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District News from Independence Community Schools

Inside This Issue

Superintendents Corner ...	Page 1
District News.....	Page 2
From the Board Table.....	Page 2
Curriculum	Page 3
Fish! Nominations.....	Page 4
PTO News.....	Page 5
East Elementary News.....	Page 7
Kindergarten: Season's Greetings	Page 8
Second Grade Scene.....	Page 8
First Grade Focus.....	Page 9
Guidance.....	Page 9
West Elementary News....	Page 10
Character Counts.....	Page 11
Fifth Grade News.....	Page 12
5 th Grade visits Living History Farms.....	Page 12
Middle School News.....	Page 15
High School News.....	Page 16
Weather Related Information.....	Page 18

If you have items you would like to see in the newsletter, or if you have information you would like to place in the newsletter, please contact Mary at the Administration Building by calling 334-7400 or e-mail her at mcooksley@independence.k12.ia.us

The four R's of High School

-Devin Embray, Superintendent

I sit on a committee of teachers and administrators from the high school who have engaged in an initiative offered by AEA267 called "R4". This committee is studying the four "R's" of high school. They are: Reflection, Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. We have met once so far with an opportunity to attend the high school summit conference later this year. I am very impressed thus far with what I have heard, not only from our facilitators on this subject, but from our committee as well. These teachers and administrators have given up valuable classroom and building time to study how our high school fares according to the four R's. We have been very engaged with Reflection and Rigor in our district already and what we have studied thus far and I can only imagine what lies ahead as it pertains to Relevance and Relationships. Before I go any further let me explain a little about what the four R's stand for.

Reflection deals with how a teacher assesses what they have accomplished with their students. It may involve analyzing their formative assessments (the ones along the way prior to a GLE summative) or the GLE summative itself. It could be analyzing their Individual Career Development plan or giving thoughtful input from news of what their building leadership team may be planning for the building. It could also be what they have thought about in regards to professional development and how what they have learned could be utilized within their instruction.

Rigor involves the levels of instruction and assessment. It doesn't really mean more work, but rather higher level work. Most of us can remember Bloom's taxonomy where the lowest level of understanding is knowledge and comprehension. High Rigor would mean that we would be asking students more than that in accomplishing their work. We would most likely be asking them to demonstrate, analyze, or synthesize something.

[Continued on page 2]

December, 2006

Superintendent's



Devin Embray

Corner

Calendar of Events

December 1st – 9th Girls BB, MS Wrestling, JV/V GBB
December 2nd – 9th Grade BBB, HS Wrestling
December 4th – 7th GBB, 8th GBB
December 5th – CCC, J/V BBB, JV/V GBB
December 6th – Science and Technology SAC
December 7th – 6-12 LA SAC, Health and Wellness SAC, MS Wrestling, HS Wrestling
December 8th – **MS Awards Assembly**, 9th BBB, 9th GBB, V BBB
December 9th – HS Wrestling
December 11th – K-5 LA SAC, 7th GBB, 8th GBB
December 12th – Special Ed. SAC, 9th GBB, HS Wrestling, JV/V GBB, **MS Band/Vocal Concert**
December 13th – 1:00 Early Dismissal
December 14th – MS Wrestling, HS Wrestling, 9th BBB
December 15th – JV/V GBB, JV/V BBB
December 16th – 9th GBB, HS Wrestling
December 18th – 9th BBB, MS Wrestling, 9th Wrestling
December 19th – JV/V GBB, JV/V BBB
December 21st – 9th GBB
December 22nd – **NO SCHOOL, Christmas Vacation**, JF/V GBB, JV/V BBB
December 25 – January 2nd – **NO SCHOOL** Classes resume **January 3rd**



**Independence Community Schools**

1207 1st Street West
Independence, Iowa 50644
319.334.7400

Visit our website at:

<http://www.independence.k12.ia.us>

Board of Education

Dawnye Sturtz, President
Bob Reiff, Vice President
Kevin Greenley, Director
Charlie McCardle, Director
Kevin (KC) Robb, Director

Superintendent

Devin Embray
319.334.7400

**Director of Curriculum and
School Improvement**

Mary Cooksley
319.334.7400

Director of Finance

Chris Kimball
319.334.7400

Transportation Director

Michael Donnelly
319.334.7435

Food Service Director

Nancy Michels
319.334.7415

Technology Director

Dan Good
319.334.7405

East Elementary Principal

Dr. Mary Jean Blaisdell
319.334.7425

West Elementary Principal

Josh Lyons
319.334.7430

Middle School Principal

Meredith Miller
(319) 334-7415

High School Principal

Karl Kurt
(319) 334-7405

**High School Asst
Principal/Athletic Director**

Dave Ross
319.334.7405

Big Brothers, Big Sisters**Coordinator**

Jeannie Neeley
319.334.7415

**District News and Information**

[Continued from Page 1]

The four R's of High School

-Devin Embray, Superintendent

There is some misunderstanding as it relates to rigor and many have mistakenly thought it meant "more" work not necessarily high level work.

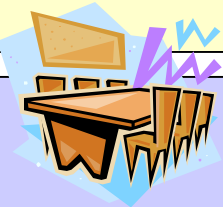
Relevance is concerned with how the instruction relates to real world issues. How many of us have heard our children say, "How is this going to help me in the real world?" I would challenge you to make sure your child asks questions like that if they don't know. It is our task to make sure that what we do for instruction relates to the "real world" and that the skills we are trying to instill are in fact very useful or "Relevant" to your child.

Relationships rounds out the four and it primarily deals with the statement, "I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care." This statement is one that rings loud with not only me but many. I facilitate a group of Superintendents and during one meeting we held an interview with students across Iowa and Minnesota who were either finishing up their first year in college or had just graduated from high school. The main theme that came out of that encounter was that students claimed that teachers that cared about them beyond the grade were the ones that had caused them to go on and try for bigger challenges such as college or some sort of post-secondary experience. They claimed that they actually tried harder to not "disappoint" those teachers. From their vantage point relationships were crucial for them in terms of going on to further their education.

