherine's Germiston); Willy Castle, Clare Hedding, Mario Martins, Rick Wilson (St David's); Roger Loring (St Dominic's); Pinky Chili, Elsie Coka, Sannah Malau, Anastacia Mashinini, Nozipho Mdimma, Carol Mthimkhulu, Given Tsholetsane (St John Berchmans); Mariestella Chamane, Lucy Motsie, Duma Sithebe (St Martin de Porres); Marian Barenbrug, Jean Carey, Brenda Kelly, Marilyn Orford (St Teresa's Mercy); Charles Alofondika, Ivy Millen, Deon Oerson, Tessa Thompson (St Theresa's); Faye Barton, Stafford Billson, Craig Fortuin, Mike Moses, Debbie Shardlow (Veritas); Robin Lydall (St Benedict's & Holy Rosary); Sr Jordana Rechten; Sr Anne Walsh; Kelsay Correa, Kevin Roussel (CIE NSO); Rosa Calaca, Tim McCrindle, Neil Mitchell, Siza Nhlapo, Veronica Peters (CSO)

1. Welcome

John Gelling, chairperson of the Catholic Schools Council of Johannesburg, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked Sr Claudette for the use of St Vincents.

2. Introduction of Sr Jordana Rechten

Rosa Calaca introduced Sr Jordana Rechten, the Bishop's new representative for schools in the Diocese of Johannesburg.

3. CSC Chairperson's Report to the 2007 AGM on the activities of the Catholic Schools Council of Johannesburg during 2006

What is the purpose of the Catholic Schools Councils and for us gathering today?

The Catholic Schools Council is a forum for the Catholic schools of the Johannesburg Diocese to come together for fellowship, to grow professionally, to collaborate on matters of common interest and to seek unity of vision.

The CSC is the school level of participation in the Catholic education network. At this level, teachers and principals have opportunities to serve the Catholic schools movement by taking creative initiatives in meeting the professional needs of their colleagues, or at least by participating in the events of the various sub-groups.

The owners of our schools are involved at another level – the level of the Catholic Schools Board, on which they all have a representative. The Catholic Schools Board is concerned with maintaining the ongoing viability of our schools and with ensuring that their Catholic ethos flourishes.

Then there is the Catholic Schools Office, which is the operational arm of the Catholic Schools Board. It carries out the directives of the Catholic Schools Board in providing services to our schools. One of these services is to provide administrative and backup support for the Catholic Schools Council, such as the organisation of today's AGM.

For most of our schools, the Catholic schools movement and bodies such as JOCASCO (in the past) and now the CSC are the only larger body or association of schools that they belong to. The Catholic schools family is our home, where we find support and collegiality.

At the CSC AGM last year on 4 February 2005, the meeting split into groups as is our usual practice - board members and owners, principals, teachers, RE teachers, pre-school teachers - and each group elected a working group and a chairperson.

The Executive Committee

The chairpersons of the working groups constitute the Executive Committee of the Catholic Schools Council of Johannesburg. They are Boitumelo Letho (representing pre-school teachers), John Gelling (representing principals), Judy Werth (representing teachers), Dominique Byrne (representing RE teachers), and staff representatives of the Catholic Schools Office. This was their second year of office, since, according to the rules of the CSC, they hold office for two years.

John Gelling was elected chairperson of the Executive Committee at its first meeting, and, as such represents the CSC of Johannesburg on the Catholic Schools Board.

Care of the Teacher Year

Schools got involved in the spirit of Care of the Teacher Year by arranging events to show their appreciation for all that their teachers do. We heard of steam train rides, picnics, guardian angel systems, buddy systems, teachers getting lost at "Amazing Mazes", and teachers' family days.

Teachers enjoyed more caring attention with Saturdays of art and music, yoga and body pampering, scrapbooking, ballroom dancing and music appreciation, arranged by the Catholic Schools Office.

