

ISD ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY
June 8, 2015

Present: Paula Chance; Gwenn Eyer; Kris Smith; Matt Fraas; Juan Bernal; Susan Dramin-Weiss; John Miller; Janice Smith-Warshaw; Janet Hamm, C.A.R.T. Provider; Crystal Kelly-Schwartz; Jerry Covell.

Absent: Angela Botz; Ben Lachman; Amy Richards

Visitors: Charles Hicks, ISD HS Educator; Charlene Hicks, ISD Alumni; Elaine Cady, ISD Museum; John Brennan, ISD Dorm Parent; John Harper, ISD Vocational Instructor; DeDe Summers, ISD Alumni/Representative for Independent Living/President of the Jacksonville deaf community; Christine Good-Deal, ISD HS Principal; Angela Kuhn, ISD PK-8 Principal; J.D. Bordean, ISD Interpreter; Melanie Ervin, Interpreter; Austin Bernal.

Paula Chance, Chairperson, opened the meeting by announcing that there were six members currently in attendance and two on the way so they had a quorum. Also, she acknowledged how nice it was that Gwenn Eyer was in attendance. She commented on the proclamation from the Governor and how she felt everyone at the previous meeting was indeed a hero.

Paula went on to comment about the upcoming departure of Dr. Janice Smith-Warshaw as ISD's Superintendent. She said that Dr. Smith-Warshaw would be missed at ISD.

Paula expressed concern over the search for a new Superintendent for ISD. With the change in Illinois government, she didn't feel that things were as transparent as the previous search for a new Superintendent. Paula said that she realizes there are many other changes happening within the state and that the main focus is not always on the selection process of a new ISD Superintendent.

Paula expressed excitement over the new Superintendent of ISBE, Tony Smith. She has heard many good things about him.

Paula mentioned the press coverage ISD had received in the Jacksonville Journal Courier. She mentioned the many pictures and articles pertaining to the positive accomplishments of ISD students. For examples, she mentioned a slam dunk contest, a student making honors, and another student breaking a long-standing school track record.

Dr. Janice Smith-Warshaw then addressed the council regarding her May report. She reminded the council about the new strict DHS guideline that visitors to campus must be escorted by a staff member. They are not allowed to walk around campus on their own. She mentioned that this includes members of the Advisory Council.

Dr. J. also talked about all of the work that has gone into PARCC testing. She acknowledged Kathryn Surbeck for all of the time she put in working with the school principals and coordinating the testing.

Dr. J. addressed the success of the ISAC breakfast. She thanked Carolyn Eilering for assisting with this and felt Carolyn's presence made a difference in assuring a successful trip. The students were able to visit legislators and see their offices.

Dr. J. announced that ISD placed third at the Academic Bowl at Harper College. She also acknowledged the good work by Fara Harper and Craig Kuhn with the ASL Bowl hosted by ISD.

Dr. J. mentioned that she attend the CEASD conference. She said that several other superintendents approached her saying that they also use cued speech and praised her efforts to continue its use at ISD.

Dr. J. then provided information regarding personnel issues. She stated that there had been an interview for the Director of Student Life position, which was declined by the candidate. The position has been posted again. Also, posted were positions for secretary in the superintendent's office, secretary for CTE, and an office associate position that would work in the business office as well as the power plant. Also posted were 10 positions for RCW trainees. Paula commented on the teaching positions that need filled. Dr. J. said that CMS was in control of that and that the educators that have expressed interest have sent their applications to CMS for grading.

Kris Smith then addressed the council regarding the announcement of her being the acting director of DHS/DRS. She acknowledged Paula's previous comments regarding the search for a superintendent for ISD. The process is different this time due to the change in personnel. Kris reminded the council of Beth Purvis' recent visit to ISD which indicates that she is mindful of the needs of the school and is taking an active role in the decisions regarding the school. She also reminded the council that ultimately it is up to the Governor to decide who the next superintendent will be.

Kris thanked Dr. J for her past two years of leadership at ISD.

Kris then talked about the many meetings she has attended regarding the state budget. She pointed out that this is a time of change and a balanced budget is a top priority. There have been several major changes, including a new governor, new labor management contracts with AFSME, IFT, and SEIU. With regards to the schools, Kris has been helping coordinate the grants since the retirement of Marjorie Olson.

Kris talked about the State of Illinois working on a project called Employment First. This is looking at employment as a first option for people with disabilities.

Kris also mentioned some changes being made to the job description for the position previously held by Marjorie Olson. The revision will state that the position can be of support to ISD and ISVI, for example, if maybe a principal or superintendent were to vacated their position. Kris was hopeful that the job position would be posted soon. She said that this person would be based in Springfield, but would be a liaison to the schools as well as to Beth Purvis and the Governor's office.

