

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2011 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Mary Fitzpatrick, Eli Lesser (via Skype), Fran Melmed, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez (via Skype), Elsie Stern, Dana Twyman Naomi Wyatt

Board Member(s) Absent: Derrick Johnson

Others Present: Jerry Santilli, Business Manager; Jurate Krokys, CEO; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Shavon Norris, Teacher Representative; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Todd Lentz, Ellen Pannell, Susan Segal, Felicia Sarner, Donna Sharer, Josephine Hing, Gloria Shabazz, Annette Earling (PTA rep), parents; William Loskoch, teacher

I. Call to Order

Rona called the meeting to order at 7:20p.m. and noted the agenda order will be changed; public comment will come before the CEO report.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the April meeting were approved unanimously with the following changes:

- the full names of the board consultants are Cassie Solomon and Harris Sokoloff.
- the budget breakfast that Pedro, Rona and Pam attended was hosted by EPLC (Education Policy and Leadership Center).
- Susan Gobreski is an ICS parent, and is also the Director of Education Voters PA.

III. Public Comment Period

Donna Sharer (Parent) Ms. Sharer circulated a full draft of her comments. She noted that she is a public school teacher and a member of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers union. She stated that on page 41 of the Parent-Student handbook, it talks about global citizenship and being able to share your opinion; she stated that she doesn't feel that is happening. She stated that she respects longevity in the classroom and is concerned that the ICS Director job requirements do not include having at least five years of classroom teaching experience. She added that she feels ICS teachers need collective bargaining.

Rona encouraged people to speak and noted that the Board reads all e-mails, letters, etc., adding that this keeps ICS to a high standard. She noted that staffing is not a Board issue; the Board is focused on the long-term good of the school, stability of the school as a whole, etc. and that the CEO and administration are hired to handle things such as staffing. She stated there is a Board Human Resources committee and teachers do participate on the committee. The Board members are not the ones making staffing decisions, but are happy to hear comments, but the comments should be directed to the CEO.

Ellen Pannell (Parent) Ms. Pannell stated that she is frustrated about the decision regarding teacher Andrea Yanez and asked whether the Board is sure that school policy was followed. She stated she sees no difference in the way she runs her classroom now,

then when her other child had her as a teacher. She stated that Andrea consistently sends home Monday memos. She stated that she doesn't see how 6 months of negative evaluations can take the place of 6 years of excellence. She noted that we all make mistakes and asked the Board to make things right.

Tina Kluetmeirer (Parent) Ms. Kluetmeirer stated that she feels the letter sent to parents regarding the teacher evaluation process raised more questions than answers and asked who is involved in making the evaluation process. She noted that past Board minutes state this is a new process and that teachers wanted better communication. She stated that a red flag should be raised when someone gets good evaluations for years and then has a decision like this by the same administration who gave the teacher good evaluations. She stated that this decision may have been based on incomplete information. She noted that the bylaws state the Board is involved in staffing. She stated that both her children have new teachers this year and they're great, but that there have been five teacher changes this year and that parents don't know why those changes happened. She stated the cost of losing an experienced teacher like Maestra Andrea is very high and that it seems to contradict ICS's global education goals.

Josephine Hing (Parent) Ms Hing stated that ICS is a close community, but that she feels it's not the same community anymore. She stated that she always comes to the Silent Auction and that this year she could count the number of teachers on one hand and asked if that was because of what's happening this year. She added that she wants her kids to feel safe and nurtured.

William Loskoch (Teacher) Teacher William stated that he has been offered a leadership role in New York City. He thanked ICS for his four years at ICS, which have resulted in a lot of professional growth. He thanked the Board for their work involving things such as the new salary scale, Middle States Accreditation, the Keystone Staff policy, expanded student enrollment and the new leadership model. He noted those things show the Board is willing to take on risks.

