



St. James School Advisory Commission Guidelines

Revised & Approved: May 2015

Preamble/Mission Statement

The School Advisory Commission of St. James School has the responsibility to the school community of serving in an advisory capacity with relation to the initiation and evaluation of policies and programs concerning Catholic education for the children of St. James School. The committee will consider the human and spiritual needs of each student and support their development of talents, opportunities, and personal growth.

Working in close collaboration with the pastor and school administrator(s) and hearing its many constituents, this Commission shall assist in enabling the St. James School community to reach its educational goals.

Article I – Name

The organization shall be known as St. James School Advisory Commission, hereinafter referred to as the Commission.

Article II – Purpose and Function

Section A: Purpose

The purpose of the Commission shall be to advise the Pastor and Principal, who is delegated by the Pastor for the supervision of educational programs presented by the parish at the pre-school and grade school levels. The Commission serves the school and wider parish community by advising the Pastor and Principal on policies, strategic planning, program development, etc.

Section B: Function/Duties

In its advisory capacity, the Commission serves to provide guidance with regard to the educational needs and priorities of the school community. The functions and duties of the elected voting members and non-elected, non-voting members of the Commission include and may not be limited to the following:

1. To assist in the development of policies with regard to the education of students within the school while insuring compliance with the regulations of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
2. To assist the school Administrator(s) with the strengthening of the Catholic Identity of St. James School.
3. To collaborate with the school administrator(s) in the review of evaluation studies made by the administrative personnel regarding curricular objectives and their outcome, and to suggest ways of improving the effectiveness of the education programs of the school. The Commission does not evaluate the educational administrators or individual teachers.
4. To advise the Pastor and Principal with regard to recommended policies and to work in collaboration with other parish committees on the planning of education, operations, maintenance of facilities and equipment, long-range planning, finances, adequacy of personnel as it relates to the pupil/teacher ratio, as well as to determine strengths and weaknesses.
5. To receive, review, and approve the operating budgets for the school, in order to maintain a quality educational program while being fiscally responsible. The Commission shall review the budgets prepared by the Administrator(s) and recommend them to the Finance Council for inclusion in the parish budget.
6. To promote better understanding through the initiation and evaluation of programs concerning Catholic education, and to foster Christian values within the school community.
7. To guide current members of the St. James School community in appropriately expressing community concerns regarding Catholic education of the children within St. James School. (See Addendum A for Policy and Procedure)

Article III – Structure

The St. James School Advisory Commission shall be comprised of two main committees: Financial Trends and Religious and Academic Trends.

The Financial Trends subcommittee will be responsible for sending a representative to the Parish Finance Committee meetings. This subcommittee will work to advise the Pastor and Principal with regard to the current and future fiscal needs of the school. Their work will include long term planning for the school in order to maintain and strengthen school programs. The group will also advise the Principal with regard to budgetary matters.

Religious and Academic Trends will work to advise the Principal and Pastor with regard to the current and future spiritual and academic needs of the school. The subcommittee will serve to assist in the advancement of the school's continuous improvement plan through their work. The enrichment program will be chaired by members of the Religious and Academic Trends subcommittee.

Article IV – Membership

Section A: Voting Members

Voting members of the Commission consist of the twelve members of the Commission. The selection of twelve members allows for adequate membership in order to fulfill the work of the two subcommittees.

Members are expected to be supportive of the mission and values of St. James School and work to advance those. The Commission works collaboratively with the school administration and members should be interested in being a part of this team approach to the education of our children and betterment of our school.

Members should be:

- Willing to listen and respect the ideas of others.
- Willing to consider the needs of the school in the context of the whole parish.
- Willing to give time to prepare for and attend meetings.
- Willing to serve in an advisory capacity.
- Committed to work in a spirit of prayer, dialogue, consensus-building, and planning.

Section B: Non-voting Members

The Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Commission by virtue of his office.

Non-voting members of the Commission shall also include the principal, assistant principal, the representative from the PTO (normally the PTO President), and the faculty representative from the school.

All non-voting members are encouraged to be active participants in carrying out the obligations of the Commission.

Additionally, the Commission welcomes reports from other parish organizations whose programming may impact the broader parish community and/or the work of St. James School.

Section C: Terms

Each member serves a term of three years and is appointed by the Pastor prior to the start of each school year. One-third of the member representation will begin their three year terms each year. This one-third will consist of two men and two women.

In March of each year, the school community shall be asked for recommendations concerning new members for the Commission. The Commission will review these recommendations for suitable candidates, approach the candidates to determine their willingness to serve, and educate those willing to serve about the role and functioning of the Commission. After discernment by the Commission, Pastor, and Principal, individuals will be invited to join the Commission. The Pastor then appoints those who have agreed to serve.

New members will be invited to attend the June meeting. New members take office at the August meeting and can serve only two consecutive terms. Minimum age for membership shall be 18.

Regular meeting attendance is expected. In the event that a member of the Commission has been absent from three meetings during one session, remaining members of the Commission may, at their discretion, determine and declare that a vacancy exists. Upon such declaration, such member shall be deemed to have resigned. Should a vacancy occur on the Commission, the chairperson will organize a process by which the vacancy will be filled working alongside the other officers and the school administration. A replacement for the vacancy will be of the same gender as the vacancy. The Pastor may also remove a member from the Commission for cause.

Article V – Officers

The officers of the St. James School Advisory Commission consist of the chairperson, vice-chairperson and the executive secretary; all of whom are elected annually by the Commission during the May meeting. The following timetable will be followed with respect to nominations:

1. Announcement will be made by the chairperson during the March meeting to consider persons for officer nominations at the April meeting.
2. Nominations will be taken for officer positions during the April meeting.
3. Elections will take place by secret ballot for officer positions during the May meeting.

