



Independence Academy
675 29 Rd Grand Junction, CO 81504
Phone: (970) 254-6850 Fax: (970) 241-2064

Board Meeting Minutes
Monday March 29, 2021
5:00 P.M

Meeting Call to Order: 5:11 pm

Role Call :

Present

- **Brad Thompson**
- **Brandy Savoni**
- **Sherry Price**
- **Hadassa Berger**
- **Abbie Siegmund**

Absent-None

I. Staff and Student Celebrations:

- A. Megan Henry shared some recent art projects. One is a picture wing that were fabricated by Mrs. Berger's company that will be permanently hung outside the new art room for students to take pictures. She also shared different projects throughout the school year, including a recent display of student work in the Aspen Art Museum.
- B. All students who applied to the STEM program at Central were accepted and 8 out of the 10 students who applied to the Palisade IB program were accepted.

II. Public Comment: Time-limited TBA – individuals may make public comment, limited to items on the agenda, and two (2) minutes. The Governing Board asks that each member complete a public comment card, available in the front office, prior to commencement of the meeting. Public comment cards should be given to the Executive Director who will then deliver them to the Governing Board President.

- A. None at this time

III. Approval of the February 22nd Board Minutes

Motion: Abbie Siegmund

Second: Brad thompson

Vote:5-0 Passes

IV. Approval of the February 2021 Financials

Motion: Abbie Siegmund

Second: Brandy Savoni

Vote: 5-0 Passes

V. Approval for Brad Thompson to authorize up to \$60,000.00 in order to facilitate the installation and update of the automated sprinkler system, using reimbursed Capital Construction funds.

Motion: Abbie Siegmund

Second:Hadassa Berger

Vote:5-0 Passes

VI. Discussion about the current relationship with District 51

A. Mrs. Gonsalves reviewed some obstacles and struggles she has run into when working with the district.

1. IACS was left out of the recent planning for middle school sports. She was told repeatedly by the director of Athletics that IACS is not part of the district and that he does not have to include us.
2. IACS was left out of the vaccination process for COVID 19, so Independence had to seek out their own way of obtaining vaccines for their staff.
3. IACS does not have a reliable contact or representation in the District. Brian Hill, the current liaise, has little knowledge or interest in Charter Schools.
4. IACS has repeatedly been given very unclear guidelines as to what we are part of and not part of. There are times when we are not allowed to purchase items from the warehouse, but when we try to find more cost effective ways to provide health insurance, the District tells us we are not allowed to per our contract, yet nowhere in our contract is that stated.

- B. Based on the information the board recommended that Mrs. Gonsalves reach out to our Charter Lawyer, Dustin Sparks, to review our contract and give the board recommendations of next steps.

VII. Executive Director's Report.

A. Operations

1. COVID Risk Assumption-IACS has and continues to thrive during COVID environment. This is not to say we did not have to make accommodations to meet guidelines and take into consideration spending priorities because of PPR cuts overall, however, we did not face the same operating challenges as other schools.
 - a) We are currently in-person learning and have been most of the year. To better serve our community we are operating three models of learning simultaneously. In-person, distance learning, and a hybrid option.

- b) We had one three week shut down, in which we still offered special education in the building and some tutoring time as well as special activities outside on the field for physical education.
 - c) To manage COVID, we have used a cohort model to help limit student movement inside the school, providing students and teachers with ample PPE, and have implemented a more rigorous cleaning schedule.
 - d) In anticipation of a sub shortage, we hired additional paraprofessionals and had each one become substitute certified, this way we were able to provide in-house substitutes for all grade levels. This allowed us to keep our doors open almost all year and not have to fight over subs with our district schools. It has also allowed us to seamlessly move between absences as our paraprofessionals have a more intimate knowledge of policy and procedures and the students in their classroom.
 - e) IACS did not lose any staff to covid-19 concerns. All of our staff return to in-person teaching without accommodations despite accommodations being offered to our older teachers and teachers with possible health concerns. Going into the 2021 - 2022 school year, our staff retention will be 100%.
 - f) Vaccines were made available to our entire staff in March of 2021.
 - g) IACS was able to manage small adjustments to curriculum programs to accommodate covid-19 lines and restrictions.
 - h) Our school was able to go 1 to 1 with Chromebooks from 4th through 8th grade to help with remote and classroom learning. Based on parent feedback, we implemented a more pencil flash paper approach for pre-k through third grade, making activity boxes that span a four week.. Parents of our younger students were very pleased with this approach.
 - i) Enrollment grew from 401 to 423 this year and at first glance, enrollment will grow again in the 2021 - 2022 school year you will have a 97% retention rate for students going into next year, most students leaving only because job loss has forced families to move from Grand Junction.
 - j) Colorado may expect a 19% PPR increase this year, due to the HB 20B - 101 and could see a PPR increase over our pre covid numbers in 2019. If the full 19% does not happen, I am comfortable with being able to meet the needs of our students within our yearly budget as long as it doesn't continue to decrease, we have no indication an additional decrease to PPR will happen.
 - k) Government funding from CARES, ESSR, and ESSR II has been extremely helpful to offset costs. We have been able to stay within our yearly budget and still deliver instruction to the same standard our community has become accustomed to.
2. Independence Academy enrollment numbers are up. We will be closed to 440 students without Pre-K numbers. But we are struggling to get our numbers in pre-K so it is sold in early stages of building that program. Record numbers for Middle School this year with lots of excitement around the Rise program.

