



MEETING MINUTES – General Meeting

Date: November 08, 2017

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by: Mary Pendergast

Minutes approved on: December 13, 2017

ASL Interpreters: Jessica Morgan and Shauna Jehle

CART Reporter: Shelly Deming

Call to Order: (6:30 PM)

- a. Chairperson Montgomery called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf of Trustees to Order at 6:39p.m.

Roll call of Board of Trustees

- a. **Trustees in Attendance:** Amanda Montgomery, Jodi Merryman, Danielle Loughlin, Joe Fischgrund and Nora Meah
- b. **Excused** – Jane Canulla
- c. **Administration in Attendance** – Director Nancy Maguire Heath, Amy Vincenzi, Assistant Director for Finance and Operations, Barbara Cesana, Assistant MS/HS Principal, and Mary Pendergast, Special Education Administrator

Public Comment: (6:30 PM-6:35 PM)

- No one registered for public comment

Acceptance of Previous Minutes:

- Joe Fishgrund made a motion to approve September 13, 2017 meeting minutes; Danielle Loughlin seconded by motion approved with all in favor.

Report of the Chair of the Board of Trustees:

- Chairperson Montgomery apologized for having to cancel last month's meeting due to no ASL interpreter availability. She indicated that she had nothing else to report except for the continued search for a few new Board of Trustee members.

Report of the Director:

- Director Maguire Heath reported the middle school students met their Hurricane Harvey relief fundraising goal for the Texas School for the Deaf. They had a video-conference with students at that school last week and got to meet some of the students from the school who were affected by the devastating hurricane.
- Soccer season is over and basketball season is starting. There will be a youth team and a varsity team this year.

- The Powerschool new student information system is a disappointment. What the company sales personnel promised was, in fact, not possible for them to produce. The team is trying to decide whether to stay with Powerschool for the duration of this year, despite its significant limitations, or return to Rediker. Because we are small, the reports we needed to be generated are unique and not compatible with Powerschool after all. The administration attempted to hire a consultant to help work out some of the kinks but they said they could not customize the system sufficiently to meet our needs. Jodi Merryman asked if there would be any financial ramifications. Nancy reported that Amy is working on a solution. To date we have not paid them anything but if we stop the contract we will pay them a pro-rated amount to cover the 4 months of use. We signed a one-year contract but they have failed to meet the expectations communicated to the school therefore we expect to be able to end this agreement.
- Joe Fischgrund reported that he knows of some other schools for the Deaf that are using Powerschool and he wondered if we could contact them to see if they were having similar problems.
- Director Maguire Heath shared that in the Board packets she included information on current after school activities and information on a blood drive being sponsored in Steve Florio's name (Commissioner of the State agency -Deaf and Hard of Hearing), who has been battling a serious illness.
- There is a packet included with the data from benchmark assessments in ELA and Math for elementary, middle and high school from May 2017 and October 2017. It is significant to note after analysis of the data it was determined that the regression from this cycle is markedly less than in previous May to October cycles.
- In past years the data revealed on average a regression of up to 40%. Last year we saw that percentage decrease and this year the decrease was even more significant. The regression was quite minimal and some students even made gains from May to October. This is a first and we see this data as evidence that the ESY program, which has been strengthened with the support of the Teacher's Union, is helping a great deal. Other contributing factors include the introduction of *Thinking Maps*, skills repetition, and fidelity to the curriculum, i.e. Bedrock ASL Grammar. For the students who demonstrated regression, we are concerned but have some understanding as to why. Joe Fischgrund thanked the Director for presenting the data. He also wondered why the students closest to grade level expectations had more significant regression. He wondered if this is a red flag for future risk and how do we use that information. He asked if a summer shared reading program might help to minimize that regression. The assessment information allows us to identify concerns and target more specific interventions moving forward. She shared that she is encouraged by this data and will look closely at regression or stagnation in the mid-year data after students have been in school for some time.
- Nora Meah was grateful to see the data as presented, in particular the middle school math. She asked if the middle school cohort had more experience taking the STAR. Director Maguire Heath answered that late middle and early high school have the most experience with the test. Nora Meah asked if fall Star is review of previously learned content or new content. The Director replied a combination of both. The new separation of middle and high school (previously Secondary) into separate entities has also made an impact that is encouraging.
- Barbara Cesana, Assistant Principal shared that we started looking at the data more consistently with staff last year and that seems to have made a change in their practice. Next, we will have protocols for sharing data with students. She mentioned that middle school has had longest consistent exposure to the new curriculum being taught with fidelity. The Director mentioned that high school also has access to skill practice through programs on the Chromebooks that they take home. The Director pointed out that we did not look at the regression data through the 3 cohorts (Deaf, Deaf

