

Independence Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting

November 10, 2004, 6:30 PM

Board Members Present: Pam Prell, Becky Baehr, Michelle Campbell, John Baram, Eric Cramer, Sean Hennessy, Susan Gobreski, Ingrid Schafroth, David Webber, Sandra Aidar, Gary Shepard, Rosina Miller

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Andrea Soelter, Dean of Students; Randi Ostrow, Foundations; Ramzy Andrawos, Operations Manager; Krista Pfeiffer, Board Liason; Vicki Holm, PTA Liason; Michelle Coates, PTA president; Michael Lewis Sr., Parent; Albert Abel, Parent; Luther James, Parent; Sherdina James, Parent; William Boyd, Founder

I. Call to Order

President Rebecca Baehr called the meeting to order at 6:45 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

- Students:** Currently, we have 509 students on roll. Our goal is to hit 512 by next month. We have recently enrolled a few students; however we also lost a couple of students: two went to the Hershey School, one we lost due to transportation. Our K-3 classes are filled to capacity and overenrolled with the exception of the immersion classes in 1, 2, and 3. Last year we reached out to Latino organizations, no real success. In previous years, we have put out ads in the local paper. If anyone is willing to help search out some students for these openings, it would require a student who is facile in English but has some Spanish for easier integration. I will contact Christina Alvarez at CHAD who recruits for CHAD.
- Curriculum and Programming:** We are getting ready to start up the Gifted Program once again. We have begun the testing of first graders recommended for this program. In addition, we accept any other recommendations from other grades.
The Gifted Program this year will use research skills development as its base. The Theme for this year's program will be The Study of People in Time. Specifically, we will use the initial study of Elizabethan England to get a sense of knowing a time period and the people in that time period by viewing it through the arts: literature, art, music, living styles. Then, students will be able to work on specific cultures that existed at the same time as Elizabethan England: The Inca Empire, the Aztec Empire, The Songhai Empire, and The Ming Dynasty. Using the developed template students will be able to see if they need to ask other questions. Will they find similarities in how culture impacts a people? In addition, students will study and possibly perform some form of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."
In our regular Music program, a few innovations this year: the fifth and sixth graders are studying guitar. In fact, they participate in "combo" classes: one half of a class goes to Dance/Movement, and the other half goes to Music. This enables a smaller class size for the learning of guitar. In addition, Teacher Susan has organized an all-volunteer fourth grade choir. This group will meet last period on Mondays once a week. The response was tremendous from both boys and girls, studious and those less inclined. I am planning to offer our kids as performers in the Spring Charter School conference (in Harrisburg this time).
The Martial Arts class is off to a nice start. The special mats and uniforms are in; kids are taking it very seriously.
- Parents and ICS:** There are multiple signs of parent involvement not only remaining the same but strengthening. First, 5th and 6th grade parents have been very responsive in several areas: they have truly supported the "enhanced" dress code for the older kids; they were understanding and supportive of the delayed opening, and there was a very nice turnout for Back to School Nights.

The attendance at both Back to School Nights was very large. About 250 parents attended the first night for grades K, 1, 2, and about 150 for gr. 3,4,5,6. In the days that followed, several parents called with offers to volunteer or connections to funding and the like. The PTA had a large turnout at their first meeting. I have a few parents who consistently keep me informed of grant opportunities by sending me emails.

- 4. Teachers:** The teachers have designated teacher representatives to the PAC- Principal's Advisory Committee. This group will meet at 7:45 the first Monday of the month. In addition, Krista Pfeiffer, teacher representative to the Board of Trustees and I will meet on Wednesday, one week before the Board Meeting.

Observations of teachers have commenced. Some teachers have been given the opportunity to observe colleagues. Mentoring meetings have also commenced.

- 5. Buses and Tokens:** We had reinstated the full charge for tokens from our parents who wished to purchase tokens. One of our parents called to complain to the School District. The School District called Megan at the front desk to ask what we were doing charging the full price. We explained that we were informed last spring that we were not eligible to apply for school district subsidy on tokens. This person (who is indeed in charge of tokens for the district) now tells us we are eligible for selling reduced tokens and that we must reimburse all of those from whom we took full cost. (This is not hard to do since we list them by name when purchase is made). I will, however, ask that the District person put this permission into writing.