Our high school committee is just in the beginning stages of this endeavor to analyze what pertains to our high school as it relates to the four R's, but I can assure you that we have a very good group of instructors taking on this challenge. As the year progresses look for updates from this committee on its findings and what if any issues that result from them.

FROM THE BOARD TABLE

Contributed by Dawnye Sturtz, Board President



School board members across the state recently headed toward Des Moines to attend the Iowa Association of School Board (IASB) Convention held November 15 to 17. This year I was pleased to represent the Independence Community School Board. I had the opportunity to attend the general and educational sessions as well as to view the Commercial Exhibits and the Show and Tell Exhibits. I also saw familiar faces of board members from other school districts that I met in prior years and was able to share similar concerns and successes.

Wednesday's Iowa Association of School Boards Annual Meeting and the Delegate Assembly was a new experience for me. All school districts are given a voting card based on student population. Independence's voting card was worth two votes. Board members spent the afternoon approving the Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, the dues structure, and the legislative beliefs, resolutions, and priorities. It was always interesting when another board member would approach one of the many microphones to offer an amendment or even an amendment to an amendment.

During Thursday and Friday, I was able to attend the general sessions and five educational sessions. The general sessions consisted of everyone gathering in one place. We were able to listen to some of the many talented students in the state, including Iowa Valley High School's Concert Choir and Alburnett's vocalist Merrick Robison. The keynote speaker was Phil Boyle, whose main point was that everyone has values that determine how he or she responds to an issue. Imagine a compass with its four directions labeled liberty, community, prosperity, and equality. One of those labels or values tends to drive people in their decision-making. The educational sessions are designed to share success stories and ideas for improvement. The topics I selected included extracurricular activities, saving money and resources, community relations, academic content standards, and legislative advocacy.

The IASB convention is a great place to get new ideas about what others are doing to improve student learning. As I listened to many of the speakers from AEA's or other school districts, I overheard familiar words such as learning teams, teacher collaboration, and curriculum alignment. I am pleased that our school district seems to be a step ahead in many areas. Perhaps we will have a team of presenters next year!



The Walls Go Up!

The K-5 “Walls” of the Language Arts curriculum were displayed on October 2, 2006. Teachers analyzed what is currently being taught in Kindergarten through Fifth grade, with teachers from grades 6 -12 also present to provide input.

The “Walls” show what is being taught in different categories, or strands, in the areas of reading skills, literary and informational text, writing skills, compositional writing, speaking & listening, media, and research skills. Next, teachers will interview one another to determine missing information. Then the “walls” will be updated so any gaps or overlaps in skills can be determined.

The group meets again on December 7th to continue analyzing the current curriculum. If you have any questions about the curriculum revision, or just want to learn more, contact Mary at 334-7400 or e-mail her at mcooksley@independence.k12.ia.us



Elementary teachers analyze what is currently being taught in Kindergarten through Fifth grade.



Left: Nikki Matthiesen, 4th grade teacher, Diane Kineth, 5th grade teacher and Josh Lyons, West Elementary Principal discuss what to ask teachers during the interviews scheduled on November 29th. Above: The “walls” displaying the K-5 Language Arts curriculum.

Parent Needs Assessment Given

On November 21st and 22nd, a Parent Needs Assessment Survey was completed by parents attending Parent Teacher Conferences. When the information is compiled, the results will appear in this newsletter.

The purpose of the survey is to determine what we can do to enhance each building and assist the district with moving forward; continuing to improve services for children and parents. Thank you for your continued support.

Subject Area Committee Upcoming Meetings

- CCC – December 5th - 4:00 – 6:00
- Science – December 6th - 8:00 – 3:00
- 6-12 Language Arts – December 7th 8:00 -11:30
- Health and Wellness – December 7th 12:30 – 3:00
- K-5 Language Arts – December 11th – 8:00 -11:30



What is Mastery?

Mary Cooksley, Director of Curriculum and School Improvement

Independence Community School District believes all students have the ability to learn skills and concepts; preparing them for life in an ever-changing and competitive world. We have high expectations for **ALL** students and want them to succeed. As a result, teachers are holding students accountable for attainment of skills and concepts outlined in their subject's Grade Level Expectations. Many students are being re-taught because we feel that all students should "master" the content. The Curriculum Coordinating Council has tried to make the definition of mastery more easily understood by parents and students, so a tiered system was created to better communicate the levels which a student might demonstrate their knowledge on a Grade Level Expectation. First, Mastery is defined and then the levels of demonstration follow.

Mastery: Students will successfully demonstrate, to a predetermined standard, the expectations of the course over time.

Exceptional: Students will successfully demonstrate, at an exceptional level of knowledge, the grade level expectations of the course over time.

Proficient: Students will successfully demonstrate, at a skilled level of knowledge, the grade level expectations of the course over time.

Competent: Students will successfully demonstrate, at a basic level of knowledge, the grade level expectations of the course over time.



Bus Transportation Request

I would like to ask all parents of East, West, and Middle School students who ride the rural busses home to call the bus garage if their children are not riding the bus home due to being picked up by parents or going home early.

Bus garage #334.7435
24 hour answering machine

Thank you, Mike Donnelly

Aaahhh chooo! Cough, cough.

Aaahhh chooo! Cough, cough. Hopefully these won't become familiar sounds this winter. With the cold and flu season upon us, now is the time to prepare to limit the spread of germs. Hand washing is the easiest and one of the most effective ways of accomplishing this. Encourage your child to wash their hands with soap and water often throughout the day, especially before meals, before and after using the restroom, and after using a tissue. Keeping your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth will also help prevent transmission of disease causing germs. Make sure your son or daughter gets plenty of rest and eats a balanced diet consisting of all food groups daily.

