

Mustang



pride



District News from Independence Community Schools

Inside This Issue

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Superintendents Corner ... | Page 1 |
| District News..... | Page 2 |
| Curriculum | Page 3-5 |
| Transportation Request.... | Page 4 |
| 6 TH Grade Science..... | Page 5 |
| A Day at Middle School.... | Page 6 |
| East Elementary News..... | Page 7 |
| New Face at East..... | Page 8 |
| Kindergarten Corner | Page 8 |
| First Grade | Page 9 |
| Second Grade Scene..... | Page 9 |
| West Elementary News.... | Page 10-12 |
| Third Grade..... | Page 10 |
| Mini Mustang Bank | |
| Scholarship..... | Page 10 |
| Nurse News..... | Page 11 |
| Middle School News..... | Page 13 |
| Special Needs..... | Page 13 |
| Coping with Homework... | Page 14 |
| High School News..... | Page 15 |
| Weather Related | |
| Information..... | Page 16 |

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

Who's Talking to your Children?

-Devin Embray, Superintendent

I recently attended a conference sponsored by School Administrators of Iowa where Robert Kramer, a police officer from the Cedar Falls police department presented on the topic of sex offenders on the Internet. It was a very informative presentation and one that I know our parents would not only benefit from, but greatly enjoy from an informational standpoint. Predators on the internet are addicted to pornography and in most cases it is very difficult for them to stop their behavior. Most are repeat offenders. Officer Kramer has done several interviews with sexual offenders and has gone to several trainings concerning them and what they think. The psychological profile that Officer Kramer describes is too graphic to place in this writing.

It was surprising to know that Iowa has the highest per-capita number of computers per household. Over two thirds of Iowa households have computers and over fifty percent of these have access to the internet. The Cedar Falls police department conducted a survey across the cedar valley area recently, and found the following information:

- 85% of students surveyed responded to the survey (all schools in the Cedar Valley area.)
- 25% have had exposure to pornography on the internet.
- 25% have been solicited by someone on the internet.
- 1-25 students have made contact with someone on the internet and followed that with a phone call, without meeting the person.
- 1-33 received an aggressive solicitation from someone on the internet meaning, gifts were sent, phone calls made, flowers sent, prepaid cell phones, digital cameras, web camera's, and precautionary sexual devices.
- 76% of those who responded stated that parents had no restrictions on them when they were on the internet or they were not monitored by parents when they were on the internet.

There are two kinds of offenders that make up most of the cases, according to Officer Kramer. The situational offender is one that during the course of the encounter the victim says no to the advance and the encounter happens anyway. The other is the preferential offender. This is someone who seeks out situations with children and they are very hard to identify due to them being very common ordinary individuals on the outside.

There are those who say that this happens due to a lack of relationship between the parent and the child. While this may be partially true, they have found that students from families with strong family relations, those with high self esteem and strong personalities to include strong peer relations may still be involved in these situations

March, 2007

Superintendent's



Devin Embray

Corner

Calendar of Events

March 5th – No School for students K-12– P/T Conferences K-8, 12:00 – 8:00

March 6th – 2 hour Late Start – 10:30 begin classes

March 6th – High School faculty Professional Development – 8:00 – 10:00

March 6th – K-8 P/T Conferences, 3:30 – 6:00

March 12th – CCC

March 19th – Special Education Subject Area Committee meets

March 20th – Health/Wellness Subject Area Committee meets

March 20th – 6-12 Language Arts Subject Area Committee meets

March 21st – 1:00 Early Release – Professional Development K-12 teachers

March 22nd – Science Subject Area Committee meets

March 22nd – Technology/Information Literacy Subject Area Committee meet



[Continued on page 5]

**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

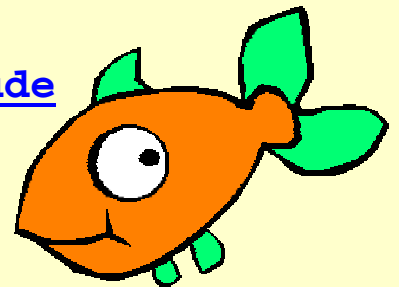
**District News and Information****07-08 Calendar Approved**

The Board of Education approved the 2007 -2008 school calendar at the February 19th regular board meeting. Early release days have been moved to a more consistent basis for next school year. Each Wednesday of the 2nd and the 4th week of each month will be professional development days for teachers. Teachers will be working in collaborative Learning Teams to accomplish the work of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Some of the days teachers were scheduled for Subject Area Committee work during the school day have been reduced; that work will now be accomplished during some of the early release days scheduled.

The collaboration of Learning Teams is an important aspect of professional development in the district. By supporting the time teachers use to align curriculum, discuss research-based strategies, and analyze assessments to deliver quality instruction, you are assisting in the district's goal of increased student learning and increased student achievement. Our gains have been significant thus far, and in spite of our adjustments, we hope to continue these successes!