Any of the eight returning voting members of the Commission are eligible for any office.

The chairperson shall chair all regular and special meetings of the Commission. The chairperson shall determine the meeting agenda and distribute it prior to the meeting. The chairperson establishes committees on standing and/or AD HOC basis according to need.

The vice-chairperson performs the duties of the chairperson when he/she is absent or unable to act.

The executive secretary collects committee reports and distributes them for review prior to the meeting. He/she sees that a written record of all acts of the Commission is maintained. The executive secretary is to perform all the duties of the vice-chairperson when he/she is unable to act.

The officers, principal, and assistant principal shall be known as the School Advisory Commission Leadership Team. The Leadership Team will work together to prepare meeting agendas and to develop the focus and direction of the Commission.

Article VI – Meetings

The Commission will generally meet on the second Thursday during August, September, October, November, December, January, March, April, May and June. (Dates will be published in August of each school year.) Additionally, during February, the elected members will meet with the administration to discuss the budget. This meeting is closed to the public. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor, the school principal, the chairperson or by three or more members and notification shall promptly be made to all members.

The pastor normally delegates the school principal to represent him at the regularly schedule meetings.

For purposes of transacting official business, it is necessary that a majority of the total voting members be present for voting on issues.

All regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission are open to members of the parish and to parents of children receiving their education under the auspices of the parish. The right of non-members to address the Commission is limited to those whose petition has been approved by the three elected officers of the Commission for agenda ten days in advance of the next regularly scheduled meeting. Such non-member topics of discussion shall be presented at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled meeting, allowing the non-member no more than fifteen minutes to present their topic.

A member of the Commission may add items concerning the educational needs of the school to the next regularly scheduled meeting by submitting it to the chairperson before the agenda is published for the next scheduled meeting.

Each agenda should be brought to the administration ahead of each meeting. The agenda should be shared with the members of the Commission in advance of the meeting.

The rules of parliamentary procedure as contained in Robert's Rules of Order shall govern meetings of the Commission. The ordinary order of the meeting agenda shall be:

1. Faith Formation of the members
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Approval of minutes
4. Committee report review – Questions and Answers
5. Approval of reports and recommendations
6. Old business
7. New business

8. Adjournment
9. Closing Prayer
10. Sub-committee meetings
11. Sub-committees report back to whole Commission

The chairperson or three voting members may call for an executive session of the Commission in which all voting members, the principal, and the assistant principal may attend. These sessions may be called to discuss confidential matters that should not be made available to the public until after the Commission provides input and/or a vote.

Commission members are expected to respect the confidential nature of communications with the school administration. There are times when sensitive topics or information will be discussed.

Article VII – Committees

When necessary, committees may be formed to address specific needs or projects. The chairperson or a group of three elected members are empowered to appoint committees of the Commission to assist in its endeavors. As committees are formed, members whose skill set and expertise will serve the Commission will be invited to serve on the committees as they are formed. An invitation to join such a committee does not constitute membership as a voting member on the Commission.

Such committees shall operate until the duty assigned to them is completed and will be dissolved at that time. The function of all committees shall be fact-finding, deliberative, and advisory, but never legislative or administrative. Recommendations by any committee shall be subject to ratification approval by the Commission.

The Commission shall be divided into two working committees: Religious and Academic Trends (RAT) and Financial Trends (FIT). Commission members are assigned to one of the two committees based upon the skills and interests they possess. Each group works on projects outside of the designated meeting times. All Commission members are expected to contribute time to the work of their assigned committee.

By means of a majority vote of the St. James School Advisory Commission members during a scheduled meeting, any and all available funds in the St. James School Advisory Commission's bank account may be directed by the Commission, provided such funds have not been previously allocated.

Article VIII – Amendments

These guidelines, which will remain in compliance with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati regulations, may be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the total voting membership of St.

James School Advisory Commission. All amendments must be presented to the Commission at a meeting and voted on at the next regular monthly meeting.

ADDENDUM A

Policy and Procedure for Community Concerns brought to a member of the St. James School Advisory Commission

The following procedural information should help guide current members of the St. James School Advisory Commission when approached by community members regarding issues or concerns. By following these guidelines, St. James School Advisory Commission members can comfortably and confidently act as a communications channel for the greater good of the school.

Step 1:

Listen to the concern of the individual. After listening to the concern, the Commission member should determine if the concern is broad in nature regarding policies OR if it is related to a specific actions regarding a child, administrator, or faculty member.

If the concern is of a specific nature related to above, the Commission member should encourage the individual to communicate directly to the proper authority. If the Commission member is unaware of the proper authority, then they should encourage the individual to address the St. James School administration directly.

Under no circumstances should the St. James School Advisory Commission become a body for hearing grievances regarding staff members or administrative actions.

Step 2:

If the concern is broad in nature or related to policy and/or procedures related to St. James School, the Commission member should encourage the individual to provide written detail of the concern. This detail should then be submitted to the Commission for inclusion for discussion at the next available Commission meeting, in accordance with the May 2015 Advisory Commission Constitution Article VI which states:

The right of non-members to address the Commission is limited to those whose petition has been approved by the three elected officers of the Commission for agenda ten days in advance of the next regularly scheduled meeting. Such non-member topics of discussion shall be presented at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled meeting, allowing the non-member no more than fifteen minutes to present their topic.

If not approved by the Commission, the Commission member who relayed the concern, along with an officer of the Commission, will provide written response to the individual.

Step 3:

If the concern is approved by the Commission for inclusion in an upcoming Commission meeting, then the Commission member should encourage the individual to be present during the meeting for their presentation of the concern. If the individual is unable or unwilling to do so, then the written concern will be presented for the discussion by the acting executive secretary of the Commission.

Step 4:

The result of the discussion will be outlined in a response letter that is provided to the individual.