When your child is ill, please do not send them to school. Some reasons to keep a child home include:

- ✓ Fever greater than 100 degrees
- ✓ Vomiting within 24 hours
- ✓ Repeated diarrhea
- ✓ Mucus draining from the eye
- ✓ Sore throat with swollen neck glands
- ✓ Rash of unknown cause
- ✓ Runny/stuffy nose accompanied by headache
- ✓ Unusual fatigue.

Most illnesses are over very quickly and are not a cause for concern. But, if symptoms worsen or persist for more than 24 hours, contact your physician.

Please remember to send your child to school with appropriate clothing and outerwear for the season. Coats, hats, gloves and boots are essential for our students when they travel to and from school and during recess.



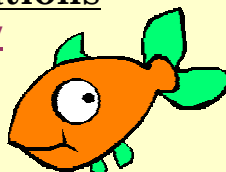
November Fish Nominations

Choose Your **Attitude**

Play

Be There

Make Their Day



- ❖ **Carole Franz** – 1st Grade at East Elementary
- ❖ **Dave Ross** – HS Assistant Principal/Athletic Director
- ❖ **Mike Donnelly** – Transportation Director
- ❖ **Julie Flickinger** – 1st Grade at East Elementary
- ❖ **Teresa Nennig** – HS Family and Consumer Sciences
- ❖ **Mary Cooksley** – Director, Curriculum and School Improvement
- ❖ **Kathy Wilson** – HS Media Associate
- ❖ **Teri Schloss** – West Elementary and MS Nurse
- ❖ **Holly Mueller** – 3rd Grade at West Elementary
- ❖ **Jenny Cappel** – Associate, Buchanan Co. Early Childhood Center
- ❖ **Dianne Ossman** – Secretary, Buchanan Co. Early Childhood Center
- ❖ **Nancy Black** – 3rd Grade at West Elementary
- ❖ **Karl Kurt** – Principal, High School
- ❖ **Mark Torgerson** – HS Math
- ❖ **Jim Heinz** – HS Science
- ❖ **April Loomis** – Special Education Associate, East
- ❖ **Bobby Beatty** – HS Coach
- ❖ **Meredith Miller** – Principal, Middle School
- ❖ **Sheryl Mace** – 2nd Grade at West Elementary
- ❖ **Melody Malek** – Kindergarten at East Elementary
- ❖ **Josh Lyons** – Principal, West Elementary
- ❖ **Mary Jean Blaisdell** – Principal, East Elementary
- ❖ **Julie Hanson** – MS Kitchen Manager
- ❖ **Chris Kimball** – Business Manager
- ❖ **Donalyn Pogue** – Kindergarten at East Elementary
- ❖ **John Neil** – HS Special Education

Does your child have a teacher that possesses the Fish! Philosophy Principles each and every day? Nominate them for entry into the Fish! Community. **Make Their Day** by showing your appreciation for all they do for students. To make a nomination call Mary at 334.7400 or e-mail the nomination to: mcooksley@independence.k12.ia.us

Independence Community PTO - November 2006

PTO INFO TO KNOW

Co-Chairs:

Shelly Bertelli
sbertelli@ix.net

Dawnye Sturtz
lsturtz@iowatelecom.net

Please let us know if you want to be included on our PTO email list. You will receive meeting agendas, minutes and other updates.

Watch for next month's update with a preview of 2007 PTO events!



PTO is no longer handling the Campbell Soup Labels. Parents, please do not send them to school with your child. We are, however, continuing with the Box Tops for Education and the Milk Moola caps and bags.



Our coordinators are Amy Stephens, Stacy Nabholz, Holly Rosauer, and Teri Wilkes.



= 10 cents



<http://www.boxtops4education.com/index.aspx>

Membership Drive

Registration Day PTO membership drive table was covered by the following PTO volunteers: Deb Martin, Cindy Thompson, Polly Fank, Rhonda Jasper, Ann McMillan and her children, Roger Fischels and his children, Teri Wilkes, Dawnye Sturtz, Heather Hansen, and Shelly Bertelli. In addition, Pam Gissel and Mrs. Knott recruited additional members from the West Elementary and East Elementary teaching staffs. PTO also had a table at the East and West Open Houses with Deb Martin, Beth Silver, Mary Beth Brinkema, Julie Berner, Kelly Henderson, and Dawnye Sturtz helping. The current membership is 110 families. With spouses, the count is 160 individuals. It's never too late to join PTO for only \$2.00! Email a Co-Chair for more information.



Back to School pool Party a success!

Kathy Meyer organized a pool party for PTO members and their families. Attendance was about 45 people on the evening of August 8th. Although it was cool, the kids enjoyed swimming and some of them even won a door prize!

PTO DONATES \$500...

PTO has donated \$500 to the Independence Dollars for Scholars. An area senior planning to major in the education field will be the lucky recipient next May.



Boohoo.....Yahoo Breakfast

Kindergarten, first grade, and other elementary parents were invited to enjoy muffins, bagels, and rolls at the Heartland Agribition Center on August 23rd from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. The breakfast enabled parents to meet others and to share the experience of sending their children off to school. The parents also learned more about the PTO group and the Mentoring Program. PTO helpers were Jeannie Neeley, Dawnye Sturtz, Cindy Thompson, and Kate Barloon.

Fall Fund Raising - Thanks, Deb Martin!

Deb Martin has done a great job of organizing this fall's fund raiser. The delivery date is November 28th, so watch for more information soon. PTO does a large fundraiser every other year with the proceeds to pay for PTO activities as well as special projects. The group has plans to contribute a portion of the funds towards safe surfacing at the East Elementary playground and towards a mobile computer lab for West Elementary. PTO hopes to form committees to help make these goals a reality. If you have an interest in helping, please email a Co-Chair!

