

ISD ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY
December 11, 2015

Present: Gwenn Eyer, Paula Chance, Matt Fraas, Deborah Beranek, Susan Dramin-Weiss, Ben Lachman, Sheri Cook, John Miller, Juan Bernal, Deb Gossrow, Corey Axelrod, Serena Preston, and Danielle Bernal.

Absent: Jerry Covell

Visitors: Charlene Hicks, ISD graduate; Kevin Ryan, Vice-President of Illinois Association of the Deaf; Angie Kuhn, ISD PK-8 Principal; Christine Good-Deal, ISD HS Principal; Janet Hamm, CART reporter; Cori Pate, Interpreter; Marcia Breese, Interpreter; Jenna Allen, Interpreter; Angela Laptewicz, Cued Speech Transliterator; Ed Hoyt, ISD Athletic Director; Amy Richards, ISBE; Deloris Summers, Deaf Community Center President.

Gwenn opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and asking them to pick up a packet that included the agenda and reports for the meeting.

After introductions of council members and visitors, the council reviewed the August 20, 2015 meeting summary. After making changes, Susan made a motion to approve the summary. Sheri seconded the motion. Susan then made a motion to close, and after consensus from the council, the August 20th meeting summary was approved.

The council went on to review the September 11, 2015 meeting summary. After making changes, Sheri made a motion to approve the summary. Juan seconded the motion. After consensus from the council, the September 11th meeting summary was approved.

Following a few more introductions, Gwenn told the council a little about herself. She explained that she is a wife and mother. She has five children, all adopted, ranging in age from 12 to 40. Her youngest daughter has a hearing loss and attends ISD full-time. Gwenn explained that she has worked for the Department of Children and Family Services for about 30 years. She said part of her experience has been meeting planning and staffing state councils. She is the compliance manager for the Foster Parent Law. She also runs a Bed and Breakfast. She has a small corporation that she has had for about 10 years, and she is the corporation president. Gwenn explained that she is active in the community and is on the PTSO at ISD.

Gwenn explained that she likes to structure her boards with a theme. Her theme for this year is "Honoring our heritage, building our future". She said that she knows that everyone on the council has a strong heritage with ISD. The members are all invested either as parents, former students, current staff members, former staff members, or outside stakeholders that work with and for the school.

Gwenn talked about her expectations so that the council can run smoothly. These expectations included being respectful, considerate, and timely. She also talked about the importance of transparency and professionalism, and having direction to better achieve the goals set by the council.

Gwenn asked that council members not email the whole group on a distribution list. She reminded the council that emailing the whole group would violate the Open Meetings Act because it opens that email up as a meeting that was not posted. So, when responding to an email, only respond to the person sending it, not all recipients.

Serena then talked about new or different things happening at ISD. She mentioned the front door of Main Building now being kept locked and how this is part of the efforts to provide a safe environment. She also informed the council that she has been working with two joint committees in developing a framework for evaluating teaching staff. This is related to the Education Reform Act of 2010.

Serena talked about the continued vacancies at ISD and the progress being made on filling these vacancies. The vacancies include an office coordinator position in the Outreach Department, support service positions in housekeeping and dietary, a guard, and a Student Life Director. She also mentioned that several staff members plan to retire either at the end of December or the end of the school year.

Serena also talked about her involvement with serving on a statewide committee for special education (ISAC). This committee looks at school districts who want to withdraw from their co-ops. The ISAC also conducts reviews for anyone who is applying to be a hearing officer as well as reviewing annual performance evaluations of hearing officers.

Serena informed the committee that she officially joined two sub-committees. She has been serving on the Transition Committee since the retirement of Marjorie Olson, but recently became a formal member of that committee. She also joined the Accessibility Subcommittee. Reading from a description of this subcommittee, Serena said the subcommittee reviews any proposed legislation or any problems that's brought before us regarding physical and programmatic access. We review systematic problems with access. We keep up with the guidelines. This includes physical access, access to curriculum, assistive technology, interpreters, translators for EL, and any combination of all of those things.

Gwenn pointed out that Kris Smith was unable to attend the meeting due to still fulfilling two positions. She said that Kris did report that they do have applications for the superintendent position, but there is not any information beyond that point.

Gwenn then opened the discussion to questions for Serena. Questions were raised about the hiring of RSWs and a hiring freeze. Serena pointed out that there is not a hiring freeze in place and that she looks closely at the impact of all vacancies. She said that there were some RCW trainee positions posted and that interviews are in the process of being held.

Susan asked about the current enrollment at ISD. Serena said that there were approximately 160 students on campus and about 50 being served by the 0-3 program.

