

**Independence Charter School  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
June 21, 2010 7:00 pm**

**Board Members Present:** Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Rosina Miller, Kristin Nocco, Eli Lesser, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern

**Board Member(s) Absent:** Becky Baehr, Pam Prell

**Others Present:** Jurate Krokys, CEO; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Gerald (Jerry) Santilli, Santilli and Thomson; Michael Farrell, William Loskoch & Kelly Nelms, teachers; Claudia Lee, Marcie Lichtman-Lentz, Maria Palladino, Jose Ramirez, Vince Romano, Tara Ryans, parents; Robin Kohles, parent & Owner's Rep; Mary Fitzpatrick, Naomi Wyatt and Dana Twyman, prospective Board members.

**I. Call to Order**

**Rona** called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the May meeting were approved unanimously. Rona announced that ICS's charter has been renewed for another five years and that ICS has been given 38 additional student seats. The news was received with a round of applause.

**III. CEO Report**

Jurate announced that 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will have Global Art next year, instead of the type of art they've had for the past several years. Global Art will focus primarily on drumming. Class will be held in the room next to the cafeteria. She also announced that we will be purchasing additional mobile computer labs; Arabic class will be held in the current stationary lab. The computers from that room will be deployed to classrooms. As many teachers have requested, over the summer many of the movable partitions between classrooms will be covered over to provide more soundproofing. This will mean that many will not longer be able to be opened.

Jurate handed out information regarding responses from the recent Parent Survey. Concerns included: communications, administration/parent/teacher relationships, curricula, transition from lower to middle school and gifted/after school programming. Jurate noted that the after school priority for ICS is to provide needed tutoring. Once that is completed, clubs will be formed. She added that ICS clubs are not intended to replace after school programs. Jurate stated that the administrative staff will be meeting in July and that by the August Board meeting, she will have a response to the concerns from the parent survey. Kristin stated that the Board will need to decide what it wants to address and what information will be addressed by administrative. She asked when the information will be disseminated to parents. Jurate stated that will start with the summer mailing.

Rona asked Elsie to give an update on the Family Connections Task Force. Elsie reported that there have been several different group meetings where participants have discussed what helps them connect to ICS and what hinders that connection. Responses have included that there is variation in communication from individual teachers (in writing, e-mail and/or phone) and in class-wide events. She noted that there were positive responses to getting information from lots of media. There were negative responses regarding the unpredictable response time from ICS staff, as well as some confusion regarding to whom to talk about different issues. In addition, there were

concerns about the ICS volunteer system being unsystematic and some families not knowing each other and not disseminating key information to all families.

Elsie noted that teachers agreed that there are some communication issues, but cautioned that parents also need to know the limits of how frequently teachers can send e-mail messages, etc. Elsie reported that the task force brought a proposal to Jurate and Stephanie and had a great response and that there is a plan to implement changes over the next 12 months as outlined in the CEO report. A volunteer coordinator position has been added to the budget. In addition the Board will take on creating a family-staff communications policy through the Human Resources and Policy committees. There will also be discussion about possibly creating a communications plan for ICS.

Elsie noted that other items will most likely be addressed during the Middle States Accreditation process. Jurate added that because of the goals, ICS was able to create the volunteer coordinator position and that staff person will transition into the new position over the summer. She brings good experience to this area and will help with parent partnerships. Kristin asked if Jurate will be communicating the survey results to teachers; Jurate stated that she will be including this when she speaks to the teachers on Wednesday. Kristin asked Rona if this information will be given to all committee members; Rona said it will be. Rona asked whether the new person is bilingual; Jurate stated we were not able to find a bilingual person with the skill set needed for the position. Pedro asked who will handle calls related to an academic problem. Jurate stated that ICS will be vigilant about disseminating information about who to contact for different concerns. Jurate also noted that sometimes there are also communications problems because parents do not respond to calls and notes from ICS staff. Pedro asked whether PTA officers represent all grades; Jurate replied that there is no plan for that. Kristin added that the PTA does have a Middle School parent sub-group. Elsie stated that although the PTA does fundraising, it is also becoming more of a platform for parent concerns. Elsie noted that this new position will help figure out what the best avenue is to voice concerns. Pedro said it is important to get the parents at each grade level to build a strong group. Jurate noted that zoned group meetings have worked well and that ICS is also looking into the possibility of teachers visiting homes, taking into account safety concerns. Rona thanked Elsie, Kristin, Jurate, Stephanie and all staff involved, noting this is an artifact of our growth and it's great that it's solvable.

