

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2011 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Lauren Ayala, Rona Buchalter, Rebecca Clothey, John Eagen, Mary Fitzpatrick, Susanna Greenberg, Derrick Johnson, Eli Lesser, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern, Dana Twyman

Board Member(s) Absent: Gloria Shabazz, Naomi Wyatt

Others Present: Jerry Santilli, Business Manager; Jurate Krokys, CEO; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Amy Leigh, Teacher Representative; Odamis Fernandez-Sheinbaum, Student Achievement & Testing Coordinator; Maureen Eagen, PTA Representative; Dana Spadotto, teacher; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant

I. Call to Order

Eli called the meeting to order at 7:04p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October meeting were approved; Rona abstained from voting.

III. CEO Report

Jurate reported that tours for prospective parents have begun for the year and we are now accepting applications for the 2012-2013 student lottery. She noted that we now typically have over 900 students on our waiting lists for this current school year. She added that ICS's average student attendance is 98%. Jurate said that all high school applications have been submitted. Eli asked Jurate to get a list of colleges where the students from our first graduating class are attending, as well as the number of those students who are not attending college. Jurate and Amy agreed to work on that list.

Jurate noted that ticket sales and sponsors are coming in daily for the November 17th anniversary event, which will include performances by 7th and 8th grade students. Jurate will circulate the draft agenda later this week.

Eli asked that Jurate plan to speak to charter school accountability, as well as plans for community forums. Rona asked Jurate to speak to the facilities discussion mentioned in the CEO report. Jurate stated that Eli had asked the Facilities Committee to give a recommendation soon. She reported that several community members contacted Jurate to find out whether ICS might again be interested in purchasing the Royal Theatre. In addition, Jurate had a conversation with Greg McKenna, along with Ramzy and teacher/parent Lance Lukasiak, and parent Ron Eldridge. It appears we could be eligible for a \$5 million bond if we decided to add an addition; that would, however, required that we add more students to our enrollment. Mr. McKenna suggested starting a high school. Jurate stated the committee does not have a recommendation at this time and that the External Relations Committee will continue the discussion later this month. Eli stated that we would need an investor to move forward on this.

Jurate asked Odamis to review the PSSA summary. At a later Board meeting, Odamis will talk about the progress students are showing using Achieve 3000. Odamis noted that ICS students have consistently showed phenomenal growth and are sustaining that growth and that our seventh graders have been consistently showing substantial growth. He stated that ICS plans to look at other charter schools to see what methods they are

using to close achievement gaps. Odamis stated that in comparing scores by students in the Enhanced program to the Immersion program, students in the Immersion program consistently score higher. Jurate noted that the difference between these students in the two programs seem to be partly attributed to socio-economic status and that in Immersion we tend to have less students with special education services and less minority students. Eli asked if we are doing enough to educate parents about the programs. Jurate stated that we do try to educate prospective parents. She noted that we are now seeing more and more racial diversity in the Immersion program. Eli noted that we also now have more diversity in the Enhanced program; Jurate stated that is more due to the waiting list and families wanting to get into ICS. Lauren stated she feels we are promoting global education to the community, but there seems to be a significant disconnect. She suggests that ICS parents participate in the tours, so parents can hear directly from parents. Eli stated he feels we need to talk more about the Enhanced program. Elsie stated this is the part of our program that pains her the most. She stated that having a fully integrated school needs to be part of our strategic plan. Amy said the students spend a lot of time in blended settings, allowing students to work with each other. Rona stated it looks like the achievement gap is growing, when you look at the grade and not specific students over time. Jurate stated that another aspect is an increase in the number of students with special education needs, both new students and current students who are identified as needing special education services. She added that we have also had an increase in English Language Learner (ELL) students. Odamis noted that we tend to lose a handful of mostly Immersion students to Masterman in fifth grade and tend to replace those students with ELL students or students who have not tested as strongly as those students who leave ICS for Masterman. Lauren asked whether ELL students have to take the same standardized tests; Odamis stated that if they've been in an English program school for less than one academic year, they do not have to take the standard tests. If the student has been in an English program school for less than three academic years, they can take a test in their native language. However, Pennsylvania only offers the test in English and Spanish. John asked about the fifth grade dip in scores. Odamis stated the stated has said that since there seems to be a fifth grade dip across the state, ICS needs to take that into account when looking at ICS student performance. Odamis noted the AYP determination is based on a growth model. Odamis added that there is a generally accepted Confidence Interval (CI) of 95%; it takes into account that when you're testing students, there's always going to be some type of statistical anomaly. Elsie said that when Principal Stephanie gave a presentation to the Board last year, the growth curve of the advanced students seemed to flatten. Elsie asked if that has continued. Odamis said we are moving our advanced students and that teachers continue to get extra professional development on differentiation in instruction. Eli stated he is not thrilled about the numbers and feels we have flat-lined, especially in reading. He stated that if we want to be the best school in the city, we need to show real growth and suggested we may need to find another measure. Jurate stated she thinks that this needs to be a big strategic planning discussion for the Board. Jurate stated that research shows that when students are taught to take tests, they can improve scores, but those skills do not translate well. Jurate added that 95% of our students get into top high schools. Dana agreed that ICS does not focus on test-prep and we have integrity about our lottery process, which means we are a true reflection of the city. Dana stated that we'll always have students whose abilities are not reflected on standardized tests and that families value what ICS offers, which is why we have so many students on the waiting list. Elsie noted that the 70%+ shows a tremendous amount of work on the part of our teachers. Eli stated he wants to find other ways to tap our brilliant faculty and administration to come up with a different approach. Pedro stated he's been surprised that we haven't been able to do better in reading on the standardized tests. Eli noted that is the school's job to come to the Board to tell them what they need in order to enact the plan. Pedro said the Board can decide at what level they want the students to be reading. Rebecca noted that a goal is different from telling