To honour and pay tribute to the work of our teachers, the Catholic Schools Office arranged a Care of the Teacher Year Mass for teachers at the Cathedral on 29 July. Not only teachers in Catholic schools attended but also teachers from the parishes who teach in public schools. Archbishop Thagale was the main celebrant. Each teacher received a lighted candle, a blessing, a rose, a chocolate and a prayer card. Learners from St Martin de Porres School paid tribute to teachers, and the Cathedral Choir sang the Mass. We sympathise with St Matthew's School – their marimba players who were going to play at the Mass were left stranded on the pavement outside their school when their transport – which had been booked and confirmed and re-confirmed again that morning – did not arrive. We missed their beautiful sounds at the Mass.

There were many calls for this Mass to become an annual event. Perhaps we should do what our colleagues in other dioceses, such as Pretoria, do. They take one school day a year – the children get a holiday – as a day for all the teachers in all the Catholic schools of the diocese. They have Mass with the bishop where he blesses them school by school, seminars, activities and, of course, lunch. Would there be support for such a day in the Diocese of Johannesburg?

Activities of sub-groups

Pre-school teachers

The pre-school teachers' group arranged a presentation for pre-school and Foundation Phase teachers on School Readiness, by Merritt Watson, principal of Sacred Heart College primary school, who is also an Educational Psychologist. This event in October was hosted by Sacred Heart College.

Principals

Finding the most workable structure for our principals to interact continues to elude us. At the 2005 AGM most principals felt that the system of principals meeting in clusters should be dissolved and replaced with a larger principals' forum.

However, the principals in the south-west cluster, chaired by Amalia Filiantris of Mayfair, still very much value coming together and met quarterly during 2006. The schools take turns to host the meetings. The late Ian Hattingh of St Theresa's Coronationville, who was the vice chairperson of the cluster, used to remark on how much he enjoyed getting to know the other Catholic schools in his area and coming to know the other principals as valued friends and seeing how they did things.

The eastern cluster, chaired by Roger Loring of St Dominics, met in February and hosted a very pleasant Principals' Breakfast at CBC in October for all the clusters, at which we bade farewell to four leaving principals.

The north-central cluster did not meet last year.

To try to gauge what principals needed, the Director of the Catholic Schools Office, Rosa Calaca, consulted with a group of principals. Principals felt that coming to a meeting with an agenda which consisted mainly of points of information which could probably be circulated in a written communication, was not really productive. Professional development is what is needed. From the consultation a "Principals' Interest Group" was initiated, which would offer brief afternoon seminars on a specific topic of mutual interest, rather than a full meeting with an agenda and minutes. The group met three times last year on timetabling, safety in schools and Grade 10 Maths. A series of seminars is planned for this year, the first next week on conducting pupil disciplinary hearings. Colin Northmore of Sacred Heart continued as the principals' representative to the Catholic Schools Board.

Teachers

At the AGM last year, the teachers' group identified areas of concern, including personal money management for teachers, the integration of Life Orientation and Religious Education, emotional intelligence of learners, the curriculum and assessment, and outreach opportunities and possibilities.

A workshop on personal money management for teachers was arranged. The speaker's PowerPoint presentation was all set up, the teacups and biscuits were out, the urn was boiling ... but not a single person turned up for it.

RE Teachers

The RE Teachers planned the annual Grade 11 and Grade 7 Masses. At the cost of all our schools no longer coming together as one, the Grade 11 Day last year was split into two as the numbers were getting too big. The feedback from most people was that the new arrangement works well, as the Cathedral was still pretty full, with 791 learners on one day and 765 on the other. The Grade 11 Day was arranged as a pilgrimage to the Cathedral, and to better prepare learners for the day, a pilgrimage cross travelled from school to school, RE teachers were supplied with lesson material on pilgrimage and PowerPoint presentations to show to their learners on our diocese and the Cathedral, and on the shelters run by the Sisters of Mercy for homeless people and for women needing a place of safety. The Grade 11 learners collected food and other provisions for these shelters, and also collected money for the Diocesan Educational Trust.

1200 Grade 7 learners filled Regina Mundi Church for the Grade 7 Mass in October, and 400 attended a second Grade 7 Mass at St Patrick's in Benoni.

80 RE teachers participated in the annual Ascension Thursday retreat at Bosco, led by Brother Mike Chalmers of the Catholic Bible Foundation.