We continue to have various problems with the new bus company, specifically on a couple of lines. One evening in September, even police were involved due to the excessive lateness. All means short of calling Paul Vallas have been put into play including yet another meeting at the District. This was a hot topic at the last PTA meeting. The PTA will write a letter, which I will send to Alice Heller and a copy to Paul Vallas.

- 6. Workshops:** Workshops have been attended in regard to the State and Federal counts necessary in regard to teachers and students. Special meetings are being held in preparation for the renewal with the District.
- 7. Technology:** Finally, we seem to all be connected by email. Final touches for computers in classes upstairs are happening. The computer lab on the fifth floor is almost connected. We need to begin our EETT grant work with Fast ForWord reading support via computer. In addition, in a few weeks, we will accommodate the Immersion classes with basic English practice at the computers with kids paired up to use interactive English lessons a couple of times a week.

Discussion

A slight change—the 5 children who were not age 5 by September 01, 2004, would not be paid for. Jurate Krokys will call Art Galpern about this issue and will keep the Board of Trustees informed.

IV. Treasurer's report / Budget Committee Report

Be it resolved that the ICS board of trustees approves the spending of \$223,001.88.

Sean Hennessy moves to approve the spending.

Eric Cramer seconds this motion.

Roll Call Vote

Pam Prell -- aye

Becky Baehr -- aye

Michelle Campbel -- aye

John Baram -- aye

Eric Cramer -- aye

Sean Hennessy -- aye

Susan Gobreski --aye

Ingrid Schafroth --aye

David Webber --aye

Sandra Aidar – abstain

Rosina Miller --aye

Motion Carries.

V. Updates

A. PTA report

First fundraiser brought in \$19,500.00 with a profit of over \$7500.00. There will be a PTA potluck during the first Wednesday of December, please attend with your food dish. Picture day is almost here. There was a slight mix-up with notification and parents will be able to pay up to and

on picture day. The photographer does not usually do school pictures...he is able to do “fix-up’s” if a student has a scrape or has spilled on their shirt.

B. Teacher representative report

Krista has been coordinating teacher presentations at the Board meetings. She will have ideas and a possible schedule for the December meeting. The “shadowing schedule” will be ready in December.

C. Committee Report

1. Executive Renewal

None

2. Human Resources

None

3. Curriculum

Waiting to hear from Becky Baehr and Claudia Lee and their trip to Minnesota about the Spanish Immersion Program. We are also looking at lots of middle school issues.

4. Discipline

SWEBS grant—the state awarded us this grant under the premise that students who are on task are more able to learn...increasing reading levels. We have created school rules and a curriculum to teach these rules to the students. For the first five weeks of school there was a 20-minute discipline lesson. We have seen children able to use the same language. They are able to verbalize where choices have gone wrong and what choices they should have made. In some cases we are also seeing children being able to change the choices they are making. Most teachers are giving positive feedback. We are seeing more discipline happening in the classrooms.

5. Technology

We have just purchased 10 computers and we just received 10 donated monitors. Thanks to Eric Tippenhauer for all of his hard work. He is doing very well. Apparently e-mail use is up!! Most of the teacher and Board member bios need to be updated. Our digital camera is broken. Ramzy Andrawos brought his in and it was stolen. Susan Gobreski is willing to loan ICS her digital camera. Michelle Coates will check if the photographer (school photos) will do digital pictures of the teachers.

6. Community Relations

There is one seat on the Board that is still open. We will try to schedule potential nominees for the December Board meeting.

7. Development

There are already five Board members. Please remember that tax deductible year end giving can be given to Independence Charter School!! Michelle Coates—the school wide directory will be distributed soon and will include forms for “giving” to the school.

VI. Resolutions

A. Old Business

1. Lease Reimbursement Application

Whereas the Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of School Facilities’ Charter Lease Reimbursement Program provides reimbursement for lease payment costs, be is resolved that Independence Charter School apply for and accept funds, with Reimbursement requested and received quarterly.

Susan Gobreski moves to adopt the resolution.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote

Pam Prell – aye

Becky Baehr – aye

Michelle Campbell—aye

John Baram—aye

Eric Cramer—aye

Sean Hennessy—aye

Susan Gobreski—aye

Ingrid Schafroth—aye
David Webber—aye
Sandra Aidar—aye
Gary Shepard—aye
Rosina Miller—aye
Unanimous to adopt.