Rona noted that Jurate will also make some comments today:

Jurate stated that she knows everyone here and that the buck stops with her, although there are many people involved in the process. She stated that the Board plays a key role and that the Board has been a huge supporter of teachers since day one. She noted that it's difficult to answer questions about personnel decisions, since legally she cannot do that without the permission from the employee. She noted that she has heard a lot of rumors that are not at all what the issues are---for example, she stated she's heard a rumor that this decision had something to do with citizenship, which is absolutely not the case. She noted that from a personal aspect, when she decided to go into leadership in education, she said she would never do it unless she could do the best for students and teachers. She stated she thinks this school is an amazing place for people to express discontent and if an avenue doesn't exist, you can create it. The same is with teacher suggestions, such as changing the evaluation process----a process with which the teachers were involved. She noted that part of what she hears parents saying are things about endearing qualities of a teacher, which all parents want. However, she noted that ICS is seeking to become an even better school and that we need to make sure the best teaching is happening and that this is part of the growth process. She stated that we all have to come along with that to do the best for the kids. She stated there are many different reasons for teachers not returning and that there are a very small number of people to whom contracts are not being offered for the next year. She stated that the Board, of

course, can determine if there is not adequate proof for these decisions. She added that for those who say morale is very low, she encourages them to come and visit and talk to many staff and see the amazing things that are happening. She noted the decision was made based on things that are very, very important and that she stands on her own integrity. She noted that in regard to Ms. Sharer's comment regarding Ms. Sharer's feeling that ICS needs a union, Jurate feels we need to discuss teacher performance.

Rona noted that Jurate has agreed to lead a discussion with parents to discuss the general issue of the teacher evaluation process, but will of course be keeping confidentiality about any specific situations.

IV. CEO Report

Jurate reported that ICS's Reading Olympics group returned today with a blue ribbon and that we also have a group going to the International Odyssey of the Mind competition in Baltimore this month. She stated that we are in the process of interviewing prospective teachers for next year and are also in the process of considering candidates for the Lower and Middle School Director positions, noting that this new model came out of a working group. John asked whether June 1st is still a target hiring date for the Directors; Jurate stated she feels we're working well with that timeline.

Rona moved the Middle States Accreditation (MSA) goals and policy issues to now, so that Eli (in Copenhagen) can sign off (since it's much later there). Pam moved the MSA goals motion; John seconded. Eli stated he'd like the Board to officially endorse these goals. He noted that we'll meet a couple times each year to see where we are in meeting the goals, as well as to determine what adjustments need to be made. Pam noted the matrix makes it very easy to follow. The motion passed unanimously. Rona announced that Dana will be organizing the Board's strategic planning process over the summer.

Elsie moved the admissions policy motion; Naomi seconded. Eli explained that we have had a kind of piecemeal process. He noted we're proud of our open student lottery and simply wanted to document the steps in the process; this can be used year after year. Rona asked about the section that talks about Board lottery issues, specifically the "conclusion" part and asked whether we should have that part in the resolution. Elsie stated that for clarity, we may just want to include the information regarding Founders' children. Pam stated we could also add that currently there is no lottery preference for Board members. Elsie moved a friendly amendment to strike the first paragraph of the conclusion and to add that "Consistent with Act 22, children of Founders are entitled to lottery preference and that Founders include those individuals currently listed in the by-laws, section 3.1 and those individuals named as Founders since the inception of the school. This list includes all individuals who hold, or have held, Founder seats on the Board of Trustees since the school's inception." John seconded. The amended motion passed unanimously.

VI. Non-BOT Committee Reports

PTA: Rona clarified that no PTA report was circulated. Annette Earling reported that the Silent Auction was a huge success; there's no official financial tally yet. She thanked the Board for their basket. She stated the PTA would like to know what they can do to help make the teacher contract information more transparent. Rona asked Annette to take back the information to the PTA that Jurate is willing to have a meeting with parents to discuss the process. She noted that new officers were elected and that Maureen Eagen is the new PTA President.

