

# Parent Organization

## General Meeting Minutes

### Minutes for February 5, 2009

#### Opening

Adrienne Poulard, President, opened the meeting at 8:32am.

#### Budget

Cassie Morgan spoke about the “free money” opportunities that we have with AIS. So far we have raised \$3,500: \$1,900 from Publix, \$1,400 from Georgia Natural Gas (GNG), \$300 from Target, and \$100 from Kroger. Cassie reminded everyone to turn in box tops that weren’t expired. She noted that we have only 69 AIS families who have participated in the Kroger program this year, but that other schools are earning as much as \$7000 a year.

She explained that if you sign up for GNG or if you are currently a GNG customer you can register to get credit with the school.

*Adrienne introduced Alan Colberg, Chairman of the Board for AIS.*

#### Alan Colberg

Alan said that the AIS Board of Directors is trying to make board activities more transparent by posting more about them on the Web. Alan said that he has been with the school for 12 years, and that he has 3 children at AIS and another child at a different school because this child wouldn’t be a good fit for AIS.

Alan handed out a paper that explained the function of the board, its priorities and key dates in the future. He went over the paper, explaining that the role of the AIS Board is to uphold the school’s mission and values. He explained that the Board aspires to be a benchmark in academic excellence, and that we will be “as good as” or “better” than the top tier schools in Atlanta. He reviewed the Board’s key strategic plan themes from the 2006-10 Strategic Plan, which includes such things as student character development, strengthening the AIS brand (particularly so that we are better known locally) and selectively strengthening the school’s operations.

Alan elaborated on the fact that the Board’s role is more long term focused – dealing with things like the mission, strategic planning, financial stability and compliance. The only position they got involved in hiring is the Headmaster.

Alan reviewed some of the more specific activities of the Board this year – hiring the new Headmaster, overseeing the capital campaign for the new buildings, increasing Board

visibility and direct communication with the parents, clarifying the role of the Board versus committees and adding to the Board's capabilities.

He said that the Board was working this year with the Administration on the following: maintaining the community principles for the school, the re-accreditation of the school, ensuring that the curriculum ensures success for all children, even those who are only here for a short period of time, and to manage the financial aid program. He said that they had created a new comprehensive assessment program for the faculty and they are implementing an emergency preparedness plan.

Alan explained that tuition calculation is conducted by a "bottoms up" analysis where we look at what we need to be spent in each area to develop a zero based budget with a small surplus for unanticipated expenses. He said that we benchmark ourselves against competitive private schools as well as competitive salaries in other markets that may be fairing better than ours. He compared AIS to two other schools in which we have raised tuition less over the past five years, Lovett and Westminster. He said that the new buildings were not affecting tuition this year because this is capital expense, not operating, but that once the buildings came online they would be part of our operating expenses.

He said that 17% of our students receive financial aid, a broader financial aid program than most schools. If families are concerned about paying tuition, Alan encouraged them to contact the Admissions Office

In planning for economic uncertainty, the school is trying to exercise better cost management, but Alan stressed that we will not compromise existing the curriculum and programs.

Kevin Glass, our new Headmaster, will be here the week after Spring Break and we will have several forums for the parents to meet with him.

Alan spoke on the Board composition: 20 members, 70% parents, 40% women, 20% international, and 20% with deep Atlanta roots. We have a wave of board retirements coming up so we need new board members. We are looking for the following in board members: linkages to local universities, more international members and some specific expertise in areas that we need, i.e., legal, building and grounds, safety issues. We have 25 potential board members and would like to add to that list.

They will be selecting new board members at their May 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. It's important to the school that we look for people who share the values and aspirations of the school.

We are making good progress with capital campaign. If we can reach \$14 million we will get the remaining \$2 million from a matching grant.

We are targeting March as a start date for the construction.

