

**Independence Charter School
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2010 7:00 pm**

Board Members Present: Eli Lesser, Rona Buchalter, John Eagen, Derrick Johnson, Dana Twyman, Pam Prell, Pedro Rodriguez, Elsie Stern, Naomi Wyatt

Board Member(s) Absent: Mary Fitzpatrick, Fran Melmed

Others Present: Jurate Krokys, CEO; Shavon Norris, Teacher Rep; Ramzy Andrawos, Director of Operations; Stephanie Bungard, Principal; Cristina Vea, PTA Liaison; Leonora Cravotta, Development Director; Robin Kohles, Owner's Rep; Megan Steelman, Administrative Assistant; Diane Cohen, Laversa Kweh, Cheryl Young, Parents.

I. Call to Order

Rona called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. Rona had all the Board members introduce themselves and note their involvement in ICS and the Board.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the June and August meeting were approved with corrections to typos.

Rona suggested that we not have report packets printed up for each meeting. She explained that we can provide laptops or people can bring their own. If a Board member wants a printed packet and/or a laptop, the member needs to let Megan know the day before the meeting. We will print a few packets and will have an ample supply of agendas for all.

III. CEO Report

Jurate noted that she has a Middle States timeline to circulate. She noted that we are assimilating about 66 new students in grades 1-8. We have had more attrition this year than usual; the nation's economic situation seems to be a factor, with several families moving out of the area. The school year has gotten off to a great start. The staff is giving good feedback about the middle school uniform. Lots of renovations have already been completed—the larger fitness & movement room, soundproofing between classrooms, etc. Back to School Nights (BTSN) will happen next week. Stephanie reported that we will have parent sessions running throughout the nights. We want BTSN to be not just meeting your child's teachers, but learning more about ICS. There will be an exit interview. Rona asked if the list of parent suggestions was used to plan the workshops; Stephanie said they were. Jurate asked all Board members to plan on attending the 10/29 mural dedication and to bring a significant guest with them---someone who has the potential of becoming a friend of ICS. This event is the day before the annual Friendraiser festival. Jurate reported that we have funds for tutoring, which is our priority. We will also have some clubs, but less than last year. We have also added special education tutoring this year. We'll have Drexel Physics, Penn Engineering and some other, which will come free of charge. We are targeting these clubs for students who need extended day. We can use some Title I money to help parents with transportation costs if that is an obstacle to having the children participate in extended day activities. We will be dismissing students from tutoring and clubs on the sidewalk—not inside. We are trying to get "No Parking" signs until 6p.m., so that there is a safe

place for this dismissal. Shavon asked who is deciding which children need the clubs. Jurate stated kindergartners are not going to have clubs or after school tutoring, since they are usually too tired at the end of the day. She added that we may not be offering clubs to first graders until later in the year for the same reason. She said we will be asking the deans to recommend students. Staff members are paid \$50 per club day. Teachers have asked for the staffing to rotate throughout the year. Derrick asked whether there is a set list of clubs; Jurate stated that she and the Principal are working on finalizing the list for this year and then the information will go out to parents. Jurate explained that we cannot post a tutoring and club schedule any earlier than the end of September, because staff do not know their own schedules that far ahead and we need to first determine how many tutoring groups we need to have.

Jurate gave some additional information on the charter school planning grant application. If awarded, the grant gives three years of planning time; the grant application was submitted in August. Although it's a 3-year grant, schools need to request renewal for each of the years. Today was supposed to be the date the government said the process would be completed, so we should hear a decision within the next few weeks. Eli asked that a copy of the grant be circulated; Leonora agreed to do that. Rona cautioned that there is no obligation; Leonora confirmed that is true. Jurate circulated a Middle States timeline. Rona asked everyone to review it and bring any questions to the next meeting. Jurate explained that she is getting more forceful with the steering committee to get the process moving. She noted that most of the process is community-based, not Board based, but that the information will, of course, be shared with the Board for feedback. Jurate will allow committee members to meet during school time, because it's not always possible to get the whole group together for an after school meetings. The plan is for the Board to vote on the strategic goals by February, so that a copy of our report can be sent to the Middle States team in preparation for the April team visit. We have four teachers who are working on their principal certificates, so most likely they will be helping with some of this also as part of that process. Elsie stated she has experience with this in higher education and asked who will be processing the data. Jurate noted that it's a matter of making recommendations. For example, if a goal is that students be physically fit, then we look at whether things are happening to meet that goal. It's the mission and beliefs that is setting the benchmarks for where we want to be.

IV. Public Comment

No one signed up for the public comment period.

