



## RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

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### SPECIAL MEETING – STAKEHOLDER MEETING

**Date:** April 26, 2011

**Time:** 6:00PM

**Minutes recorded by:** Nancy Sousa

**Minutes approved on:**

**Interpreters:** Maureen McAntee, Carol Fay

**CART:** Shelly Deming

#### **Call to Order**

Chairperson Travis Zellner called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:02 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.

#### **Roll Call of Board of Trustees**

- a. **In Attendance:** Travis Zellner, Mary Wambach, Marie Lynch, Jodi Merryman, Westley Resendes, Angelo Garcia, Iraida Williams (arrived at 7:00)
- b. **Excused:** Amy D Roche, Harvey Corson,

#### **Adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2)**

- c. **MOVED Mary Wambach AND SECONDED Jodi Merryman:** That the Board would adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2) at 6:05 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- d. **MOVED Westley Resendes and SECONDED Mary Wambach:** That the Board would return to Open Session at 6:28 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- e. **MOVED Mary Wambach AND SECONDED Westley Resendes:** That the Board would seal the minutes of Executive Session. Approved unanimously.

**Andrea Castenada (from RIDE) PLA Reform Model Presentation:**

She noted that the federal government directs the state to choose at least five low achieving schools every year and we are one of them. This is a very serious turning point for RISD. She presented a brief explanation with the major points in each of the four transformation model choices; noting that rules in all models are not flexible, not optional; you can add, but cannot take away from any of the models. They tell you what to do but not how to do it; you will get guidance from RIDE – we have no opinions on which one you should choose.

All models focus on dramatic and rapid improvement with a fast time line- need to make decisions; write plans and start the work. All models expect that all adults work together – this will be a major overhaul for RISD. Three items to concentrate on:

1. What are RISD's unique strengths and needs?
2. Determine why RISD has a history of low performance?
3. Find pieces that are especially powerful or especially poorly suited to our school in the models that are presented, to help in your decision.

**Ms. Castenada** stressed that these four models are from the US Government, not the state of Rhode Island – we must comply with all aspects of the model chosen. We will have to choose our model by the May 3, 2011 meeting. She agreed to answer questions from the staff and public.

Questions were asked re: the option to extend the school year/day – there has to be enough time added to meaningfully change the education of students; if Model 2 were chosen – Restart – how would organization be selected and what does it look like?

**Ms. Castenada** stated that it would have to be a competitive process with the school and RIDE advertising for organizations interested in running the school; other schools have formed partnerships with teachers and the school district; others have a qualified company come in to manage the day to day running of the school. The school is responsible for reaching out to parents; with any of the models, BOT makes the decision for the next Director.

Another asked if it was typical that deaf schools are considered low-performing. **Ms. Castenada** noted that we do not have a choice in using the state assessment-

cannot be excluded because we're small or students have special needs. Questions on the Restart model-most common is that a for-profit or not-for-profit organization comes in to operate the school; BOT makes governing decisions. Same measures will have to be used to measure success; make the important distinction once model is chosen to set school turn-around is very hard work-a three year plan-your target needs to be targets for improvements than can supplement NECAP analysis. She noted that **ambitious but achievable**. Public member noted that there is a law on the books that protects the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; no matter what model is chosen, NECAP is inappropriate measure of achievement for our students.

**Chair** greeted everyone – very interested in your input – noted that the brochures were printed by RIDE and include our function, goals & mission statement – developed from stakeholder input. Again tonight-looking for your input to help us decide on the model to choose. We have Spanish and Portuguese interpreters. Each person will have three minutes to speak; if you have more to say, please communicate with us through email or written letter; Mary Pendergast is the primary contact for PLA.

Stakeholder/Public Comments: (attached copies of public comments)

PLA Reform Model Questions & Answers: included above and:

**Chair** expressed the Board's commitment to make the right choice with stakeholder input; a decision will have to be made within the next two weeks; Saturday will be another stakeholder meeting. Jennifer Smith from RIDE will be here Saturday to explain the same information that we went over tonight.

Public member asked about RIDE's involvement after model selection?

**Ms. Castenada** answered that the Office of Transformation staff is responsible to work with the schools; there are ten schools involved – the most successful turnaround involves the school figuring out what to do – some money will be available on a competitive basis – chosen on quality of plan. RIDE will provide technical assistance – RIDE more involved with RISD than any other school in state. Questions were asked of the Board re the process of choosing a new Director?

**Chair:** all personnel practices will be on hold until we choose a model. Re Model 2 – is there a Director? – cannot be answered at this time; Ms. Dunsmore is the Director at this time; Mary Pendergast is focusing on change (PLA). Another public member asked if the Model 2 would mean a conversion to a new type of school-a pause in the life of the school and then re-open with the basic format of the school the same?

**Ms Castenada** answered that any of the models call for dramatic over-haul of everything about running the school; we would still be a state day-school serving the deaf and hard of hearing students-that’s only thing that stays the same. Chair explained that the restart model does not say how and what the limitations might be; there is a process to follow – any interested organization will have to bid; we have to live within all of the rules of state government. If we go out to bid and can’t find an organization capable to run the school, can we choose another model and go forward? We do have a time constraint and have to choose a model within 30 days. Public member asked and was given an explanation of what a Charter School is – it is a public school in which school is separate and has flexibility to organize around a specific theme- must submit a very specific application – sometimes takes one and one half years to complete.

**Mary Pendergast** noted that she and the Board are working with RIDE; this is a chance to look at different aspects of the school; ready to face problems.

**Chair** noted that the Strategic Plan is the starting point – must choose a model that fits our goals.

**Motions from Executive Session: None**

**Agenda Items and Next Meeting Date: 4/30/26 special meeting**

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## **II. Adjournment**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.