Stephanie reported on the raw PSSA results, noting that these are unofficial. She reported that the scores look good and appear to show pretty significant growth, especially in math. She noted that reading scores are not as high as we would like and that is a national trend. She clarified that we need to look at how each student is growing---not just groups. In reading, the group of students with IEPs stayed about the same over the last few years. She added that the lowest scores seem to be 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders, who are new to PSSA testing. More in-depth analysis will be done over the summer. Rona asked Stephanie to come back in August to share more. Stephanie stated that over the summer work will be done on student assessment and student profiles that will help inform instruction. Stephanie and Rona both noted that we need to decide what information we want to track to see how we're achieving from year-to-year. Pedro stated that we need benchmarks for those scoring below basic, since there are so few students in that category it should be easy to quantify. Stephanie replied that those are students we track for tutoring, be that we need to do some specific analysis. Pedro stated it's important that we are checking progress throughout the year. Elsie asked what ICS is doing to address the achievement gap. She also asked how ICS's goals mesh with what's being tested on PSSAs and what our plan for strategies is for kids on either side of the bell curve. Eli also suggested tracking students out through high school and college. Kristin asked what tools ICS can give parents to help their kids. Rona also stated we need to determine how we measure global citizenship. Stephanie stated the Asia Society

may also include us in a pilot project about that. Jurate said we also have anecdotal data, such as content of student speeches, field trips such as to Heifer International, teacher observers, etc. Pedro asked about the reading scores. Stephanie replied that we want to be stronger and that over the last two years we've taken measures to help improve on reading---changing our younger grade reading program, using the 100 Book Challenge, etc. and that we now need to wait to see if we have positive results. Jurate stated that we could "teach to the test," but that studies show that when kids take SATs, they are usually average. She added that unlike a lot of schools, we do not have a middle school dip. Rona stated that we want to capture something that's not on the PSSAs, but we also need to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Rosina moved the motion to recognize Nancy Hionides; Eli seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Jurate invited the Board to tomorrow's party for Nancy. Rona noted that the parent survey results concluded that the ICS front office is a warm, inviting place.

#### **IV. Public Comment Period**

**Tara Ryans (parent):** Ms. Ryans stated she feels ICS needs to look at supports given to sub groups, looking at truancy, etc as they affect academic progress. She voiced concerns about bus policy and non-instructional support for things like emotional and medical needs, not just for things like language. She stated that she has three children at ICS and that each has had at least one behavioral concern on the bus and that she doesn't feel there is much support. She stated that if there are a lot of behavioral concerns about one or two buses, then ICS should look at the data and work on social skills building with those children. In addition she feels parents need to be involved with developing meaningful consequences so parents can support and follow through. She noted that on one day her son returned home with a gash on his head and that she hadn't received any phone call and her son had not received any first aid. She recounted another time when she found one of her children curled up on the floor during a school-wide event, with no one attending to her. She pointed out the incidents like these could be huge liability issues. She said that some responses from staff have been insulting, with staff saying things like, "I wouldn't use the bus, I'd pay to park" while not understanding that some parents do not have that economic option.

**Claudia Lee (parent):** Ms. Lee stated that she came to the Board in February 2010 regarding the middle school zero tolerance late grading policy and has not received any response. She also stated that a week before school ended, she received a truancy report, even though she had sent in eight (8) letters regarding the reason her child would be absent from school for several days. She stated that she has gone to the Principal and to the teachers and is now coming to the Board. She stated her concern is that the zero tolerance policy is harsh and unfair and doesn't make sense and that she won't accept this happening to her child. She said the teacher told her that her child was given the opportunity to make up the missed work. Ms. Lee stated that her child's friends didn't have class notes left and that her child's getting a "C" is going to hamper her chances to get into a good school. She stated she is discouraged and feels this is personal, noting her child was given four zeros in one class on the same day and that she is requesting an explanation. She noted that although her family is moving, she would have transferred her child anyway and that she is noting as the reason for transfer: discrimination. She stated that she is a teacher and that it is not okay to have a zero tolerance policy that is not in the handbook. Rona summarized that Ms. Lee's main concerns are 1) the zero tolerance policy and 2) excused absences.

**Jose Ramirez (parent):** Mr. Ramirez stated that ICS teachers are normalizing grades and that doesn't make sense. He stated that the grading needs to stay consistent---if

classwork is worth 30%, it needs to stay that way. He added that some teachers are changing in mid-stream.

## V. Non-Board Committee Reports

**PTA report:** No report

**Teachers Report:** William thanked Kelly for all her hard work and noted that Kelly is moving to India, where she will be teaching second grade.

**Development Report:** A written report was circulated. Leonora reported that 33 students will be attending Al-Bustan Arabic camp, which will be funded by the FLAP grant. She stated she is working on several marketing initiatives, including the annual report and an updated dvd.