Paula questioned Kris regarding the process and waiting period for a decision regarding the vacant superintendent position. Kris said that she had plans to meet with Beth Purvis and James T. Dimas regarding ISD's needs and the day-to-day operations of the school. She said that she understands that although school is not in session at this time, people are still working at the school and things need to move forward. Kris asked the Advisory Council to consider providing her with a list of what they feel the priorities should be as far

as day-to-day operations go and said that she had plans to meet again with Dr. J for further feedback from her. Kris also pointed out that the school has an administrative team that she feels are trustworthy of providing leadership in the absence of a superintendent.

Paula then asked Kris about the current vacancies at the school, specifically the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Student Life, and Secretary positions. Paula expressed her thoughts about setting a target date and also the involvement of various committees and individuals in the planning and decision-making process.

Kris responded that the state does have a Bureau of Recruitment and Selection and they are expected to help with national searches. Also, she mentioned that networking with CEASD and Illinois Association of the Deaf help get the word out regarding vacant positions.

Gwenn thought that the Advisory Council could possibly help by gathering a list of resources that would help announce job vacancies. She also asked about the possibilities of the council having an input in writing the interview questions for the incoming superintendent position. Kris stated that she would check with Beth Purvis about that since the hiring of the superintendent would go through the Governor's office rather than CMS. Kris stressed that she is aware that the superintendent of a deaf school is different from a superintendent or principal in other towns. The needs of the students are much different and the educational staff should be aware of the educational tools needed as well as the residential component of the school.

Discussion continued regarding the number of deaf schools as well as the number of superintendent vacancies at those schools. It was determined that there are 44-46 deaf schools, and 10 that currently are in need of a superintendent.

The council then moved on to the membership report. Dr. J reported that there were two new applications. Gwenn stated that there were two current council members who would like to be reappointed. The council decided on a secret ballot. Both members, Matt Fraas and Ben Lachman were voted in for three-year terms.

Some decision ensued regarding the length of terms for member of various categories. It was decided to wait until the fall meeting to look over that and make needed amendments at that time.

The council then voted on qualifications of a member. The council voted "yes" to the qualifications and Amy Richards was accepted as a member of the council.

Gwenn stated that, according to the bylaws, the council had filled the positions of parents, persons with a disability, and a person with expertise in deaf education. Gwenn informed the council that she had two additional applications, one from a professional in a field related to deafness and one from a deaf individual. She stated that she was still in need of an application from a parent in order to stay within the categories lined out in the bylaws.

Some confusion occurred over the categories and bylaws. Gwenn suggested they follow up with the ISD council law and DHS to answer the questions. It was decided to get more information so that everyone clearly understands the regulations and they will continue the voting of new members in the fall.

Following a short break, John Miller recognized Fara Harper as recently receiving the staff member of the year award.

Paula then asked Angie Kuhn about the ASL classes offered to parents during the Parent Infant Institute that was held at ISD. Angie said that the parents attending the institute rotated through a variety of classes, i.e. group counseling, ASL, spoken language, and cued speech. She stated that the parents did have the option to have additional cueing and ASL.

Paula then posed a question regarding Dr. Beverly Trezek and her schedule at ISD. Angie explained that Beverly would be returning to ISD in two weeks. She explained that she thought Dr. Trezek's contract was initially for five years, then for three years and now it is for every three years. This is the end of the three-year cycle. So, Dr. Trezek has to decide whether she is going to come back or not. Angie stated that the school would like for her to return and continue to collect data to help better understand if the students are making progress in math and language.

Crystal and John both had questions regarding what happens if Dr. Trezek decides not to return and also about where the funding comes from for her consultation. Angie explained that if Dr. Trezek decides not to return, the school would like to find someone else to continue the project. She also explained that the funding comes from IDEA-B, which is through the State of Illinois.

Angie explained further that we pay Dr. Trezek as a consultant. The research is through DePaul University, but we pay her to consult with us, analyze the information and make recommendations on how we can best serve our students. This is a bilingual consultant and that is budgeted in the IDEA-B grant. Angie explained that this is better than having two separate consultants who may feel the need to compete with each other. It's felt that two separate researchers competing with each other would be more harmful than helpful to our students.

Juan stated that he hopes this program continues because he feels it has been beneficial to his daughter, who is a student at ISD.

Angie further explained that it is the schools responsibility to educate each student individually. She said that the means of communication varies in each classroom, i.e. some use cued speech, some use ASL, some use auditory and spoken language, and some have a mixture. She explained that it really depends on the students in the classroom and what their individual needs require for them to learn successfully. These decisions are made by the student's IEP team.

