

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, April 14, 2004**

Minutes

Board Members Present: Rebecca Baehr, William Boyd, Jon Baram, Michelle Campbell, Eric Cramer, Sean Hennessy, Rosina Miller, Gary Shepard, Susan Gobreski

Board Members Absent: Julia Colton, Bruce LeBuhn, Pamela Prell, Ed Hanlon

Others Present: Randy Ostrow, Foundations, Inc., John Rowe, Deputy Director, Jurate Krokys, CAO, Krista Pfeiffer, Teacher Representative

I. Call to Order

President Eric Cramer called the meeting to order at 7:10pm

II. Reading and Review of Minutes

Minutes were approved and adopted.

III. CAO REPORT

1. **Curriculum:** The largest current impact on our student curriculum has been the testing which has been taking place since March 22nd. The Terranova city-wide testing for Grades 1,2, and 4 took nearly a full week to complete. These were mostly morning sessions, some as short as 30 minutes, some requiring several sessions of 15 to 40 minutes each. Grades 3 and 5 took the PSSA's. It was the request of the state that these happen first so that they could begin to compute the information. So these same children will also be taking the Terranova's upon their return. Testing accommodations are provided for all students with IEP's. These accommodations include extended time, smaller group size, permission to read directions in the Math area. This year, the test also allowed schools to manipulate group sizes in all classrooms. In other words, if we thought it helpful, we could break up a classroom into smaller groups in different locations. We took advantage of this opportunity, and had about 10 subgroups working along with all of the tested grades. For example, we took some 5th graders who were most easily distracted and/or most easily frustrated and put them together in smaller groups. ESL (English as a Second language) kids were tested separately with translators available. I think that the teachers did a wonderful job in preparing the children. Many children were excited about the prospect of taking the tests. Landmark was very cooperative and neighborly in letting us (and CHAD) use their space during testing. They have large uncluttered rooms that are perfect for this purpose.

For next year: We are exploring the following options in regard to curriculum:

1. Contract with a martial arts organization for the purposes of bringing Karate or something similar for our 5th and 6th grades
 2. Textbooks for FLES program for the upper grades for the purposes of the study of grammar and other more structured language learning.
 3. A Reading program for the Immersion grades like Macmillan.
 4. Expanding Voyager Universal Literacy up to Grade Three.
 5. Through the EETT grant, if funded, purchasing Fast ForWord licenses to allow the use of these programs for the older at-risk children
2. **Personnel:** We are currently continuing to interview for the Social Worker and Nurse positions. In addition, we are in final interviews for the remaining teaching position. The excellent resumes however keep pouring in.

3. **Events:** It is hard to believe that some of the events below were just a few weeks ago. So much effort has been put forth in their regard with great results.
 - a. The International Festival: This occurred on March 19th. All classes participated with great help from volunteers too. Classes set up displays at grade tables. Food and artifacts were displayed. Kids presented their work to fellow ICS'ers. It was very festive. Teachers as well as parents were impressed by the results of our very first International Festival.
 - b. Report Card Conferences: These occurred March 16th through 18th. The turnout was overwhelming with nearly 90% parents visiting from every classroom. Kudos to teachers for contacting all parents.
 - c. Choir debut: Our fledgling choir, organized for the Fundraiser April 1st performed for the guests very successfully. The children were selected from grades 2,3, and 4. The selection criteria were enthusiasm for singing coupled with cooperative behavior in music classes. Thanks to the efforts of Teacher Susan MacDonald for her great work. We are discussing the formation of a choir next year that would meet on a regular basis.

4. **Grants applications:** John Rowe is currently completing the writing of the EETT (Technology) grant application due this Friday. We are eligible for a \$ 30,000 grant. The focus of the grant is to increase literacy through the use of technology. We will also be applying for the 21st Century Grant (after School), the Lenfest grant (for immersion and country studies), and the Goldman Sachs grant (international studies). We have also been fortunate to have been approached by Communities in Schools, an organization typically providing services to the Philadelphia Public Schools. They in turn have been asked by the State (their major funder) to include charter schools in their grant writing for the new round of funding. Our name came to them through an acquaintance of one of our classroom assistants Jamel Henderson. Representatives from this organization have met with me and Tiffany Nguyen, our ICS Wings after school coordinator. They were very pleased with the tour and our vision of an effective after school support program for at risk kids. The program would be coordinated by us with coordination in terms of resources provided by this organization. This looks like an excellent program and I hope that we are awarded the grant.

5. **Mandatory Fresh Air:** I have instituted a mandatory "three times a week out for fresh air" to all of my classroom teachers. Although many of our teachers do take their children out to the park, some do not regularly. It is our belief that many of our children would do better behaviorally if given an occasional break and some fresh air. We do not expect that each time classes need to go to the park. Claire Grillo and Rita Orsino are working out a "walkabout" map that shows simple routes for teachers to take kids. Some routes will feature historical sites, some interesting architecture. If any one has suggestions, please email claireg@independencecharter.org or ritao@independencecharter.org

IV. Treasurer's Report

1. Audit

A. Fiscal Year 2001-2002:

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School adopt the findings of the Independent Audit for Fiscal Year 2001-2002.

Susan Gobreski moves to approve.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Roll call vote

Rebecca Baehr: aye
William Boyd: aye
Michelle Campbell: aye
Eric Cramer: aye
Sean Hennessy: aye
Rosina Miller: aye
Gary Shepard: abstain
Jon Baram: aye
Susan Gobreski: aye

Resolution approved

B. Fiscal Year 2002- 2003

Be is resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School adopt and approve the findings of the Independent Audit for Fiscal year 2002-2003.

Susan Gobreski moves to approve.
Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Roll call vote

Rebecca Baehr: aye
William Boyd: aye
Michelle Campbell: aye
Eric Cramer: aye
Sean Hennessy: aye
Rosina Miller: aye
Gary Shepard: abstain
Jon Baram: aye
Susan Gobreski: aye

Resolution approved

***Discussion** School District will do an audit of charter schools up for renewal. This audit will be a very different kind of audit than the one presented. ICS is requesting lead time.*

2. Budget for fiscal Year 2004-2005

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School adopt and approve the 2004-2005 ICS School Operating Budget as presented in Attachment A

Rosina Miller moves to approve.
Susan Gobreski seconds the motion.

Roll call vote

Rebecca Baehr: aye
William Boyd: aye
Michelle Campbell: aye
Eric Cramer: aye
Sean Hennessy: aye
Rosina Miller: aye
Gary Shepard: aye
Jon Baram: aye
Susan Gobreski: aye

Resolution approved unanimously

Discussion

Susan noted that a portion of the budget reflects renovation of additional space. Gary asked what the cost of living expense was. Randy explained that we budgeted 3%.

Note: Gary mentioned that he attended the March to Save the Children on Saturday where he talked with Paul Vallas. Paul was impressed with ICS and knew that ICS shared a building with CHAD. His office called Gary to schedule a meeting on May 10 at 2:30.

3. Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees approves this month's disbursements as reflected in the Treasurer's Report.

Becky Baehr moves to approve the resolution
Sean Hennessy seconds the motion
Unanimous to approve

V. Updates

A. Committee Reports

1. Human Resources (Jurate) - New hires will be discussed in depth in executive session. In brief, Jurate said that there are many qualified applicants. We are looking at a full-time nurse and social worker position.

2. Community Relations Ron D'Alonzo with the International Visitor's Council has agreed to serve on the Advisory Board. Susan Gobreski, along with her daughter, conducted a tour of ICS for visitors from Thailand. *Parents Survey* results are being entered. ICS will have a table at the corporate awards breakfast next Wednesday, 4/21 at 8:15 at the Loews.

3. Fundraising John presented a report on the fundraising celebration. Net revenue to date is approximately \$6,600. Donations are still coming in.

4. Technology. Committee is in the process of acquiring a server as a donation. Some members attended the tech conference at the Wyndham. Committee is looking into developing partnerships to have technical maintenance done by large corporations (possibly CISCO).

John is working on a \$30,000 *EETT grant* to purchase reading software for grades 3-6, computer upgrades, and professional development. Grant will be submitted Friday, April 16 and funding decision will be back in May.

5. Curriculum Jurate explained that Spanish curriculum materials will be presented later in April. Committee is looking into International Baccalaureate program participation. This would create prestige with parents and has wide recognition. Sean is investigating a martial arts physical education program for 5th and 6th grades from Gold Medal. Committee is looking into bids from different martial arts programs. Jurate found that martial arts instruction solicits a positive response from parents.