Alan concluded his talk with a Q and A session:

**Q: What do our applications look like this year?**

A: Attendance at Open House was dramatically higher this year although applications this year are flat, which is good given the current economy. We will not compromise on admission standards regardless of number of applications. We only have 18 children this year applying out, versus 30 or more in previous years, so outflow is lower. Children apply out for various reasons, he said: moving, not able to handle AIS curriculum, etc.

**Q. Is there a concern that more children will leave AIS to attend public school?**

A. We won't know that until the reenrollment process.

**Q. Why do you compare our tuition to Lovett's and Westminster's when an international family would never consider those schools?**

A. We have to compare ourselves to local schools because of the local economy. We are competing with the local schools.

**Q. What factored into the larger tuition increase in primary school?**

A. We started understanding better than it costs more to operate the primary school. We did not want to subsidize the primary school.

**Q. How big of a hit did our endowment take in the stock market downturn?**

A. At its peak it was 7 million dollars, which is small, but we are a young school. We lost 25% of that in the past 4-5 months due to the economy, which is slightly less than other schools. We are currently drawing about 5% from the endowment. The Board is committed to increasing the endowment.

**Q. Where did the endowment come from?**

A. Private and foundation donations. We also we raised \$4 million more than we needed for the SAC construction which went into the endowment.

**Q. Does the board mandate external audits?**

A. Yes, we have audits done each year to oversee processes. We don't do external audits unless we have a specific need to evaluate how to get full value out of an area, such as IT. These audits are not published, although there are some elements of the audit in the annual report.

**Q. Why is it mandatory to have insurance if you are on the tuition payment plan?**

A. The Board was not involved in that decision, but this year the insurance is mandatory. The Board is still looking into this; they did not know about it. *(Note: The school has since revised its policy to not make the insurance mandatory.)*

**Q. Have we invited local media to come meet with the new Headmaster when he comes here?**

A. This will most likely take place in July; good idea to do this.

**Q. What percentage of the faculty is coming from the international environment versus local, and how does that affect salaries?**

A. Historically, we have been heavily invested in international faculty, who often get paid more: a 70/30 ratio.

**Q. How many people are working in administration of the school, not direct education, and what authority does the Headmaster have to affect this?**

A. There are 22 employees who are not directly involved with the children. This number has not grown as the school has grown over time. The Headmaster has ultimate control over the number of administrative personnel.

**Q. What will be the difference with Kevin Glass as the Headmaster?**

A. Maintaining community values will be the main focus of Kevin Glass. Also financial aid is critical. The “community” is very involved with the children getting into colleges; it’s important that parents have good relationships with school personnel in working with them on the college application process. We need to be sensitive that the IB process and the American college application process are two separate things. About 20% of our graduates attend international colleges.

Cynthia Fleck thanked Alan for all the board has been doing recently to be more transparent.

**Q. When creating the budget, do we take into account the annual fund?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Has outsourcing helped us?**

A. We have only outsourced maintenance, and we are still evaluating whether this is a positive or a negative.

**Q. Is 80% of operating costs covered by tuition?**

A. No, it’s over 90%.

**Q. Is there a place where we can exam how our students perform based on other local schools?**

A. We do have this information but we can't publish this data. You can ask Robert or me to come sit down and look at it. We do publish non-priority data, such as SAT averages.

**Q. What are we doing about the decline in expatriation of international families? I'm worried that the school could lose our international identity.**

A. So far, we are not seeing much affect but we could see it in the future. We are committed to our 50% split, so we need to find ways to recruit more international families.

### **Adjournment**

Adrienne thanked everyone who has volunteered for a PO event this year, and told everyone to look for coverage of the Asian New Year's festival on the front page of the Buckhead Reporter.

She announced that Jazz Black & White would be held on February 28, and that there was a reduced price on tickets until the 14<sup>th</sup>.

On March 22, we will have *Tea and Symphony*, an afternoon event.

Tom Schwartz said that he would like to see more volunteers in next year's PO Council and to please let him know if they would like to get involved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38am.