

Independence Charter School

Board of Trustees Meeting

March 09, 2005 7:00 PM

Board Members Present: Becky Baehr, Sean Hennessy, Susan Gobreski, David Webber, Sandra Aidar, Eric Cramer, Michelle Campbell, Christine Chisholm, Pam Prell, Rosina Miller

Board Members Absent: Gary Sheppard, Ingrid Schafroth, John Baram

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Randi Ostrow, Foundations; Ramzy Andrawos, Operations Manager; Veronica Kim, Teacher representative; Anna Evans, Teacher representative; Natalie Kozlowski, Art Teacher; Joan Bell, PTA liaison; JoAnna Davis-Diaz, parent

I. Call to Order

President Rebecca Baehr called the meeting to order at 7:16pm.

II. Reading and Review of Minutes

The minutes from the last Board meeting were circulated. A few minor changes were noted.

1. The reason the Board moved to executive session was corrected.
2. Spelling of Fulbright from Fullbright.

Sean Hennessy moves to approve the minutes with the above changes.

Pam Prell seconds the motion.

Motion Carries.

III. Public Comment Period

Joanna Davis-Diaz is a teacher, currently on maternity leave. Joanna is also the step-mother of Naomi Fecher Davis, a first grader in the Spanish Immersion program. Joanna is interested in being on the Board of Trustees. As the board is currently full, different options for involvement were discussed at the meeting: parent seat, advisory board member.

IV. CEO Report

1. Personnel: The cafeteria staff has met with Sandra Aidar giving a presentation regarding cafeteria organization she has observed at another school site. It is clear that much more consistent work, feedback and planning must take place for consistent change to take place in the cafeteria. Ramzy has scheduled bi-weekly meetings with the staff in which I will be present when possible. On the off weeks cafeteria staff will meet without supervisors. This had been requested in the past however this time Ramzy will receive a schedule.

Krista Pfeiffer has stepped down as teaching staff representative to the Board of Trustees. She has done a great job representing teachers and in turn representing events that took place during the Board meetings. Candidates were solicited and an election took place. Anna Evans and Veronica Kim will team together to represent the staff.

Next school year: an advertisement has been placed in the Public School Notebook for teaching positions. Another will be placed in the online advertisements of the Philadelphia Inquirer (cost to be presented to the BOT) for positions opening up in the coming school year. Currently, we have been receiving applications through the Teacher Open House and through Craig's list advertisements. Currently we are interviewing in stage one and have begun setting up demonstration lessons with an eye on middle school positions. Several teachers and HR committee people have volunteered to help with observing demonstration lessons. In early April, we will be meeting with Amity representatives for Spanish speaking teachers.

We present a new NTA for the blue room in resolution at the BOT meeting. This person, Kurt Hunte, is well qualified, has presented all clearances, and has tried out the position as an emergency part-time person to make sure it was the right fit. We are relieved to be able to fill the position, which is a demanding one. It is one we rely on heavily.

All full time staff will be receiving forms asking for their "**intent to return**" in the coming year.

Previously in early February, staff received a form in which they indicated grade preferences and other

responsibilities they would be interested in. This ‘Intent’ form is a formal statement informing me of their commitment or intent to leave.

2. Programming at ICS: Several important events have occurred at ICS in the past month. A new parent orientation for grade one gifted student parents took place reviewing the program. Natalie Kozlowski will be meeting with these students on Friday morning for a brief 45-minute period. The theme for this first grade program will be housing around the world. They will begin with studying houses in Japan.

A meeting with prospective Grade One Immersion parents for next year took place last week. The purpose of the meeting was to fully inform parents of what going in to gr.1 “cold” without Kindergarten Spanish would mean, including insisting that they agree to get a tutor. All 6 families agreed to do so. This is the number of spaces that open up naturally as we move from 20 per classroom to 23. In all cases these are new families coming from McCall, Greentowne and other such schools. The meeting was very positive and the families are intent on following through in all areas. Our parent contact at **Children’s Literacy Initiative** has once again come through to find places for our teachers. This multiple day training is excellent and teachers returning can implement great best practices learned.