Let's Be SAFE!

A Safe Surfacing/
Equipment
Playground
presentation was
held on
November 2nd.
Karen Sherman
from Solon shared
her expertise and
gave several
suggestions to the
group.

congratulations



PTO applied for a grant from the George R. Hood Trust and was fortunate to receive \$300. It was used to purchase a nice bench made of recyclable materials for the East Elementary playground.

MATH NIGHT UPDATE

Math Night was held on October 17th from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the West Elementary Media Center. The Open House enabled parents to learn more about our math curriculum, including Rocket Math, Mini Math, Mental Math, and Accelerated Math. Parents were able to watch students working on Rocket Math, view various Math websites, check out Math Facts in a Flash (home version), learn more about math for Kindergarten students, and look at various Math games and other resources. Several helpers made this a success: Teachers—Melody Malek, Sheryl Mace, Nancy Black, Holly Mueller, Delene Donnelly, Donalyn Pogue, and Julie Flickinger. Others that assisted were Wendy Fischels, Joni Kuper, Shelly Whited, Pam Gissel, Shelly Bertelli, and Dawnye Sturtz. Childcare was provided by Richard Lens and students, Britney Shonka & Andrew Gissel.

Thanks for all of your help!!

DONATIONS NOW TAX DEDUCTIBLE

It is Official—The Independence Community PTO has been approved by the Internal Revenue Service as an organization exempt under section 501(c)(3) as a public charity. Contributions to the group will be deductible for tax purposes to the extent that they are gifts and no consideration is received in return.





Elementary

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Dec 13 - 1:00 Dismissal – In-service

Dec 14 - 6:30 JK Winter Concert

@ East gym

Dec 22-Jan 2 - Winter Break

Jan 3 - School Resumes

Jan 4-9 - Testing

Jan 13 - No School – In-service

Jan 24 - 1:00 Dismissal – In-service

Jan 31 - 1:00 Dismissal – In-service

Mileage Club Volunteers Needed!

If you would like to devote 15-30 minutes each week outside at recess to help students reach their goals in the Mileage Club, please call East/South Elementary to volunteer your time!

Mentors Needed!

If you are interested in being a mentor and volunteering your time to work with a child for approximately 30 minutes each week on a regular basis, please call and let us know!

Wanted: Substitute Associates

If you are available to substitute occasionally as a classroom, office, or library associate (duties vary), please call 334-7425. We need YOU!



Principal's Corner

By: Dr. Mary Jean Blaisdell

The school year seems to be flying past so quickly and the New Year is just around the corner! Thanks to all who attended November conferences. Your child benefits from your participation and teachers appreciate the opportunity to share student learning and progress with you as well.

November was an active month! The Veteran's Day assemblies allowed students the opportunity to recognize the efforts and sacrifices made by men and women in the armed forces. Students also celebrated Thanksgiving in their classrooms during the month.

This year, there will be no Winter Vocal Music Program at East Elementary. We are, however, scheduled to have a Spring Vocal Music Program in March.

Junior Kindergarten will hold a winter program on Thursday, December 14th at 6:30 in the East Elementary gym.

In January, we will have our second set of assessments at the K-5 level. K-2 will start these tests January 4 and continue through January 9. These assessments measure instructional reading level and comprehension, fluency, and phonemic awareness. Math facts and computation are also measured at this time. The results of these tests will be shared at conference time in February.

Have a wonderful, relaxing winter break!

Box tops for Education/ Pop Can Tabs/Milk Moola for Schoola

We continue to collect General Mills Box Tops, Pop Can Tabs, and bottle caps and bag tops from Kwik Star products. Our PTA will again be taking care of these collections for us! This is a good way to help us earn extra money for things we need. Thanks! If you are interested in spending time at school or at home sorting/cutting and redeeming these items for our school, please call!





Kindergarten Corner: Season's Greetings!

Thanks for all who attended Parent/Teacher Conferences in November. We greatly appreciate your involvement!

Kindergarten students will be celebrating the 5 Senses in December. The students will learn how many holiday traditions are related to our senses.

We will look forward to our wonderful winter break with our families!



Kindergarten has a Charlie Brown Thanksgiving

Second Grade Scene

Mrs. Flickinger's, Mrs. Mace's, and Mrs. Miller's classes dressed in their Halloween costumes and sang spooky songs to the residents of Prairie Hills and Buchanan County Care Center. It was fun for everyone!

December is quite a busy month in 2nd grade. Some of the classes are working on the Balance and Motion unit in Science while the others work on Solids and Liquids. The kids love these hands on Science units and the vocabulary they learn along with it is amazing!

We will soon be starting Time and Money units in Math. It is always helpful if parents can have their kids count change at home. Also, it's a good time to make sure you have an analog clock or watch for your child to practice telling time.

The winter is a great time to snuggle up and read a good book with your child. It could be habit forming. We hope so. The more they read, the better they get. Thank you, Parents, for all the work you do at home with your child. It really helps

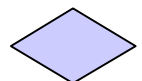
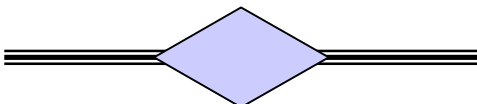
First Grade Focus: Practice, Practice, Practice!!!

What's the best way to improve reading skills? Practice! First graders at East are getting additional reading practice with the help of reading book carts. Each day, students can choose from over 700 titles. The books vary in difficulty so students can pick books to match their growing reading skills.

The book carts were started eleven years ago with donations from a memorial fund. Each year contributions from parents and people in the community keep the collection updated and growing. First grade teachers want to thank everyone who supports reading through this program!



Second Graders dressed in costumes and sang spooky songs to Prairie Hills residents



Guidance is off to a TeRRiFiCC Start!

