



RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

SPECIAL MEETING

Date: May 10, 2011

Time: 6:00PM

Minutes recorded by: Nancy Sousa

Minutes approved on:

Interpreters: Jon Henry, Maureen McAntee, Carol Fay

CART: Shelley Deming

RIDE: Andrea Castenada

ATTY: Sara Rapport

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, , Amy D Roche, Jodi Merryman, Harvey Corson, Angelo Garcia
- b. **Excused:** Iraida Williams, Westley Resendes,

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

- c. **MOVED Amy D Roche AND SECONDED Harvey Corson:** That the Board would adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2) at 6:03 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- d. **MOVED Amy D Roche and SECONDED Angelo Garcia:** That the Board would return to Open Session at 6:57 p.m.. Approved unanimously.
- e. **MOVED Mary Wambach AND SECONDED Jodi Merryman:** That the Board would seal the minutes of Executive Session. Approved unanimously.

Motions from Executive Session: Board in consensus to authorize Chair to resolve Knight grievance (sign settlement agreement).

OPEN SESSION: 7:00 p.m.

PLA REFORM MODEL SELECTION:

Chair: We are here to pick one of three remaining models; want to have open, effective dialog. Andrea Castenada is here from RIDE to answer questions – our discussion centers on student needs; our goal is to be all on same page. Re: budget, Andrea will explain process of PLA funding and Corsino Delgado will tell us what money is available from our school budget.

Ms. Castenada: 4 potential funds of money:

1. State money – part of operating budget – there are some unencumbered dollars
2. Race to the Top (RTTT) money – given \$75,000 to support school reform efforts; not discretionary-committed to be spent on placement of person in this building to support transformation.
3. School Improvement Grant-G Funds – competitively managed pot of money-amount of money based on quality of your application.
4. Federal dollars available on short-term basis to support planning work between now and Sept. 30.

All represent different needs – and must be spent and delivered by 9/30.

Member asked if the federal money could be used to hire someone to help us write grant.

Ms. Castenada: Yes, you can use federal money to hire High Quality consultant to move school through the process.

Chair and Members had questions about hiring a high quality consultant in deaf education; help with the RFP process; should that model be chosen, how long would process be; can we use the same consultant used in the past; approved list of vendors; purchasing process; possibility of finding an organization positioned to provide educational services to the deaf and hard of hearing; budget constraints.

Corsino Delgado reported that for next year our budget requests are reduced \$588,000 – roughly 8%, 3% cut across salaried personnel, balance in operating costs; RIDE is going along with what the governor recommended – won't see approval till July; we did anticipate this cut; we do not have a surplus; some monies can be carried over and spent by 9/30; were given \$288,000 in stimulus funds – still have to make-up about \$300,000; federal funds are restricted and can't be converted.

Ms. Castenada answered members' questions by simply stating that the RFP process is complicated -how long it takes depends on what you want and how much money you are

going to spend; probably will take 120 days at a minimum. If you could choose from a list of approved vendors, process is expedited – you can contract with these vendors for up to \$50,000; PSI status does not solve this process; once you pick a model, you have 120 days to form a plan; will be difficult to find organizations that are positioned to provide the kinds of services our students need, but an organization can sub-contract out.

Chair: this is a difficult decision; must think of student needs; since Board established 11 years ago, there has been three administrative groups, each with pros and cons; we have not been able to meet NECAP objectives; teachers have never been evaluated; requests for professional development increased; teachers are all committed-some need help, some are very successful. We must make it very clear that we will follow BEP and RIDE; there are areas student needs are not getting support; impact to students starts at the top. Let's look at the models that will provide support, evaluation; incentives, guidance.

Member: I bring perspective from the field of deaf education – have led four school systems and all faced same challenges re: support, evaluation, strengths, family communication and commitment and community outreach. Our students arrive here not ready for learning-without language/communication skills. This is typical school for deaf; we need to focus on the parents, community outreach and early screenings; help families cope with the realities of deafness and hearing loss; find creative ways to develop language access-look at their needs prior to entering school. We should seriously consider spending time and money to get out to the families – stop blaming tests and teachers.

Chair and Members: agreed with above statements; feel that the new brochure will help to communicate with families; history of deaf education is not a happy story; whatever model we pick is about making the situation better for children as a group; to have them lead productive lives; not trying to punish teachers.

Member: In conversation with a local Assistant Principal, I realized what an exciting opportunity this is to build a curriculum with vertical teaming, bilingual communication; stressed that communication is the most important part of learning.