The Pennsylvania Charter Schools Conference will take place May 1-3 in Harrisburg. This joint undertaking with the Pennsylvania Charter School’s Coalition and the PA Department of Education will be very interesting because it will for the first time represent ALL charter schools in that the Alliance of Boards of Charter Schools and the **PCSC** have joined into one organization. Even better is that our **sixth graders have been invited to perform for the assembly** at a painful 9am in Harrisburg. They will present their wonderful dance medley of the 1900’s that won rave reviews here at ICS. I am very excited that I can bring our kids to perform, to show off our great kids. If anyone wants to hop a ride with 6th graders on a tour bus type and then stop off at a pretzel factory upon return, please let me know. Otherwise, of course, I can register you for other programming and will get you the agenda as soon as it is available. Usually there are at least one or two sessions applicable for Boards.

Nurse Leslie is hosting a HOPATHON for Muscular Dystrophy. She has also probably **broken all records for the city of Philadelphia** in that EVERY SINGLE child at ICS has up to date health records. Nurse Leslie is a real problem solver and when there were 6 kids left and we could think of no other way to get physicals, she found a young doctor willing to donate time who came right in to school who saw the children, of course with parent permission (and that permission slip was hard enough to get). Amazing problem solver Leslie Burton.

I have made contact with Debra Kodish at the Philadelphia Folklife Center and we are talking about connections with ICS. Debra has a personal connection with my family in that my own father was a featured folk artist with the Center for several years in Lithuanian Folksong.

3. Federal programs: Randy Ostrow and I met with Arthur Lindley from the State in regard to our Title I status. In the past, the former state representative for these matters did not require a school improvement plan from Title I schools. A new representative has noted that to keep our whole school status we would have to in very short time write a comprehensive plan. We were presented with an alternative that allows us to be a **targeted school** something we are eligible for since we made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). There is no difference in monies, but there is more paperwork on our end from the Business Manager. We chose to be a targeted school since this would keep us from being labeled as “out of compliance” at least until we had written a school wide plan.

4. Renewal: Rather than make a long report on the Renewal work and the auditing in this report, we can have the committee present at the meeting. I will provide the final document submitted to the School District, which is our response to the compliance check. The auditing firm of Mitchell and Titus were very pleasant and worked hard to make the experience easier. The remaining timeline is March 9th (today) for a closed door meeting with the SRC. Then, on March 16th, a meeting wherein there will be a public aye or nay. I have plans for balloons, signs and cake for the whole school. I also plan a school wide photo on Thursday using Landmark’s huge hall.

V. **Treasurer’s report / Finance Committee Report**

Be it resolved that the ICS board of trustees approves the spending of \$122,578.90.

Sean Hennessy moves to approve the spending.

Eric Cramer seconds this motion.

Roll Call Vote

Becky Baehr--aye

Sean Hennessy--aye

Susan Gobreski--aye

David Webber--aye
Sandra Aidar--aye
Eric Cramer--aye
Michelle Campbell--aye
Christine Chisholm--aye
Pam Prell--aye
Rosina Miller--aye

Motion Carries.

Discussion

The State Department of Education and School District of Philadelphia are refusing to pay us for students who were not five years of age by September 01 of the school year. We will not be paid for those students for their entire kindergarten year, \$6700 per child per year. If we had planned to open up a 4-year-old kindergarten, if it was stated in our charter or renewal, we would have been paid. It is suggested that our attorney advise us on the collection of these monies.

We received \$30,000.00 more than anticipated for Title I funding. This is money that is not yet budgeted. Sandra Aidar asks if this money can be spent to develop programs equivalent to those offered to the gifted students and extend them to all students. It is suggested that we discuss the budgeting of this money at a later time.

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees approves a budget transfer of \$11,000.00 from Support Services into Instructional Services.