By: Julie Rouse

The East Elementary students are working hard to be TeRRiFiCC (trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring, citizens) students and classmates. The six pillars of character are helpful tools I utilize throughout the guidance curriculum. To jump start the school year the kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade students worked on building their feeling vocabularies. Through fun activities, such as the “Feelings Song” (a catchy tune that I couldn’t get out of my head for days) and role plays, the students demonstrated that they knew how to verbalize and identify emotions.

The first pillar of character we have been working on is RESPECT. The kindergarten met Austus the Lion and learned that respectful people are kind and considerate. We worked on building our manners. Acceptance of others is another component of the RESPECT pillar. The kindergarten classes made “The Colors of Us” poster, which supported the fact you can be different from someone else and still be friends.

The 1st graders have been role modeling behaviors that follow the “Golden Rule.” Also, you may have seen your 1st graders wearing “respectacles,” or glasses that magically let you see respectful behavior in your classroom. They also met a box of crayons that had trouble getting along with each other. After each color saw what the others contributed to the group, they saw the value in differences.

Finally, the 2nd grade classes have been working hard at being the role models of our school. We worked on our listening skills and identifying respectful behaviors. We played “Respect Bingo” to offer respectful solutions to everyday events/problems. Currently, the 2nd graders are learning a rap titled “Something for Me, Something for You” from Teaching Tolerance. Please ask your child about the song and its positive message.

I have included some helpful websites about character education, child safety, and family life. If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to call or email.

I look forward to the rest of the school year.

Art News

Mrs. Sorg and Ms. Rickels

It has been a wonderful experience to be a part of the Independence School District as a student teacher from Upper Iowa University. I have had the pleasure to meet and work with the students and staff at the Middle School, as well as East and West Elementary. My placement with Mrs. Sorg at the elementary level has given me a great insight of how “Art is the glue that holds it all together!”

Educators and parents alike realize that not all students learn the same way. By teaching visually, verbally, auditorily, and tactically, through the use of his/her senses, it is four times more likely that the lessons being taught, is learned, and then retained. By gaining background knowledge of a subject in one area it will trigger a chain reaction in the comprehension of a new connected lesson.

My time with the art classrooms, here at Independence, is drawing to a close. I would like to thank the parents for sharing their very talented children with me. The whole experience has given me a greater outlook of how a community and school district can work together to create a positive influence on the wellness of their children. I have experienced only talented teachers teaching exceptional students. Thank you!

The students have been working hard to learn about the history of art and the basic elements/principles of art and design. The kindergarten students learned about the Native American Indians, their culture, art, and community living. They created their own teepee using design and color patterns. We talked about the shape of the teepees, as they are a triangle from the front, a circle from the bottom, and a cone shape overall. The students learned about the pictograph symbols used by the Native American Indians. The shape of the circle was used to represent many things to the Native American Plains Indians, for it symbolized the moon, the sun, the fire circle, and the camp circle. The students set up a village with their teepees to role-play the possible way of life of the first Americans.



Kindergarten students learn about the Native American Indians.



December, 2006



WEST ELEMENTARY

Respect and Protect

The past three months have gone by so quickly it's hard to believe December is upon us. In those months students have been involved with a number of activities during the school day. Those activities range from Accelerated Math and Reading to learning a new language to experiment hands on during science time.

I have been impressed with how our students work and their ability to manage time and follow directions. However, we do have those incidents when students make a choice to ignore the expectations of the teacher or associate.

We have rules and expectations we all must follow in order for us to be successful and to create order within our school.

Please review with your children the importance of following the expectations of the school and the adults in our school. These rules and expectations are documented in the student handbook.

Teachers and associates are here to help students be successful and will often take time to correct or remind students about expectations.

West Elementary follows the Respect and Protect policy. We implement discipline procedures as well as incorporate an educational component to assist students in a positive decision making process.

Associate Teachers are a Vital Resource

The associate teachers at West Elementary have an enormous impact on our students and their success.

Our associate teachers are often over looked and sometimes under appreciated for the tasks they are given. They are often handed the "grunt" work of our school, but they have just as much responsibility to help our kids be successful.

West Elementary associates are in charge of recess duty, checking papers, lunchroom duty, before and after school bus duty, working with small groups of students on reading and math, supervising hallways, and supporting the teacher in the classroom.

These professionals deserve a great deal of credit for their efforts and for taking on challenges daily.

They are a part of our West Elementary family and without them we would not function to the standard we do.

Thank you to our West Elementary associates for being a part of our learning community.

Coming Up:

1:00 Dismissal	Dec. 13
3 rd -5 th Vocal Concert	Dec. 18
5 th Grade Band	Dec. 18
No School	Dec. 22-Jan. 2



the bottom line

by Josh Lyons, Principal

What are we preparing our children for? What goals do you want your children to accomplish in their life?

These questions are often times difficult to answer. However, the answer is simple. We want our children to accomplish just as much if not more than we have in our life. So, what does that look like?

Take time to talk with your child about what it is that they want to become. Some may say they want to be a policeman, fireman, an astronaut, a famous author, or maybe even the President of the United States.

All of your children have the ability to do whatever they want to, it takes time, perseverance, skill, and sometimes a little bit of luck. Help your children become whom they want to be, push them, and most of all help them reach for the stars.



"Character Counts" at West Elementary

The guidance curriculum at West Elementary is based on the "Character Counts" program that focuses on the six pillars of character (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship). Students at West Elementary are striving to have a TeRRiFiCC school year. We started the school year with lessons focusing on feelings and emotional awareness. Students discussed the many internal and external cues that they or someone else experiences with an emotion. Next, students have been working on the pillar of RESPECT.

