# St. Francis of Assisi School Leadership Council Minutes September 10th, 2026

**Prepared by: Mollie Mertens**

**Board Members Present:**
Father Pins (Pastor)
Andrew Phillips (At-Large)
John Cord (Treasurer)
Mollie Mertens (Secretary)
Phil Stover (Communications Dir)
Jennifer Tracey (Volunteer Coord)
Becky Baker (Fundraising Coord)
Steve Craig (At-Large)
Adam Mullinax (At-Large)
Kelli Moore (Pastoral Council Rep)
William Downs (At-Large)

**Participated Via Zoom:**
Brenda Pedersen (Chair)

**Not Present:**
Michael Perrin (At-Large)
Baylie Panzi (At-Large)

**Others Present:**
Jeff Lynch (School Principal)
Jodi Halligan (Vice Principal)
Wendy Henry (Preschool Director)

**Called to Order**: 6:30 p.m.

**Adjourned:** 7:52 pm

**Location:** Saint Francis Science Lab Classroom

**Minutes Prepared By**: _____
Mollie Mertens

| AGENDA ITEM | DESCRIPTION/DISCUSSION | NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS |
|---|---|---|
| **Call to Order & Opening Prayer** | Andrew Phillips (in place of Brenda Pedersen available via Zoom) called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and Fr. Pins led an opening prayer. | Call to Order and Opening Prayer. |
| **Teacher Presentation** | Teacher Presentation (John Southward and Sara Grabau)<br>Mr. Southward has been teaching at SFA for 23 years. Starts every class with a prayer. For the middle school art students there is one big project students look forward to. For 6th grade it is garden gnomes, 7th does tape sculptures and 8th grade does giant pop art. | |

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| | Elementary Technology- early in the year Mr. Southward is teaching the younger levels how to log in to the chromebooks, navigating the apps they will use and appropriate usage. The goal is to help the students learn to use the chromebook as a tool. In addition, the older elementary students will use their time in technology to work on keyboarding and coding.<br>Ms. Grabau has been teaching at SFA for 20 years- she taught here and then got hired. Mrs. Grabau always starts and ends the year with a self portrait which provides a visual representation of the growth and progress they have demonstrated throughout the year. K-5 meets for 6 weeks twice a year.<br><br>Both teachers expressed excitement about the new kiln in the past year and that they enjoy their work and students. | |
| **Approve Minutes** | Minutes from August 13, 2026 Leadership Council meeting were sent out electronically before the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jennifer Tracey and seconded by Becky Baker. The minutes were unanimously approved. | Minutes of the August 13, 2026 meeting were unanimously approved. |
| **Open Forum** | There was no request for an Open Forum at this meeting. | |
| **Pastoral Report** | Fr. Pins distributed a Conflict of Interest Policy and the Annual Report.<br>• In October the Parish will celebrate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis.<br>• October 4th will be Francis Fest. Pet blessing will be held at 1pm by the Statue of Mary.<br>• Father Pins and 50 other members are headed to Assisi to celebrate the Feast Day.<br>• Permits have been approved by the planning and zoning committee. Now the West Des Moines City Council has to read it twice at their meetings. It was read on September 9th and will be read again on September 23rd before it can be approved.<br>• Construction is happening! Ceremonial groundbreaking has occurred and timeline is currently:<br>Chapel - finished approx June 2027<br>Preschool- finished approx July 2027<br>Remodel and meeting rooms in Parish- finished approx By January 1, 2028.<br>*All of these dates are approximate. | * |

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| | So far no complaints from the City of West Des Moines regarding back up on 72nd Street, however they have not flown the drone to get a full picture carline. | |
| **Administrative Report** | Wendy Henry (Preschool Director) reported: All of the teachers came back this year. HHS licensing visit was last week and the program passed.<br><br>Mr. Lynch and Mrs. Halligan presented the following information:<br>• Carline- 20 minutes on the first day and that number continues to decrease. Tuesday 26 tardies were given out- so they know a change needs to be made in the morning. Requesting continued patience as we work through the kinks. So far no complaints from the City of West Des Moines regarding back up on 72nd Street, however they have not flown the drone to get a full picture carline.<br>• School Happenings:<br>1. FAST Testing- elementary next week and middle school the week of September 22nd.<br>2. Professional Development<br>a. Crisis Prevention Intervention training in October, this will teach de-escalation strategies.<br>b. Leader in Me will come out three times this year for Professional Development.<br>3. Tomorrow the SFA grads- the Dowling cheerleaders and football players will come back to get the students excited.<br>4. The AEA will continue visiting the school to assist as they did last year.<br>5. Denise Mulcahey will be at SFA working with teachers as they learn the Danielson framework about student engagement.<br>6. Literacy and Math coaches are at Saint Francis each week as we continue to implement a new reading curriculum.<br>7. Teachers meet 1x weekly in PLC, and 1x monthly meeting by grade level to make sure they are aligned.<br>8. Teacher evaluations- newer teachers get three evaluations per year. Veteran teachers get 1x per year.<br>9. Grandparents day- parking issue because fencing is blocking off numerous spots typically utilized. Teachers will park at R and R that day to help | |