VII. BOT Committee Reports

Board Governance/Development: No report was circulated. **Elsie** reported that the committee has scheduled meetings with four prospective new Board members with hopes of welcoming new members at the July meeting. She noted that new officers will be installed in June. She stated the committee is moving forward working with Cassie Solomon and Harris Sokoloff (consultants) regarding the composition of the Board. Pam noted we may need to have a bylaws change if we want to move to twelve people on the Board. Rona noted we have a few other housekeeping bylaw changes that are also needed and that we will also be RACI (noting who will be **R**esponsible **A**ccountable **C**onsulted **I**nformed) Board committee tasks.

V. Finance/Business

Jerry noted there are several budget adjustments (development, Ecuador, IDEA Stimulus Funds). He noted that all federal stimulus money needs to be spent by the end of September 2011. He stated that the School District subsidy will come in about \$25,000 higher than anticipated due to more students with special education services; this will help cover the extra personnel expenses due to staff on medical leave.

He stated that the cash flow continues to be strong and that we have very few liabilities. He noted that in the budget-to-actual there will be a shortfall in undesignated funds. He stated that the PSERS (employee retirement system) variance is a timing issue, so will go away. He noted that we'll be examining each line item before the end of the fiscal year. He stated there are no unusual disbursements, except the quarterly PSERS payment. He noted that Food Services now has a slight surplus and that lunch participation is up. Fran asked why there were two Aetna bills; Jerry said Aetna is not good about sending bills on time. John asked whether we have information on the medical insurance increases; Jurate stated our benefits consultant has given us some preliminary numbers and hopes to have final numbers in the next week or so. Rona noted that if the School District opens the union contract and changes health benefits, we could also do that.

Naomi moved the disbursement resolution; John seconded. The motion passed unanimously. It was agreed that a budget adjustment resolution will be considered at the June meeting.

VIII. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

IX. New Business

John noted that the parent involvement on the Facilities Committee has been fantastic. The committee has talked about expansion for a gym, locker room, etc for a total of six million dollars. He noted that the Finance Committee decided we cannot afford that and it was agreed that we should wait to do this until we have the funds to do it right. John clarified that we're talking about adding on space on our current property. He noted that we need to hire a consultant to find out whether we can get outside funding (i.e., naming rights, etc). John asked for suggestions as to who to consider as a consultant. Pedro noted that Facilities and Community Relations need to meet soon. Jurate stated that some funders may want to contribute to something bigger (i.e., a think tank, etc). Naomi said exercise, etc is such a hot topic (Whoopi Goldberg, etc). Rona said that some chunk of the reserve could be used, but wouldn't want to use it all; we'd want to be able to have at

least half of the amount raised. Jurate also noted we'd need to work out construction time (i.e., impact on students, etc).

Rona asked Dana to discuss the topic of possibly accepting ten more students. Dana noted she forwarded questions to Jurate; Jurate noted she has asked Principal Stephanie to take responsibility for gathering the required information. Jurate noted that if we do take ten more students, at least half would be brought into the immersion program. This year we did this and added several immigrant families (native Spanish speakers), which really enhances our program. Stephanie noted that ICS is academically challenging, especially for students just entering ICS in higher grades. She added that retaining students in higher grades is never the first option; we take the age of student, maturity, parent involvement, etc into consideration. Elsie asked whether we can consider putting new students into a lower grade if they don't test well. It was explained that the only pre-admission testing we do is for Spanish fluency for the immersion program, grades 2-8. Naomi said we may want to add in as to how many new students become possible retentions. Rona noted we may want to consider having a placement test. Jurate stated we will need a decision by the June Board meeting, especially if we decide to test all incoming Middle School students. Rona noted that Stephanie will report at the June meeting. Pam suggested having an ad hoc group that meets separately. Jurate suggested the group consider the whole four-year increase plan, but that the Board could vote each year. John, Mary and Pam are interested in participating in that group with Dana.

Rona stated that Pedro sent some recommendations regarding organizing. Fran stated we need a task force to plan the next right step. Pedro suggested a "send off" rally on the morning of on the Day of the Hill; there was agreement amongst the board members.

X. Adjournment

Elsie moved for adjournment; Pam seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:49p.m.

Handouts circulated prior to this meeting:

Agenda
CEO report
Finance report
March 2011 financials

Independence Charter School

May 11, 2011

Resolutions

ADOPTED

1. March Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of March 2011 in the amount of \$378,342.34 as presented to the Board.