Third graders worked hard at collaborating with their classmates to create a Respect Book. The book was divided into four sections: Respect for Yourself, Respect for Others, Respect for Property/World, and Respect for Authority. Ask your third grader about what they drew and what area of respect it represented. All third graders should be able to give an example of each category. Next, the third graders have been reading "Eight Keys to a Better Me," a book donated by several local businesses. We enjoyed the books and showed our appreciation by writing "thank you" postcards.

The 4th grade class started the RESPECT lessons with "starters" and "stoppers." We created a list of behaviors, facial expressions, attitudes, etc. that would be helpful or hurtful to our relationships. Recently, we worked on cooperative behavior. Students worked in pairs; one student was blindfolded while the other directed them through the "cooperation maze." Finally, the 4th grade class has been identifying respectful and disrespectful behavior in different scenarios. The students did an excellent job offering suggestions on how to correct disrespectful behavior. Moreover, the 4th graders have Respect Calendars and each student has indicated a goal they would like to achieve by the end of November.

In 5th grade the students have been journaling and performing skits on respect. The students write reflections about quotes we read in class. For example, "I complained because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet" – *Arabic proverb*. The quotes serve as conversation starters and the students have had some insightful reflections. The respect skits provide the students with an opportunity to demonstrate the disrespectful and respectful versions of given scenarios. Also, the 5th grade students have played a cooperative game with spoons and ping pong balls. As a class, the students discussed what characteristics are beneficial and detrimental to a team.

I have included some helpful websites about character education, child safety, and family life. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call or email. I look forward to the rest of the school year.

Mrs. Julie Rouse
jurouse@independence.k12.ia.us

*"If it's sanity you're after, there's no recipe like laughter."
~Henry Rutherford Elliot*

www.charactercounts.org
www.cfchildren.org
www.loveandlogic.com
www.family.samhsa.gov

Fifth Grade News

West Elementary fifth graders toured Living History Farms near Des Moines in early October. Students toured the 1875 town of Walnut Hill and took a 300 year walk through an Ioway Indian farm of the 1700's, a pioneer farm of the 1850's, and a 1900's farm. The tour focused on changes in technology and how the farms and the town relied on each other to prosper. The following are articles written by fifth graders, which include the student's perspective of information they learned.

The 1700's Farm

One of the first farms in Iowa was the 1700's Ioway Indian farm. Wickiups are houses that they used for every season. Summer homes were made out of bark because it kept the houses cooler. Winter homes were made out of cattails because they could put layer upon layer for better insulation. Teepees were made for traveling or hunting. The Ioway Indians grew gardens with squash, corn, and potatoes along with many other vegetables. Bears, deer, fish, and buffalo were some of the things they used for meat and protein. The gardening tools they used were: scapula hoe, little shovel, and big shovels. They also used tools for hunting like: bow and arrows, and some of guns. The Ioway Indians used everything they could on their farm in the past, and look where we are now with farms... a lot has changed.

by Blake Henderson and Nick Bokemeyer



The Print Shop

by Matteaha West and Abigail Goedken

How did you print a newspaper in 1885? Well, you would start out with type. Types are little blocks with letters engraved on the end. If you were a printer you would lay the type in rows as sentences. The sentence had to be written backward so when you printed it, it would be forward. An easy trick so you didn't have to spell backward is to spell the word forward upside down and then flip it over and you have a word spelled right side up backward. When you were done laying it out, you would put ink on it and put it on a press. Once it was on the press you push on it and it would be printed on a big roll of paper. Now, you wouldn't want a big roll of paper with one print on it so you take it cut it with a big paper cutter. Then you would be done. That's how you would print a newspaper in 1875.



The Walnut Hill Millinery

By April Donlon and Stephanie McMillan

Have you ever been to an 1875 millinery ... no, good then I won't bore you to sleep. The Millinery is just a fancy name for a ladies hat shop. Ladies hats were always custom made and could cost anywhere from \$0.25 to \$3.00 on average. Hats were very important, if you lived in this time. They were always worn when you went outside. Ladies, when you were inside someone's house for a brief visit, you would leave your hat on. But if you intended to stay for a longer period of time, you would take your hat off. Men always took their hat off when indoors. The hat shop served many purposes in addition to making hats. It was the women's hang out place because they weren't allowed in the pub or other manly places. Often the back of the store was rented to a dressmaker who not only sold dresses, but also sold fichues, bonnets, gloves, fans, and an abundance of other items. The Millinery was a cool place to hang out and see the latest fashions.





School

Middle

Meredith Miller, Principal

Calendar of Events

December

- 1 - WR Waverly- Shell Rock, Hudson @ Indee, 4:15pm
- 4 - GBB W. Delaware @ 4:00pm
7th-Manchester, 8th-Indee
- 7 - WR North Linn, East Buchanan, @ Indee, 4:00pm
- 8 - Awards Assembly @ 8:45am
- 11 - GBB Benton Comm @ 4:15pm
7th-Atkins, 8th-Indee
- 12 - 6th-8th Band/Vocal Concert @ Middle School, 7:00pm
- 13 - 1:00 Dismissal, Staff Development
- 14 - WR North Fayette, Oelwein @ Indee, 4:00pm
- 18 - WR Indee, Vinton-Shellsburg, Benton Comm. @ Vinton, 4:15pm
- 22 - Winter Break Begins (Dec. 22- Jan. 2)
- 25 - Christmas

January

- 3 - Classes Resume
- 12 - 1:00 Dismissal, Staff Development
- 24 - 1:00 Dismissal, Staff Development

6th Grade Technology

This is an old class with a new name. Many of us remember it as Keyboarding, now known as Technology Literacy, we have added the following lessons to our curriculum: keyboarding, word processing, vocabulary terms used in technology, online safety, copyright issues, and power point. Students not only benefit from becoming computer literate, they enjoy the class too!