**Fish Nominations**

- ❖ **Choose Your Attitude**
- ❖ **Be There**
- ❖ **Make Their Day**
- ❖ **Play**



- **Kari Schwartz** – High School Art
- **Tracy Steger** – High School Language Arts
- **Pam O'Loughlin** – Middle School Teacher Associate
- **Teri Schloss** – West and Middle School Nurse
- **Rachel Hurley** – High School Social Studies
- **Shelli Bertelli** – Success Center teacher
- **Josh Carnelly** – High School and Success Center Counselor
- **Jayne Beyer** – High School Special Needs teacher
- **Debby Currie** – High School Secretary
- **Stephanie Sheldon** – Success Center Associate
- **Angela Quinn-Webb** – Success Center Associate
- **Judy Olsen** – High School Media Specialist/Librarian
- **Heidi Puffet** – Middle School Special Education Associate
- **Virginia Lake** – East Elementary Media Specialist/Librarian/TAG
- **Lois Johnson** – East Elementary Teacher Associate
- **Rhonda Jasper** – East Elementary Media Associate
- **Deanna Miller** – East Elementary Teacher Associate
- **Nancy Black** – 3rd Grade Teacher – West Elementary
- **John Neil** – High School Special Education Teacher

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

GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR EVERY CHILD
SPECIAL EVENTS

Celebrate Read Across America at Home

On March 2, 2007, teachers, librarians, and students will participate in the 10th annual Read Across America. The event is sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA) and commemorates the birthday of Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel)

Parents can join the celebration on March 2nd as well, but are encouraged to read to their children on a regular basis. The easiest way is to read to your children daily, making a ritual of it in the evening before bedtime.

The NEA offers the following tips for reading to children Kindergarten through 3rd grade:

- Keep reading to your child even when they can read themselves. Read books that are too difficult or long for them to read alone.
- Try reading books with chapters and talk about what is happening in the story. Encourage your child to make predictions about what will happen next, and connect characters or events to those in other books and stories.
- Talk with your child about reading preferences that are beginning to develop. Ask whether they like adventure stories, mysteries, science fiction, animal stories, or stories about other children. Encourage them to explain the reasons for their preferences.
- Talk with your child about favorite authors and help them find additional books by those authors.
- Take turns reading a story with your child. Don't interrupt to correct mistakes that do not change the meaning.
- Talk about the meaning of new words and ideas introduced in books. Help your child think of examples or new concepts.
- Talk with your child about stories using the notions of the beginning, middle, and end of the story to organize thinking and discussion.
- Ask your child to tell why a character might have taken a specific action. Ask for information from the story to support their answer.

Enjoy yourself and have fun! The most important thing you can do to help your child become a successful reader is communicate that reading is valuable and enjoyable!

If you are interested in more information about Read Across America go to their website at: www.nea.org/readacross/parents.html

This site also contains specific tips for parents to use with infants and toddlers, children in grades 4-6, and children of all ages. It also contains several booklists that may prove helpful to parents in choosing books that children will enjoy.

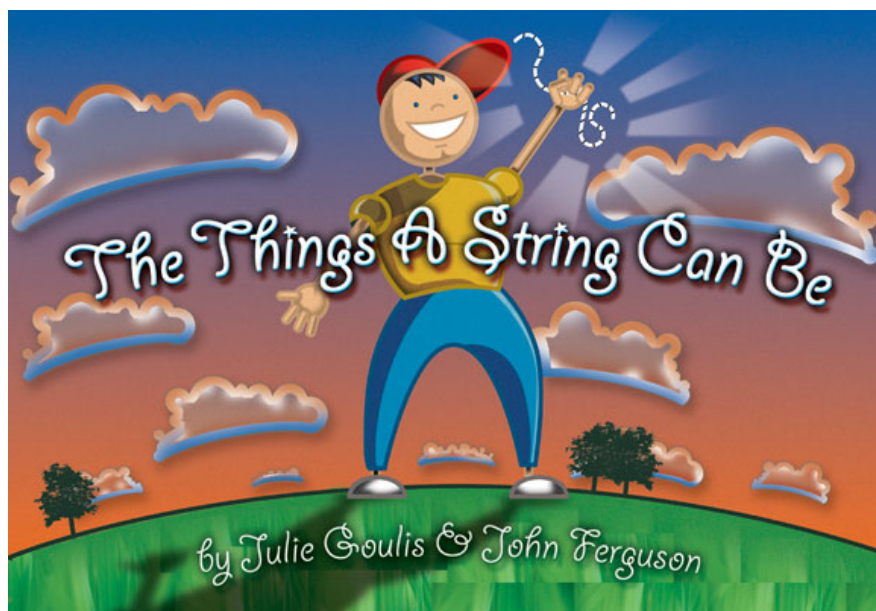
NEA's BOOKS ACROSS AMERICA
Giving the Gift of Reading

School-based Dental Sealant Program

The school-based dental sealant program will be continued this year. The program will be offered to all students in grades 2nd through 8th in the Independence School District during March and April. Students who participated last year will continue to be in the program. Consent forms will be sent home with students who did not participate last year.



This program is implemented by the Black Hawk County Health Department and is funded by a grant from the Iowa Department of Public Health. If you would like additional information about this school-based program, please call Joan Gilpin at 319-277-1843.



Celebrate Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month in the United States. This year's theme is "Generations of Women Moving History Forward".