ELL and Deaf plus additional special needs) this time because she specifically wanted to see a school wide picture.

Special Guest: (7:20 PM – 8 PM with break at 7:30 PM) The Wycliffe Group, Strategic Plan, Alex Chu

- A report and presentation of the Wycliffe Group's final draft of the strategic plan by Alex Chu began by framing the conversation about the process. The process has been year-long. Objectives have grown and changed throughout the process. The plan arrives at what the Stakeholders and school aspire to. The document provided is not a completed strategic plan. A Strategic Plan grows and changes and develops over time. Still pending is the Board's review revision and adoption of the plan.
- Alex did a walk through the document to illustrate points that warrant further discussion or to highlight how certain things were arrived at when beginning to determine next steps.
- A chart of proposed timelines for goal completion is ordered by priority. He reviewed the goals in more detail sharing stakeholder feedback. He reviewed things to consider when forming partnerships to support the attainment of goals.
- Alex proposed work that the Board and School still have ahead. There should be focused conversations about document and consensus about the mission, vision statement, the goals and objectives and setting benchmarks to monitor progress toward achieving the goals. The group should also identify tasks required to meet those objectives. He provided some potential benchmarks and metrics to measure progress towards goals.

Discussion of proposal -

- Nora Meah asked about the process used for prioritizing goals. Alex shared that they used a cluster analysis of feedback about urgency of tasks as organized on timelines during stakeholder meetings. They also used other feedback provided by stakeholders at the meetings.
- Joseph Fischgrund commented that our mission, vision statement and core values when clarified could perhaps assist with a clear definition of who we can provide services to without limiting what we can be to whom.
- There was some discussion of clarifying language in the plan to reflect the variety of students we serve.
- Chairperson Montgomery proposed for next steps that each Board Member spend some time reviewing the report in greater detail in preparation for discussion at the next meeting.
- Alex offered to update the plan with any feedback sent to him by the end of next week. The Board members will email Director Maguire Heath with any feedback.

Report of the Assistant Director

- Assistant Director Vincenzi reported on the new line item in the budget for the school lunch program. This line item is needed to get a purchase order to purchase student lunches.
- Assistant Director Vincenzi shared strategies to manage the unexpected bridge closure at the bottom of Hawkins near Branch Avenue. This has proven to be a large inconvenience for families, for which the City has no solutions.
- HR has slowed down after hiring several new employees. The latest was a contract Speech Language Pathologist. Her name is Emma Rogers.
- Negotiations have begun with the RISDeaf Teachers Union. The Council 94 contract expires soon as well. The contract with 2012 is also soon to be renegotiated. The Teacher's Assistants contract will expire at the end of this school year. It is expected that current fiscal and budget implications will pose a challenge in negotiations.

- As was reported previously the school had an unexpected deficit last year due to incorrect figures provided to us related to personnel costs. We've been instructed to justify the deficit and to provide a corrective action plan for the cost of health insurance, FICA, etc related to salaries.
- No new business at this time.
- **Next meeting will be on 12/13 at 6:30 PM**
- **Adjournment: 8:43pm**

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