7th Grade Life Science, Garry Anderson

Some of the exciting curriculum we have covered thus far this year have included cell models, scientific method, microscope, and create a creature. The students really enjoyed the process and outcome of the create a creature series. This project demonstrated all the characteristics of living things. Students were placed in groups and asked to think outside the box in order to create a creature of their very own. Though this project was completed early during the year, the winners of each class are displayed in the classroom.



1st pic: left to right: Sam Rasmussen, Bryce Bachman, Cole Johnson, Dustin Toale, and Brandon Thein.

2nd pic: left to right: Kara Meyer, Lucas Clinton, Sirina Makepeace

8th Grade Math, Mrs. Curtis

It is hard to believe that the school year is almost two-thirds of the way over. Some days I feel like I'm finally getting into a routine and getting to know the students. Yet before you know it the end of the year will be here.

For those whom I have not had the opportunity to meet I want to introduce myself. I am Mrs. Curtis, the 8th grade math teacher. This is my first year teaching at Independence Middle School and my fifth year of teaching. My husband and I live just outside of Aurora on dairy farm. Earlier this fall I was on maternity leave for a while. In October, we were blessed with our second daughter, Keelie, who joins her 2-year old sister, Mackenzie, at home.

I have been enjoying teaching the students this year. Everyday presents a new opportunity for them and myself to learn and grow. Students have been busy working at passing their GLE's in math. The last two units have dealt with reading and analyzing word problems to setup equations and then solve. Many students showed growth in their abilities throughout these units. We continue to work on rational number concepts and strengthen understanding of those ideas. Recently, we started a new unit on linear relationships that involves graphing data and comparing information from the graphs. The students have not done any data analysis this year, so hopefully they will enjoy this unit.

Feel free to contact me @ 334-7415 or e-mail tcurtis@independence.k12.ia.us if you have any questions. You can keep up-to-date with your child's grades and assignments by using the Pearson Centerpoint website information system.



School

December Calendar

- 1 – GBB (H) Marion
9th GBB (H) Marion
- 2 – WR – Indee Invite
9th BBB at Benton Community
- 5 – GBB (H) Vinton-Shellsburg
BBB at Vinton-Shellsburg
- 7 – WR at W. Delaware/Maquoketa
- 8 – GBB at West Delaware
BBB (H) West Delaware
9th GBB at West Delaware
9th BBB (H) West Delaware
- 9 – JV WR at LaPorte Invite
V WR at Oelwein Invite
JV BBB (H) Benton Community
- 11 – Band/Vocal Concert
- 12 – JV WR at East Buchanan
GBB (H) Western Dubuque
BBB at Western Dubuque
9th GBB (H) Western Dubuque
- 13 – 1:00 Dismissal – Staff Development
- 14 – WR at Central DeWitt
9th BBB (H) Wapsie Valley
- 15 – GBB at Benton Community
BBB (H) Benton Community
- 16 – WR at North Linn Invite
9th GBB (H) Oelwein
- 18 – West Elem. Winter Concert at HS
9th WR at West Delaware Tourn.
9th BBB (H) Oelwein
JV BBB (H) Marion
- 19 – GBB (H) Central DeWitt
BBB at Central DeWitt
- 21 – 9th GBB (H) CF Holmes
- 22 – Winter Break Begins
GBB at Waterloo Columbus
BBB (H) Waterloo Columbus
- 25 – Christmas

Science Classes Use Technology to Learn!

The Science department at the high school utilized some of their resource money to purchase several items for this school year. They have purchased several multi-media projectors so they can project internet sites, streaming video clips, microscope findings, and other information onto a large screen or T.V. for the class to visually see Science. The other technology resource purchased this summer was a twelve

[continued on page 17]

ACADEMIC INELIGIBILITY

The state has mandated a no pass-no play policy for all students who participate in activities. The state's Academic Ineligibility begins on the first day that competitive play can occur for a specific sport after a terminal grading period. The first competitive play day varies from sport to sport. Girl's Basketball can begin competition on 11/20/06. Boy's Basketball and Wrestling can begin competition on 11/27/06.

Students may begin competition 20 **SCHOOL** days after this date. Conference, district, regional and state championships are counted as part of the 20 days even if Indee has been eliminated from post-season play. It is also possible for the 20 days of academic ineligibility to be split up between two sports.

If a failing student did not participate in Fall Sports, then their ineligibility will begin on the first possible day of competition. However, if the student was involved in a fall sport then the timing of ineligibility is different depending on the sport in which he or she participated.

If a student went out for volleyball, seven days have been served, leaving a student to serve 13 days from 11/20/06. If a student went out for football, 12 days have been served, leaving a student to serve eight days from 11/27/06. If a student is out for C.C. no days have been served as the season ends on 10/28/06.

Speech and Music are formatted a little differently. The IHSSA and IHSMA have indicated that students are to be held out of non-graded, extra curricular competitions for 30 days from the day after the grades were posted which was 11/2/06.

Cheerleading is not governed by any of the State of Iowa eligibility rules. However, the Independence CSD has determined to treat cheerleading the same as other sports and mirror the competition date of the sport being cheered.

Freshmen are to be considered bona fide in every sport and as such, the 20 days will take effect in the next sport in which he or she participates. Upper-class men however, can only serve the 20 days in sports they have gone out for in prior high school years.

The Good Conduct Policy has recently undergone a committee renovation and has been passed by the BOE. One change is that the informal adjustment has been replaced by a mandatory completion of an approved intervention program for the first and second Good Conduct Policy offenses. This program will consist of ten structured meetings. The students may opt to decrease these meetings up to 50% by being accompanied to the first and last meeting by their parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s).

[Continued on next page]



Good Conduct Policy Modification *[continued]*

Additionally the penalties for violating the Good Conduct Policy have been modified as well. When school officials find students to be in violation of the Good Conduct Policy, for the first offense, the students will be denied participation in extracurricular and non-graded, co-curricular activities equal to 30% of the number of scheduled dates of that activity if the student is a single activity participant, 15% of the number of scheduled events in both activities if the student is a double activity participant, or 10% of all activities if the student is a triple or more activity participant for 365 days.