3. The Middle School honors program is in full swing and has attracted many students to our school.
4. Our waitlist is a healthy amount and continues to grow every day with new phone calls and applications being submitted.
5. Kendra did a great job by putting everything online for pre-registration so that all fees have been paid or have been placed on a payment plan that would take families through May with full payments.
6. We had a high request for scholarships this year and were able to offer several families with partial scholarships because we had a few donors come forward.
7. We will be announcing the winners for the free fees for the referral giveaway within the next week.
8. Essr II funds- IACS has been allocated 424, 000 in ESSR II funds which will mainly be allocated to payroll and must be spent by Jan. 6th, 2022. In order to keep things simple-these are reimbursed loans. In 2020/2021 we will recoup 215,319.45 (40,000 of this is ESSR funds) in payroll costs and in 2021/2022 199,924.55 will be allocated to payroll/benefits. This will allow us to hire a part time counselor to assist with mental health, which we have seen an increase among students. We will also hire an interventionist to target learning loss due to COVID.
9. Administration is currently working on raises and contracts as well as hiring new teachers and moving teachers to new positions. Looking to era on the conservative side with raises this year in anticipation of the unknown of the 19% increase in PPR a 2% raise will be offered to teachers and staff.
10. Rppr is expected to grow by about 90% for the 2021 - 2022 school year, surpassing our pre covid PPR.
11. Looking into benefit options through a company who cater to Charter Schools, including online onboarding HR Services - we can save about \$70,000 a year but need to look further into the implications of leaving the district benefits and payroll.
12. we have partnered with a vendor for our yearly school supplies that should really cut back on the cost as well as the sorting and Manpower that usually takes place during the summer. Sprouts will send us enough school supplies in bulk and our brand preferences for as many students as we need sorted per grade level for less than what we purchase them for.

B. Instruction/Assessment

1. CMAS Is scheduled to start the second week of April. Are still waiting to hear about the federal waiver, without it we will move to test as usual. HB 21-1161 Was signed into law but cannot reduce testing without a federal waiver. Test would be reduced to 8th grade science Testing math testing only in grades 4-6 and 8 and ELA testing only in grades 3 5 and 7.
2. During the first week of CMAS testing lunch will be served to all students at no cost to them by local vendors in our community.
3. CMAS is scheduled for 2 hours a day Monday through Wednesday for 3 weeks. students are able to test in their home rooms with their homeroom teacher and then enjoy a regular schedule for the rest of the day students who opt out of

testing will not come to school until 10 on test days. This reason being that we do not have the staff or the room to house students who voluntarily opt out of the testing.

C. Community Outreach

1. Mrs. Gonsalves will record an executive director call to discuss with stakeholders all of the changes for the 2021-2022 school year in late April or early May.

D. Culture

1. Administration is currently planning for a continuation ceremony for our graduating eighth-grade class. We believe strongly in the need for this to happen as long as we are able to abide by covid-19 regulations. We are looking into outside venues, possibly setting up tents and having other festivities with social distancing.

E. Events Calendar

VIII. Facilities Report-Tom Madalone

- A. Should be receiving the repaired Dodge truck soon.

IX. Discussion and updates on the Building Project

- A. None at this time

X. Family Council Updates

- A. In the future there will be some conversations about restructuring Family Council. They will work on efforts to create a more sustainable, and integral program that represents the culture of Independence Academy.

Adjourned Regular Session: 6:27 pm

XI. Executive Session CRS Section 24-6-402

C.R.S. 24-6-402 (4)(f)- Student incident

C.R.S. 24-6-402 (4) The members of a local public body subject to this part 4, upon the announcement by the local public body to the public of the topic for discussion in the executive session, including specific citation to the provision of this subsection (4) authorizing the body to meet in an executive session and identification of the particular matter to be discussed in as much detail as possible without compromising the purpose for which the executive session is authorized, and the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the quorum present, after such announcement, may hold an executive session only at a regular or special meeting and for the sole purpose of considering any of the following matters; except that no adoption of any proposed policy, position, resolution, rule, regulation, or formal action, except the review, approval, and amendment of the minutes of an executive session recorded pursuant to subparagraph (II) of paragraph (d.5) of subsection (2) of this section, shall occur at any executive session that is not open to the public.

Entered back into Regular Session : 7:15 pm

Adjourned: 7:17 pm

Next Regular Meeting:

- **Date:** Monday April 26, 2021
- **Location:** Independence Academy Charter School , 675 29 road, Grand Junction, CO. 81504