You can access many lessons at
www.readwritethink.org

There are ideas for grades 3-12 on this website. In addition, check out the calendar on the website to find more information about Women's History Month. The calendar has classroom activities, links to stories of other famous women, and books about women's history you can share with your child or students.

Turn – Off TV Week - Contest

April 23- 29th is TV – Turnoff Week sponsored by TV-Turnoff Network. Founded in 1994, the TV-Turnoff Network is a non-profit organization dedicated to the idea that each of us has the power to determine what role TV plays in our lives.

Rather than channel surfing in search of something "good" to watch, we can turn off television and read or spend some quality time with our family and friends.

To mark TV-Turnoff Week 2007, the "network" has decided to hold a contest of sorts. The picture book, *the Things a String Can Be* by Julie Goulis is about a boy and his friends who use nothing but their imaginations and a piece of string to dream up all kinds of adventures. Students, teacher, and families can come up with their own ideas of fun things that can be done with string.

Submit these ideas to the TV Network by March 16, 2007.

The 10 most interesting ideas submitted will be announced during TV Turnoff Week. Prizes will range from T-shirts, pencils, stickers, and books, to flying discs and other rewards. The grand prize is a visit by the author and/or illustrator to the winning student's school.

There is also a bonus program for teachers who find the most interesting way to make this "string contest" part of the class. The winning teachers will receive gift certificates to a local store and/or dinner at a fine local restaurant.

For more information, visit the TV Turnoff Week website at:
www.tvturnoff.org/index.html



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





Curriculum Work Continues to Move Forward

February and March are busy months for Subject Area Committee members working on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The following Subject Area Committees met or will meet and work on the following:

- **Business and Industrial Technology** – continue to analyze gaps and overlaps in their curriculum; preparing to write their Grade Level Expectations this summer
- **Social Studies and World Languages** – they, too, continue to analyze what is currently being taught and looking at their focus areas to identify what students should know and be able to do. They will also write their Grade Level Expectations this summer
- **Science** – accomplishments in the area of making sure their tests match what they are teaching. This work should be complete by the end of the school year
- **Technology/Information Literacy** – this is an area of great change – as technology changes, so too, they must look at the best ways to integrate technology into the curriculum. They are currently investigating more efficient ways of collaborating with classroom teachers to be able to provide the necessary support students need to learn new skills.
- **Math** – The accelerated math course is off to a great start – Mrs. Thome is experiencing great success with her students. Mrs. Curtis is preparing to instruct these same accelerated students next year at the Middle School in Algebra. These students will have the opportunity to earn high school credit as a result of their hard work in the area of Mathematics.
- **FCS, PE, Guidance and 6-12 Language Arts** – these areas are working to choose resources that will assist with instruction in their classroom. Matching these resources to their Grade Level Expectations is the goal this year as they look at instructional resources.
- **K – 5 Language Arts** – this group is collaborating, discussing, and analyzing how they prepare students in the area of reading and Language Arts. This group of teachers will write their Grade Level Expectations this summer after they determine age appropriateness and items essential for their students to know and be able to do.
- **CCC** – this group of dedicated leaders continue to work to resolve issues dealing with all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Focus groups have also been organized to work on specific problems at the building level and at the district level.

If there are any questions concerning the work taking place in the district please call the central office and talk to Mary at 319 334-7400. Thanks for your continued support!

[Continued from page 1]

Who's Talking to your Children?

- There is no definite bedtime
- Access to use of internet which is unlimited
- Computer is in a private setting like a bedroom
- Child spends lots of time on the internet after school
- Parent finds pornography on the computer
- There are phone calls to numbers that are not recognizable; check cell phone bill
- The monitor on the computer changes rapidly when parent enters the presence of child on computer
- When child is using an email account that is not theirs; but their friends

Parents are encouraged to do the following:

- Talk with your children
- Assure them that you trust them and are willing to prove it.
- If you can't talk to your child find someone that can. I.e. sibling, educator, pastor
- Establish ground rules for internet use at home
- Protective software. (Usually means that trust is not present)
- Make sure that computers are in "public" places within the home.

There are some myths that parents tend to believe when dealing with their children. Officer Kramer states that a lot of parents often believe the following;

- They can't be their child's friend.
- The relationship must be peaceful.
- Parents can "fix" their children.

We are currently trying to get Officer Kramer to present to our parents on this topic sometime yet this spring or early next fall during one of our newly developed Parent Universities. Please watch for it in the near future. If you would like more detailed information as it pertains to this topic, please contact me at the school.

