



## **MEETING MINUTES – GENERAL MEETING**

**Date:** May 3, 2011

**Time:** 6:00PM

**Minutes recorded by:** Nancy Sousa

**Minutes approved on:**

**Interpreters:** Carol Fay, Jon Henry and Maureen McEntee

Cart: Shelley Deming

RIDE: Jennifer Smith

### **Call to Order**

- a. Chairperson Travis Zellner called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.

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

- b. **In Attendance:** Mary Wambach, Marie Lynch, Amy D Roche, Iraida Williams (left at 8:05 p.m.) , Jodi Merryman, Westley Resendes, Harvey Corson, Angelo Garcia.
- c. **Excused:**

Before going into Executive Session there was a discussion re: the pending decision and whether or not the discussion of formatting the decision could be held in closed session – **Atty Sara Rapport:** no exceptions under Open Meetings Act – all discussions related to choosing the reform model must be held in Open Session – it must be transparent. The impact of each model on the CBA can be discussed in Executive Session – can be confidential.

**Chair:** Mary Pendergast will do a presentation and then we will ask for public comments outside of PLA...the discussion of the individual models and our decision-making process will be in open session, creating an opportunity for the public to determine how we made our decision.

**Adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2) – Grievance**

- d. **MOVED Iraida Williams AND SECONDED Mary Wambach:** That the Board would adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2) at 6:15 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- e. **MOVED Angelo Garcia AND SECONDED Jodi Merryman:** That the Board would return to Open Session at 7:02 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- f. **MOVED Westley Resendes AND SECONDED Iraida Williams:** That the Board would seal the minutes of Executive Session. Approved unanimously.

**Motions from Executive Session: None**

**Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes**

- Mar 1, 2011 – Tabled
- April 5, 2011 - Tabled
- April 12, 2011 - Tabled

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Chair** announced that anyone has an opportunity to say anything outside of PLA. There were no Public Comments.

**PLA REFORM MODEL SELECTION:**

Mary Pendergast presented a binder to all BOT members and went through a Power Point presentation – included in her presentation: NECAP scores and other assessments (summarized last 3 years and comparison data) – our numbers are so small that we have to speak in broad terms; members stressed that language/communication skills are an issue with the students that come to us – many times it takes 3-4 years to get language; that time is lost in achieving growth in learning. She noted that RIDE looked at student growth and improvement in reading and math; this is the criteria that RIDE used to determine PLA – we have to show growth, movement and achievement in NECAP; realize we need other assessments. We are only school in RI with 100% IEPs; we have other testing assessments for Deaf and Hard of Hearing – using NWEA since last year.

**Member** asked if there is an ASL or sign proficiency assessment to compare our students. Also included in the presentation/binders: Report Cards, graduation rates, No Child Left Behind reports, UFCOA graph, budget and staff.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS:** 55 attended, 16 submitted in writing, of those – 20% wanted the RESTART model, 80% wanted the TRANSFORMATION model. Common needs identified: increase parent involvement, ASL classes for staff and families, Early Intervention-Outreach, language instruction-bilingual/bicultural, standards-based curriculum, teacher evaluation, deaf awareness and deaf culture, transition and vocational programs, community involvement, better leadership and consultation with staff, reduce admin staff, provide ELL.

**Member** commended RIDE, Chair and staff re working together to gather information.

**Break: 8:17 p.m.**

**Chair:** in the Model explanations, we will not use numbers at all, the models are: CLOSURE, RESTART, TRANSFORMATION, TURNAROUND.

**Jennifer Smith (from RIDE):** Are there any models that you could take off the table – to allow opportunity to discuss the ones that are popular?

Discussion ensued re: the Closure model – members expressed that Closure is not practical because we are the only Deaf school in the state; not popular with families; another

**Member** suggested that going through each model is important – with our mission statement in front of us – it is not OK to take Closure off the table – she has had people approach her about closing the school – it is worth discussing – we owe it to the public to have the conversation. Every town is obliged to honor IEPs – why not send students back to the districts?

**Vice-Chair** noted that she has thought long and hard about the issue of closure – her concern is that a mainstream model for Deaf students has not been developed; from personal experience, most Deaf kids have hearing parents who have no experience in communication, the family is disconnected-need more family time.

**Member:** we are making judgments on present state of school-not the potential of what this school can be; the districts are already struggling with kids with IEPs – remove closure as option – we have not exhausted our resources and potential. Another member noted that we finally have a strategic plan – districts are not prepared for Deaf students and can't provide for their needs; this is a brand new school, can't throw it away. Other

members agreed about taking closure off table; make our decision transparent-our job is about tomorrow-we have to hire people to be part of today.

**Member** noted that per federal guidelines (1992) all education programs must provide options for Deaf children; we have updated our website and the brochure is great – it's all about the future; partnership with families and school districts.

**Chair asked for consensus on taking CLOSURE off table – all agreed.....**

Next model to discuss: RESTART – Merits?

**Vice-Chair:** do not support the Restart model – we will not be able to find an EMO to run this school – maybe for Operations, but not goals of the education – can't support Restart model.

**Member:** also concerned with finding an organization for students who are Deaf with IEPs, especially with the time-lines involved; trying to find an appropriate EMO could take longer; some of the schools who recently tried this, not successful.

**Member:** agreed about Restart model – it is easier to find one person rather than an organization team; we may have a few candidates.

**Member:** can't comment on Restart model because we haven't explored the possibility of the costs involved, appropriateness, who is going to pay for it? – Can't make this decision

Another member noted that any decision has implications on human capital, curriculum, etc. Who will run the school? Who teaches? How numbers change? We need to really start looking at all public comments-we don't have enough information to make a decision.

**Chair:** Good points – it is hard to make a decision – we need to have more analysis of all models. I really support Restart model: the school has had one leader and one after another failed-others will too. There are other organizations out there that want to help us, if we choose Restart, advertising would be very clear – would need proven accreditation, communication, etc. – I don't think we can find one person who can run this right; can pick one leader to take care of legislation; school-wide focus for survival...we can't make a decision tonight, but Restart looks very good to me.

**Vice-Chair:** agree in some ways, but I suspect, even though there are people out there, they do not have EMO experience-I wonder if someone is out there with expertise in this one specific area.

**Member:** thanks for honoring my need for process; took notes on Saturday; would be comfortable with any of the 3 models if we could write a plan for an agency or leader – to address language, bilingual, cultures, proficiency, moving faster and further – human capital education expertise, family engagement – concept of difference and capacity – special education is not an excuse, our students have capacity to learn – we need leadership who understands Deafness in terms of academics.

**Chair:** We will release the “Closure off table” tomorrow; will continue on May 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss the other models and take a consensus. Next meeting will be special meeting with one agenda item – PLA Reform Model; we may have an Executive Session.

**Member:** I am concerned about how can we discuss Restart if we don’t know what our options are?

**Jennifer Smith:** asked that members send her specific questions about the remaining models – start at the end game – our kids’ needs...the future-moving forward, drives the decision; can’t tell you which model is best.

**Vice-Chair:** it is important to all of us that we have information before Tuesday night so that we can make a responsible decision.

**Chair:** we are all on the same page - email your questions to Mary Pendergast – she will forward to Jennifer.

**Agenda Items and Next Meeting Date: May 10, 2011**

---

**II. Adjournment**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.