**Construction Report:** Rona moved the resolution regarding the gate; Pedro seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## VI. Committee Reports

**HR Committee:** Rona reported that the HR Committee is working on updating the staff manual. She also introduced the resolution for the ICS Keystone Staff Lottery Policy. Rosina moved the motion; Rona seconded. Elsie asked whether this feels transparent enough. William stated he forward a link to a rubric another school uses to make this type of determination. Rona added that this process was worked through the HR Committee to keep it transparent. Elsie asked why we would not just use seniority. It was explained that seniority alone would not necessarily meet the requirements of charter school law. The motion passed unanimously.

Rosina moved the new hire resolution; Elsie seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Curriculum:** No report.

**Policy:** No report

**Board Development:** No report.

## VII. Finance

The April financials were reviewed and approved unanimously. Pedro moved the FLAP Grant resolution; John seconded. The motion was passed unanimously. Rona moved the SAP motion; Pedro seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Pedro moved the Dolfinger-McMahon motion, explaining that we were unsuccessful at getting the full grant we requested, but that we were given a \$2,000 donation; John seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The proposed 2010-2011 budget was reviewed. It was noted that the Finance Committee is recommending its passage. Discussion ensued regarding the additional seats that were granted to ICS for the coming school year. There was some concern voiced about the assimilating that many new students in one school year. Several teachers noted that this is something that teachers are used to doing. It was noted that a lot of these students are already here, but ICS had only been getting paid for having 732. It was agreed that there will be an orientation session for new students and their parents. The Board does not want administration to over-enroll to plan for expected attrition; it was agreed that the total student enrollment will not exceed 777 (770, plus the students who currently live in

PA counties other than Philadelphia). The budget was passed with all members voting yes.

**VIII. Issues for Discussion/Board Education**

Rona reported that ICS was recognized as a member of School That Can at the recent conference in New Jersey. She also announced that although Founders Becky and Rosina are leaving the Board after tonight's meeting, they will both be serving on the Board Advisory Council, which will be available for mentoring new Board members and being a sounding board. One of the first activities of the Council will be planning the new Board member orientation. Rona thanked Rosina and Becky (in absentia) for their many years of service to ICS. The issue of possibly getting a consultant to the board will be discussed at another time.

Rosina moved to elect officers for the 2010-2011 school year:

Rona Buchalter- President

Elsie Stern- Vice President

John Eagen- Treasurer

Eli Lesser- Secretary

Kristin seconded the motion. The officers were elected unanimously.

Board member nominees Dana Twyman and Naomi Wyatt were also approved unanimously. The Board member oath was administered to Dana, Naomi and Parent Board Seat member Mary Fitzpatrick. Rona noted that there will be additional members joining later this summer.

**IX. Old Business**

All old business was conducted earlier in the meeting.

**X. New Business**

None

**XI. Adjournment**

Pedro moved for adjournment; Rosina seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

**Handouts circulated at this meeting:**

Agenda

Minutes from May 2010 meeting

CEO report

April Financials

Finance Committee Minutes

Development Report

Human Resources Committee Minutes

2010-2011 Proposed Budget

Iron Studios Proposal for Gate and Fence

**Independence Charter School**

**June 21, 2010**

**Resolutions**

**ADOPTED**

## **April Disbursements**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of April 2010 in the amount of \$184,818.92 as presented to the Board.

## **FLAP Grant**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School accept the Federal Grant: Language Assistant Program Grant for LAIC: Learning Arabic in context for the years 2010-2013 for a total grant of \$597,328.00

## **2010-2011 Budget**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School approve the operating budget for the school year 2010-2011, which includes a total enrollment not to exceed 777 students at any point during the school year. And be it further resolved that the additional revenue be designated for unforeseen contingencies.

## **Gate/Fence Work**

Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees resolves to approve the purchase of a design to build the Beth Jacquot Memorial gate and fence for the Lombard Street entrance to the playground, to be executed by Warren Holzman of Iron Studios for a total cost not to exceed \$18,800.

## **SAP Grant**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School accept a \$10,000.00 grant from SAP for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) programming at ICS.

## **Dolfinger-McMahon Donation**

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School accept the \$2,000.00 unrestricted donation from the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation.

## **ICS Keystone Staff Lottery Policy**

Whereas the Independence Charter School (ICS) Board of Trustees recognizes that student success in academic and social development depends in large part on recruitment and retention of highly qualified, enthusiastic and committed teaching and support staff;

Whereas the Board of Trustees acknowledges that Independence Charter School staff often go above and beyond their prescribed responsibilities in performing their roles;

Whereas the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees desires to provide the most supportive work environment possible for its staff;

Whereas Independence Charter School holds an annual student lottery to accept students into and to create waiting lists for its kindergarten through eighth grade classes for the following school year;

Whereas due to the high number of applications received through the annual lottery process, most student applicants are not selected for admission to ICS; and

Whereas 24 P.S. §17-1723-A permits a charter school to give preference in enrollment to a child of a parent who has actively participated in the development of the charter school, such a staff member who meets that criteria would be designated as an "ICS Keystone Staff Member."