Gwenn then asked Juan to present the membership report. Juan reported the resignation of Angela Botz from the council. Gwenn asked for a motion to accept the resignation. Sheri made the motion, with Juan providing the second motion. With no opposition, the resignation was accepted.

Gwenn then asked Juan to present the two applications he had to fill the position left vacant by Angela's resignation. After reading the applications, the council held a vote to fill the vacant position.

Daniella Bernal then talked to the group about Student Body Government. Daniella is the temporary SBG president. Daniella reported that there haven't been many request for changes in student government this year. She said there has been a request that staff members no longer be allowed to vote for Homecoming King and Queen. Danielle said that SBG is currently working with school administration on this proposed change. Paula asked about the decorations for this year's homecoming as she had heard complaints that the decorating was not as good as in past years. Danielle acknowledges the truth to that, stating that the lack of a state budget made it harder to get supplies this year. Some students brought decorations from home to help out.

The council moved to the outcome of the election. Corey Axelrod was voted in as a new member of the ISD Advisory Council.

Paula questioned what a new research cycle meant. Serena explained to her that a research project is on-going but that each school year is a new cycle. Each school year, parents are asked to provide permission for their student to continue with participation in the research project. If a new student enrolls at ISD, the parent would provide the permission at the time of enrollment.

DeDe asked about participating in ASL research. Serena pointed out that the people conducting the research chose the research project and that we have no control over determining what type of research is being done. Angie mentioned that ISD has participated in an ASL research project in the past. She said that Boston University is currently conducting an ASL research project so maybe we'll get asked to participate in that project again.

Corey said that there was someone from UIC that was doing research for language acquisition and that he would be happy to make that connection with ISD. He also asked about the reporting of the on-going research project. Serena said that she recently met with Dr. Beverly Trezek and that she shared some of the trends that she is seeing. Dr. Trezek cannot formally release results until publication of the project. This is in accordance to her IRB agreement.

Gwenn stated that being able to make contact with someone on an ASL research project would be invaluable for ISD.

Discussion then returned to the hiring of a superintendent for ISD. Kevin Riley asked about the processing and the council's involvement in the process. Serena explained that as reported earlier by Gwenn, there are applicants. It is Serena's understanding that at some point the administration at DHS will reach out to the candidates and determine if they have the qualifications required. At that point they would assemble a team of stakeholders to interact with those applicants. Serena pointed out that DHS gets to make the final decision. They will listen to input from stakeholders, but the final decision is up to them.

The meeting topic then moved onto developing a strategic plan. Gwenn stated that the mission of the Advisory Council is to advise. Gwenn asked the council members what they saw as their mission for the council. Improving outcomes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, improving relationships with the community, continuing to follow the objectives outlined in the by-laws, managing personal biases, remaining open-minded and learning to listen were some of the visions that members saw as the mission of the council.

Council members reported as stakeholders fulfilling their roles on the Council. Deborah B. told the group a little about herself. She is an educator in a deaf program and feels that educators need to start being the

decision making force for deaf and hard of hearing students. She pointed out the lawmakers are not experts in educating deaf and hard of hearing students and they need guidance from the experts regarding what students need. Deborah said that she is a long time supporter of ISD and that ISD is an important support system to deaf and hard of hearing student throughout the state. Deborah said she often brings her students to the Evaluation Center for advice on what would best benefit the student. She feels the Outreach Department is also an important part of ISD and she uses them to provide training to her staff.

Juan stated that he felt listening to the students was important. He said the students are the ones that really know what's going on at the school, not the community. He feels we should listen to the students and their wishes and thoughts on what works best for them.

Susan reported that the Alumni Association is concerned with the school's future and the continued use of ASL. She pointed out the many rumors about ISD no longer using ASL. She has informed people that that is not true and that ASL is still being used at ISD. She would like to see ISD become one of the top deaf schools in the country.

John discussed a recent meeting by the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission. He said that there has been an increased demand for cued speech interpreters. Illinois doesn't currently have any cued speech evaluators and they are trying to get a cued speech test set up in Illinois. He said Illinois would only provide the test. The state would provide the testing site and then send the tests to an evaluation team outside of the state that has the expertise to provide the evaluations.

Corey reported on the IAD, stating that they have set up task forces to work on two of several priorities within the association. One priority being the 0-21 age group and the other being early intervention. Another priority of the association is working on getting the Child Bill of Rights passed. Corey also talked about the work with Junior IAD and the success with the event that was recently held in Chicago. Junior IAD provides opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students to meet and socialize with other deaf and hard of hearing students. Corey stressed that IAD is focused on looking at what the students want and also fighting for making data driven decisions.