The percentages change to 60% for a single activity participant, 30% for a double activity participant and 20% for a triple or more activity participant if a student violates the policy for a second time. If a student violates the policy for a third time the student will not be able to participate in extracurricular and non-graded, co-curricular activities for 365 days

Finally a mere presence component has been added to the one event suspension clause. If the student is found to be in the presence of a Good Conduct Violation with knowledge that the illegal activity is occurring and failing to leave the location despite having ample opportunity to do so he or she will be held out of one event.

This policy applies to all sports, cheerleading, extracurricular portions of co-curricular activities and extracurricular activities.



[continued from page 16]

Science Classes Use Technology to Learn!

Station wireless laptop lab. Students use the computers in the classroom for a variety of purposes. They use them for probes in Anatomy and Physiology, Chemistry and Chemistry Plus. They take part in “web quests” utilizing teacher selected websites. Wireless computers with internet access allow students to conduct “on the spot” research using science sites such as *Science News* and *Scientific America*. Doing this supports the district initiative of improving reading comprehension. Students also have the ability to access their text online, taking practice tests before a GLE is assessed. There are “flash assignments” given that require students to take labels and drag them to the correct place and label muscle anatomy. The list goes on and on – as you can see by the pictures, Science class is not the same as it used to be – utilizing and accessing up-to-date technology allows students in Independence Community Schools to be prepared for the future.



Students use new laptop computers in Advanced Biology Cells, Anatomy & Physiology, Chemistry and Chem Plus classes.





Independence Community School District Weather Related Information

Dear Independence Community School District Parents/Guardians:

We will soon be experiencing our first real evidence of winter. It is time that we prepare for inclement weather and snow-laden roads that offer increased danger and risk.

The Independence School District's bus drivers have had an excellent safety record and always try to reduce any ever-present risk due to weather and road conditions. Buses are equipped with radio communication, communications are maintained with County and State road crews, buses are kept in top maintenance condition and drivers are experienced with driving conditions of the area.

Regardless of all we do to reduce risk, it does not guarantee that a bus will not stall or get stuck. Parents and students can reduce risk by simply dressing students warmly so they remain comfortable in any given situation.

In the Independence School District there are few days that the weather will not allow us to run buses and have school. Generally if we can run buses, we will have school. Occasionally we may have a late start, perhaps two hours late, in order to allow highway crews to clear roads, clear access areas, and to have the fog lift.

The transportation system of the Independence School District involves three levels of responsibility as to whether a child should attend school on a bad weather day. These levels are: The School administration and transportation supervisor, the bus driver and the parents. On days when weather and road conditions may be unfavorable the transportation supervisor and administration personnel are up before 5:00 a.m. to listen to weather forecasts, to check out road conditions first hand, to communicate with County and State road officials and to receive calls from certain people from various areas in the district. The bus supervisor will communicate with the superintendent of schools or his designee and a decision will be made to send out buses and have school.

If a decision is made to call off school, late start or early dismissal, that information will be on area radio, television stations, and the district web site as early as possible; generally by 6:30 a.m. **Please note, although the radio and TV stations listed below may not be your favorite listening/viewing choice, these are the only stations that will be contacted for weather related information for the Independence Community School District and St. John's.**

Radio

KQMG - 95.3 FM
KOEL - 950 AM
WMT - 600 AM or 96 ½ FM
KMCH - 94.7 FM
KFMW - 108 FM

TV

KWWL - Channel 7 or 11
KCRG - Channel 9 or 10
KGAN - Channel 2 or 13

Web site: www.independence.k12.ia.us. Click on District Information and scroll down to Delays and Closings, click to open.

[Continued on next page]

*[Weather Related Information Continued]*

After a decision has been made to have school and run buses individual drivers make the next decision. Some roads may not have been plowed or may be in poor condition. The individual bus driver must decide whether it is safe to travel on those roads. The drivers are instructed to observe safety first, to turn around if conditions are unsafe. If part of the bus route cannot be driven, every attempt will be made by transportation personnel to contact parents so children will not wait needlessly for a bus that is not coming. Please have patience. When the weather is bad it is likely the buses will not run on time and could be late. It is very important that students be dressed for the weather conditions and should not be left alone to wait for the bus.

Parents must make the third and ultimate decision. Weather and road conditions can vary greatly across the Independence Community School District. Transportation decisions that are right for most of the school district might not appear safe in a given area of the district. Whether or not school is in session and whether or not the bus is on its scheduled route, no student should be sent to school when a parent feels the risk is too high. If a parent decides a student is unable to attend school because of bad weather, the student will be given an excused absence and allowed to make up missed schoolwork.

Even when all three levels of responsibility are exercising their best judgment rapid changes in weather will occasionally cause problems. The worst situation might make it impossible to get children home with buses. In that case each family should have an arrangement for their student(s) to stay overnight with someone in town. The student(s) and the school should be aware of those arrangements at the beginning of each school year.

Weather is so unpredictable that even expert forecasters upon whom we rely make mistakes. Some errors in judgment at all three levels may occur. Every effort will be made to make a decision that is based upon the best information available; it is in the best interest of everyone involved and is based upon the safety of students and what is best educationally.

If a decision is made to call off school, run buses late or dismiss early, that information will be broadcast on all local radio and when possible on television stations as early in the day as possible (refer to radio and TV stations on page 1). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Devin Embray or Mike Donnelly.

Respectfully yours,

Devin Embray
Superintendent of Schools
334-7400

Mike Donnelly
Transportation Director
334-7435



Independence Community School District

1207 First Street West
Independence, Iowa 50644