Chair: we have three remaining models (up on screen) to choose from.....let's talk about each model with each member to confirm if supporting or not supporting.

RESTART:

Members voiced concerns/pros and cons: timeframe for RFP; appropriate EMO vendors being found; difficulty of incorporating things from other models into Restart; budget (one of the four pots of money can be used to support an EMO-our

budget is subset of RIDE) and typical cost of EMO--how to write an RFP to ensure EMO can provide radical, rapid improvement of student outcomes; no approved EMO vendors on state list; adding certain elements to contract re the relationship between board and the EMO and contractual services. Another member asked about agencies that have chosen the Restart model – how long it takes to get up and running and if it cuts into three-year response time....this is a very specific school and the Restart model would make the process even longer.

Ms. Castenada: RIDE's response is that, according to protocol, we would have to find an organization with a credible track record of successfully managing this work--would have to be an independent body-incorporated or a regional collaborative; cannot be a single person.

Chair: noted that over the course of PSI and now PLA, other people have expressed interest in helping the school.....former directors are interested, as well as Joe Fischgrund, Bill Corwin, Mike Bello, Harvey Corson of BOT. The Learning Center has looked at Restart and would be willing to help us. We do have a list of EMO hearing organizations; if we went with Restart model, could we contract with existing organizations that deal with special needs, etc.?

Ms. Castenada answered that all would have to apply through the RFP process – the State is the steward of the public's money; procurement rules exist to ensure standard process.

Member: Do not like Restart - an EMO is a management organization certified to conduct business, manage funds and personnel – believe that it will be impossible to find an organization with experience in deafness.

Member: I am in favor of Restart process because it gives us boundaries; feel it will take just as much time to fill the position with one effective, unique individual. We need rapid, radical improvement...putting that on one person is setting ourselves up for failure; this is our opportunity and responsibility to look at every option.

TURNAROUND:

Chair: what are your thoughts on Turnaround? It is not my choice – would have to let everyone go without an evaluation.....

Member: agreed that getting rid of half of the staff is not a good idea – where is the pool of teachers certified to teach deaf? I would not support Turnaround.

Member: I disagree – see similarities in Restart and Turnaround model – we must have radical, rapid movement – either model would be hard, but it's evident that what we've been doing is not working; agree that getting rid of 50% is scary. As a special

education director, realize that deaf students also need access to general education – reading specialists, range of access always with communication; we need to change something for our students.

Member: Could we find the other 50% of teachers? There are so many issues, and our first priority is the children; we don't want to place blame or punishment; we have some highly qualified teachers here; need to get integrated in community.

Member: I appreciate everyone's point of view, but consequences of choosing Turnaround are much too profound; I am leaning towards Restart or Transformation.

Member: All models have pros and cons. Let's figure out the needs of our children. Change requires time and commitment...we must have success in three years. I don't believe effectiveness of EMO depends on who we find – believe in team approach; bring in a different kind of leader/team. Instead of the teacher being the king of the classroom – form teaching teams with different skills – Transformation model would be my choice – it's a new ballgame - do things differently with different curriculum and approach to teaching and working with families-make a dynamic change; all will benefit from team approach – an EMO leaves after three years, then we will have to deal with these problems again.

Chair: So if we look at the Transformation model, would you be satisfied?

Member: No, I prefer Restart but could live with Turnaround – looking at NECAP scores and performance over the last 11 years – can't believe hiring a new person will increase proficiency rapidly. This is a real challenge for one reason – it takes a bit more of a shake-up-write terms into contract with EMO rather than with a person – easier to move change.

Ms. Castenada: re questions about replacing a principal with an EMO or administrative team – budget, administrative credentials, certification, cannot be avoided. Decision under purview of the Board; division of duties can be enacted in any model.

Member: Leadership has been wanting; I believe Transformation model could affect real change; NECAP not proficient for our students.

Break at 8:25 p.m.

Members expressed many of the same concerns, pros and cons as above, e.g. Transformation has most flexibility to build and design programs using deaf education models; raise standards for high school students; hire regular teachers to

teach English, math and science; encourage ownership of faculty, staff and families; use team approach for success in long run.

Chair: same could occur with Restart model – bringing in EMO with proven management and team support – idea of one person too risky for me.

Ms. Castenada: re questions from members on the possibility of going with Restart and not being able to find an appropriate EMO for our school and the same for not being able to find a head of school....in any event, RIDE is responsible to help maintain operational integrity of the school.