6th Grade Science Teacher and Students to Present at UNI

Jan Reed, 6th Grade Science teacher, has been asked to present to a group at the University of Northern Iowa. Mrs. Reed, along with up to 5 students, will present three units they have been working on. Students will make connections from everyday situations to air quality in their presentations at UNI as well as demonstrate their knowledge of the 7 "criteria" pollutants being monitored by the EPA. The presentation by students may include the following topics:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Not Maintaining your vehicle | Using SPF lotion |
| Not maintaining your furnace | Riding your bike on a gravel street or road |
| Not recycling waste | Using polystyrene cups |
| Burning leaves or trash | Choosing fuel for your family vehicle |
| Needing an inhaler outdoors | Living close to an animal feeding operation |
| Leaving your computer on | Using lights to read |



Mrs. Reed and one of her 6th grade science classes



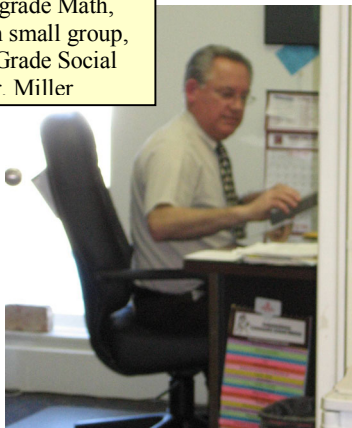


A Day at the Middle School

These pictures were taken at the Middle School this past week ... as you can see; students are engaged in a variety of learning activities in all of their classes!



Left: Mrs. Thome's 7th grade Math,
Center: Students work in small group,
Right: Mr. Carey's 7th Grade Social
Studies Center: Mr. Miller



Above: Mrs. Love and 8th Grade Social
Studies. Below: Mrs. Berryhill's 6th Grade
Math work out a problem



Above: Students work
on presentation in 6th
grade technology class
Left: Mrs. Hilbert in 8th
Grade Language Arts
and below: Mrs.
Freeman instructs 8th
graders in a Language
Arts lesson.





Elementary

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Mar 1 7:00pm PTO mtg. at West
Mar 5 No School:
12:00-8:00 Parent/Teacher
Conferences
Mar 6 2-Hr. Late Start
3:30-6:00 Parent/Teacher
Conferences
Mar 12-13 **NO SCHOOL for
Kindergarten, ECSE or JK**
Mar 12-13 East Roundup
Mar 21 1:00 Dismissal – Inservice
Mar 29 6:30pm East Vocal Music
Concert
Apr 6, 9 No School: Spring
Break
Apr 13 No School – Inservice
Apr 18 1:00 Dismissal: Inservice

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

March will be an extremely busy month at school! We will be soon having **Parent/Teacher Conferences and Kindergarten Roundup!**

Parent/Teacher Conferences are coming soon and we appreciate the time you take to visit with your child's teacher. The efforts of home and school together can be such valuable assets in your child's life.

Monday, March 5: No School
12:00-8:00 Parent/Teacher Conferences
Tuesday, March 5: 10:00 Late Start
3:30-6:00 Parent/Teacher Conferences

Kindergarten Roundup is just around the corner! Kindergarten Roundup is designed to give teachers a chance to get to know your child and make recommendations regarding readiness for Kindergarten. Once again, if you know of any child who will be five years old on or before September 15, 2007, please fill out the form included in this newsletter and return it to the principal's office at East or West Elementary Schools.

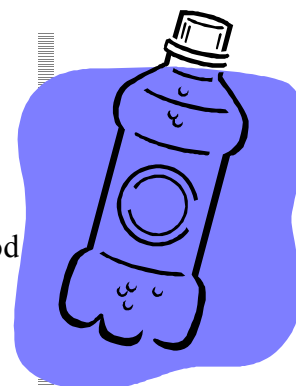
Monday/Tuesday, March 12/13 8:30 - 11:00; 12:30 - 3:00
East Kindergarten Roundup. On these days, there will be
NO SCHOOL for Kindergarten, ECSE or JK

The snow is (hopefully) behind us and spring is just around the corner. As spring approaches, students are often shedding their warmer clothing for lighter jackets. It is at this time of year, however, that we need to be watchful of weather changes. Please see that your child is dressed in layers of clothing so that, as the day warms, outer layers can be removed or put back on as the day cools.

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!





Learning the Importance of Character

Over the past two months students at East Elementary have been learning about Responsibility and Caring. These two pillars of character are related to the other pillars we have touched on thus far: Respect and Trustworthiness.

Kindergarten met Ansvar the Elephant and he has taught us about self-control. Ask your child about his/her "Cool-Down Counters." We placed beads on a pipe cleaner and we used these to practice deep breathing and counting to ten when we felt ourselves getting out of control. The students also loved singing "If You Are Angry and You Know It" and recognizing all the healthy ways we can express and control our anger. Currently, the students are learning the value of taking responsibility for their actions through apologizing. Students practiced apologizing to their classmates in a role play exercise. Next, the Kindergarten classes will meet Karina the Kangaroo and learn the value of caring for others.

First grade has been working out in guidance class. We learned the Responsibility Exercise which involves jumping jacks and marching. It goes like this: 1,2 Do the best in all you do – 3,4 Do your part than do some more – 5, 6 Don't blame others for your fix – 7, 8 Set a good example and be first rate – 9, 10 Make a mistake so try again! You will surely giggle if you could see your child completing this exercise. Students have been learning the connection between determination and responsibility. Also, the first grade has been practicing giving and receiving compliments. They will learn a fun little song to the tune of "I've Been Working on the Railroad" to help remember how to give a compliment.