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| | with more spots. Mr. Lynch will also allow Grandparents to enter through the gym entrance as well. More conversations to come<br>10. Safety- fire drill and severe weather drill will occur this week. Some changes have been made and will be introduced.<br>• Demographically St. Francis School currently has 478 families and 671 students (675 is capacity). 578 are receiving ESA funding.<br>• ESL is now serving 26 students- great to have a teacher here to help with the increase in need.<br>• 8th Graders headed to leadership training at Camp Dodge.<br>• Mental Health Monday- starts this Monday in September<br>• 3 teachers doing a commercial for Aerotech shoes. 73 different schools throughout the country are participating.<br>• A survey will go out regarding preschool and what type of programs meet the needs of the parish community.<br>• Cintas came in and looked at AED's and two have expired. $480 would be the monthly rate to get new ones. New machines and pads cost about. Mr. Lynch will also look into a grant that may help with funding. | |
| **New Business** | 8th Grade Mass- Mollie will attend and serve. Steve will make sure the cookies are ordered.<br><br>Grandparents Day- see discussion above. | |
| **Old Business** | Steve Craig presented the following information:<br>• Faith Formation Catholic Identity committee- Steve led a discussion about the feedback from the Leadership Council Survey that cited a need for a group to form with the mission to strengthen Catholic identity and increase involvement in the Parish. In addition to the survey, this is a need also outlined in the By-Laws. The format is up for discussion but brainstormed that they could meet 2-3 times yearly, ask other Catholic schools in the Diocese how they draw parents to Parish activities, bring in speakers, etc. Father Pins would like to see the Leadership Council define the objectives for the group and who would serve on it. | Old Business presented by Steve Craig. |
| **Treasurer's Report** | John Cord presented the Treasurer's Report:<br>**Leadership Council Account** (**2422)**: as of<br><br>August 31, 2026 | Treasurer's Report from John Cord. |

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| | ● Beginning Balance (08/01/26): $50,198<br>● Ending Balance: $230,213<br>● Remaining Expenses: $168,773<br>● Surplus: $61,440<br><br>**Recent Activity:**<br>● Recarpeting: $29,600<br>● 2026 transfer: $210,853<br><br>**Fundraising Account (2426):** As of August 31, 2026<br>● Beginning Balance (08/01/26): $330,439<br>● Ending Balance: $65,000<br><br>**Items to discuss**<br>● Additional $350 to 1st grade teacher budget - Mrs. Curtain class room needs<br>○ Mailboxes, caddies, desk skirt, decor, organization bins, etc. Motion to approve by Steve Craig and seconded by Becky Baker. | |
| **Fundraising and Development Report** | Report: Fundraising and Development Director Update (Becky)<br>• Track-a-thon will be held next week. Kids are practicing during recess and earning bracelets.<br>• Auction - holding two meetings in the next few weeks. Hoping to get ideas and solicit volunteers.<br>• Raising money for some new furniture for the classrooms, throughout the school, furnishings for the new preschool, landscaping and new carpeting. | Fundraising Report from Becky Baker |
| **Volunteer Coordinator Report** | Report: Volunteer Coordinator – Update (Jennifer)<br>• Sara Wendler has volunteered to be the spirit wear chair<br>• Volunteer meeting September 24th<br>• Would like to do more for teacher appreciation and may be a request for an increase in budget. | Volunteer Coordinator Report from Jen Tracey. |

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| **Update from Committees** | Written summaries were sent by email to LC members in advance of the meeting and no further discussion was required. | |
| **Executive Session** | No executive session was requested. | |
| **Closing Prayer and Adjournment** | Father Pins led a closing prayer. There was no other new business to discuss so the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 pm. | **The next Leadership Council Meeting is scheduled for October 8th, 2026 at 6:30 pm.** |