November 14, 2007

Dear ISL Stakeholder,

Thank you for your interest in helping the ISL Board plan for an independent ISL High School.

As you know, the ISL Board and administration are not confident that we can open an independent ISL High School in time to serve the school's inaugural class. We are therefore making plans to accommodate current 7th graders students in an ISL High School based on a shared facility/academic exchange model. Under this plan, students will attend some of their classes at a partner institution, while still taking a majority of their academic hours from ISL teachers, who may be physically housed in the partner institution. ISL students will spend a significant portion of their time in language immersion classes, and will graduate with an ISL degree. Other details, including with respect to extracurriculars, IBO curriculum, and specific partner institutions are still being negotiated.

We envision this shared facility/academic exchange model as a short term plan, covering the first 2 – 5 years of an ISL High School (ISLHS). We are asking for your help in planning for the longer-term goal of a free-standing independent ISLHS. A number of specific challenges must be addressed:

- Financial viability. The majority of charter schools fail for financial reasons. An ISLHS must be financially self-sufficient without charging tuition. As a type two charter school, ISL receives no funding for facilities, and our funding per student (MFP) is typically significantly below the amount needed to pay for facilities, administration, and faculty salaries and benefits. There are no charter school start-up funds or outside grant monies currently available to fund an ISLHS, and ISL's current director of institutional advancement is not available to assist with high school grant-writing or development.
- Student body. We project 15 students moving from ISL middle school to its inaugural high school class, a number which increases to 30 in the second year, 35 in years three and four, and 45 in the fifth year. These numbers are likely too small to sustain a high school without significant additional recruitment of students. How many students will attend an ISL high school? How will they be recruited?
- Curriculum. Newly recruited students generally will not be trilingual. The ISLHS must have a curriculum that accommodates the different educational backgrounds of its students, and must remain true to ISL mission of academic rigor, respect for diversity, and language immersion. There are very few existing public language immersion high schools available to take as role models.
- Facility. Where will an independent high school be located? ISL is lobbying the the RSD and OPSD for access to a facility, but we have no reason at this time to believe these efforts will succeed.
- Transition. How will the high school come on line in its first year(s), when the inflow of students from ISL middle school will likely represent a minority of total students? Will he

school initially open its doors as a 9-12 institution, or begin with a smaller number of students and build up (resulting in less funding from the state during the transition period)?

- Personnel. Will the high school hire one or more full- or part-time staff prior to its inaugural year to begin executing these plans? A qualified school administrator will command a salary of $75,000 - $100,000 (plus benefits); how will the high school administrator be funded?

With the ISL Board and administration devoting the bulk of their attention to ensuring a successful shared facility high school in the immediate future (while maintaining our high standards for the K-8 program), we invite other stakeholders, with our support, to solidify medium-term plans for opening an independent high school.

Requirements for participation: The Subcommittee on an Independent ISL High School is being convened as an official subcommittee of the ISL Board. Members of the subcommittee are asked to do the following:

- Establish a regular meeting time and place (we are happy to make ISL facilities available with advance notice); publicize this meeting schedule to the ISL community (we are happy to assist with this publicity). Members of the Education Committee of the ISL Board will attempt to attend these subcommittee meetings and will otherwise support the subcommittee to the best of our ability.
- Select a subcommittee member to act as the meeting convener and to submit monthly reports or meeting minutes to the Education Committee of the ISL Board. We are eager to monitor your progress and provide feedback as needed.
- The subcommittee's goal is to produce a detailed business plan for opening an independent ISLHS, with concrete and detailed answers to the questions raised above, as well as others which may arise. Once the committee develops a comprehensive proposal, the plan will be reviewed by the Education Committee of the ISL Board and forwarded to the full board with the Education Committee's recommendation.
- Fair warning: the Board and administration approach an independent ISL High School with a degree of caution. We share your dream of the full ISL high school experience for our children; but we have a responsibility to do it right, or not at all.

Again, thank you for supporting ISL and taking on this important planning job! Your hard work will help us open an independent high school as soon, and as successfully, as possible.

Sincerely,

Marc Rosenblum
President, Education Committee of the ISL Board
Secretary, ISL Board of Directors

Sean Wilson
Head of School
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