the staff how to do that. Jurate stated that it is good to have high goals, but you need to be mindful of what kind of pressure you're creating. Dana noted that Odamis had shared a document at the Curriculum Committee regarding the various interventions that have been instituted to assist students; Dana will forward that document to the Board. Rona noted that as a charter school we've been experimenting with various curricula and that the school has been trying various ways to close the achievement gap. Derrick asked about Achieve 3000. Odamis stated one reason we purchased Achieve 3000 is that it's accessible from school and home.

IV. Public Comment Period

No one signed up for the public comment.

V. Non-BOT Committee Reports

PTA: Maureen noted that the PTA will be continuing to coordinate after school clubs at ICS for the rest of the year and that parents have been happy with the clubs. Having the playground on Fridays has been successful, but will end next week until the warmer weather. There will be a Friday afternoon alternative, which will be a reading activity in the library. Elsie asked if there are statistics on which students are attending clubs. Clubs are costing the PTA about \$4,000. The PTA is organizing child care for the night of the anniversary event. Maureen reported that the PTA is also thinking about only having the Silent Auction every other year. Eli suggested that PTA reps and the External Relations Committee should talk together regarding fundraising. Maureen stated the PTA would still plan a social event every year—just not an auction, because it's so labor-intensive. Jerry asked how the club instructors are being paid. Maureen stated that anyone earning more than \$600 will need to get a 1099 form; that will only be one person. Eli suggested that the PTA get a United Way identification code, since many parents or Board members may donate that way.

Teachers: Amy stated things are going well and that tomorrow will be a turnaround training professional development day. Eli asked whether many teachers are planning to attend the November 17th anniversary event. Amy said she will make another announcement at tomorrow's professional development day; Rona noted that Amy will be spearheading the annual Board member visits to the school. Rona added that these visits really give great insight into the school.

VI. BOT Committee Reports

External Relations: Derrick reported that the plans for the anniversary celebration on November 17th are going well and that so far over 140 tickets have been sold, as well as several sponsorships. He noted there is still time to sell more tickets and sponsorships. One of the goals of the committee is to coordinate fundraising events. Jurate stated there seem to be a lot of people who plan to attend, but who have not yet purchased tickets; she asked Board members to make individual contacts. Jurate noted that the sponsors each get a certain number of tickets to use; Rebecca asked whether each of the Ambassadors is bringing ten guests. Derrick stated he is working to get names to make sure of the number of guests who will be attending. Jurate noted we will be disseminating a press release. Elsie asked Derrick to send the Board a list of invitees, so they know with whom they need to follow up. Derrick noted we will not be able to take credit cards at the event, just checks and cash. Derrick stated that the partnerships between corporations and schools are becoming more evident in Philadelphia. ICS needs to think about potential corporate partnerships. Rona asked whether Derrick has any in mind; Derrick stated that he would want to target local corporations. The committee hopes to work with the Board to fundraise and will probably need to have a third party consultant train the Board members to do that.