Sean Hennessy moves to approve the spending.

Eric Cramer seconds this motion.

Roll Call Vote

Becky Baehr--aye
Sean Hennessy--aye
Susan Gobreski--aye
David Webber--aye
Sandra Aidar--aye
Eric Cramer--aye
Michelle Campbell--aye
Christine Chisholm--aye
Pam Prell--aye
Rosina Miller--aye

Motion Carries.

Discussion

Is the WINGS program designed to create revenue? We are working on creating an account where funds are isolated. There are many specifics, such as early dismissal days and overhead costs, that need to be looked into before the WINGS budget is discussed in detail. There was also discussion of what the role of WINGS should be at ICS.

VI. Updates

A. Brief presentation: Natalie Kozlowski, Art Teacher

Teacher Natalie attended Tyler School of Art as a ceramics major (glass blowing). Natalie began working in an art gallery and then moved to teaching art in a preschool. Natalie then went back to school for her degree in art education.

Natalie's goal is for all students to feel successful in the completion of their art work. Most classes are studying specific artists, often associated with country studies. Each grade will focus on at least one artist/art form from a country of study. Students coming out of class know a wide variety of artists. However, students are also learning about the "elements or art".

Kindergarten and 1st are focusing on colors and shapes. Every grade has done a self-portrait for their beginning project. Gr. 1=Claude Monet, Gr. 2=Elements of Art, Gr. 3=Wassily Kandinsky (abstract), Gr. 4=Egypt/Pyramids/Tomb Paintings/Frontalism/Hieroglyphics, Gr. 5=Monochromatic/shade/tint/value, Gr. 6=William H. Johnson.

Discussion

What about an art show? A First Friday? Could we use this as a fundraiser? A silent auction or a public auction? What about putting the art into a calendar, etc?

B. Teacher representative report: Anna Evans, Veronica Kim

None

C. PTA report

Transportation was discussed at the meeting. The PTA is trying to put together a phone chain in the case of late busses or weather. There was also the discussion of bus matrons, (however the district does not provide schools with matrons. What about parent volunteers? Could we put together a process where parents are “interviewed” and background checks are completed?) Silent Auction will take place May 14th from 6pm-10pm. (Each Board member should come up with four or more items to be donated.)

D. Committee Report

1. Renewal/Executive

Sean Hennessy was at a meeting where Paul Vallas announced that ICS would be approved for 7th and 8th grade. The final announcement will be made on the 16th of March. A big thank you to Jurate Krokys, Randi Ostrow, Ramzy Andrawos and all others who helped with the compliance monitoring.

2. Development

Please remember that each board member is trying to raise \$1,000.00 by June 30th (the end of the fiscal year). This would bring our fundraising totals for the year to a point where we will be able to hire a development person for the school. (Also remember that grant research is helpful as is large corporate connections.) LaSalle workshop will occur on Wednesday, March 30th at 6:30pm-9:30pm at Independence Charter School. The second option is Saturday, April 02nd in the morning. The PTA is letting all interested parties know about the opportunity. This workshop will focus solely on fundraising. David Webber will speak to Ramzy Andrawos about completing the membership application and dealing with all issues of money.

3. Human Resources

Pay scale is continuing to be researched. School District pay is being looked at in order to remain comparable with salary and benefits. The thought is that the entire pay scale may rise to remain comparable.

If you are interested in being invited to observe prospective teachers, please e-mail Jurate Krokys and copy Susan Gobreski.

CEO evaluation is beginning.

Applications are being accepted for the following positions:

Vice Principal (Dean for older students), Curriculum Coordinator, Spanish Language Coordinator, Full Time Secretary, Full Time NTA, Teaching Intern (3rd), Part Time Physical Education, FLES teacher (3rd),

Meetings take place the third Thursday of the month at 8:45am.

Discussion

For the upper grades we are looking into programming with the Painted Bride and other independent artists to fill the arts program. It is requested that there is a listing of every staff position available for the 2005-2006 school year.