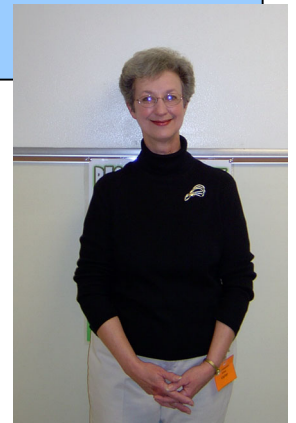
The second grade students have been completing activities that identify responsible and irresponsible behavior. We discussed how there are positive and negative consequences for choosing to be responsible or irresponsible. Next, the students learned the phrase to "have a lot on your plate." We used the saying to represent the connection between responsibilities and stress. Moreover, the students have been learning the importance of taking responsibility for your actions. Currently, the second grade students are working on a Caring Book which depicts all the different ways they can show others they care.

Please help your child learn the value of good character and use teachable moments to stress the importance of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

A New Face in the Office

Marjorie Lappe has joined the East Elementary office staff as secretary recently! You may have seen or met her already but if not, please stop by and introduce yourself! She replaces Jami Tekippe who took a position at the Administration office. We wish Jami well in her new job and welcome Marjorie aboard!

Marjorie Lappe joins
East Elementary as
the new secretary



Kindergarten Corner

Parent/teacher conferences will take place early this month. We will be sharing your child's progress with you on March 5th or 6th. You will be pleased with our progress in learning!

Kindergarten students will be hoping the Luck O'the Irish will bring us a mild March. We will begin our unit of study on the farm. We will also be hosting Kindergarten Round-Up March 12 and 13 for students who will be 5 by September 15, 2007. Please call the East office for more information (319)334-7425.

We look forward to singing for you at our East Spring Concert on March 29th at 6:30. You won't want to miss us!

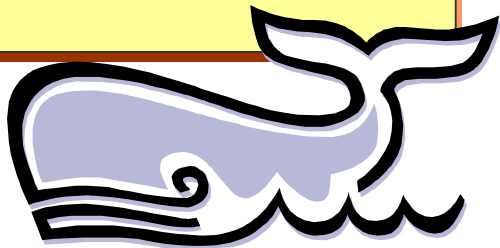




First Graders Attend *Suessical the Musical*

Recently, first grade students had the opportunity to attend a live stage performance of *Seussical*. Classes went to the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center in Cedar Falls to see a professional company bring several Dr. Seuss classics to life. Both before and after the show, education majors from UNI worked with the students to introduce word play, creative movement and storytelling.

In the classroom, students are studying the ocean, with an emphasis on dolphins, whales, and sharks. The thematic unit includes reading, writing, drawing, singing, geography, science and math activities. It's obvious that the children think the unit is oceans of fun!



Second Grade Scene



The second-graders have been busy this winter! Mrs. Goedken's and Mrs. Hill's class visited the care centers and sang songs for Valentine's Day. The kids are preparing for their Vocal Music Concert which will be on March 29th.

The cold weather of February enabled everyone to concentrate on school. A lot of learning has taken place this winter! In Math everyone has been working hard on memorizing the addition and subtraction facts. Counting money, telling time, and adding 3-digit numbers have also been on the agenda this winter. Some classes studied Balance and Motion in Science while others were learning about Solids and Liquids with the Foss Kits. They really enjoy the hands-on units. In Social Studies we've been learning about the presidents and we continue to improve on reading and writing daily.

Thanks for coming to Parent-Teacher Conferences. It's always good to share and celebrate your child's progress!



Calling All 2007-08 Kindergarteners!

We are trying to locate all children in the Independence Community School District who will be five years old on or before September 15, 2007 for entrance into kindergarten in the fall of 2007. If you have a child who is of this age or know of a child of this age, please fill out the form below and return it to the principal's office at East or West Elementary School by February 2, 2007.

| <u>Child's Name</u> | <u>Birthdate</u> | <u>Parent's Name</u> | <u>Address</u> | <u>Phone</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

March, 2007



WEST ELEMENTARY

the bottom line

By Josh Lyons
West Elementary Principal

It is difficult to realize that March is already here and spring is just around the corner with summer vacation shortly following. This is the time of year when we begin to wind down and look ahead to next year. Our staff is already planning class schedules, student transitioning, and how we can continue to improve our educational programming for students. Many parents are thinking ahead as well and will begin bringing requests to me for the classrooms they would like their children to be placed in. Although, it would be wonderful to grant all requests for classrooms, it is not always possible to meet them. Instead, I would encourage parents to provide me with information about their child and their needs to be met the following year. This information will be taken into consideration and is due to me by Friday, April 27th. If you wish to fill out a Student Needs form, please request this form through the West Elementary office. They will be available beginning March 5th. This can be picked up at the office or mailed to you.

MINI MUSTANG BANK SCHOLARSHIP

The Mini Mu\$tang Bank is continuing a special scholarship fund to be awarded annually at the Independence Dollars for Scholars reception. We have been working hard to teach kids to save a small amount of money weekly for something they really want. Many are surprised how much that can add up to by the end of the year. We have found that this same idea works for a scholarship.