Matt explained that it is the parents and the IEP team's decision on how to best educate an individual student. He expressed that it is the schools job to create a classroom that support those decisions. He said that this is standard IEP procedure at all schools.

Much discussion occurred regarding parents' responsibility in their students' education. It was pointed out that many times parents don't understand what is best educationally for their child and it's the schools responsibility to inform the parents of the options, so that they can make informed decisions. Christine Good-Deal, pointed out that the IEP meetings are an important tool for use in decision making. She explained that during an IEP meeting, the parents and the IEP team evaluate how the student is progressing and also look at their future goals, options for attaining those goals, and transitional needs. Christine further explained that an IEP is an ongoing document that can be re-evaluated and discussed at any time, and that adjustments to an IEP can occur if it is determined that something is not working or needs to be altered.

The importance of educating the community of what ISD offers was discussed. Crystal pointed out that she feels the use of ASL and Cued Speech has caused a separation within the school and the deaf community. Juan pointed out that as a parent he likes the use of bilingual communication. He stated that his daughter still communicates with ASL, but she has learned cued speech and as a result, her academic skills have improved. He feels this is very important and he sees cued speech as a learning tool.

The council further discussed the impact social media is having on the school. There are many people in the community who have negative feelings towards the use of cued speech and this has caused a separation of support. Juan expressed concern over how this is impacting the students. He wants the students at ISD to feel safe and to focus on their education. Discussion followed regarding the importance of presenting ISD as a bilingual school, with equal use of various forms of communication.

Discussion followed regarding the deaf community's fear that cueing will become the first language for the deaf rather than ASL. Christine said that the principals have discussed the need of providing more publicity on the ISD website regarding what is offered at ISD. She pointed out that ISD needs to stress that visual communication is first. She talked about the different levels of communication amongst ISD students. She gave an example of many students coming to ISD with no previous access to fluent signers. She agreed that ISD needs to respond to the deaf community and be transparent about what is being offered at ISD.

The council then discussed the upcoming IAD forum and the presentation of ASL that will be occurring at that forum. It was announced that the plans for a cued speech presentation at the forum was cancelled.

Susan asked about the upcoming cue camp being held at ISD. Angie said that the money for the cue camp comes from the AG Bell Association. She explained that ISD was hosting the cue camp to encourage more signing and cueing together. She said that the cueing class would be taught by deaf people, through ASL. The camp is for families, professionals, and interpreters.

After a short break, the council discussed holding off on discussions regarding the bylaws, OMA, and Closed Meeting Act until the fall meeting.

Gwenn commented that the flyer for a town hall meeting, scheduled for July 11th in Schaumburg, represented the presenters from ISD, regarding the Senate and House Bills, as Advisory Council members. Paula said that they were not going there as representatives of the Advisory Council and that she would make that known at the town hall meeting.

Jerry then gave a presentation regarding the board composition for the ISD governance legislative proposal. Paula explained that this process started after realizing the frustration of hiring teachers in a timely manner and the hiring process not recognizing candidates from out of state. Paula talked about the process of learning the procedures through various means, including ISBE, state representatives, ISD's personnel administrator, CMS and DHS.

Jerry said that the proposal is called the ISD Governance Proposal. He explained that he discovered that because ISD was under DHS, it was looked at as a vocational facility rather than a school. Jerry talked about a subcommittee deciding to pursue the option of staying with DHS, but as an educational division, making it a separate state agency.

Jerry further explained that one proposal considered was to try to mirror the same outline as IMSA, Illinois Math and Science Academy. He said this type of proposal would make ISD an independent state agency. According to Jerry, the IMSA is appropriated money and they requisition themselves.

Jerry explained how after talking with Senators Manar and McCann, the committee thought that staying with DHS, but being independent would be the thing to do. He said the senators had explained how although DHS is large and ISD is just a small part of that department, being totally on its own could cause even more oversight for ISD.

Jerry then discussed the need to settle on a composition of a school board. He expressed an interest in having the Advisory Councils input on this decision. Discussion continued about the number of board members and the composition of those members. Gwenn suggested the board be comprised of four parents and four deaf and hard of hearing experts.

Jerry reported that Senator McCann would like to have the proposal completed by November so that it can be filed and introduced in the spring session.

Several council members needed to leave, so it was decided to continue this discussion at a special meeting later in the summer.

Crystal then announced that she would no longer be able to remain on the Advisory Council, as she is moving to Texas.

There was a brief discussion regarding Paula's position as the chairperson. It was determined that she had served for three years (the time frame allowed according to the bylaws) and therefore she agreed to withdraw as a candidate for the election of a chairperson.

The council decided to vote on a new chairperson at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.