B. New Business

1. Renewal Application Provisional Acceptance

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees delegate authority to the executive committee to complete and submit the Renewal Package for Charter Schools, on behalf of the entire Board for deposit to the School District of Philadelphia by 4:30 pm on November 15, 2004.

Eric Cramer moves to adopt the resolution.

Sean Hennessy seconds the motion.

Discussion

The application is for a renewal to K-8th grade. The application contains information about what is happening on a day-to-day basis in the school. Please hand in line-by-line edits on paper to Rosina. There is lots of discussion about the time frame for deciding which specific second language we are going to incorporate into the middle school. The Board will make a decision at the February Board meeting. Luther James—Why is the Board looking at Arabic? Becky Baehr—the board does not want a romantic language. We have been looking at Chinese and Japanese. Mandarin Chinese was a top choice, but McCall school down the street has a Mandarin program and we don't want to conflict with them. Albert Abel—If you choose Arabic, how many high schools offer Arabic? Where would the students be able to carry on with that language? Becky Baehr—Our students will have a greater language capability than the average high school student. They will be able to pick up any language they choose. But, this is a good point to consider. The curriculum committee will put together a bullet point presentation on our language options, their pro's and con's.

The size of the school was also discussed. The size projections are based on our size now. Krista Pfeiffer—what happens with the curriculum in the middle years and size growth? This will be discussed in the curriculum committee with a lot of teacher input.

We are going to take our mission, vision, and goals and let them grow with our students. One idea is to have students participate in a service-learning project. In the 8th grade the students would put together civics, language, and culture for a project (perhaps on an immigrant culture).

Unanimous to adopt.

2. Holiday Bonuses

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School signify their appreciation for the efforts of the teachers and support staff by presenting staff with holiday gift certificates to be given in December 2004, not to exceed \$4000.00 in total for all certificates.

Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Discussion

Luther James—If there is an issue with hiring another Spanish teacher, can we afford to give staff \$4000.00 in gift certificates? Sean Hennessy—There is money in the budget, but we need to find a qualified teacher. The Human Resources and Budget committee will get together to double check. Ingrid Schaffroth—Are you looking into a gift certificates from a company who will double the certificate or donate an equal amount of money to the school? I organized a similar program at my child's school. Jurate will speak to her about this.

Unanimous to adopt.

3. Employees

Be it resolved that Independence Charter School Board of Trustees recognize the part-time employment of the following persons with the positions indicated and under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the Board of Trustees:

Jaye Allison—lunch assistant
Alicia Arnold—classroom assistant
Thal Benjamin—early morning assistant
Mike Charlton—lunch assistant
Stephanie Elpenrod—classroom assistant
Carmela Esquivel—classroom assistant
Angela Gaio—classroom assistant
Lucinda Glove—early morning assistant
Lauretta Gooden—classroom assistant
Eric Jones—classroom assistant
Amy Leigh—classroom assistant
Jessica Luna—classroom assistant
Javed Memon—early morning assistant
Kim Passidomo—classroom assistant
Shavern Paul—classroom assistant
Marisol Rodriguez—classroom assistant
Laura Serrano—classroom assistant
Katrin Shelton—classroom assistant
Megan Steelman—substitute secretary
Maritza Vasquez—classroom assistant

Pamela Prell moves to adopt the resolution.

Eric Cramer seconds the motion.

Discussion

Jurate Krokys states that these are not ALL of the part-time employees, but only the new part-time employees.

Unanimous to adopt.

4. Technology

Be it resolved that Independence Charter School buy an additional voice mail system to accommodate all teachers not to exceed \$3200.00.

Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.

Pamela Prell seconds the motion.

Discussion

The software is being replaced and will allow for 16 additional voice mail accounts. The new system will allow us to buy “expansion” cards to update the system in the future.

Unanimous to adopt.

5. Operations

Be it resolved that Independence Charter School re-key 6 doors on the second floor and replace two locks on the fifth floor not to exceed \$200.00

Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Unanimous to adopt.