Last year we raised \$750 and decided to leave \$50 as a seed for 2007. The scholarship went to Andy Budzine who worked with the Mini Mustang Bank when he was in 5th grade. The MMB Board members actually make the presentation at the Dollars for Scholars Reception



Any parent, student, or school staff member may deposit in the MMB Scholarship Fund Account as much as they want each week for as many weeks as they wish. (The fund is set up so that deposits may be declared as a charitable donation.) Later in March the MMB Board members will be coming to each building. A notice will be sent out ahead to designate date and time.

If you decide to contribute, you may come to West Elementary Library any Thursday between 7:45 and 8:30 a.m. to deposit directly, or you may send a check to West Elementary. The check should be made out to the MMB - DFS Scholarship Fund.

We hope you will help us raise \$700 by May 1st to award a scholarship for 2007.

West Elementary Third Graders

The third graders are finishing the fourth theme, "Animal Habitats", in the Reading series. They have two themes left, "Voyagers", and "Smart Solutions". The classes are reading various chapter books in class, also. Your child should be reading more chapter books independently. Their Accelerated Reader reading range from January should give you an indication of the level of books for them to target for growth. Students should be turning in Book-It slips for at-home reading in February and March.

In Math, the third graders will be concentrating on multiplication facts, fractions, geometry, graphing, and measurement. They will review past learning and work on problem solving and continue with Accelerated Math.

In Science and Social Studies, digestion and sound will be main topics. Students will be using their Social Studies textbooks, plus learning more about maps.

Please check your child's school supplies to check if they need pencils, erasers, etc.





School Nurse

Terri Schloss

“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” How many times in our lives have we all heard that? Research has now shown that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A nutritious breakfast provides approximately one-fourth of the recommended dietary allowances of such nutrients as protein, vitamin A, vitamin B6, calcium, magnesium, iron and zinc. Children that skip breakfast do not make up for lost nutrients later in the day and can average less than 2/3 of the recommended amounts of many nutrients.

Yet, on any given day in the US, 50% of children go to school hungry. Not making time for breakfast, children left on their own for meals, lack of appetite and no access to nutritional foods is listed as some reasons for skipping this very important meal.



Children who skip breakfast have trouble concentrating at school and become inattentive and restless by late morning. Breakfast eaters are more likely to be calmer, less anxious and more focused in school. Children that are hungry can have both physical and psychosocial symptoms. Physical symptoms of hunger include stomach pain, headache, muscle fatigue and sleepiness. Psychosocial complaints can include anxiety, nervousness, anger, fidgetiness, hostility, confusion and unhappiness.

A good breakfast is one that includes one type of cereal or grain, fruit and a dairy product. It can be hot or cold. A balanced breakfast provides a child with enough energy until lunch. It can be a quick and easy meal, at home, at school or on the go. Consider putting a breakfast together the night before that can be eaten cold or easily reheated. Try to avoid high sugar content cereals and breakfast bars, which can rapidly increase and then decrease blood sugar levels.

We wouldn't start off on a long car trip with an empty tank of gas, yet many of our children start their school days with empty stomachs. Take time to “fill ‘er up!” before their day starts.



Important Dates:

Mar. 5th No School-P/T Conferences

Mar. 6th 2 Hr. Late Start-P/T Conferences

Mar. 8th CLIMB Theater- Bullying Pres.

Band Concert

Mar. 11th Daylight Savings Begins

Mar. 21st 1:00 Dismissal

Mar. 26th NWEA Testing 4th Grade

Icy Cold Weather Keeps Kids Captive

The months of January and February proved to be those of endurance for the students and staff at West Elementary. With temperatures dipping below zero, wind chill or not, students were forced to stay indoors for approximately two weeks of school. West Elementary's policy has been to keep students indoors when the temperature or wind chill is at zero degrees or below.

The first indoor recesses are always novel to our students. However, after several days in a row, the novelty begins to wear off and behavior problems increase. With the inability for students to burn energy by running around and playing with friends in a large open area, incidents requiring disciplinary action doubles during those weeks.

Staff have had to be creative, allowing students extra breaks throughout the day as well as finding a large enough space to do some stretching or jumping jacks. Unfortunately the gymnasium is scheduled for almost the entire day for classes, making it virtually impossible for students to run around during a break time or recess. Students are usually stuck with playing old board games within the classrooms. Hopefully Punxsutawney Phil was right and winter will be shortened, bringing an early spring.

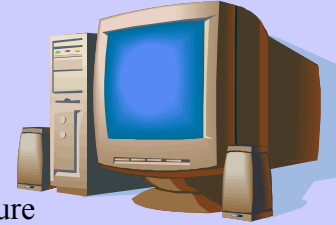




West Pursuing Grants for Mobile Computer Lab and iPods

West Elementary is pursuing funding for two technology resources. One of those resources is a mobile computer lab. With the use of the current computer lab for technology classes, time for teachers to use this resource is limited. The solution has been presented in the form of mobile technology. A grant has been written for this technology through the Qwest Foundation. West Elementary has requested funding in the amount of \$30,000 to purchase twenty-five lap top computers, a mobile cart, airport, and printer. The hope is that this technology can be used to support classroom instruction and help our students become more technologically literate. We should know soon whether our request for funding has been granted.