RE teachers also attended a workshop on the use of music in Religious Education and liturgical celebrations, presented by Veritas Publishers from Dublin, in February; a workshop on the new CORD material in March; and a workshop on the responsibilities, functions, possibilities and opportunities of a RE department in a school, in October. At this last workshop teachers were also informed about the accredited courses for RE teachers on offer at St Augustine College this year (2007), and plans for the professionalisation of Religious Education, which include a Professional Society of RE Teachers, a journal, and regional and national RE conferences.

Board members

The problem of under-representation of board members in the activities of the CSC grows each year. We had only two board members present at last year's AGM. Board members have told us that since they voluntarily give of their free time, it is asking too much of them to become involved in initiatives whereby more-able boards assist less-able boards through training workshops.

Therefore, any initiatives involving board members will probably have to come from the Catholic Schools Office. There may be individual board members out there who would be willing to be called on to be part of these initiatives by giving of their skills and expertise in the service of our schools.

But it looks like the idea of having a board members' sub-group of the CSC, which itself sees to the needs of the Boards of Governors, may have to be abandoned.

4. Adoption of the Report of the last AGM

The Report was adopted by the meeting

5. Financial Report

Tim McCrindle presented the financial report for 2006. Copies were available for schools who requested them.

6. Introduction of the Catholic Schools Office website

Neil Mitchell took participants through the Catholic Schools Office website. The site includes information about the different bodies in the Catholic education network, recent activities, news updates, coming events, job vacancies in the schools, links of interest to Catholic school educators, the 2004 Congress, services offered by the CSO, RE resources, and each school has a profile on the website. Schools were asked to check their profiles and to inform Neil of any corrections or updates, to forward any good pictures of their school, and – if their school has a website – to place a link on it to the CSO website. The website address is www.cso.za.org. It is envisaged that the website will be a means of schools keeping in touch with what is going on in the Catholic schools network.

7. Theme for 2007

Anne Baker of the CIE presented CASPA's theme for Catholic schools for 2007, "Parents and Schools Building Community"

The 2nd National Schools Congress called for schools to become communities of care, offering pastoral care within the local community and beyond.

Parents:

- traditional family with Mom Dad married with children
- Mom and Dad living together
- single parents
- Grannies, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, neighbours also sometimes act as parents

Teachers come from families. They face pressure from:

- Curriculum changes and extra administration from the new curriculum
- Parents' expectations
- Social situation of learners
- Learner discipline
- Parental discipline
- Colleagues who do not do what they should do and we are left overworked

Learners:

- Each child is unique
- Challenging on many levels – exciting, frustrating: an endless list!

What we need to do:

- Explore the concept of community
- What does community mean to a Catholic school?

Community serving humanity: Bishops' Pastoral Plan

"The call to build community is not a mere human urge. It comes to us from the divine community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whose image we are made. When Jesus established his Church he created a new community"

People of God

- Called to live in community
- Social obligation to serve others, not only our own family
- Not just warm fuzzy

School community

- A school is a small enough environment to be able to build supportive, quality relationships
- These relationships must be based on service of one another
- Characterised by care, concern, openness
- This community can demonstrate to wider community how we can work together

Centrality of Relationships which:

- Foster positive human relationships
- Recognise the uniqueness of all community members
- Enable students, teachers and parents to feel personal support and care
- Are always welcoming

Parents as first teachers

- responsible for the education of their children in all areas of life, especially in the development of their faith and values which flow from the Gospel message
- Catholic school endeavours to partner with parents to educate the whole child.
- Develop mutual respect

School as a Community of Faith

- Fosters a belief in God
- Models a Christian way of life
- Acknowledges the link between God, people and nature
- Is active in the local Church and has a sense of the wider Church and society
- The Catholic school is called to be salt of the earth, light of the world, a city on a hill, a lamp on a stand. In all these images there is the concept of the Catholic school as being a positive influence in the kingdom, an organisation which breaths life, stands out and provides direction.