VII. Public Comment Period

Vicki Holm – What is going on with the FLES program? Not all of our children are getting Spanish language five times a week. Her third grader is only getting Spanish three times a week. Is this because something wasn't budgeted for ahead of time? Why is this? What is the likely hood that my student will get more Spanish this year? Jurate Krokys—there was a scheduling miscalculation and the teacher schedules were over booked. The schedules put all classes back to back, not leaving room for transition for the FLES teacher between rooms. Another issue is that we had a teacher quit three days before school start. The ideal situation would be two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. There is a slight budgeting issue, but there are plans to look into this and perhaps start in January. Pam Prell—We are looking into options because this is not optimum. We would like all students to have more Spanish instruction. Michelle Campbell—Can we give a more concrete answer at the next Board meeting? Pam Prell—This will depend on the teachers and how things are going. A Fles program can

exist on three times a week, but we are not settling into this schedule. Sandra Aidar—I've heard that Maestra Claudia teaches part time, would she be making up the FLES hours? Pam Prell—No, she is the school's immersion coordinator and uses the hours she is not teaching to coordinate the entire Spanish Immersion Program.

Albert Abel—There is no security stopping people from entering the school on the 7th street entrance. This is a very serious issue. Becky Baehr—We do take security very seriously. The ownership of this building is changing in the very near future and security is one of the issues on our agenda. At ICS we do have security: front door buzzes, visitor sign in and out, signing students in and out. There is always a person stationed at the front door of the fifth floor as well. Even if a person gets past the person downstairs they have to get into the front doors of the school. Gary Shepard—He has a good point. Any other building in the city has a security guard at the front desk and visitors have to sign in in order to enter the building. Michelle Campbell—We have done walk arounds and have talked about getting cameras installed in the stairwells. Teachers have very strict guidelines about who they may release children to and how the children have to be signed out. Susan Gobreski—I have a child who attends this school and do not want my child to feel that she needs to sign in everywhere she goes. I feel that we are doing a very good job with security. Gary Shepard—I think that we need to be very cautious and we should not wait for something to happen. We should take a cue from what is going on around us. Terrorism etc... Becky Baehr—In the renewal application there are very detailed questions about the security at Independence Charter School. There will be a renewal inspection very soon, which will give us very critical feedback. John Baram—There have been many times when I've walked right into the 5th floor. Jurate Krokys—The directive to keep the door closed at all times. We will look into this again. Becky Baehr—What about Ramzy looking into a card swipe or coded entry? Albert Abel—What are the guidelines about parents being able to observe their students in the classroom? Jurate Krokys—We have a very open door policy. However, I will ask parents why they would like to observe in order to try to make the observation as meaningful as possible. It would be good to have a days notice for courtesy for the teacher. There are some situations where I might like to accompany the parent when they are observing (custody, teacher safety, lesson disruption) and may be unable to do that without notice. This would be useful to put into the parent guidelines. Albert Abel—As a parent who does not know the school very well, I feel a one-day notice would not allow me to see the school in its natural state. I want to see what is really going on. Jurate Krokys—We do many tours and unannounced walk throughs with visitors. Our teachers are the best and there will always be something great happening. Susan Gobreski—I have found that meeting with a teacher and volunteering in the classroom will let a teacher know you are interested in the normative and may ask you to come in any time. Sherdina James—I am a parent and come in to volunteer. I was introduced to the students and the students knew who I was and tended to tune me out (showing me the natural environment).

Albert Abel—how does a parent join the board of trustees? There are two letters sent home at the beginning of the year. There are two Board of Trustees seats open to parents every year. There is a general election to determine who the parent Board members will be.

Michael Lewis—My issue is personal in nature. I would like a moment of the Board of Trustee's time at the end of the meeting.

X. Executive Session

Adjourn to executive session at 9:00 pm to discuss a parental concern of a confidential nature as well as the CEO contract.

Return from executive session at 10:00 pm.

6. CEO Contract

Be it resolved that ICS offer the CEO a new 3-year contract, from September 1, 2004 through June 30, 2008, with the terms agreed to by the Board of Trustees in executive session.

Rosina Miller moves to adopt the resolution.

Gary Shepard seconds the motion.

Unanimous to adopt.

XI. Adjournment

Eric Cramer moves to adjourn.

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion.

Meeting adjourns at 10:01 pm.