V. Non-Board Committee Reports

PTA: A written report was circulated. Cristina reported that the officers met today for the first time this school year. Even though she'll only be reporting every-other month, she plans to attend all the Board meetings. Cristina asked whether the parent workshops that Stephanie talked about were going to be done through the PTA. Stephanie said they are separate, but will be coordinated. Cristina said she appreciates the work that Jenny (Hoedeman-Eiteljorg, Family & Community Partnerships) is doing.

Construction: Robin reported that the walls between classrooms were completed. She stated that our building permit for the outdoor stage was denied, but that we have figured out an alternative plan. She added that we have also run into a problem with the additional staff toilets due to their design not being handicapped accessible. She noted that we are applying for a variance. However, if that variance is denied, then that money will be invested in other projects---possibly solar panels on the roof or a green roof on the

new addition. Rona asked whether either of those projects would eliminate the possibility of ever building on the roof (i.e., a gym). Jurate clarified that the Schrader Group had said it wouldn't be possible to build on the roof; due to building codes, it would need to be a totally separate structure. She added that if the additional staff bathrooms don't get built this year, we'll plan at least one other bathroom on the ground level in next year's budget. Rona asked whether there are other projects that could be done, that don't involve the roof. Robin said the green roof would help alleviate the water pressure on the roof and we would also get a water credit. Jurate stated that another possibility is to get more technology. Robin noted that the last of the playground work will be completed before the mural dedication.

VI. Committee Reports

Curriculum: A written report was circulated. Pam noted that the committee is on track for giving Middle States feedback in October. She stated that the topic of language acquisition will be a major focus for the committee this year, especially in light of the FLAP grant. She said that parent communication will be moving off this committee once the committee is sure there's another mechanism for that communication to happen. Dana asked whether there will be specific work on evaluation. Pam said they will consider that, but it might have to wait until next year. Eli asked how we'll be tracking our first graduating class, since they will be graduating from high school this year. Pam agreed to put that on the agenda. Stephanie said we have been discussing that issue among staff and have the beginning seeds with alumni day we've been holding each January. Rona suggested we may want to have a staff liaison to work on that and asked Stephanie to work on that; Stephanie agreed.

Board Governance: Pam moved the Founder Seat resolution; John seconded. Eli asked whether this change would be added to the by laws. Rona said it would be noted in the by laws. Rona asked for a roll call vote: Eli-abstain, Naomi- yes, John-yes, Pedro-yes, Elsie-yes, Pam-yes, Rona-yes, Derrick-yes, Dana-yes. The motion passed.

Naomi asked whether committee minutes should be circulated if it's the month when you're not reporting. Rona said that you would circulate it only during the month you're reporting. Derrick recommended posting it on the Yahoo Group.

External Community Relations: Derrick reported that the committee met recently. The group concluded that most funds have been raised through grants and this committee would like to work on bringing in more individuals and groups to financially support the mission and vision of the school. Derrick stated that the group feels this should be a committee of the Board. Pam said the alternative would be for it to be a committee that works under the CEO. Jurate stated she feels it may be a better marketing tool to have it as a Board committee. Rona added that it is a goal of the Board to be more proactive on this front. Derrick stated that we want to be strategic about how we approach people. The committee wants to clearly define the wish list of the school: enhancing the facility, technology, extended day program and academic enrichment programs. The next step would be planning how to start to pursue donors. Derrick noted that we also need to work on figuring out who is connected to whom within the ICS family. Stephanie noted that we need to coordinate our data base and other contact lists. Elsie asked whether this is a subset of development or whether this group will also help with grant writing ideas. Derrick said this group would help connect Leonora with contacts. Pam asked whether this committee will be recruiting some parents who have specific interest in this area. Pam also noted that having community members on all committees is part of the Board

committee structure recommendations. Elsie stated that one of the Board's goals is to support Jurate in endeavors like this. Rona stated that her vision for this committee is for it to think holistically and at the big picture, not just on specific connections---thinking broadly about strategies. The committee can then let Rona and the rest of the Board know how they can support the efforts. Derrick stated the committee wants to balance the strategy with the immediate needs of the school. Eli noted that the Policy Committee is going to be working on a plan for building use, which may connect to this. In addition, we may want to identify who has media connections. Derrick stated one thing the committee wants to do is to spread the message of the school to a larger audience. Rona stated that the Board will discuss whether or not to move to make this a standing Board committee at a later date. Elsie pointed out that in no way should stop the progress of the committee.