2. Middle States Accreditation Goals

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves the goals established by the Middle States Accreditation Steering team, as presented below:

Goal One: Global Citizenship

By the year 2018, all members of the ICS community will understand, articulate, and apply global citizenship principles adopted by ICS.

Goal Two: Student Success

By the year 2018, Independence Charter School will increase academic achievement by closing the achievement gap as determined by a number of indicators, including the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) exams, project-based assessments, student attendance and lateness.

Goal Three: Building and renewing infrastructure

By the year 2018, Independence Charter will integrate key aspects of the instructional and administrative infrastructures

Goal Four: Student and Community Life

By 2018, ICS will provide a wide range of resources and opportunities that foster a healthy and productive student lifestyle.

3. Admissions Policy

Whereas Independence Charter has made additions and clarification to the student admissions policy over the past two years; be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approves a student admission policy, which shall be:

The Independence Charter School is a public school chartered by the School District of Philadelphia; the school admission policy is designed to be fully in support of the PA Code in Act 22 of 1997 (§17-1723-A). Beyond this legal definition, the ICS community supports diversity of its students, and strives to provide access to children from across the city. The policy contained here is designed to provide complete documentation of the process and application for admission to our school.

General Application Guidelines

- Only one application can be submitted per student.
- A completed application must be submitted by the application deadline, as posted on the ICS website
- Program changes cannot be made to the application after it is submitted (i.e., asking to switch from the Immersion lottery to the Enhanced lottery).
- Except for Kindergarten, which has only one waiting list no matter which program preference a family has chosen, ICS develops separate waiting lists each year through the lottery process for each grade and program (Spanish Enhanced and Spanish Immersion).
- ICS does not carry waiting lists over from year-to-year. If a child is on the waiting list for the applied for school year and a space does not become available, the child's name does **not** automatically go on to a waiting list for subsequent years; the family must submit a new application for the next year's lottery.

Calendar

- The Board of Trustees will approve the annual lottery and admission calendar at the September or October monthly board meeting. Once approved information will be posted on the school's website and made publicly available.

- Recommendation for lottery dates and admissions will be submitted to the Board by the CEO
- Applications are available on the school's website and in the school office.
- Spanish language applications are also available.

Sibling Preference

- Sibling preference will only be given for siblings living in the same household (either all the time or through joint custody) as the current ICS (in grades K-8th) sibling AND when submitted by the lottery deadline.
- Any sibling preference applications received after the lottery deadline will be added to the end of the waiting list.
- If a child is accepted for the upcoming school year through sibling preference, but the sibling (who had been at ICS) does not return for the following school year (or in the case of siblings of an 8th grader if the 8th grade sibling left before graduating), sibling preference is no longer valid.

Requirements for Application:

- Proof of Pennsylvania residence (a utility bill, lease or mortgage statement with the name of at least one parent who is named on the child's birth certificate or custody papers and the current address). If valid proof of Pennsylvania residence is not available (as defined above), the applicant should contact ICS before coming in to submit the application to find out what other documentation would be acceptable.
- The child's birth certificate, must have the full name of at least one parent, OR original custody paperwork.
- Parent photo identification of a parent named on the child's birth certificate or court issued custody papers (i.e., driver's license, state identification card, etc).
- To submit an application for a child who lives with parent(s), but for whom one is not the parent, original court documents must be brought in for review. The applicant should contact ICS if there are further questions regarding these types of situations.
- FOR KINDERGARTEN APPLICATIONS ONLY: in addition to the copies of required documents, the ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS must also be brought in for review.
- No faxed, mailed or incomplete applications will be accepted.
- At the time of dropping off the application, the parent/guardian will be asked to complete a postcard that will later be mailed with information about the child's status. *It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to contact ICS with any address and/or phone changes.*
 - After the waiting list postcard is sent, parents/guardians will not receive further updates, unless ICS comes to the child's name on the waiting list because a space is available.