Therefore, the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby resolves to create the designation of ICS Keystone Staff Member pursuant to the following guidelines and policy criteria:

Section 1.     **Eligibility:** The following ICS staff persons will be eligible for designation as an ICS Keystone Staff Member:

- 1.1 The staff person has worked 2 school years or more at ICS as a full-time employee, or the equivalent; and
- 1.2 The staff person has received satisfactory end-of-year evaluation ratings for at least two consecutive years, and
- 1.3 The staff person has contributed to the development of ICS in ways that are not included in the relevant job description, such as volunteering to serve on committees, demonstrating leadership, working on special projects, bringing new resources to the school and advancing the mission and vision of ICS. (This list is not exhaustive, but is merely illustrative).

Section 2.     **Designation:** Once eligible, an ICS staff person may be designated an ICS Keystone Staff Member by:

- 2.1 Submitting to the Board of Trustees an application setting forth the staff member's eligibility for designation as an ICS Keystone Staff Member; and
- 2.2 The Board of Trustees adopts a resolution designating the staff person an ICS Keystone Staff Member.
- 2.3 ICS Administration shall create forms for use in submitting an application for Keystone Staff Member Status to the Board of Trustees.

Section 3.     **Enrollment Preference:** School age children of staff persons designated as ICS Keystone Staff Members may receive enrollment preference by complying with the below requirements:

- 3.1 The child's / student's application must be submitted by the lottery deadline corresponding to the year of desired admission;
- 3.2 The staff person must be a designated ICS Keystone Staff Member at the time the application is made;
- 3.3 The ICS Keystone Staff Member is employed and in good standing at ICS at the time of the lottery; and
- 3.4 The ICS Keystone Staff Member is employed and in good standing at ICS at the time the child begins enrollment at ICS.

Section 4.     **Enrollment:** The children of ICS Keystone Staff Members would be enrolled as follows:

- 4.1 Children whose applications are timely submitted for kindergarten will be accepted at ICS for kindergarten.
- 4.2 Children whose applications are timely submitted for 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade will be placed on the waiting list after any siblings of current ICS students who are on the waiting list. See the Lottery Policy for details on the maintenance and preference of children on the waiting list.
- 4.3 The ICS Lottery Policy will be amended, prior to the holding of the lottery for admission to ICS in the 2011-2012 school year, to reflect the provisions of this policy.

Section 5.     Nothing in this policy shall prohibit any staff person from submitting an application for admission of a child to ICS at any time without the staff member having Keystone Staff Member status.

Section 6.     For the 2010-2011 school year only, staff members who have completed three years of full-time employment at ICS, and who meet the requirements of Section 1 (regarding Eligibility) may submit an application, in accordance with Section 2

(regarding Designation) to the Board of Trustees for Keystone Staff Member Status in the summer of 2010. The Board of Trustees will vote on applications received pursuant to this section at the July 2010 meeting.

### **2010-2011 Board Meeting Calendar**

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees resolves to approve the following meeting calendar for 2010-2011:

July 2010- no meeting

August 11, 2010

September 8, 2010

October 13, 2010

November 10, 2010

December 8, 2010

January 12, 2011

February 9, 2011

March 9, 2011

April 13, 2011

May 11, 2011

June 8, 2011

### **2010-2011 New Hires**

Be it resolved that the following individuals be offered full time positions as listed for the 2010-2011 school year under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract:

Rachel Butler: Kindergarten

Anthony Martinez: 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

Jennifer Franks Ahagotu: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

Jennifer Jutzi: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

Alison Stumacher: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Meg Guerreiro: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts

Lacey Boland: Middle School English Language Arts

Katharine Dean: Middle School Social Studies

Darlene Porter: Middle School Math

Kate Marquez: Spanish FLES (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Brian Flynt: Special Education

Nicholas Vacca: Multi-Prep (Computer Science, etc)

Julie Fialkow: Middle School Counselor

### **Nancy Hionides Commendation**

Whereas be it resolved that Nancy Hionides, having served the students, parents, and staff of Independence Charter School for over 8 years as the Senior Secretary is now retiring in June 2010,

And be it further resolved that the service Nancy has provided has been executed with excellence and commitment to the betterment of the school and the quality of life for staff, students and parents,

Now then be it resolved that Nancy Hionides be commended for her excellent service which has always gone above and beyond,

And be it further resolved that a plaque commemorating this commendation be hung in the "hall of fame" so that this commemoration may be celebrated on an on-going basis.

**Resolutions  
DEFEATED  
None  
Resolutions  
TABLED  
None**