VII. Finance/Business

Jerry was not able to attend due to a scheduling conflict when the meeting date was changed. John reported that the 2009-2010 books are still being completed; that report should be ready soon. He stated there are no major variances in the financial report. John noted that it is fiscally responsible to have a surplus for use during leaner times. Pam asked whether the FLAP grant expenses like #5376 to Al-Bustan will always be included in this report; Jurate said they would. John moved the disbursement resolution; Eli seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Leonora asked about the FLAP grant totals on page 11 in regard to the indirect costs; John said that adjustment seems to have been made and the amounts seem to be correct.

John reported that there are some budget changes---a reduction in the per student allotment and a reduction in the pension costs; however, the differences are minor, so a budget adjustment is not necessary at this point. John asked Jurate to report on the change in the prescription plan costs. Jurate reported that our benefits consultant had gotten misinformation from the Philadelphia Teachers' Union regarding the prescription co-pays. The additional cost to ICS in order to offer a prescription plan with similar co-pays will be about \$4,000. Jurate noted that we want to keep the benefits the same as the School District. Bob McIntyre, our benefits consultant, will be coming for a meeting with staff next Monday or Tuesday to explain the mistake.

John said he needs at least one Board member to be on the Audit Committee; it can't be him since he's the chair of Finance. Naomi volunteered. John cautioned that we need to be prepared for budget changes that might be coming over the next several years---the funding cliff. Jurate stated that at the Title I meeting she attended today, it sounded like only the stimulus money would be gone next year. The question remains what budget cuts may happen at the state level. John said Jerry recommended applying for bonds, etc now---not next year, if we are able to plan ahead. John said he does not feel the ICS Board can decide on the Worlds of Opportunity Foundation's insurance needs. John moved the ICS insurance resolution; Naomi seconded. John explained this is for umbrella coverage increases. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Old Business

Rona noted that the conflict of interest forms that Eli and Pam had submitted were reviewed by the Executive Committee and the Committee did not feel there was any conflict.

Rona noted that the Board has agreed on goals; both the Board goals and institutional goals will be printed at the top of the agenda each month. Shavon noted the teachers are

also working on goals and asked if they can be included also. Rona said they can be included.

Elise stated that since this is the first time around for the Board setting goals in this manner and that we are setting (Board, committee and school) goals simultaneously this year and will work through kinks as we go along. Each committee was asked to report on their goals and where the full Board involvement is anticipated.

Finance- John reviewed the Finance Committee's goals:

1. ICS "Funding Cliff" - due to what's projected to be a dramatic drop in funding that will likely hit sometime in the next 2 years, the primary Goal for the coming year is to work with the Administration/Business Manager in projecting how much funding we anticipate losing from existing revenue streams.
2. Identify Revenue Priorities - In conjunction with the above, the Finance Committee should begin to work with the Administration to identify areas that will likely be impacted by cost reductions in the coming years. These cuts may have potential to be funded by other sources [grants, gifts, etc], therefore this work should directly correspond with the External Relations Committees efforts, in addition to HR.
3. Financial Software Implementation - Purely oversight however is an important endeavor so that Administration & Business Manager are able to provide timely information without excessive amounts of manual labor.
4. Future Funding for Gym/Facilities – Given the current positive financial condition of the School, the Committee will explore a potential Bond Issue in conjunction with the Business Manager once a final decision has been made by the BOT regarding a new facility [South Street] or further construction to the existing building [Lombard St].

Derrick asked about the financial software package. John explained the Board had approved that last year in order to have less paper and more automation. Pam asked how the citizenship goals of the institution may impact on finance (i.e., who we would not use as a vendor). Rona stated that we may want to use Becky Baehr's suggestion of developing a checklist of items based on the OXFAM principles that we've adopted. Naomi said it would be helpful to have a discussion about this with Jerry Santilli. Rona stated this would need to be a goal of the whole Board. John suggested a first step is to look at our current vendors. Jurate noted that we try to do some basic things. For example, when we had the old lead-based painted fence down, we hired a company who would ensure its proper disposal. Stephanie suggested that the Board start with the Global Ed proposal and through OxFam documents.

Human Resources- Naomi reviewed the HR goals:

1. Develop a diversity recruiting program to initially target local, pre-graduate students interested in working at ICS.
2. Review the concept of "paid time off" to determine whether such a program is viable and should be implemented for 2011-12
3. Review the teacher position posting and notification process regarding contract renewals / non-renewals and propose potential changes to timing, process, etc.
4. Monitor and report on the progress of staff/teacher evaluations, including formal and informal visits, to committee and staff as the evaluations proceed
5. Regularly review issues referred to the committee by the full board and/or by staff and

consult with the administration regarding confidential personnel matters

Pedro asked whether there is discussion about how to retain staff and not have last minute resignations. Pam said we're somewhat limited in that we're just one school, so there are limited opportunities for advancement. Eli stated we need to try to create more leadership opportunities, not necessarily new positions. Pam said there are a lot of leadership opportunities. Shavon said that she feels there are two groups of teachers leaving: those who leave for professional advancement and those who talk about leaving, but may change their minds as they develop relationships within the ICS community. She noted that she is a Board rep in order to help nurture the building of relationships. She feels it is a matter of diversity in recruitment and retention. Naomi said the committee can re-visit the first goal to possibly make it broader; she will take that back to the committee's next meeting.