Member: Any good organization has to have a team leader; can't hire an EMO without a leader-run the risk of having a leader-less school. Hire a right and good leader to apply all the principles our students need.

(A woman in audience wanted to speak, was told that there was no public comment at this meeting.)

Member: there is a very simple history lesson here; searched for leader 3 times in last 11 years – assuming all our teachers are qualified and capable – we have 3 strikes – have to change the game and look toward Restart with a group of individuals.

Chair: In Restart model, Board can identify leader.

Member: I will support whatever majority decides as a group, and look at the vendors; what happens if chosen group does not work out – can we change?

Ms. Castenada: technical answer = yes; but real answer is that you would have to have real compelling reasons – you need to think of it as a 3-year commitment.

Member: we have best interests of students at heart; looks like blame is on teachers; definitely look at this as jumping-off point, not end result; it's disturbing no matter what direction we go in; posture ourselves to keep thinking about the students. The lack of parental presence is an issue; Restart does not displace large groups of people at this time – want to go ahead with Restart.

Chair: who is in favor of Restart model – who could live with it?

Members: Jodi – yes, Amy - yes, Marie: yes as long as EMO is totally appropriate for this school – for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing – really know how to do it all and raise the bar.

Chair: asked Ms. Castenada to help us understand and list all concerns regarding Restart model; the deadline is this Friday – includes objectives? With 50,000, could we hire a consultant to write RFP?

Ms. Castenada: while there is a state-approved vendor list, there is not an EMO on that list; as far as the process of the BOT notifying commissioner=describe the stake-

holder process, meet all criteria, describe needs that you considered; there are available resources in RIDE to write RFP – no need for consultant to write it.

Member: Without a list of EMOs, following state purchasing laws, how much time will process take?

Ms. Castenada: Normal time for an RFP is 90-120 days assuming it moves without problems; if you're contemplating start of school year, expect and demand a partnership from RIDE to help between EMO or Director hiring.

Chair: going back to member's suggestion of choosing Transformation.....

Amy: I don't know if I could live with Transformation model, want Restart.

Angelo: Restart is my choice.

Marie: I can live with either.

Jodi: I can live with Restart or Transformation.

Mary: No, I cannot live with it; consensus on Transformation is more acceptable to others.

Harvey: Looks like we have two choices – Transformation model says to replace principal or school leader – I like Transformation – administration, parents and families support Transformation; things can change drastically – advocate for Transformation.

Chair: Board could advertise for new leader – could be a team with one person behind that team.

Angelo: remind ourselves when looking at Restart model-we can add to that model from others – take away the best of what would benefit our students.

Chair: looks like we can't come to consensus – take a formal vote? Narrowed to two models – whichever gets the most votes – Restart or Transformation – do we want to follow Angelo's suggestion for an informal vote?

For Restart Model: Moved Angelo Garcia, Amy D. Roche Seconded –

Vote withdrawn.

For Transformation Model: Moved Harvey Corson – Amy D Roche and Angelo Garcia: not comfortable with an "I can live with it" vote – seems indifferent to want consensus.

Harvey: vote on which one you favor – one with most votes – wins.

Chair: In favor of Transformation???

Marie: I disagree with Angelo, there are pros and cons of each model – make the best of both-Restart is problematic – Transformation makes more sense – there were lots of issues that affected the past hirings; "living with it" not a point of indifference.

Angelo: Vernacular makes us look like we are indifferent; not taking it lightly; not about perception; not just be flip about it.

Chair: it is 9:00 p.m....

Do we have a consensus in favor of Transformation – raise hands.

Three members and Chair in favor of Transformation

Chair: do we have a consensus in favor of Restart – raise hands.

Two members in favor; one member did not vote for either.

Chair: It seems that Transformation is the chosen model – can your concerns be transferred?

Harvey: Let the record show how many voted for each model.

Attorney Rapport: You do not have consensus on Transformation – you have to Vote.....answer indicated by opinions.

Chair: Vote for Transformation Model:

Motion made by Harvey Corson, Seconded by Marie Lynch – all in favor?

Harvey Corson, Marie Lynch, Jodi Merryman, Travis Zellner

Not in favor = Angelo Garcia, Mary Wambach, Amy D Roche

Chair: Motion carried – Transformation Model is our selection.

Agenda Items and Next Meeting Date:

II. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.