

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting
August 18, 2004, 7:00PM**

Board Members Present: Pam Prell, Susan Gobreski, Becky Baehr, Michelle Campbell, Gary Shepherd, John Baram, Rosina Miller

Board Members Absent: Eric Cramer, William Boyd, Sean Hennessy

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CAO; Andrea Soelter, Dean of Students; Randi Ostrow, Foundations; Ramzy Andrawos, Operations Manager; Krista Pfeiffer, Board Liason; Anne Tarbox Hall, Family Support/Counselor

I. Call to Order

President Rebecca Baehr called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM

II. Reading and Review of Minutes

The minutes from the last Board meeting were circulated. No objections or modifications were made and the minutes were approved.

III. CEO Report

1. Personnel: The latter half of July was spent finalizing interviews and observations for the Gifted/Science Position. A few finalists were chosen after interviews. A couple dropped out when offered classroom teacher positions. The opportunity to observe the remaining qualified candidates occurred in July. Amanda Weinberg emerged as the excellent candidate to whom we offered the position. We have met since then, mapping out the school year for both the science and the Gifted Curriculum. Noteworthy is that we will actually have a Science Room for Gr. 1-4 (206). Children will meet once weekly with the science teacher with a science follow-up lesson by the teacher.

Part Time Assistants: Some interviewing of new assistants has occurred and we should be fully prepared by September. Interviews for lunchtime and after school positions will be ongoing the next two weeks.

The part time secretarial position slated for the coming year will be combined with the tech needs as spelled out in the EETT grant. This position becomes a full time position. The tech position will primarily be for coordinating the work of students in the "FastForward" reading support program.

We are finalizing the discussion of a custodial position for the coming year.

2. Summer Programs at ICS: The latter half of July evidenced the final weeks of summer school for the at-risk learners as well as for the Spanish Immersion programs. For the first time this included a two day mini-camp for incoming Sp. Immersion Kindergartners. The Leadership Camp in the last week of school was led by Anne Hall, our Family and Student Support person, and by Andrea Soelter, our Dean of Students. Parent response was very positive, and I am sure this will be the first of many such leadership activities. This camp was financed by SWEBS grant money.

3. Preparation for the new School Year: The new school year is upon us. July and August have been preparation months. We have worked on finalizing retentions and class assignments.

Materials that have been ordered have been arriving. Tracey Hall has been doing a marvelous job accounting for all incoming materials so that they will be ready for distribution once the teachers have returned.

We have been somewhat cramped by the delays in renovation. New furniture is arriving for the fifth floor but must be stored on the second until that move will be possible.

4. Grants: We were unsuccessful in obtaining the 21st century grant. No umbrella organizations were funded. We applied together with the Communities in Schools umbrella organization and were therefore not funded. This is unfortunate because it narrows the possibilities for our after school program. However, we will continue to search for other sources.

We did receive the EETT grant and Spencer and I traveled to a mandatory workshop on August 4th and 5th in Harrisburg. The workshop was useful in that it provided guidelines for the execution of the program, and clarified methods of accountability.

5.Safety: Safety is always a concern for us. On July 2nd, Land I visited and inspected our floor as well as our fire drill records. He told me that we were one of a very few schools in the entire city that will be receiving provisional certification. Our new Operations Manager will be in charge of overseeing

our compliance in terms of the alarms, exits and accessibility. The Dean of Students will be scheduling and executing the fire drills.

We have also developed an informational booklet about every child in each classroom that the teacher will be able to take with him/her to the dismissal area. Listed will be the adults allowed to pick up children. Therefore, if there is an unknown adult we will be able to ask for an ID.

We also look forward to working with the new bus company assigned to us: Metro Mobility. They will be visiting the morning of August 18th along with representatives of the School District. We will also have additional busses assigned to our school. This may complicate our dismissal procedures. However, we will have slightly altered dismissal schedule that may help in this matter.

We are developing floor-to-floor traveling procedures which include teacher traveling with one group and a second group accompanied by an aide.