Parental Involvement

- Involves excellent communication both ways
- Seek advice and support of parents - consultation
- Incorporates shared decision-making
- Parents serve on committees and governing bodies

Major aspects

- Communication! Communication! Communication!
- Policies
- Manage the conflict
- Make use of key gathering points

Plan

- Pastoral directive from our Bishops
- Materials will be distributed with resources and ideas
- Schools make own plans to develop community

7. Presentation by Dominique Byrne, chairperson of RE teachers' sub-group

Preparation for the Reception of Sacraments in Catholic Schools

Response by the Bishop

- New Policy for Catechetics drawn up and signed.
- Ideally preparation and reception of sacraments should happen at parishes.
- Preparation may be done in the Catholic Schools context

Standards to be met

- Catechesis must be of an equal standard to that in parishes.
 - Teachers suitably trained and qualified
 - Same time frame ie 60 – 90 mins a week
- Catechesis is ongoing formation not just preparation for the sacraments

Training and formation of Catechists

- Should attend courses offered by the Catechetical Office (refer to handout)
 - The Creed
 - Lumko
 - Teec
 - Beginner
 - Echoing the Word

Working with the parish

- Parish Priests of the local community informed and kept updated on catechesis of their children.
 - Content, progress and parental involvement
- Parish priests to give permission to the school before a child commences lessons for the reception of sacraments.
 - Letter stating **practising** Catholic. Child may wait.
- Parish Priests to be informed of date and time Sacrament will be received.
 - Parish Priest to be notified once sacrament has been received (Parish Records)

Preparation for Reception of Sacraments

- Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - In the third year of Catechism
- Reception of First Holy Communion
 - In the fourth year of Catechism
- Confirmation
 - Three-year preparation from 14th year of age
 - Specific Programme followed.
 - Community Outreach essential
 - Retreat

Way Forward

- Work closely with Parish Priests.
- Make contact with the Catechetical Office.

8. Group meetings

8.1 Board Members

- Need for training of members of boards
- There are three processes that have emerged in the establishment of boards
 - nominate and elect
 - volunteers
 - appointment of members in cases where there is a specialised need (in these appointments the commitment of the person must be ascertained)
- Board members are entering unknown territory and the basis of their authority is not always clear
- Functions of the board need to be defined
- There is a problem around the induction of board members (a policy brief on governance will be available in the coming week)
 - Board members need to have a sound understanding of what a Catholic school is
 - Some boards are too business-like
 - Ethos
- Ownership needs to start from the top
- There is an increase in the involvement of the laity but continuity remains the owner's function
- Owners need to be involved in school development
- Support to administration from the boards is needed
- Principals need to report to the board
- There is a problem around the uncertainties that arise which lead to name-calling in schools. This is linked to the point on authority and function of the board
- Parental expectations of the school can be divisive especially when parents begin to compare schools with one another
- There is a need for a code of good conduct for board members highlighting the need for confidentiality
- There are some questions around the role of the teacher's representative on the board
- Constitutions don't seem to be accompanied with practice
- Business people on the boards have fixed ideas which sometime conflict with the ethos of the school
- Not all boards have sub-committees and there seems to be quite significant differences among boards. This leads to problems around succession planning as there is no uniformity across the sector

- A description of what it means to be a board member is needed
- The schools need to provide the board with a little document package that will provide some context for the board
- A board manual needs to be developed
- The involvement of Bishops' Representatives is not ideal. Sr Jordana needs to be approached to highlight this problem to the Bishop

8.2 Principals

- A lunch will be organised again this year. Roger (St Dominics) and Pat (CBC) offered to organise.
- A discussion on the clusters took place. The South-west cluster is very active; they have diverse needs and they meet to help one another. They agreed that principals not in their cluster are free to join and to attend their meetings. The dates and venues of the meetings will be sent out by the CSO to all principals.
- John explained that he had set up a forum on Yahoo for principals. The e-mail is cathprincip@yahoo.com. About 20 e-mails were sent out on 6 October 2006 inviting principals to join. If you would like to join, e-mail cathprincip-subscribe@yahoo.com, and then you will be invited to join.
- The Principals' Interest Group was discussed. Meetings held last year were very fruitful. It is open to all, not just principals. It is administered from the CSO. An attempt will be made to hold meetings in a central location.
- A suggestion was to arrange a get together for pupils from different schools so they could learn from and interact with one another.
- The new curriculum was raised. The issue of standards is causing concern – at what standard should the work be pitched.
- Govt schools would like to know if they can get access to the IEB exemplar papers – The IEB will have to be asked about this.
- Communication from the GDE was seen as a problem.
- John Gelling was cajoled into being chairperson of the Principals group again (perhaps the terms should be limited to two so that others are obliged to play a role!) Debbie Harris was elected as vice chairperson.