Multiple children from one household

- If a family is applying for more than one child, an application must be completed for each child and each child's name will be entered individually into the lottery.
- If one of the children's names is chosen from the lottery **for a space in the Kindergarten class**, the other child/ren from that family **who are also going into Kindergarten** will be accepted.
- For all other cases, if/when ICS gets to one family's child on the waiting list, the other sibling(s) will be moved to a sibling waiting list; however, there is no guarantee that a space will become available for those siblings (no matter the grade).

Procedures for the Student Lottery

- The lottery will take place at ICS on the date and time designated by the Board of Trustees and is open to the public.
- The name of each child for whom an application was received by the lottery deadline will be put in a box according to the grade and program (i.e., boxes will be marked "K Enhanced," "K Immersion," etc.).
- The ICS charter gives preference to Philadelphia residents; therefore, any application received by the lottery deadline for a Pennsylvania applicant who does not reside in Philadelphia will **not** be included in the lottery process. The names of those applicants will be added to the end of the waiting for their particular grades after the lottery process takes place.

Notification of acceptance and waiting list status

- Notification for incoming Kindergarteners who received a kindergarten space through the lottery will be mailed within 30 days of the end of the lottery, with registration to follow.
- **ALL 1st-8th grade applicants go onto waiting lists.** A postcard noting the child's place on the waiting lists for Kindergarteners who did not receive a space and for grades 1st-8th will be mailed out within 30 days of the completion of the lottery.

Wait List Procedures

- ICS moves through the waiting lists in numerical order, beginning with the sibling waiting list and then moving to the general list.
- If/when ICS comes to a child's name on the waiting list, ICS will contact that child's family via telephone and (if available) e-mail. ***It is the families' responsibility to keep ICS informed of updated contact information.***
- If a child is accepted from the waiting list for a space at ICS and that child has another sibling on an ICS waiting list (who meets the ICS sibling preference policy), that sibling will be moved to the sibling waiting list.

- If the family that is called does not respond to ICS within 5 business days the next name is called.
- Students called from any of the ICS Spanish Immersion waiting lists for grades 1st-8th will be tested to determine if the child has the Spanish skills necessary for him/her to fully participate in the Spanish Immersion program. If the child is not able to perform at an acceptable level, s/he will not be able to enroll at ICS.
- When ICS contacts a family from the waiting list and is informed that the child is either being retained in his/her current grade or being promoted two grades (instead of one), the child will be moved to the top of the non-sibling waiting list for the “new” grade, but there will not be a guarantee that ICS will be able to offer the child a space in that grade.

Admissions for Founding Members of the Board of Trustees

Consistent with Act 22, children of Founders are entitled to lottery preference and that Founders include those individuals currently listed in the by-laws, section 3.1 and those individuals named as Founders since the inception of the school. This list includes all individuals who hold, or have held, Founder seats on the Board of Trustees since the school’s inception.

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:

ARTICLE I SECTION 1. ELIGIBILITY: THE FOLLOWING ICS STAFF PERSONS WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR DESIGNATION AS AN ICS KEYSTONE STAFF MEMBER:

- A. **1.1 The staff person has worked 2 school years or more at ICS as a full-time employee, or the equivalent; and**
- B. **1.2 The staff person has received satisfactory end-of-year evaluation ratings for at least two consecutive years, and**
- C. **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).**

ARTICLE II SECTION 2. DESIGNATION: ONCE ELIGIBLE, AN ICS STAFF PERSON MAY BE DESIGNATED AN ICS KEYSTONE STAFF MEMBER BY:

- A. **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**
 - B. **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.

ARTICLE III 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:

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

ARTICLE IV SECTION 4. ENROLLMENT: THE CHILDREN OF ICS KEYSTONE STAFF MEMBERS WOULD BE ENROLLED AS FOLLOWS:

- A. **4.1 Children whose applications are timely submitted for kindergarten will be accepted at ICS for kindergarten.**
- B. **4.2 Children whose applications are timely submitted for 1st-8th 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.**

- C. **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.**

ARTICLE V 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.

ARTICLE VI 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.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED**