

Independence Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting

January 12 2005, 7:00 PM

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

Board Members Absent: Michelle Campbell, Eric Cramer

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Randi Ostrow, Foundations; Ramzy Andrawos, Operations Manager; Krista Pfeiffer, Teacher representative; Leslie Burton, School Nurse; Michelle Coates, PTA President; Adrienne Lindstrom, FLES teacher

I. Call to Order

President Rebecca Baehr called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

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. Public Comment Period

None

IV. CEO Report

1. **Personnel:** We have three new **student teachers** from the University of Pennsylvania again this semester. We have had this great relationship going for 2 years now. Several of our teachers are pursuing graduate degrees at various colleges and universities. Some of our specialists are pursuing both state **certification** (currently hold emergency certifications) by preparing for PRAXIS tests and by taking the additional graduate courses necessary.

The **safety team** met and reworked the framework for responsibilities in the cafeteria. We now have three individuals responsible for three areas but all three work closely together to make for a better experience for the children. Joyce Rice, who has been with us since year one and whose daughter is in fifth grade, is a regular part time cafeteria person. She has taken on the responsibilities of Safety and Cleanliness. Diane Mapp who joined us last year in the cafeteria is in charge of recess activities and activities during lunch. Laretta Gooden who joined us this year, will be taking care of scheduling and job oversight. This threesome will be awesome.

We have advertised January 18, a Tuesday, for **Teacher Open House**. I will be including a handout for you at the BOT meeting that you can hang up at your favorite place as well. Gary Shepherd has agreed once again to advertise over his radio program. We have also advertised on Craig's List. I have noticed that in last Sunday's Inquirer, the Penn Alexander School has an advertisement out for teachers. The list of the contacts is as follows: Temple, Community College, Chestnut Hill, Drexel, Holy Family, LaSalle, Penn, Villanova, Rosemont, Gwynedd Mercy, Cheyney, Howard, Morgan State, University of Maryland, Lincoln, Kutztown, Bloomsburg.

Teacher evaluations continue and I am almost ready to start round #2.

All Staff at ICS were pleasantly surprised by the gift certificates given by the Board as a Holiday thank you. The gift certificates are good at a local independent book store. Thanks to Ingrid Schafroth for the connections and the legwork.

2. **Programming and Events:** In December, all children participated in **Fire Safety Assemblies**. The last week of December was exciting because all children participated with their classes in performing for the **Holiday Assemblies**. Many classes wrote notes and cards of **condolence** to our Fireman from 4th and Arch who lost his life in December. The K, 1,2, and 3rd grades have gone to the Arden Theatre for our annual trip to the **theatre**. They saw a production of Frog and Toad. The kids were great. The PTA (in the form of Vicki Hirsch Holm) helped to organize the purchase of tickets and also subsidized the cost of the tickets. Grade 4,5,6 kids will be going to see a production of HOLES at the Academy of Music on January 19th. We also have the Principal's Challenge **Poetry Slam** under way. I will be

looking for parent volunteers who can help with printing. We produce a poetry “magazine” following the slam with original work. Last year it was a simple Xerox effort. It would be nice to fancy it up a bit this time.

Teacher Claudia’s class has agreed to coordinate efforts for **tsunami relief**. This will be a long term support effort. One of the things we are talking about is doing a presentation at the Painted Bride and opening up the presentation to families and friends as a fundraiser. The theme of the presentation would be something related to country studies. The country studies **International Festival** is slated to occur in late May. We are thinking of having this be a day and evening affair so that parents can be impressed by the work of the children as well. Also, the fifth grade civics classes under the wing of Teaching Intern John Robinson have been studying about **poverty and homelessness**. They have been sponsoring a coat and clothes drive for the homeless via the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (speakers presented to the kids) and that coat drive will end this Friday—please bring anything you would like to donate to the BOT meeting.

We have ordered a wonderful set of posters on character building with African-American characters, and workbooks that address “character” and citizenship. Hopefully they will be arriving shortly.

Teachers will be able to use them for African American History month.

Test prep books have also been ordered for various grade levels. Teachers will revisit the topic of test preparation during the February teacher in-service.

I have met with Wendy Osterweil, the Director of Programming at the Fleisher, and have spoken to Lisa Nelson Haynes at the Painted Bride. We are planning to get together, inviting the Board representatives from the curriculum committee, to further discuss possibilities in the coming year of writing grants for artists-in-residence.

3. Test Results: We finally received the test results from the 3rd grade PSSA’s. These took longer since they were considered still in the early stages of development. The results are not very good but are not surprising given the levels of students in many of last year’s 3rd grade classes (most are 4th graders now). Our kids scored in the 32% percentile, whereas the district averaged 33%, and the state averaged 51% in reading. In mathematics, our students scored in the 36% percentile, the School District 37%, with the state scoring 51%. We will be able to look at the disaggregation of these scores. The good news is that the city and state compares 3rd grade to 3rd grade. This year’s current third grade is doing very very well. Spencer reported that virtually all charter schools with whom he has spoken have reported similarly low scores. I will ask around more at the charter school meeting on Thursday. We have ordered test prep materials recommended by the John Hancock school, the highest scoring school in PSSA’s in the city after Masterman(for lower grades).

4. Technology: We have finally gotten the Fast ForWord program started. Reviews of the program are great from kids. T. Eric and T. Kristen Long (reading specialist) have done an excellent job scheduling kids in to the computer lab on the fifth floor. The afternoons in the computer lab are reserved for the Immersion kids. They participate in typing skills programming as well as basic English acquisition programming. We look forward to the acquisition of more Fast Forword licenses to expand our use of the computer lab to children of various levels.

Jonathan Baram has worked on the Technology Plan for the School for the next three years. This is a very large undertaking and we are very grateful!!! We hope to bring it to the BOT meeting on Wednesday. It is due January 15th.

We also spent some of the time in December and January attempting to revive the server. Some very dedicated work over the weekend by Ramzy, Eric and the tech consultants we have put us back on track.

Discussion

Personnel: We did receive the official notification that we need to get the renewal audit signed and sent everything should be okay with it

Safety audit can happen anytime – we feel comfortable.

We will get paper in place, and teachers have been informed and we will be in good shape

We will send it to them and then they will let us know when they are coming

Mitchell and Titus are the new auditors

Test results – we scored rather low for pssa third grade last year, the group as a cohort are low, that is the group that did not have voyager, and since this year there is voyager, and we will see that our score will be much higher. Another reason requires a lot of reading; we scored higher in Terra Nova because there is not that much reading. The state scores in the 51 percentile for third grade. This is new data that does not affect our renewal. The state committee recommends that a low base score is a good thing because you can only improve.

The Pennsylvania School Report showing our open house, and there is word that it will be a successful one.

One of the things on the check list is the financial checklist if we did not get it from anyone please do so.

Renewal checklist – Is there anything that will hold us up, do we need to ask for an extension? PSERS tax return is the only issue that Randy sees will be a problem in getting. Susan suggested that we put in a binder, and just give it to them. If we have everything tabbed, and in one filing cabinet drawer we will be ok.

No more questions on CEO report

V. **Treasurer's report / Budget Committee Report**

Be it resolved that the ICS board of trustees approves the spending of \$110,339.73.

Sean Hennessy moves to approve the spending.

Rosina Miller seconds this motion.

Roll Call Vote

David Webber-- aye

Pam Prell -- aye

John Baram -- abstain

Susan Gobreski--aye

Sandra --aye

Ingrid --aye

Rosina – aye

Becky --aye

Motion Carries.

VI. **Updates**

A. Brief presentation: The School Nurse – Leslie Burton

I triage Kids – take them in and see what is the matter, a lot is not nursing it is more mommying.

See if there are too sick and should go home.

Giving emotional support and encouragement

Medication administration

Teachers – Coordinate what needs specific students have in each class, on the class as a whole or individual need.

Works with the counselor, Anne Hall works on all the outside coordination

Meet with dean of students, principal and many other resources

Help the parents finds required resources, questions

Average day depends from 1 kid to 20 kids a day. Try to decipher what is going on.

A lot of kids are no longer coming to the nurse because they know what they will ask her, as far as what Leslie has done, in addition to seeing all the kids, screening is required, lice check, height weight screen, and hearing from 1-3 grade. PA College of optometry to try and get some eye screening, but does not look promising.

At the end of January there will be dental screening.

Hop-a-thon-

Programs that we have had – Nutrition program 5 grades to do a one time program, and they are going to come back for 4 week series,

Asthma – October Temple nursing program – specifically to students who had asthma, and have an inhaler

Ordering of supplies, school records, as far as the future, finishing certification, technology in the health room, one more machine that she needs for eye screening,

Health classes for the older kids especially the girls.

Leslie came in and has spent time going through paper work and she is very good with parents, parents feel comfortable, and so do the kids. PJ feels comfy having her here.

Legally we need to find out at what grade we are allowed to learn about health related issues.

Board could sponsor a poster contest for nutrition, maybe we could wait after a four week series, a principal challenge on nutrition.

The menu comes with a lot of propaganda, what can we do to eliminate that.

Obesity – there are a fair number of kids who are above normal, what we had talked about, running around the park. If they get the knowledge about exercise and healthy eating habits. Tr.

Carla came up to her with problems in their joints because of their weight, maybe weight watchers for kids (Leslie will look into it).

Spanish FLES – Adrienne Lindstrom

FLES Teacher here at ICS

Foreign Language in the Elementary School

FLES is the way it was taught. At our school what makes it different is that our kids get it at least 4 times a week, learn by singing, coloring, dancing, much more holistic than reading from a book.

What makes a program – The teacher, creativity, adaptability, native or near native speaker, ability to teach a language, energy, can make Spanish accessible.

Spanish Coach – position that was just started 2 weeks ago, very energetic

We had to cut back the schedule at the beginning of the year, because the schedule was very packed.

We are able to teach FLES because we have time and flexibility that is why there is a coach.

Coach will take vocabulary and take it further. She is an actress, and she will see the kids once a week, and she is capable and excited for this new position.

Goals – SOPA – Student Oral Proficiency Scale

Maintains conversation with increasing fluency

Present tense, future tense, past tense with difficulty – learn the basics and then worry about the rest of the stuff.

Connected sentences

Vocabulary to discuss social and academic issues in some detail

Understand longer stretches of connected speech spoken at a normal rate. Recognize the word spoken by different dialects.

Seldom has comprehension problems on everyday topic

FUTURE

Teachers and creating curriculum

Whatever I think about I have to be able to do, even if we fail at times. Feeling everyone is challenged, teacher must be someone who is like our kids, we teach inner city for better or for worse, must know the kids culture and where they come from.

Adrienne leads Board in a demonstration song and dance lesson.

Applause to Adrienne.

B. PTA report

No January meeting, would have been two days after returning from break. Combined meeting in February – Tr. Kristen reading workshop – Feb 9th one of the nights Philadelphia reads was available. Same night as a board meeting

Silent auction – meeting for that Wednesday at 7

Board liaison position will be resolved in February, 2 people interested

Las Vegas Lounge – Happy Hour Father's forum Friday January 14th

Father's Forum – Fix it day January 22nd

Day of Service MLK day of Service

Jurate Krokys – Vicki Hirsch Holm – HUGE pat on back did an awesome job for the performances, now working on upper grades.

Silent Auction – Holding it off site – Considering. Maybe Landmark Lots of choices of room.

Photography – artistic black and white PTA got 20% of all the money PTA made \$1600 very nice

C. Teacher representative report

Nothing substantial to report

Sandra Aidar – Report for next board meeting, comparison with other schools.

D. Committee Report

1. Executive Renewal

Open seat on the board.

2. Human Resources

Meeting next Thursday – 3rd Thursday 8:50 take up planning for hiring and talk a little about what is done. Mapping out hiring process some of the committee chairs will sit down as we discuss the expansion plan. Jurate has been doing an awesome job. Finding good people for the open positions

3. Curriculum

Meetings will take place on the 4th Monday at 4:00pm. Did not meet this month. Sandra has agreed to co-chair with Pam. How do we identify early on what is needed? Is it for special ed kids, is it not for special ed kids, etc.

Discussion

What is the question: Are the immersion kids representative of the program? Why do our Spanish immersion classes have 50% 50% in terms of diversity. Is there a question that we need to look at? People need to raise questions and it needs to be discussed. Teachers have questions on how immersion works within the school. This meeting January 22 at 9 am “the nuts and bolts of the immersion program.” Is Spanish a learning barrier for some students or not? To what extent do we modify our program to meet Philadelphia inner city kids’ needs? Do we want a special ed teacher to be talking to the kids in Spanish? Alternatively, you don’t want to punish the kids who are not doing well. If we penalize, are we “discriminating” against the kids? The immersion program is more balanced racially than the general program. The curriculum committee will meet to discuss the recommendations of the teacher/curriculum subcommittee.

4. Discipline

There were a few issues on the front burners, which Leslie was important in. Several kids have a whole lot of issues, sixth graders harassing another sixth grader. Good to have policy in place which we can go to and follow it. Human factors, and what is involved in family. Kids have fewer tools that they come with. When we can look into the child we try our best. Nothing major just doing our best.

5. Technology

Ernie Coates, got us 9 computers, the server we think is cured, replaced the hard drive. Technology plan – John has updated the previous technology plan what is in place, where are we going, what do we have and what do we need. The EETT is focused on this plan. We needed to come up with more goals, and many we achieved from the previous plan that was written. We need the board to make a motion to approve this.

The BOT approves the 3-year technology plan submitted by the technology committee.

Sean Hennessey moved it

Susan Gobreski seconded it.

Unanimous to approve

David Webber is updating the website. Community calendar and keep everything that we have from Yahoo.com

Acceptable use policy by the end April.

6. Community Relations

Need to put a packet to mail out to people we need to get together as a committee, advisory and transportation committee; all is well. Susan went to talk to teachers.

7. Development

Sending out the list and see who we know. Pick out who we know.

The appeal raised \$8300 we got 61 gifts.

Real good meeting; try to raise \$10,000 by July 1st; toying with some ideas, who are we and what do we need. Short term: get enough funds together to hire development person. Long term: own building in 5 years, roof top play ground.

There has been a whole lot of work. We need \$3-4 million and about \$2 million in the bank; best option is to stay here but we need to raise money to have our own building at some point. There were grants for millions of dollars (to purchase a building), 15th and Lombard, we need to go to the state level to obtain a building. Create a subcommittee about building. Sit down with Councilman Kenny and pursue the building. Long-term goal is to get funds to get a building, or should we pursue political officials, Paul Vallas and his connection with people that he has connection came through Gary Sheppard, maybe have exploratory circle of what it is that we would like. It might be good to say in the next two months that we should sit down and talk about things (“retreat”): What do we want our building to look like? David found good training for the board, (4 of them) we will look into one, and then move on. David emailed around, end of last week, about training, and going to board

training. Focus is on topics that people are interested in and basic training for board members. We need to raise the funds to buy a building. How do we get a full-time fund raiser? Do we give a salary for the 1st year and then the person raises their own salary? A coordinator who takes lead from the board, or do we hire a development person who brings ideas to the board. This would have to be coordinated with human resources as well as fundraising committee. Development people should be paying for themselves, with 3-6 months. Beginnings of drawing up this plan, and get this position to pay for itself. The money that we raised last year is still in this year's budget. By next meeting Ingrid Schafroth will come with a plan on how to raise another \$10,000.

SCHOOL SIZE AND EXPANSION.