8.3 RE Teachers

Events of 2006:

- Music Workshop at Emaromeni School by visitors from Veritas Publications, Dublin
- CORD workshop at Cathedral by Paul Faller
- RE Teachers' retreat on Ascension Thursday at Bosco by Br Mike Chalmers of the Catholic Bible Foundation
- Grade 7 and 11 Masses
- "Being all that we can be" workshop at Holy Family College Parktown on the vision that a RE Department should have of what it can achieve in a Catholic school and what it can do to achieve this vision, and on plans for the professionalisation of RE
- Pastoral Care Conference (CIE and Sacred Heart College)

RE Conference, 1-3 June, Bosco

- Neil and Siza explained the plans for the conference. It will be a prelude to the National RE Conference in 2008
- Jenny Potgieter (La Salle), Mike Moses (Veritas), Sabie Makgothi (Mayfair), Sharon Meyer (Holy Rosary) and Girlie Kheswa (Lourdes) agreed to be a reference group who would give the organisers feedback on the plans for the conference
- Sacred Heart College will organise a prayer service on the Saturday evening of the conference
- There was a request that the conference start early on Friday and end on Saturday evening, as Sundays are precious family time. The organisers would consider this

Other events planned for the year

- 27 February: Workshop on Assessment in RE. 2.30 pm, Marist Brothers Linmeyer
- Second term: report-back on how CORD is working, with Paul Faller
- October: the new order of the Mass (changes in wording of the liturgy) – Pat Fraser, Marian Barenbrug (St Teresa's Mercy Rosebank), Aline Johnson (Sacred Heart) volunteered to organise this workshop

Dominique Byrne (chairperson) (Assumption) and Anastacia Mashinini (St John Berchmans) were elected to represent the RE teachers on the Executive of the CSC

8.4 Teachers

(As the chairperson of the Preschool teachers' group was not able to be present at the AGM, the pre-school teachers joined the meeting of the teachers' group)

Judy welcomed all present. She gave a brief overview.

- Teachers' group seems to be a problem; i.e. is very specific whereas this group has difficulty implementing suggestions.
- Workshops set up but attendance is very erratic.
- Website – looking at alternate ways of working with teachers.
- This year the website can be developed to be teacher specific: subject money management.
- Small area 2 or 3 schools to cluster for meetings.
- Workshops no longer large group at Cathedral rather small school by school groups.

Operation

Chair – attends CSO meetings – report back to representative or board should have ± other members on committee to help with setting up of interest groups. Suggestion: have the chair contact various schools and people volunteer to help out in the small group area. This will minimise the stress of have to come regularly to a meeting.

Ideas/Needs teachers have:

- Worksheets can be typed and placed on Website (if school has no access to website the information can be faxed). Identify one person from each school to be a liaison officer for getting the info through for the Website. Share information re courses, worksheets, etc. On website have something on how to live a balanced lifestyle re our stressful life.
- There is not an updated list for all Catholic School teachers. Try to get a list set up for Catholic teachers in all schools – will try bring them into the fold and offer support. List is only for those who attend this conference.
- Visibility to use the newspaper, "The Teacher", to advertise the Website. Parish Priest should announce the meeting or place in the bulletin. We need to provide support for all due to various factors that affect people in our schools – be a support – often the CSO can be a source to tap into for information.
- With the shortage of teachers many teachers now have to take on new subjects. This is stressful. We can twin to help each other.
- CSO runs a seminar for all new teachers in the Catholic Schools system. Chair for teachers' group can be a 'phone line' with the CSO as a service for who to contact when you need to help.
- Catholic Schools are often excluded when the State provides materials. This group needs a liaison person with the GDE to obtain the material needed. Workshops need to be paid for – CSO offers courses which are not the same and thus teachers very confused.
- Teachers in Catholic schools are leaving for GDE as they have better benefits. Staff often feel overworked and not really cared for. This will be problematic for schools as good teachers are leaving. They need to be looked after. Teachers need to be informed of the motives and restructuring within the GDE.
- Catholic schools split because of the status benefits etc. Is this really fair? Can this be addressed?