Ben then talked about his thoughts and hopes for ISD. He talked about being an advocate for literacy and improving student outcomes through English education. Ben pointed out that cued speech is any speech that is conventionally spoken. He stressed that the goal is to provide full language access to deaf and hard of hearing students.

Deb G. talked about her background as a social worker and that she is a parent of an ISD student. She talked about the successes and growth that her son has experienced since attending ISD. She said she is interested in maintaining relationships with other ISD families and also with the fiscal budgetary issues. She said she would be willing to assist with any current procedure or start a new procedure for reaching out to the new families at ISD.

As to the fiscal and budgetary issues, Deb said that she helped with the Santa's Cottage this year and was able to apply to the Shopko Foundation. This was very helpful, as it provided \$250 to spend on items for the cottage.

Deb also talked about the possibility of ISD having an open house for the community. She feels many people know about ISD, but don't really understand what happens here. She has talked to several people who have positive comments about ISD and are interested in learning more about ISD and the use of sign language.

Following a short break for a group picture, Sheri provided her report. Sheri said she works for the Gallaudet University Regional Center and serves 14 Midwestern states. Sheri's said she works with parents, professionals and deaf and hard of hearing individuals from birth to age 21. Sheri talked about her background as a deaf educator. She has taught at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf and also at in Outreach Department at ISD. Her sister is currently at teacher at ISD, so she has strong ties to ISD. Sheri talked about her work with the Battle of the Books. This is a reading group competition with the middle school students. She reported that the person running this program at Gallaudet was complimentary of the students at ISD and was impressed with their reading group. Sheri also talked about her work with the Midwestern Academic Bowl. She said that the Midwestern Bowl was just held at Ohio School for the Deaf and that the Midwestern Region was in the top four and qualified for Nationals in April. She reported that ISD received fourth place, so they qualified for Nationals.

Sheri stressed that she would like to see our students thrive. She said that at the Academic Bowl there were student with several different means of communication. It wasn't a problem for the kids. She said that kids are not the ones fighting, it is the adults. Sheri mentioned that she often gives presentations, and will be providing a training session to the RCWs at ISD.

John asked Sheri about dates for DeaFest and the Deaf Can Do It Day. He also mentioned that the Illinois Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are providing a finger-spelling bee on April 21, 2016. Sheri said that DeaFest would be held in Carterville, Illinois on May 6, 2016. She said she thought the Deaf Can Do It Day would be held on May 2, 2016.

DeDe provided her report by saying that she is the President of the Community Center for the Deaf and that her vision is to see the students staying on campus during the weekends rather than going home each weekend. She feels that the students would benefit from staying here on the weekends and have more opportunities to interact with the deaf community. DeDe added that the JCDD provides events for children, including visits with Santa Claus.

Corey agreed that student involvement in the community is important. He pointed out that students need to learn how to thrive in the community as well as at school.

Amy then talked about the Cogswell Macy Act. She stated that this is a federal act that does not yet have an Illinois supporter. The act is for promoting and ensuring delivery of high-quality special education and related services for students with visual disabilities, deaf and hard of hearing, and deafblind. She explained that one aspect of the act is to work on accountability and making sure that the child count for students is correct. She went on to explain that a guidance document is being drafted requesting that if a student has a vision impairment, is deafblind, deaf, or hard of hearing that that be identified on the IEP rather than lumping it in with other categories, such as developmental delay, multiple disabilities, or other health impairment. She stated that it should be listed individually as a primary or secondary disability so that the counts are accurate, so that more services and funding can be requested in those areas.

Amy also talked about the elimination of ISTAC (the climate and environment and culture piece) and RTI (Response to Intervention). They will be replaced with MTSS network, multi-tiered system, a support network.

She stated that as of right now, there is not a deaf and hard of hearing specific component to that, but that SENA and the ISBE are working together with the national group to include deaf specific items for the training.

Gwenn thanked everyone for their reports and said she enjoyed hearing them and that a lot of issues were addressed that are important to her. She talked about ways to get students involved in the deaf community and the importance of them having mentors who are deaf.

Gwen then asked for suggestions for agenda items for the next meeting. These included the superintendent search, the May 8th meeting summary, OMA training, cued speech research status, and a student presentation about the 3D printer. Added to the agenda was to discuss inviting someone to provide a presentation related to LEAD-K, discuss ways to include the students within the deaf community, talk about ways to provide positive support to ISD, and discuss the possibility of coordinating with an access website.

Gwenn thanked everyone for coming and the meeting was adjourned.