4. Curriculum

Fleischer and Painted Bride are being looked at for various programs in the upper grades during the 2005-2006 school year. Thursday, May 5th the committee will be meeting with another IB school to discuss what IB entails.

4. Technology

None

5. Community Relations

There is an educator, Chris Branas, is interested in being a part of the advisory committee to Independence Charter School. Susan Gobreski has Mr. Branas' resume.

Susan Gobreski nominates Chris Branas to the Independence Charter School advisory committee.

Sean Hennessy seconds the nomination.

Unanimous to nominate.

Teachers are being asked to give each parent a survey at parent/teacher conferences. Volunteers will be needed to “proctor” and walk through hallways during conferences.

6. Discipline

There was going to be an expulsion hearing this last Monday. The student was transferred out. We need to create policies about weapons, police calling, police interaction on school grounds, etc.

7. Facilities

Negotiations are taking place with the Futures Foundation regarding space in 105 S. 7th street for the 2005-2006 school year.

There was a meeting to discuss space for the upcoming years, long term. We are looking for a long-term building with 50,000 square feet. These building are hard to find. We are only looking into buildings in Center City (river to river and Spring Garden to Washington)

On March 7, there was a meeting organized by the Center City Residents' Association to discuss the future of the Thomas Durham School building. It is a four-story building, originally built for 700 students. The building does not have a gym or cafeteria. Jurate Krokys, Sean Henessy, Sandra Aidar and Facilities Committee member Kristin Nocco attended the residents' association meeting and found the neighborhood to be friendly toward an elementary school. The association will set up a process to "interview" prospective buyers. We will have to make a proposal and presentation. There was a request at that meeting by Paul Vallas that we establish a neighborhood "set aside" (we can define our "catchment" area—all of center city, e.g.—if permissible under current Pennsylvania law) for enrollment if we relocated to the school.

GOAL: We need to see the building in order to decide what our interest is in the building. We should try to get a meeting with Ellen Savitz (or Alice Heller). We should also put together a presentation and written proposal including: how we will raise the money for renovations, how will we become a part of the community, what is our long-term plan. James Kinney and Juan Ramos need to be contacted. The residents' association will be invited to tour the school, to attend the silent auction and to attend student performances. Jurate Krokys will generate a parent/student list of current ICS students from that neighborhood. Jurate Krokys will turn notes into Rebecca Baehr for CHAD proposal for the first floor and Jurate Krokys and Sandra Aidar will work on a plan to submit a proposal to the Center City Residents' Association.

VII. Resolutions

A. Old Business

B. New Business

1. 7th grade expansion

Whereas the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School has received assurances that the school will be renewed by the School District of Philadelphia, and that it will be granted additional student slots to operate 7th and 8th grade, and

Whereas there has been substantial support and interest from 6th grade parents and from parents in the ICS school to have their students continue attending ICS in 7th and 8th grade, Now therefore be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School intends to operate the 7th grade in 2005-2006 and the 8th grade in 2006-2007 so long as ICS is able to secure sufficient space and qualified staff to service the needs of an expanded school.

Sean Hennessy moves to adopt the resolution.

David Webber seconds the motion.

Susan Gobreski moves to table the motion.

No one seconds to table the motion.

Pamela Prell makes a friendly amendment.

...“and qualified staff”...

Rosina Miller seconds the motion.

Unanimous to accept the amendment.

Unanimous to adopt.

2. NTA Position

Be it resolved that Independence Charter School offer a full time Non-Teaching assistant (NTA) position to Kurt Hunte under the terms and conditions specified by the CEO and the ICS employee handbook.

Rosina Miller moves to adopt the resolution.

Sean Hennessy seconds the motion.

Unanimous to adopt.

VIII. Adjournment

Rosina Miller moves to adjourn.

Susan Gobreski seconds the motion

Meeting adjourns at 10:04pm.