6. Teacher Planning Days: Teachers were invited to volunteer time at the end of July to help plan various aspects of the upcoming year. We discussed a variety of issues from

Teacher Mentoring, to scheduling to use of bathrooms for students. The teachers developed a prep schedule based on a set of requirements and clearly, saved the Principal about 2.5 days of grief.

Teacher Inservices will begin August 23rd for the new teachers, being joined by veteran teachers on August 25th. First day of school is September 7th.

7. Testing Results: We have results in from the State: we have met AYP- adequate yearly progress for this year. I will be able to give details at the Board Meeting. Our details regarding PSSA's are also in finally. We average at 42%, which is 20 points below the average for the state, and about 20% above that for the city. I know, (from knowing our upcoming classes) that we will be able to score higher with our upcoming 5th graders who will take the test this coming year. We will continue to work hard to finesse the kids' preparation, and to help teacher preparation.

8. Renovation: The Operations Manager is now coordinating Renovations, of course with the support of Sean Hennessey, the Board and the Principal. As much as possible, we will have an alternate plan in place for one or two weeks of programming for the 5th and 6th graders. However, the impact of late renovation is much more widespread including the following: No site for Dance/Movement, no Counselor's office, no Operations' Manager's office, no computer lab, no 2nd special ed office, no offices for the Spanish teachers, the Teaching Interns. We will work with Landmark on the third floor for space. The classroom part is easy, harder when talking about the offices and all of the materials that those specialists will not have handy.

9. Book Reading: Maggie's American Dream by Dr. James Comer—please join us on Wednesday, September 1st at 6:30, for a discussion of this great book. If anyone needs a copy I have a few more in my office.

IV. **Treasurer's report**

Be it resolved that the ICS board of trustees approves the spending of \$142,070.43.

Susan Gobreski moves to approve the spending.

Pamela Prell seconds this motion.

Roll Call Vote

Pam Prell- aye

Susan Gobreski - aye

Becky Baehr - aye

Michelle Campbell - aye

Gary Shepherd - aye

John Baram - aye

Rosina Miller - aye

Unanimous to adopt.

Discussion

Susan Gobreski—Would it make sense for us to change our fiscal year, corresponding with the school year? **Randi Ostrow**—Not really because it would put you on a different schedule than the state, and

it might not alleviate the issues. Ramzy Andrawos and Randi Ostrow will be meeting to discuss the unresolved token issue.

Michelle Campbell moves to approve the balance sheet.

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote

Pam Prell- aye

Susan Gobreski - aye
Becky Baehr - aye
Michelle Campbell - aye
Gary Shepherd - aye
John Baram - aye
Rosina Miller - aye
Unanimous to adopt

V. Updates

A. PTA report

There will be pre-printed post cards notifying students of their class assignments and referring people to web site for supplies. They also give the important dates such as Back to School nights. PTA is organizing them so they are labeled and stamped for teachers.

B. Teacher representative report

None

C. Presentation: Neighborhood Schools Concept

Alice Heller: It is wonderful to see charter schools that work. Paul Vallas asked her for the names of 5 charter schools that work and Independence Charter was named as one of them. Ms. Heller also congratulates ICS on our PSSA scores stating it is a great baseline.

Ms. Heller will be speaking about “The neighborhood baseline concept”. This is part of a two prong bigger picture.

The first prong: the School Reform Commission, Philadelphia School District and Paul Vallas are all in support of charter schools. However, if we continue to add charter schools the School District will go bankrupt because each charter school pulls students from so many neighborhoods. The school district can not close any of their schools and is not realizing any savings. The Philadelphia School District would like to become partners with the charter schools.

- 1) Total Neighborhood Concept: in certain areas of the city there is overcrowding in the neighborhood school, if we don't have to build a school and put a charter school there it is a savings. It would mean that new charter schools would take all of the kids from their surrounding or “specified” neighborhood before the charter school would accept children from other areas.
- 2) High Schools are so large they don't work. By opening a charter High School in the neighborhood and allowing all neighborhood students to enroll before anyone else, cuts down on costs to the Philadelphia School District. The neighborhood can be used as criteria for enrollment. The Philadelphia School District is in the midst of creating charter school policy that would apply to all new charter schools. (As it stands now, Philadelphia has half of the entire states charter schools.)