5. Discipline The Committee met with teachers. Teachers reported that they spend 10% to 25% of their time performing classroom management. Teachers are requesting professional development specifically for classroom management.

Teachers are asking for cultural sensitivity training for teachers who are not familiar with an urban environment. This will be separate from the Social Worker's role in the school. Jurate discussed the complexity of the diversity of the children at ICS. Saturday school suspension was thought to be effective by the teachers because it takes the child out of their social setting. Lunch assistants were discussed. Jurate discussed the \$7,500 grant for SWEBS which is focusing on the discipline policy for the school. Year 1 is focuses on assessment; year 2 training and action. The Code of Conduct is being revamped for next year. Susan requested that the revamping integrate parents in the process. Teachers have reiterated that the problems in the classroom are coming from children from all walks of life. A mediation program was discussed.

6. Legal Details of a settlement offer regarding a specific student will be discussed in Executive Committee. There were discussions about amending the By Laws to change the title of Chief Administrative Officer to Chief Executive Officer.

7. Policy Employee Policy and Procedures Handbook will be ready for presentation to the Board in May. Policies will be adopted for the 2004-2005 school year.

8. Nominations

None

9. Renewal Jurate discussed the importance of the Association of Boards of Charter Schools and requested the attendance of one board member at each of their meetings.

10. CAO Evaluations – Krista spoke on behalf of the teachers. Teachers did not want to put their names on the CAO evaluations. Rebecca explained that the Board wants names to ensure that the comments are responsible. There was debate over if the teacher's comments will be honest and candid if the teacher's name is not required. Krista mentioned that employees leaving do not want to be viewed as embittered. Susan wants to create a culture where feedback is not threatening and that growth in the school need to be accepted. Anonymous comments will be accepted, but names should be put on all reviews. Completed evaluations must be returned by Friday, April 23rd. Sean will evaluate and the results will be presented to board at next Board meeting.

B. PTA:

Silent Auction-- Board is encouraged to attend. Invitations will be available at the front desk next week. Creativity in donations is encouraged. Effort to represent all of the parents is made through parent liaisons making individual follow up phone calls after the invitation has been sent.

Book Fair – May 3rd. Need for more Spanish immersion books. PTA is looking for space outside of the library, after school, to have the fair.

Student Talent Show – Last meeting of year is fun. Students will have until the 20th of May to submit proposals for performance. Gary suggested a ribbon or medal for participation.

Officer Nominations –Elections will be in May. Still need a board liaison and secretary. PTA is encouraging parents to attend board meetings.

Knitting/Crocheting Club – Way to interact amongst staff

Girl Scouts – Starts next week

VI. Resolutions

A. Old Business

1. Teacher Pay Policy

Be it resolved that the Teacher Pay Policy be changed so that the amount awarded for an approved year of interning at ICS be changed to “up to \$ 500” per year for a maximum of two years.

Rosina Miller moves to approve the resolution

Becky Baehr seconds the motion

Unanimous to approve

2. Out of Scale

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees approves the following raise policy for addressing teachers’ pay that will be “out of scale” in the 2004-2005 school year:

Teachers whose salary will not be raised at least 2% when the new calculation is implemented will be offered a 2% raise over their 2003-2004 salary level for the 2004-2005 school year.

Becky Baehr moves to approve the resolution

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion

Unanimous to approve

B. New Business

1. Student Suspensions

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School overturns the suspension decision for the students as noted below, for the specific dates as noted below:

Student X, grade 1 (3/10/04)

Student Y, grade 2 (2/19/04)

Rosina Miller moves to approve the motion.

Gary Shepard seconds the motion.

Unanimous to approve

VII. Public Comment

Board thanks John Rowe for his efforts in the fundraising.

The board went into Executive Session at 9:38 to discuss confidential personnel matters. The board returned to public session at 10:20 to vote on the following resolution:

2. Teacher Hires

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School offer employment to the following individuals for the positions of full-time teachers under the terms and conditions specified by the CAO and the employee contract:

Ms. Tienne Martin and Ms. Tania Gonzalez

Rosina Miller moves to approve the motion.

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion.

Unanimous to approve

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm.