

# Independence Charter School

## Board of Trustees Meeting

### February 09, 2005, 7:00 PM

**Board Members Present:** Becky Baehr, John Baram, Sean Hennessy, Susan Gobreski, Ingrid Schafroth, David Webber, Sandra Aidar, Eric Cramer, Michelle Campbell, Christine Chisholm (after swearing in)

**Board Members Absent:** Pam Prell, Rosina Miller, Gary Sheppard

**Others Present:** Jurate Krokys, CEO; Randi Ostrow, Foundations; Ramzy Andrawos, Operations Manager; Krista Pfeiffer, Teacher representative; Claudia Lee, Immersion Coordinator; Jorge Ragazzo, third grade teacher in English Immersion program (Uruguay); Dublin Carrera, principal in English Immersion program (Uruguay); Joan Bell, PTA liaison; Joyce Miller, LLP

#### I. Call to Order

**President Rebecca Baehr** called the meeting to order at 7:12pm.  
**Greeting of special guest (Fulbright, Uruguay) and Audience**

#### II. Reading and Review of Minutes

The minutes from the last Board meeting were circulated. There is one correction made by Sean Hennessy (see p.8, Resolutions D). Minutes are approved with the following correction(s):

Correction will read:

Be it resolved that ICS enter into a business service contract with Santilli and Thompson LLC to begin February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 and end June 30<sup>th</sup>, 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.**

#### III. Public Comment Period

None

#### IV. CEO Report

1. **Events:** ICS has been quite busy in January and early February. Ten students who were first, second, and third place winners in the grades 4, 5, and 6 essay contest honoring the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spent this National Holiday at Pennsylvania Hospital along with many family members and Principal Jurate. They were winners in the **Pennsylvania Hospital's Black History Committee's annual tribute** to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. First place winners William Thompson, Chelcie Rojas and Simon Wu read their essays to the gathered audience. Winners from the McCall School also participated. A reception followed the program. There will be a display of the student's essays at Pennsylvania Hospital soon. As always, our connection to Gwen Mayrant, grandmother of Anieka Miller has been wonderful. I had the opportunity to participate in the judging of the essays and it was an inspiring experience. Many thanks also go to Anna Evans who volunteered to chair the committee and the teachers who donated their time to complete this event. All ten (we had ties for third place in two grades) winners' essays will be published in the Second Annual Poetry Magazine. This will probably "hit the stands" in March.

With the exception of a handful of students, over 500 ICS students undertook the annual **Theatre** trek this past December and January. The K-3 grades attended Frog and Toad at the Arden Theatre- all were greatly pleased with the production and aerobically rewarded by the brisk walk. The upper grades attended the Holes production at the Academy of Music. Vicki Holm, representing the PTA helped organize the entire endeavor, was shocked when calling to confirm the Holes tickets to find that the theatre production was expected to end a full 30 minutes later than announced earlier. The impacted dismissal of yellow school busses on that day was difficult. We no longer intend to rely on departure times reported by theatre productions.

On January 18, 2005, ICS hosted an **Open House for prospective teachers**. It was well attended by approximately 20 prospective teachers from various universities and schools. Currently, several are being contacted for initial interviews. Many thanks go out to Gary Shepherd for his advertisement as well as for the connection made with Ms. Veronica Joyner, Principal and CEO of the Mathematics, Civic, and Science Charter School. Ms. Joyner forwarded several resumes for our consideration.

ICS continues to give tours monthly for prospective parents. A morning and an evening tour are hosted by the Principal. These 1.5-hour tours are well attended.

2. **Curriculum:** Fast ForWord, a computer based reading “recovery” program targeting older children still struggling with reading has been in place since December. Approximately 35 students attend scheduled sessions in the mini computer lab daily. We are currently looking at their progress. We have submitted a mid-year report for the EETT grant, the monies of which have subsidized this undertaking.

**First in Math** is a computer based math “game” based on the game 24 that reinforces basic facts and higher order processes in math. We have obtained licenses for all classes from Gr. 1-6 (the program is based only on gr. 1 and up), and each student will be given a password and will be able to earn individual points. These points are then accrued for the classroom. Classrooms may “compete” for the highest accrued points. Our intent is to reward all classes and individuals who pass a designated goal line. Children will be able to “log on” not only in the classroom but also at home and at grandma’s. The program provides an opportunity for teachers to use this program as acceleration, enrichment or reinforcement. Since it is self-paced, children may engage the program at their own pace.

I have attached an article that supports the programs positive effects on test scores. At \$120 per classroom, this will be a good investment. I have also penned sample access to the program on the article sheet, if you wish to try it out.

We will also very soon be starting a “**middle level**” program for students who are recommended by teachers for additional support- these students being those just the other side of passing. A quick 8-week after school program is being developed to help tutor these students.

**Spanish Meeting:** On snowy Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>, a group of committed representatives met to discuss Spanish immersion supports. Present were: Claudia Lee (imm.), Sandra Aidar (BOT), Meredith Barkley (spec.ed), Kristen Long (rdg.spec./ESOL), Rosemary Williams (cl.teacher), and the Principal. The discussion was productive regarding screening of students, student support, teacher preparation. A more detailed report should happen at the curriculum committee report.

**Inservice days** at Independence were very well spent. On the early dismissal Tuesday prior to the inservice days, teachers completed interim report card sheets. These have been sent out to parents. The inservice days were spent as follows:

**Day 1:** the morning was spent with “**turnaround**” training by ICS staff. Many ICS staff have used the BOT granted opportunity to attend professional conferences (\$ 150 per conference- most conferences cost about \$ 165 nowadays) and have come back excited about valuable information learned. In addition, the Children’s Literacy Initiative (CLI) gave us several scholarships for early grade teachers to attend a four-day workshop. These are exceptional workshops and we have been fortunate to send teachers for the past three years on scholarship. We are fortunate to also have a new ICS parent on board at CLI. Teachers Andrea Y., Maricarmen, Paulina, and Tienne attended the workshops. The morning turn around training featured topics such as “literacy circles”, classroom management, and very basic organizational recommendations for early grade teachers. Nurse Leslie also brought up a very important topic of pre-adolescent sexuality, a topic we intend to revisit. In the afternoon, we were treated to a presentation on Sensory Integration by Pediatric Therapeutic Services, our Speech and OT/PT consultants, and time was also spent on developing lists of students at-risk for retention. SWEBS held a roundtable session as well. Great booklets on famous African-Americans were handed out to all grades 2-6, for each student. These booklets complement the newly framed posters in the commons area that focus on “character”. Since the booklets were at a third grade reading level, we did not purchase them for Gr. K and 1, rather selected books from our school library to be available for teachers to read to students in celebration of **African-American History month**. In addition, we purchased a videotape which presents traditional African-American stories and tales.

**Day 2:** Ramzy and Eric presented First in Math to the teachers. This was followed by a Math presentation by Barbara Kay and Testing by Kristen Long, our Reading Specialist. In the afternoon, Kristen gave the teachers an assignment to prepare grade level schedules **in test prep**. The Specialist also “adopted” assessment anchors in their everyday lessons that would contribute to the work of the classroom teachers. Teachers were given Terranova test prep booklets for each child in gr. 1-6. We will also hand out PSSA booklets.

**3. Audit and Renewal:** The audit for renewal has finally kicked off with a meeting with Mitchell and Titus representatives who will be doing the audit. This Friday morning meeting was attended by

William Spang (who is VP of IVC), Sallie Feldman, Foundations Reps: Mark Spector and Randy Ostrow, BOT members Rosina Miller, Rebecca Baehr, and the Principal. They will be working with us through the end of February. Their goal is to present all information to the Alice Heller and the Reform Commission by the beginning of March.

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

Be it resolved that the ICS board of trustees approves the spending of \$97,353.00.

**Sean Hennessy** moves to approve the spending.

**John Baram** seconds this motion.

### **Roll Call Vote**

Becky Baehr--aye

John Baram--aye

Sean Hennessy--aye

Susan Gobreski--aye

Ingrid Schafroth--aye

David Webber--aye

Sandra Aidar--aye

Eric Cramer--aye

Michelle Campbell--aye

**Motion Carries.**

### **Audit Discussion**

Ms. Miller has audited the school this year and for the past two school years. The only difficulties encountered in the audit were related to the school-based accounts and getting a third-party confirmation of the school's loan. Total revenue is close to \$1,000,000.00 due to the school's increased population. Funds balance is \$697,000.00 and the Cash balance is \$348,000.00. All financial results are considered positive. **What is the \$500,000.00 Citizens Note, due within one year?** That note can be refinanced to be paid over a longer period of time. **How do you determine the depreciation expense?** The depreciation expense is determined by the projected life of all of the assets. This audit is called a single audit because there was spending over \$500,00.00 in Federal Grants (there was additional start-up monies). Ms. Miller does not believe that there will be a single audit next year.

TWO FINDINGS: 1. There are some accounts based out of the school that are not reported out throughout the year (WINGS, student activities). 2. Check of employee files and found that I-9 forms from the schools first year did not have employer signatures. Also found that some employees lacked a current criminal background and child abuse check. (Suggest a check of all employee files. *There will be a checklist created for all employee files. All files will be updated for the renewal process.*) There will be more detailed information for schools about what they can do to prepare for upcoming audits. There should be "whistleblower protection" policy. There should be a document destruction policy. There will be a Charter School "Lunch and Learn" that will be held in the Spring. **Is the \$348,000.00 real money that can be spent on programs and curriculum?** Not suggested as every school should be operating with a 3-6 month "back-up" supply.

## VI. **Updates**

### **A. Brief presentation: Music Teacher, Susan Russo**

We have a performance-based curriculum. Tr. Susan feels that all students are able to leave the school at least knowing how to sing. All students have music once per week except Kindergartens, who have music twice a week.

All music is learned aurally, which only requires a child to listen and does not require special needs children to read. The students will experience songs from the cultures and time periods that their classrooms are studying (creating a very integrated curriculum). For students taking the PSSA and TerraNova testing, new terminologies and ideas are being introduced to increase students proficiency and ability on the tests.

Instrumental: Recorders, guitars (violins, violas... not enough time in the day to teach at this time)

Susan stresses that a second music teacher is needed for next year. This will allow for choirs and continued instrumental work. Tr. Susan also requests a stereo. **A yearly concert is requested.** Time is an issue. **Do students have music once a week because of the lack of a second teacher**

**or because of other academic classes?** Due to the FLES program and other courses, such as science, there is not enough time in the student day for additional music courses.  
(see attachment)

**B. PTA report**

Cassandra: a petition was circulated to collect signatures for Independence Charter School in support of Independence Charter School  
Bus matron... what about parent volunteers? (an application process for a volunteer position and can provide a background and child abuse check)

**C. Teacher representative report**

Teacher Shadowing: **Sandra Aidar** shadowed the Cafeteria Manager. There was a lot of chaos, yelling, whistling and “military action.” Sandra wants to find out what other schools do in the cafeteria. Sandra visited Penn Alexander School in West Philadelphia and was pleased by what she saw. The cafeteria was twice the size of the ICS cafeteria, but the staff did not feel this was the issue. Penn Alexander implemented cafeteria rules where five women maintained a quiet calm atmosphere. When there is a bit of turmoil the teachers put up two fingers and there was quiet. Students had to be seated and wait to be called to get their lunches. There was an “isolation” table. The principal at the school said this took a few months and a lot of patience to implement. Recommendation Teachers and Cafeteria Staff should get together and talk about what can be done to achieve a positive environment in the cafeteria. There was also a school district police officer helping students get their lunches.

There is a plan that Nateria Morrison gave to Sandra Aidar and will be presented to Human Resources.

**Becky Baehr** shadowed Teacher Cheryl Direso in first grade.

**Susan Gobreski** shadowed Teacher Veronica Kim in sixth grade math.

**Gary Shepard** shadowed Teacher Krista Pfeiffer in sixth grade language arts.

Teacher Krista Pfeiffer will be stepping down from the Teacher Liaison position.

**D. Committee Report**

**1. Development**

Minutes were circulated. The committee would like to recommend the hiring of a development officer. (see attachment) The committee will try to have \$30,000 in salary and benefits raised by the hiring and then the person would be responsible for raising their own salary and more. \$10,000.00 will be raised by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Each board member will be responsible for raising \$1,000.00 by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

**Is this something that has the commitment of all Board Members?** Becky Baehr will “give it her best shot.” Susan Gobreski is unsure of the commitment, but will do what she is capable of doing. Susan Gobreski would also like to see the committee “go after” corporate sponsors. Jon Baram also commits to trying to raise monies. David Webber would like to discuss the fundraising training at LaSalle University. A three-hour training has been looked at during evening or weekend hours. This would be a commitment of \$1300.00.

**2. Executive/Nominations**

New Yahoo! Group Site does archive messages and you can have discussions that are visible to the public, and they can participate in. Debates such as school size could be held on the Group Site. Files are kept in a central location and everyone has access to the most recent file versions. 6:00pm March 09<sup>th</sup>, 2005 for all new board members.

**3. Facilities**

A committee is being formed to search for a new building. Sandra Aidar, Susan Gobreski, Ellen Parnell, Kristin Nocco, and Nancy Boyd are serving on the committee.

**4. Human Resources**

Executive Session

**5. Curriculum**

Committee: Jurate Krokys, Kristen Long., Rosemary Williams, Meredith Barkley, Sandra Ahdar (Board Member) and Claudia Lee.

**Short Term Plan for Immersion Students**

**1. Reading groups**

Immersion teachers will review their list of students in need of extra academic support and divide them in two groups:

- a) Cases in which students might be referred for Special Ed. Kristen and Claudia will work on a guideline to help teachers make this decision. (We will give you questions before the end of the week). These students will work for a period of time with Kristen before we decide whether they need special ed. or regular reading support.
- b) Cases in which students demonstrate understanding, oral language ability but read at below grade level and need extra support to catch up. An assistant will work with them on daily basis using materials and support from the Lectura Program. Jurate will use her discretion to allocate funds to pay this assistant. The Reading Support person will form two or three groups of different level abilities. Immersion Teachers, Kristen and Claudia will help her with materials and guidance. She will observe Reading Centers in regular and immersion classes, Amy, and Reading Specialists in the school for a week before beginning her reading groups. She will participate in Professional Development and perhaps some Reading Workshops (?). The groups will meet daily as follows:  
Mondays and Fridays: Speech Room  
Wednesdays and Thursdays: Meredith's office  
Tuesdays: Lans and Anita's rooms (?)

## **2. Classroom Assistants**

Immersion teachers, classroom assistants and Claudia will evaluate the time spent by classroom assistants on instruction and make changes if needed. Claudia will meet with classroom assistants to discuss classroom duties and centers. We might need to pair teachers and assistants differently. We will ask Claire for suggestions and help for training classroom assistants on teaching basic reading skills. Observations of Reading Stations? Rosemary has a form she uses to communicate with Jamel, her assistant. She will present a short workshop next Professional Development Day on how she makes her communication form and how she helps Jamel to use his time effectively. Teachers will make their form together with their assistants during the workshop. Rosemary suggested having some word cards and timers for the assistants to work in centers.

## **3. Volunteer**

Debbie Cole has been a very effective and reliable volunteer who works with students from both programs. We will continue to work with her once she returns from the Navajo Reservation. We will include her in our Reading Development workshops and assist her with guidance, observations and materials. She comes twice/week for four hours.

## **4. On-going testing**

Second Grade teachers will share their on-going testing ideas from the Lectura Program with K and 1<sup>st</sup>. grade teachers.

## **5. Interactive Training Videos from Voyager**

Teachers from both programs will have some time during Professional Development Days to watch the videos, reflect and share ideas together. One of the teachers needs to be the monitor.

## **6. Immersion Teachers Training in Voyager**

Besides the videos, Jurate will include Immersion teachers in the training offered by Voyager. Immersion teachers will make the adjustments to use Voyager techniques to teach spelling, basic skills and understanding.

## **Long Term Plan for Immersion Students**

### **1. Pre testing for incoming students**

We will complement the Bracken test with a few simple tests that will give us information about:

Academic development (cognitive check list)

Phonemic awareness

Behavior (Portage check list?)

## Speech

A team will test all incoming students. This test will help us determine who are the students who because of extreme disabilities won't benefit from the Immersion Program. Each case will be considered separately by a team of teachers and specialists.

ICS will offer admission to students to the Immersion Program with low level of abilities.

ICS will offer admission to the regular program to students with extreme learning disabilities or multiple disabilities and will provide the needed support.

ICS will inform parents of this decision before school begins.

### **2. Transfer Policy**

Parents will be notified in writing that in case their children do not make expected progress in Kindergarten, they will be retained in a regular Kindergarten.

Parents who would like to transfer their child to an immersion class or vice versa, must agree to have a tutor for their child.

### **3. Summer School for Incoming Students who show need in the pre-testing.**

Jurate will apply for a Pre-school grant to offer this program during the summer previous to the academic year.

### **4. Cognitive Progress Time Line**

We will create a progress Time line to help teachers test their students' cognitive progress in language comparable to that of the Regular Program. Meredith will help us find a brief check list. Do Imm. Students know this in English?

### **5. Teachers will be trained in interpreting the Bracken Test.** Meredith will arrange for that.

### **6. Create a Curriculum Frame**

This frame will guide instruction and testing progress in the Immersion Program.

This committee will work before and during the summer to create this frame. Kristen and Meredith will help us in finding resources. We will use common check lists from different programs and compare them with the Lectura and other materials available to the Immersion Program.

### **7. Incoming Parents Meeting/Pamphlet**

Information about policies, expectations and suggestions (buy a good dictionary, etc.)

### **8. Structure a Spanish After School Program**

### **9. Reach out to other Immersion Programs**

### **10. Full Time Immersion Coordinator**

### **6. Technology**

The firewall is set up with filtering and intrusion prevention. A policy "acceptable use internet policy" is still to be written. The policy that exists at this time will be adapted to what is needed.

There are still a few teachers that are not responding to the e-mails sent out.

### **7. Community Relations**

None

### **8. Discipline**

Michelle Campbell would like to explore cafeteria options and ideas. There was an expulsion hearing for one student last night. The students withdrew today, before the expulsion was voted upon. The Lawyer that advises on expulsions would like to meet with teachers and give them a general training on what to expect and how to prepare for such a hearing. **How are expulsion witnesses picked?** The witnesses are chosen by the principal and will be witnesses to any and all events leading up to the recommendation for expulsion.

The nomination committee recommends Christine Chisholm to fill the community Board member seat.  
**Susan Gobreski** nominates Ms. Chisholm to fill the Community Board Seat.  
**Eric Cramer** seconds the nomination.

**Roll Call Vote**

Becky Baehr--aye  
John Baram--aye  
Sean Hennessy--aye  
Susan Gobreski--aye  
Ingrid Schafroth--aye  
David Webber--aye  
Sandra Aidar--aye  
Eric Cramer--aye  
Michelle Campbell--aye

**Motion Carries.**

Christine Chisholm is sworn in.

**VII. Resolutions**

**A. Old Business**

**1. Advisory Board framework**

Be it resolved, that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School approve the Advisory Board framework as presented here on February 09, 2005.

**Susan Gobreski** moves to adopt the resolution.

**Eric Cramer** seconds the motion.

**Unanimous to adopt.**

**B. New Business**

**1. Advisory Board Member**

Be it resolved that the ICS BOT approve the following person(s) for the Advisory Committee: Sandra Suarez.

**Susan Gobreski** moves to adopt the resolution.

**Eric Cramer** seconds the motion.

**Unanimous to adopt.**

**2. Spanish Tutor**

Be it resolved, that ICS offer the position of part time Spanish Tutor to Stella Jenny Potes under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS Employee Handbook.

**Eric Cramer** moves to adopt the resolution.

**Sean Hennessy** seconds the motion.

**Unanimous to adopt.**

**3. Personnel: termination**

Be it resolved that ICS terminates Mike Charlton as Non-Teaching Assistant.

**Eric Cramer** moves to adopt the resolution.

**Susan Gobreski** seconds the motion.

**Unanimous to adopt.**

**4. Be it resolved that the ICS Board of Trustees hereby rescinds the resolution passed January 12, 2005 terminating the business services contract with foundation inc.**

**Eric Cramer** moves to adopt the resolution.

**Sean Hennessy** seconds the motion.

**Unanimous to adopt.**

**X. Executive Committee**

The board enters executive session to discuss confidential matters about ICS's business services contract.

## **XI. Adjournment**

**Susan Gobreski** moves to adjourn.  
**Sean Hennessy** seconds the motion  
**Meeting adjourns at 10:04pm.**