There are existing charters (especially elementary) that bus kids for 2 hours a day. The Philadelphia School District is doing what part of the “charter” speaks to—grassroots, neighborhood, feeding with the community. The Philadelphia School District wants to offer the existing charter schools to take a certain percentage of kids from your neighborhood in enrollment. For ex: a charter school has 100 spaces in kindergarten for the upcoming school year and has a 45% “neighborhood set aside”. After sibling acceptance, 45 spaces are set aside for neighborhood. If you can't fill those with neighborhood (to be defined by Charter School and Philadelphia School District) students you go to the outside community. In exchange we may be asked to open a slot or two for school choice (No Child Left Behind) students.

The second prong: Center City District wants to increase the number of residences and businesses that have their home in center city. Center City traditional public schools would take a role with charter, parochial and private schools to create a collaborative concept that maintains everyone's independence. Working together we would promote school choice for parents, allowing education to remain in center city. Alice Heller also believes it is much better for kids to walk to school 3 blocks rather than ride a school bus for three hours a day.

This plan makes it practical for everyone. It will enhance and strengthen the community concept of charter schools.

Discussion

Pamela Prell—what about the other 55% of students? What are there rules? What if our enrollment already includes the 45% of kids from “the neighborhood”? **Alice Heller**—The numbers are flexible and we can make that decision together. **Susan Gobreski**—Would the plan be to create “anchor schools” in the community? **Alice Heller**—Promote this idea to parents saying that Independence Charter School wants to take students from the “neighborhood” first.

Alice Heller—we would decide together how much of the population we want to bring in from center city. If you couldn't fill those numbers with students from the neighborhood you could open enrollment to other students. Philadelphia School District would never deny complete enrollment to a charter school. **Susan Gobreski**—what about the kids from school choice? **Alice Heller**—the students would not be assigned, they would still have to apply for those open “school choice” spots. The school choice students would still have to adhere to the mission/vision and rules of the school. Philadelphia School District would be able to ask us for slots—part of the deal would be to leave a couple of slots open for the beginning of the year. The District is not asking the charter school to leave the slots open forever (the District wants us to be fully enrolled). However, for the beginning of the year the slots would be available. We all want the best for the kids and want all kids to succeed and want City wide growth. **Jurate Krokys**—school choice kids...we work hard with all of our kids and some have struggled very hard. One, two or three kids can make things very hard. Kids with litigation etc have made things very difficult. Who are those one or two or three kids who might come? What is our liability, as to AYP, etc? **Alice Heller**—These kids can be anyone...children in a low performing school...and the Philadelphia School District has to offer them choices. The bottom line is that the parent who will exercise choice is generally the parent who cares about their kid's education and wants to take their kid out of the low performing school. Parents have to have a certain amount of commitment to bring a child to the charter school, but none of us can require (As a condition of enrollment) a parent to be involved. Once the child is in the building they are the charter school's responsibility and they have to live up to our rules. **Pamela Prell**—would these students only be NCLB slots? Would they be random students for behavior problems? **Alice Heller**—only NCLB. Paul Vallas understands that there is a great need for alternative placements for behavioral problems. **Susan Gobreski**—would we have to hold one or two spots in each grade? **Heller**—no, we would sit down and decide what is needed. If you are k-8 and you graduate 100 8th graders and only have spots open in kindergarten then you don't have a spot, and there is nothing anyone can do. Independence Charter School will say which spots are open and the District will let you know if they are needed. **Pamela Prell**—the immersion program and daily FLES program make it very difficult for students to enter into the upper grades. They will not have the language background and will be very frustrated. **Alice Heller**—It is okay to make up the spots that you lose in the upper grades in the lower grades. If your school is set up such that you only enroll students in one grade and the students go through the program and you don't replace students that leave you can replace these numbers by accepting more students in the lower grades. The “school choice” kids would not be an exception to this “policy”. **Rebecca Baehr**—What is the other interest by charter schools? **Alice Heller**—Residential schools don't seem to be interested, but center city schools are showing more interest.