Need to send a letter to the 6th grade families that we are waiting to hear about renewal and our expansion request, and they should have back-up plans for their children who will be entering 7th grade. Are we going to have a 7th grade next year? Pam thought that we already made that decision. The timeline of adding the grades is an issue. Board members are concerned about school size and dealing with management and style of school. Are we making good choices? What is best for the current group of sixth graders and what is best for the school as a whole? What does it take to do this correctly, given that the staff is struggling with management options? Would it help to partner with a charter school that grew a grade every year, and learn from them? Veronica Joiner from Mathematics and Science school; she started elementary school. In principals mind that this is a resourceful board, and do things well as individuals, when a school is young and has growing pains that is not perfect, we owe it to the families that we have in 6th grade, what does it take to make things work, curriculum, specialist, 7th and 8th grade curriculum. How do we do it successfully, PJ is going to find out dealing with CHAD, where would we go and how can just pay rent and not pay renovations, can't separate the fact that we owe this to the kids. Teachers don't want to be middle school teachers, are we institutionally ready to handle all these students? This is what we are doing and how will we solve it. What happens to kids who are in sixth grade, can we afford to have a middle school. Let us not reinvent the wheel. Some of the things that are being discussed: A lot of this is going to depend on staffing, we cannot depend on current staff, are we going to be approved for this? What strain is it going to put on the budget? Is it going to put us in the red or will we stay in the black? What are our priorities, where should we spend money vs. where should we not spend money? Do we owe the kids anything after we have offered them all this great education? We need to evaluate. How do we best take care of the kids that we have? We do owe the 6th grade children and family some kind of choice as to what they are going to do for 7th grade. Gary: we do owe them an option for 7th grade. Do we know all that all our kids intend to return here? We have to assess the cost and availability of all the staff. Additional NTA, vice principal. More rental space, is the only issue. Certain issues don't need to be spending as much as the previous year, furniture books, etc. The ideal is if we were ready to go to 7th grade we should do it, but are we now ready for this move? Send a letter out to tell people to come to next board meeting to discuss and voice the opinion of what they would like to see for next year. We would like to hear in March meeting what is going on. Are we going to get smaller, or are we reducing our growth ratio? We want to be able to not admit kids after 3rd grades. What is this school like now that it is bigger? If we can't get a 7th grade maybe we can partner with another school. The Board agreed to collect information and to continue discussions.

VII. Resolutions

A. Old Business

1. Budget Adjustment

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustee (BOT) of Independence Charter School (ICS) delegates to the Budget Committee the authority to transfer up to \$7,000.00 from underused budget categories to Special Programs Salaries for the purpose of funding the following academic support initiatives.

- a. Middle Level Support: test preparation on Saturdays for children referred for additional help in test preparation (8 weeks, 8 tutors, 80 kids) for grades 3,4,5,6.
- b. Voyager support: After School tutoring for referred at-risk children for gr. 1,2,3 (8 weeks, twice weekly, approx. 3 teacher, 30 children).

Rosina Miller moves to adopt the resolution.

Sean Hennessy seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote

David Webber-- aye

Pam Prell -- aye

John Baram -- aye

Susan Gobreski--aye

Sandra --aye

Ingrid --aye

Rosina – aye

Becky --aye

Motion Carries.

B. New Business

1. Access Funds Budget

Be it resolved that the BOT of ICS approves the following budget for distribution of previously unbudgeted ACCESS funds:

\$500.00	counseling materials
\$500.00	software to support inclusion
\$2,000.00	Read Naturally fluency program
\$2,500.00	First in Math support program
\$3,000.00	FastForWord additional reading support
\$4,105.00	cost support for Speech, Occupational and Physical Therapy

Rosina Miller moves to adopt the resolution.

Sean Hennessy seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote

David Webber-- aye

Pam Prell -- aye

John Baram -- aye

Susan Gobreski--aye

Sandra --aye

Ingrid --aye

Rosina – aye

Becky --aye

Motion Carries.

2. Personnel

a. NTA opening

Be it resolved that Independence Charter School offer a full time Non-Teaching Assistant (NTA) position to Mike Charlton under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS Employee Handbook.

Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.

Jon Baram seconds the motion.

Motion Carries.

- b. Be it resolved that ICS establish a long-term facilities committee to investigate options for the long-term home of ICS, and to make recommendations to the BOT in this regard.

Susan Gobreski moves to adopt the resolution.

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Motion Carries.

- c. Be it resolved that ICS terminate its business service contract with Foundations Inc. effective January 31st 2005.
Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.
Rosina Miller seconds the motion.
Motion Carries.

- d. Be it resolved that ICS enter into a business service contract with Santilli and Thompson LLC to begin February 1st, 2005 and end June 30th, 2006 for an annual amount not to exceed \$56,000.00, provided the contract with Foundations has been terminated.
Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.
Jon Baram seconds the motion.
Motion Carries.

X. Executive Committee

The Board held an executive session to discuss its business services contract.

XI. Adjournment

Rosina Miller moves to adjourn.
Sean Hennessy seconds the motion
Meeting adjourns at 10:04pm.