The second grant opportunity comes from the Dubuque Racing Association. Our hope is to gain funding to purchase iPods for classrooms. Instead of using old tattered tape recorders and trying to find a place to store tapes, the iPods will store hours of audio books for students to listen to. Some of the adaptations we put in place for students is providing struggling readers the opportunity to listen to the literature as they follow along in the book. We are also hoping the grant will provide us the funding to purchase Accelerated Reader audio books to upload onto the iPods. This grant was due February 23rd with recipients being announced in May.



Displaying Great Character at West

The past two months have flown by at West Elementary. The students are learning and applying knowledge about the pillars of character.

Third grade students have recently completed the unit on Responsibility. The students read a play on being accountable for your actions and the importance of learning from your mistakes. Also, the students have been analyzing the relationship between trustworthiness and responsibility. Recently the third grade students played a game that helped them come to the conclusion that responsible people stay on task. The bean bag game also helped students generate a list of ways they can complete all of their responsibilities (make a list, one thing at a time, stay focused, work with little distractions, etc.). We also thought of ways in which you are rewarded if you act responsibly.

Fourth grade students read a play on Trustworthiness. The play stressed the importance of modeling good character even when others are not watching. The focus of the fourth grade has been on taking responsibility for your choices. Vocabulary words that have been introduced to the fourth grade students are diligence, perseverance, commitment, and punctuality. Please talk with your student about how they can show these qualities at school and at home. Students engaged in a Power Game that displayed the value of working cooperatively and compromising. We learned that you don't always have to make someone else lose to get what you want. Resolving conflicts can be more peaceful. There are unconditional rewards for helping others and working on a fair solution for all.

The fifth grade students have been amazing me with their hard work. Earlier last month the students worked in groups to share stories about kids striving to be trustworthy. We discussed the different components of trustworthiness: loyalty, honesty, and keeping promises and secrets. Students learned that being trustworthy isn't always easy and that you can be faced with difficult choices. Currently, the students are working in small groups writing plays based on trustworthiness and other pillars of character. Some of the plots are quite impressive. They are excited to perform the skits for their classmates. We are holding the Oscars for the Best Play, Best Actor, and Best Actress. Each and every one of them is a star.



Please help your child learn the value of good character and use teachable moments to stress the importance of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.



School

Meredith Miller, Principal

Calendar of Events MARCH

**5 - NO SCHOOL, K-8
Parent-Teacher Conferences,
noon-8pm**

**6 - 10:30 Late Start
(students), K-8 Parent-
Teacher Conferences, 3:30-
6pm**

**8 - Grades 5-8 Band Concert,
Middle, 7pm**

**13 Grades 6-8 Vocal
Concert, @ Middle, 7pm**

**15 - Awards Assembly,
8:45am**

**21 - 1:00 Dismissal, Staff
Dev.**

The Principal's Corner

By Meredith Miller

Trimester 3

The last day for the second trimester was February 27; our third trimester and the new exploratory classes started on Wednesday, February 28. (Any days lost to weather automatically extend our trimester in order to maintain an equal number of days for each exploratory experience.)

Awards Assembly

Students who earn an Honor Roll or Perfect Attendance award based on second trimester efforts will be recognized at an assembly on Thursday, March 15. (Our assembly is on Thursday because Friday, March 16 has our concert bands competing in large group contest that morning at East Buchanan.) Parents of students receiving an award will receive a letter inviting them to the 8:45 assembly.

Sports of sorts:

Now that basketball is over, we take an "athletic break" here at Middle School for a couple of weeks while play practice is going on. Track equipment is already setting around in the gym and on the stage, so things are a bit crowded right now. Track practice for the girls starts March 26; boys start April 2. Track schedules will be available for next month's newsletter.

And speaking of the play.....

"The Magical Lamp of Aladdin" will be presented March 23 & 24 on the Middle School stage. The curtain opens at 7:30pm each evening. This play involves over 40 students on stage and another 20 or so students on crews in charge of lighting, sound, make-up, costumes, scenery, and props. "Aladdin" is under the direction of Miss Bock (7th grade reading/language arts) and she is assisted by several parents and staff members. Rehearsals have been underway for some time. This year, a matinee will be presented to the Middle School student body on that Friday afternoon.

Students involved with the play will be selling tickets in advance. Tickets will also be available at the door. There are no reserve seats - - seating is on a "first come, first serve" basis.

Special Needs

By Lori Dietzenbach

The winter blahs haven't gotten us down because we keep ourselves too busy! In math class it's been fractions, fractions, fractions. Adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing them. The students have gotten much better at following all the steps needed in solving fractions to the lowest terms. We also work on word problems throughout the year. That is an area that seems to cause confusion for most students. The next areas of study will be decimals, percents, and then some geometry.

There's always a lot to do in reading and language arts. Besides our "usual" reading program, we've read several novel books in class. The last one being, "Among The Hidden", which was hard to stop at the end of the class. Please encourage your child to continue on with the series. This trimester the students have been working on their grammar skills. There will be more of a focus on writing the last trimester to pull all the grammar skills together.

Those students who are in team taught or integrated classes need to make sure they take the responsibility to ask questions if they don't understand. Now with science, math, and language arts classes having GLE's, they need to make sure they ask for the help they need before test time to avoid having to come in for re-teaching.