Policy- Eli reviewed the Policy Committee's goals:

1. Collaborate with other committees
2. Work on the admissions policy (at the October meeting), as well as a building use policy.
3. Increase communication about policies that have been passed by the Board, as well as student and staff policies.

Derrick asked whether we're obligated to open the building to the community. Jurate stated that is the type of school we want to be and want to change the impression of public schools. She noted that we cannot make this a profit venture, because that could cause us to possibly lose our lease reimbursement.

Curriculum- Pam review the Curriculum Committee's goals:

1. Middle States Accreditation- The Curriculum Committee will hear updates and discuss findings of the various committees working towards Middle States Accreditation related to curriculum and programs.
2. Global Education Team- This group of staff members meet regularly to consider the Global Education initiative and ensure that the curriculum and program are aligned with the goals of this program
3. Assessment and Differentiation- The result of extensive work of a staff committee in 2009-10 and the focus of administrative level training in the summer of 2010, new initiatives are underway in the areas of differentiation of instruction and assessment of student learning. This will be a primary focus of the professional development at ICS this year.
4. Language Acquisition Subcommittee- This staff committee will be meeting to discuss the FLES program, the Immersion program, as well as the Arabic language program being implemented in the Middle School with the FLAP grant. The subcommittee will consider optimal ways to align the language programs at ICS and articulate the goals and outcomes for these programs.
5. Parent Communication (related to curricular issues)- The Family & Community Partnerships liaison and the Principal will provide occasional updates on the implementation of many initiatives that were highlight in last year's review of the Parent Curriculum Communications study.

Pam noted that the committee is currently more of a reporting committee. She noted that the committee has met most items from the strategic plan. It is a place where administration and staff can come for conversation and discussion. The committee will probably prioritize the Global Ed leadership team to be sure we figure out how we know

when we've succeeded. Rona asked Stephanie if she is comfortable with this plan. Stephanie said that she is.

Board Development/Governance- Elsie reported that the Board members are circulating Brian Carpenter's book about Charter school boards. It talks about transitions such as the one happening with the Curriculum Committee. Elsie reported on the Board Development/Governance Committee's goals:

- a. Set up and manage processes of board goal setting and evaluation
- b. Create a policy re: board members and lottery preference
 - i. In conjunction with policy committee
 - ii. Will need full board discussion to establish board values around this question
- c. Evaluate the current committee line-up (esp. re: possibilities of re-creating a development committee and changing the status of the CR committee).
 - i. Will need full board discussion to determine whether there are essential functions that are not met by our current structure
- d. Evaluate the current "seat" designations (nature of parent rep seats, distinction between founder and community seats, Kristin's suggestion of a non-voting seat at the table for a PTA rep)
 - i. Will require full board discussion to orient board members to the historical function of the designated seats and to evaluate whether we have concerns about the constitution of the board over the long term (which may or may not be met by a system of designated seats).
- e. Evaluate and systematize our process of board recruitment and nomination. This process would include:
 - i. Assessment of current board make-up, including skills, diversity, parent and non-parent representation
 1. May involve full board discussion to determine the board's prioritization of criteria/needs
 - ii. Figure out how to prioritize our needs
 - iii. Create and meet annual goals and documentation of identification and cultivation of prospective board members
 1. In conjunction with the external relations committee
 - iv. Anticipating vacancies
- f. Create a schedule of board training which utilizes outside experts wherever possible and appropriate. Topics suggested by board members this year include:
 - i. How to anticipate changes in funding
 - ii. Developing a charter school "elevator speech"
 - iii. Developing an ICS "elevator speech"
 - iv. Orientation to the local political/educational environment.
 - v. Board member class visits
 - vi. ambassador training
- g. Review by-laws and oversee revision. This process would include:
 - i. Initial review of by-laws and identification of issues needing discussion or revision
 - ii. Delegation of issues to appropriate committees
 - iii. Proposing any necessary revisions on governance issues

Institutional Goals: Jurate reported on ICS's institutional goals:

1. ICS will accomplish 90-100% of the 2010-2011 goals for the Family & Community Partnership initiative, including planning for these goals. Generally, this planning in year one will target the following:

- improved communication from school to parents and vice versa via multiple links,
- improved opportunities for parent training on site and resource connections that will foster student support and success,
- improved outreach to include a greater diversity of parents in school like.

