



# Inspired Teaching Demonstration School

## **Board of Directors Meeting**

March 1, 2021

12:00 - 1:40 p.m. ET (via Zoom)

*APPROVED – May 3, 2021*

**In attendance:** John Leibovitz, Lucy Newton, Jeri Epstein, Pete Weber, Rusty Wilson, Aleta Margolis, Michelle Lerner, Andrea Browning, Maureen Ingram, Deborah Dantzer Williams (staff and ex officio board member)

**Staff:** Kate Keplinger

**Guest Speakers:** Martha Holley-Miers, Telaekah Brooks, Miriam Sznycer, Craig Pollack, Naomi Seiler

**Called to Order: 5:02 pm**

**Approval of Minutes:** January 11, 2021 Board meeting minutes were approved

### **Committee Updates**

*Nominations and Governance Committee* - Working with Education Board Partners for Board assessment and recruitment. Board members should have received a link to survey, the deadline has passed, please complete. Committee will reconnect with EBP in early March, after they have reviewed the survey.

*Finance and Oversight Committee* - Continuing toward closing on the OSSE loan, \$1.7M, which we can use to reimburse. We need to move our banking relationship to PNC, negotiating to try and get interest on the checking account as with the prior banking relationship.

*Academic Quality Committee* - Refreshed everyone on the purpose of the Committee - creating a dashboard for board members to review independently and examining school data, given the atypical nature of this school year. There are some declines evident in current school data. This was not surprising for the school's team. It's happening nationally, but the decline at ITDS is not as stark as expected. Looking at who is engaged among students and families, approximately 15% of ITDS students are not as engaged as we would prefer. Staff currently discussing summer supports to help with the learning loss, as well as planning ahead for the 21-22 school year. OSSE informed schools that DC is likely to apply for a waiver for PARCC this year. A self-reporting

survey for social emotional wellbeing was shared with students. Anticipating an award from OSSE to help with summer school and other learning loss strategies.

*Demonstration Committee* - Committee planning to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the school, celebrate Deborah's tenure, and to celebrate the new HoS. Looking at opportunities to elevate ITDS practices that other schools can adopt, no matter their model. One proposal is to host an outdoor event of some kind in the Fall.

*Head of School Search Committee* - Last week was a busy week for the committee, interviewing candidates. School received a lot of high quality applicants, regionally, nationally and even internationally. This is a testament to the school's strong reputation. A recap of what's been done so far - focus groups with families, staff and Board. Approximately 200 applications received. Paper screening, search consultant interviews a few weeks ago, committee met applicants last week. Applicants will meet with a small number of parents/guardians, students, staff, HoS, and will have an opportunity to observe a class. The goal is to balance sharing finalists with community members while maintaining confidentiality. The process for finalists will likely happen in two stages - initial contact with staff and then community members. The final timeline is still being determined.

## **School Updates**

HoS reviewed [COVID-19 Updates](#) report.

The decision to offer students 1 in-person day per week was driven by the number of available spaces, our desire to keep students with their current teachers as much as possible, and class scheduling options.

IFA Board Members shared perspectives from the parents they've heard from. IFA representatives noted that they were present to share perspectives. ITDS teachers were ready to teach virtually within 3 days of the Mayor's decision to suspend in-person teaching and learning across the city. ITDS has done lots of work to maintain the quality of instruction without compromising safety. Families appreciated that the school did not require teachers to return as quickly as other schools did. There was also appreciation shared for single log-in systems and other efforts to simplify the process to access instruction.

Virtual learning is being experienced differently across families, and even within families. It has been a nice experience for some students, while others are struggling, experiencing emotional distress, and reporting feeling disconnected. The pace of learning isn't meeting every child's needs. There were reports of family members having to scale back on their jobs, declining new opportunities, or spending money on child care/teaching supports. There has been a disproportionate impact on mothers and families who are hearing that other schools have reopened for at least a portion of their students.

Communication- some parents are feeling less agency or choice. Others ask that the school over-communicate. Families are interested in knowing how decisions are made, what community health metrics are being considered, what physical improvements have been completed at the building and how the learning hubs are going.

The IFA offered support from the parent community and requested concise, weekly updates, posted on the website, and shared universally. A reference guide for the return to school and additional Zoom meetings were also requested.

ITDS Community Health and Safety Advisory Group- Three key points shared: Increasing studies, prior to vaccine rollout, suggest that schools can safely reopen without causing community spread provided all safety precautions are maintained consistently; vaccine availability will have a positive impact; and the vaccine should prevent people from being hospitalized or dying. COVID has harmed the community in many ways including academic harms, public health harms, mental health harms, food insecurity, and obesity. The goals of communication and advocacy include helping to get the system and the process unstuck. Even with new variants, outdoor activities should be encouraged whenever possible, including lunches if feasible while maintaining social distance.

The Advisory Group offered to help advocate for the school and community. ITDS can share information about the safety and efficacy of vaccines. Asymptomatic testing is being done in other schools. It's another layer of security. Options for financial support may be available.

HVAC systems benefit from open windows, so windows should be opened to the extent possible. Will the school continue to have a nurse present in the building?

Next steps: The Board will receive an update from school leadership on or before March 8.

There was discussion of the work of school leadership and parent organization members to help teachers and all members of the school community feel supported during this time. The board reiterated its thanks to HoS, COO, and the entire leadership team for leading the school during this difficult time.

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:12 pm.**