Curriculum: Dana noted that this year the committee will primarily be focusing on the Middle States goals. The committee has started looking at the first two goals. The first is applying global citizenship goals; the team is meeting monthly and reporting out to the committee. She noted that we need to internalize the goal in order to articulate it; the plan is to have more teacher-friendly documents, etc. and that a baseline survey may be conducted. The second goal pertains to closing the achievement gap. She stated that it's been determined that about a third of the current students need some type of intervention in reading and/or math. One suggestion to assist these students is to get volunteers who are well-prepared for working with small groups of students.

Human Resources: Jurate noted that the Lower School Principal search is moving forward. Over 50 applications were received and they have now been narrowed down to seven applicants who are being invited to interviews.

Governance: Elsie stated that she is circulating a list for committee chairs to see when people are available to meet together. She noted that if anyone wants to give input on the Teacher Rep and/or Parent Rep roles, they should contact Rona in regard to the Teacher Rep and Lauren in regard to the Parent Rep.

VII. Finance/Business

John asked Jerry to review the financial reports. Jerry stated there are few variances; one is due to awaiting payments from other school districts for non-Philadelphia students. The November payment from the Philadelphia School District will reflect the corrected student allotment payment for this school year. Jerry noted that he's hopeful the anniversary event will meet some development financial goals. Derrick asked about the development line in the budget; Jerry said the amount in the budget is what the Board has committed to raising for the operating budget. Jerry stated that line 123 was due to the leak that occurred during the summer; John clarified that expenditure was approved at the last meeting. Rona asked what the positive variance on line 119 was; Jerry said that is normal for this time of year. Rona moved the disbursement resolution; Derrick seconded. The resolution passed unanimously.

John reported that we need to start a timeline for planning for the 2012-2013 budget process. He stated we're looking at 8-10% cuts. Eli noted that cuts could be as much as 12%. He said that leadership of the Board will be meeting with ICS administrators soon to plan a timeline.

John asked Jurate to give a summary of the ACTFL language program evaluation bid. Jurate stated ICS asked ACTFL to add specifics about looking at all three of our language programs (Spanish Immersion, Spanish FLES and Arabic FLES). ACTFL added an additional evaluator. The cost of the evaluation will be covered by the FLAP grant funds. Rona stated her only concern about the proposal is to be sure they're sampling all the language programs. Jurate agreed that she will follow up with ACTFL to ensure those items are clarified. John proposed a resolution: *Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees authorizes the CEO to use funds from the FLAP grant, not to exceed \$15,550 for the ACTFL language program evaluation.* Pedro seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Old Business

Old business items were covered earlier in the meeting.

IX. New Business

Eli asked Jurate to give an update on Philadelphia Charters for Excellence (PCE). Jurate noted that PCS is advocating for closing charters that aren't thriving and supporting

charters that are successful. PCE has been involved with talks with the Philadelphia school district and the Gates Foundation. Eli asked Susanna to give an update from the education policy breakfast. She stated there may be some changes to charter school law regarding conflict of interest policies and possibly changing renewals from every five to every ten years. Rona stated she's heard that it's unlikely that a new authorizing body will be formed. Rona asked whether ICS teachers have been discussing the Occupy events with students. Amy said she'll check with teachers tomorrow.

X. Adjournment

Rona moved for adjournment; John seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:07p.m.

Handouts circulated prior to this meeting:

Agenda

CEO report

PTA report

Finance Committee report

September Financials

PSSA Summary

ACTFL Proposal

**Independence Charter School
November 9, 2011
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

1. September Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of September 2011 in the amount of \$413,912.50 as presented to the Board.

2. Language Program Evaluation

Be it resolved that the ICS BOT authorizes the CEO to use funds from the FLAP grant, not to exceed \$15,550 for the ACTFL language program evaluation.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED
None**