The Board of Trustees and administration will provide:

- necessary financial support
- necessary technical support
- necessary administrative support

2. ICS will reduce the achievement gap by a minimum of 10% as evidenced in Spring 2011 testing, in reading and math performance on the PSSA standardized tests for minority students, especially African American students, by providing

- targeted tutoring and extended learning opportunities
- targeted additional tutoring for test taking skills
- long-term planning for early learning acceleration such as evidenced through parent supports for early literacy in the K-2 population.

3. ICS will complete the Middle States Accreditation process by April 2011 with the expectation for recommendation for full accreditation in Fall 2011. Strategic goals will be developed within this process and will be made available for consideration by the Board of Trustees in December 2010 for resolution in February 2011.

Jurate asked that all requests for intervention by the Family & Community Partnerships liaison go through Jurate, not directly to Jenny. She noted that although 10% may sound like a small number, reducing the achievement gap by at least 10% is a lot. Jurate noted you can teach to the test, but research shows that doesn't help in the long-run. However, she noted that we can work on things like teaching students how to focus on reading long passage. We can also do things like Saturday test-taking strategy days, etc. She stated that we will plan parent workshops for our younger grades regarding reading, etc. Pam asked how this might connect to the goals of the Curriculum Committee, such as helping research some strategies that have worked in some other Philadelphia schools. Stephanie noted that one area is the PSSA test, but we need to look at other areas as well. Shavon stated that another issue may be that most of our staff are white middle class teachers, while we have many students of color. She stated there are a lot of international teachers who may not have prior experience with students of color in the USA. She suggests combining efforts, not only looking at the academic gaps, but also the social gaps. Rona said this sounds like a great institutional goal. Jurate stated that we have decided to start with an outside presenter to address that issue. Eli noted that we have to be sure to share this information once we find something that works well, and recommended asking staff to document as this is working. Stephanie noted that the staff have already taken the leadership and created goals, which are now being edited. Pedro asked about the goal of extending learning opportunities, to be sure that we include organized sports.

Elsie asked that committees report in relation to how your committee is working on your goals, stating that will give us benchmarks for assessing whether the goals are being reached. Rona stated that the extended day goal is connected to closing the achievement gap. Rona asked how technology fits in; Pam said it connects to Global Ed. Shavon and Jurate agreed that it give teachers more opportunities to use different methods of teaching. Rona asked how expansion fits in; Jurate and Shavon said they feel that has to do with teachers' recruitment and retention. Jurate stated that the new movie "Waiting for

Superman” really shows why we’re here. Derrick asked if the main point with things like the wish list should all be connected with the goals. Rona said that way we are working with a plan, although sometimes there are just things that need to be done. Rona reminded committee chairs to be sure to hold off bringing items with budgetary impact until March when we’re planning for next year’s budget.

IX. New Business

Rona stated that we can have Jurate speak in detail on the CEO’s mission and vision at the next meeting. Jurate stated that she has developed a list of how we do things. She asked the Board to review this and will give a fuller report at the next meeting. Rona clarified that this is something the Board has asked as to how the work of the school is meeting the school’s mission and vision.

Rona noted that the Board will be discussing the lottery timing process at its meeting next month.

X. Adjournment

Elsie moved for adjournment; Pam seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

Handouts circulated at this meeting:

Agenda
CEO report
July 2010 financials
Curriculum report
Finance report
Construction Update
PTA report
Middle States update & timeline

**Independence Charter School
September 15, 2010
Resolutions**

ADOPTED

Founder Seats Clarification

WHEREAS all ICS Trustees who hold Founder Seats are expected to actively participate in the development of the Founders' mission and vision for the school, and
WHEREAS (sections 4.5.1) of the by-laws require a minimum number of Founders on the board,

Be it hereby resolved that those ICS Trustees who currently hold Founder Seats shall be considered ICS Founders as of September 1, 2010.

July Disbursements

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby approve disbursements from the month of July 2010 in the amount of \$145,829.66 as presented to the Board.

Increased Insurance Coverage

Be it resolved that the Independence Charter School Board of Trustees hereby accept & approve the quote from Boardman Hamilton to increase the umbrella insurance for the School by \$5,000,000 to a total of \$15,000,000 at the cost of \$3,750.00.

**Resolutions
DEFEATED
None**

**Resolutions
TABLED
None**