D. Renovation Update

The L and I inspector walked through this morning and gave the contractors the “go ahead” to close the walls. The contractors said the walls should be closed by Monday. General contractor felt that August 31st was “doable”, but could not guarantee. The sprinkler and HVAC permits are in process. The roof walkway: it is not a requirement that there be a canopy over the walkway. We also will not be placing high screens along the walkway and is not required by L and I. There was a problem with lighting in two of the classrooms and the contractors will be required to do attached lighting (6 in each room). They can't use the existing fixtures due to existing duct work. There is a meeting with Landmark tomorrow morning to discuss our using their space in the event that the 5th floor is not done in time for school.

E. Committee Report

1. Executive Renewal

Everyone should be gathering information and data. Rosina doesn't want all of the information until the application is out. Everyone should be prepared to turn in a “final” rough draft three days before the September Board meeting.

2. Human Resources

None

3. Budget Done

4. Curriculum

After looking at testing scores the committee is looking at ways to influence the curriculum. Pam and Rosina will try to get an International Baccalaureate “IBO” exploratory committee that will exist of parents and key teachers. IBO would be great IF it is what our teachers feel they need. Do we need to align

ourselves with this organization? The program is a big financial and monetary investment, bigger than the renewal process. We would need to make a decision to apply by early 2005...to apply in May 2005.

The committee asks Jurate and Krista to think about teachers to be on the committee. They also ask Susan to think of parents

5. Discipline

The possible expulsion of a child did not occur because the parent decided to withdrawal the child and move them to another school. Another parent wrote a letter of contest about a suspension on their child's record. The committee decided to keep the suspension on the child's record.

6. Legal

None

7. Policy

None

8. Technology

The committee is trying to get all of the computers up and running for school. There are at least 15 good computers and we need to look for new monitors. E-mail: the idea is to have every teacher using e-mail, instead of paper memos. This should be mandatory, not optional. Jurate states that teachers will have computers on their desks to make it easier to check their e-mail. Let's correct the technological problems and perhaps go toward web-based e-mail.

Perhaps train teachers in how to organize their information on the computer. Give teachers a template and info on how to expand.

9. Nominations

The criteria for the open Board Seats are: people with connections to the Latino community and people with fundraising experience. The committee is asking Board members to look for people to fill these needs and seats.

10. Community Relations

None

11. Fundraising

None

Discussion

The Board members who attended the planning session agreed that it is better to have fewer committees with more members.

Diversity and Development are the focus for all committees.

Executive committee will include legal and policy.

Human Resources will encompass the CEO Evaluation comm. (teacher policies will be handled in HR)

Fundraising will include a capital campaign sub committee

Community Relations will include nomination and advisory Board.

Discipline, Curriculum, Budget and Technology committees will remain unchanged.

VI. Resolutions

A. Old Business

1. Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees authorizes the following contracts related to renovations:
 - a. Removal of partition to make 5th floor lavatory compliant with the ADA: not to exceed \$500.00
 - b. Replacement of the fire alarm panel: not to exceed \$1485.00
 - c. Data wiring for the 5th floor: not to exceed \$2560
 - d. Door bells at 5th floor roof egress: not to exceed \$430.00
 - e. 2nd floor library partition: not to exceed \$2850.00
 - f. Materials and placement of roof pavers on the 5th floor exits to roof fire towers not to exceed \$17,000.00. This amount reflects the interlocking rubber pavers, labor, setup and clean up, as well as rental which will include a dumpster as well as a crane to transport the pavers onto the 5th floor.
 - g. Purchase of additional light fixtures to compensate for unforeseen obstructions in the ceiling: not to exceed \$1680.00.

Rosina Miller moves to adopt the resolution.

Gary Sheperd seconds the motion.

Discussion

Gary Sheperd asks if the pavers will be attached to the roof. **Ramzy Andrawos**—No, they will be interlocking with the structures already existing.

Unanimous to approve

B. New Business

Be it resolved that Independence Charter School Board of Trustees offer a position of full time teacher of Gifted and Science to Amanda Weinberg under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS contract.

Michelle Campbell moves to adopt the resolution.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion

Unanimous to adopt.

VII. Public Comment Period

None

VIII. Adjournment

Michelle Campbell moves to adjourn.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Unanimously accepted.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.