St. Mary School Advisory Committee (SAC)

Meeting Minutes

2026–2027 School Year
Date: October 28, 2026
Scheduled Time: 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Hybrid | Discovery Hall and Google Meet
Presiding: Principal Lisa DeCore

Committee Members Present In Person
- Lisa DeCore, Principal
- Brad DeAngelis, Athletic Director
- Sarah Mueller, PTO Secretary
- Kathryn Wheller, Parent Representative

Committee Members Present Virtually
- Jen Shepard Hooley, PTO President
- Sandi Ziegler, Parishioner
- Dennis Ziegler, Parishioner
- Spencer Shaw, Parent Representative

Quorum: Yes

I. Opening Prayer and Roll Call
Principal Lisa DeCore lead the opening prayer.

II. Approval of Previous Minutes
Approval of the previous meeting minutes was not recorded.

III. School Updates and Communication
First Quarter Updates and Enrollment
The Council reviewed first-quarter school operations, enrollment, and opportunities for continued growth. Current enrollment is 247 students: 50 in preschool and prekindergarten and 197 in kindergarten through eighth grade. Members discussed a goal of adding approximately 20–25 K–8 students for the following school year.

Potential enrollment and marketing initiatives were discussed, including targeted postcard marketing through Postcard Mania, continued use of yard signs and local marketing materials, additional school visits for prospective families, a second open house in the spring, and earlier preschool-focused recruitment in future enrollment cycles. Discussion also addressed the relationship between school enrollment, parish engagement, and long-term financial sustainability.

Digital Academy and School Information Systems
Members discussed continuing Digital Academy challenges with enrollment administration, billing, reporting, customer service, and communication. Concerns included operational inefficiencies, inconsistent system performance, difficulty navigating multiple functions, and teacher messages that do not consistently generate parent notifications.

School leadership is evaluating FACTS as a potential alternative, including student information management, billing, communication, and fundraising capabilities. Members discussed the benefits of a unified platform.

Tuition Assistance and Financial Considerations
The Council discussed maintaining affordability and understanding the school's reliance on EdChoice and other tuition assistance. Members requested the number of students receiving assistance, including those receiving full assistance, and discussed possible implications of future scholarship-program changes. Additional data will be obtained for Council review.

IV. Academic Programming and Instructional Excellence

Grades 4–8 Block Schedule
The Council reviewed feedback regarding the grades 4–8 block schedule. Members emphasized maintaining strong academic programming while adapting instructional structures to student needs.

Technology and Traditional Instruction
Members discussed balancing technology-supported learning with handwriting, written assignments, physical books, reading materials, and hands-on classroom activities. The Council supports the use of technology so long as it supports foundational instruction.

Professional Development and Instructional Support
Mrs. DeCore provided an update on her current professional development, informal classroom observations, and instructional coaching efforts, outlining the goal is to complete formal staff observations before Christmas break.

AeroZone Pilot Program
Mrs. DeCore provided an update that Terry Malone has been visiting St. Mary School on Wednesdays to provide one-hour professional-development sessions for Mrs. Fedak and Mrs. Freeze as they prepare to use the Aerozone equipment. The pilot, which includes tabletop units and handheld devices, is being provided at no cost to the school.

V. Student Engagement and Parish Community

After School Clubs and Enrichment
Existing and developing extracurricular opportunities included Power of the Pen, Classroom of Champions, Brain Brawl, Publication Club, Nexplore Makers Club and Robotics, Crochet Club, drama, and potential 3D-printing activities. Members discussed expanding participation and connecting club activities with school events.

The Publication Club may assist with photographing school athletic teams and organizing images through established school systems. Follow-up will involve Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Fedak.

Parish Engagement and Student Participation
Members discussed strengthening school and parish connections through greater student involvement in parish Masses, music, and other activities. Discussion considered how increased student visibility could support parish relationships, community engagement, and school awareness, as well as what level of participation would be feasible. Meeting notes and suggestions will be shared with Father John for consideration.

VI. School Operations and Priority Items

Safety and Security

The Council reviewed ongoing camera adjustments and the need for repositioning and replacing certain cameras, moving existing 360-degree cameras to the gym and cafeteria, improving future coverage of the parking lot entrance and driveway, and connecting Discovery Hall cameras to the broader security system.

Capital Improvements and Facilities

Facility maintenance included replacement of major walk-in freezer components during August.

Communication and Administrative Accessibility

The Council discussed reliable communication among school leadership, families, and staff, including improved parent notifications, accessible channels for contacting administration, and greater Advisory Council visibility. Continued website development and recognition opportunities for students and staff were also addressed.

A preliminary 2027–2028 academic calendar was provided for review. It remains a draft subject to revision.

VII. Announcements and Closing

Closing discussion addressed ongoing school priorities, member questions, and continued collaboration with school leadership. No formal motions or advisory recommendations were recorded.

Next meeting: January 27, 2027, 6:30–8:00 p.m., via Google Meet.

Action Items Summary

- Share meeting notes with Father John, including discussion of increased student participation in parish liturgies.
- Discuss a spring open house date with Mrs. Zjaba.
- Obtain and share a breakdown of EdChoice and other tuition assistance participation, including the number receiving full assistance.
- Coordinate with Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Fedak regarding athletic team photography and uploading images through the school's organization system.
- Investigate missing Digital Academy parent notifications and determine how to correct the issue while the platform remains in use.