Coping With Homework Horrors

Dorthea Bovy- 6th grade Social Studies

The school year is almost 2/3rds finished! It certainly is hard to believe, but it's not time for summer relaxation just yet. This time of year can be difficult for getting homework done. I understand the busy schedules students have and I've been trying to allow classroom time for students to get started on homework. If your student still brings home homework, there are many suggestions for successful homework completion. Parents are very influential on their child's attitude and motivation toward academic success.

If you have a hard time motivating your child in the homework area, Greatschools.net Staff have some great suggestions.

Set Aside a Regular Time and Location for Study.

Give homework its own special time and place, and if your child is in middle or high school, let her set her own schedule.



Take It Step by Step.

Children may get overwhelmed by the amount of homework they have to do. Encourage your child to calmly figure out what needs to be done and how much time it will take, and then create a plan. Help your child break each assignment down into manageable steps.

Provide a Quiet, Well-Lit Environment.

It's best to do homework in a room that has good lighting and is relatively quiet. This reduces distractions and helps to maintain concentration.

Allow Time for Some After-School Fun.

Students need to take a break from academics. A healthy balance between work and free time will not only contribute to better performance, but will also help your child develop valuable time-management skills.

Help Out.

You shouldn't have to do your child's homework or reteach the material covered in class, but you can help out by showing an interest, making yourself available as a resource and by encouraging independent problem solving. For example, if your child is doing a project on presidential elections, point out related articles that you've come across in the newspaper.

Praise a Job Well Done.

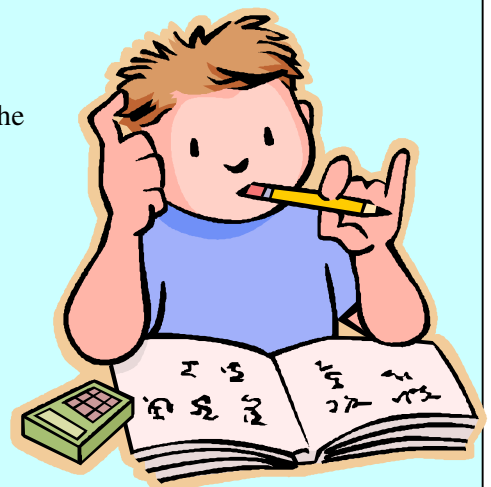
Kids, no matter what their age, need to know that they are doing a good job. Be vocal about their successes and encourage them to keep up the good work (especially as the year draws to an end and a tendency toward laziness may settle in). A little praise will go a long way in building confidence and healthy study habits.

Share Concerns with the Teacher.

If, at any point in the year, your child seems to be losing motivation and you've exhausted all attempts to reinvigorate him, share your concerns with the teacher. You'll want to determine if the problem is the quantity of homework, the assignment itself or your child's attitude toward school. An open dialogue with the teacher goes a long way in avoiding potentially serious problems.

Please remind your student that teachers are here to help in the morning, during the school day 7th hour, and after school.

Thank you and have a wonderful rest of the school year.





School

March 2007 Calendar

- 3 – NEIBA Jazz Festival (H)
State Wrestling Duals
- 5 – Non Student Day
No School for H.S. Staff
- 6 – 10:20 Start at H.S.
- 12 – Freshmen Ring Meeting –
2:45 in Vocal Music Room
- 16 – End of Term 3
- 19 – GTR – Wamac Indoor at Cornell
- 20 – BTR – Wamac Indoor at Cornell
3:15-6:30 Parent's Order Class
- Rings
- 21 – 1:00 Dismissal
- 24 – State Solo/Ensemble Contest (H)
- 26 – NHS Blood Drive
- 28 – Juniors & Seniors meeting with
Post Prom Committee 1:30
- 29 – East Elementary Vocal Concert
at High School
BSC at Hudson Jamboree
- 30 – BTR at Vinton
BSC at Decorah
- 31 – BTN at C.R. Prairie Invite
BSC (H) Cono Christian

By Karl Kurt, High School Principal

Registration

We will begin the registration process for our current 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students on February 28th. We will be meeting with various groups in various grades to discuss the registration process. We do our best to communicate what we believe is the best course of action for our students depending on their potential career path. However, that does not always mean that our students follow our suggestions. We encourage parents to be active in this process and to call us if you have any questions, comments, and concerns. We realize that you may not have the latest information or all the information you need, so please don't hesitate to ask questions to ensure that your child's schedule helps put them in the best possible position to be successful in post-secondary classes or in a chosen career.

ITEDS.

We completed the ITEDs on 2-8-07. Our students worked very hard on these tests. We are anxious to receive the report to help us measure the progress of our students.



Professional Development.

Our learning teams have been meeting during the early outs that have taken place in the last couple of weeks. It is great to walk-around to the various learning teams and hear conversations about instructional strategies, integrating technology, and discussing formative and summative assessments.



Potential Reductions.

It is an uneasy time for the High School staff as we look at potential reductions again this year. We appreciate the family and students that came out to the Board of Education meeting to express their support for our teachers and our programs.



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.



After a decision has been made to have school and run buses the next decision is made by individual drivers. 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.

The third and ultimate decision must be made by parents. 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

