

Volume 6 Issue 2
Winter, 2011-2012

District Events:

February 8

1:00 Early Dismissal

February 9

P/T Conferences 7-12

February 20

No School -
4th Snow Make-up Day

February 22

1:00 Early Dismissal

February 27

No School

February 27-28

P/T Conferences K-6

February 27

School Board Meeting -
Independence 6:00 p.m.

February 28

2 Hour Late Start

March 7

1:00 Early Dismissal

March 19

School Board Meeting -
Independence 6:00 p.m.

March 21

1:00 Early Dismissal

April 4

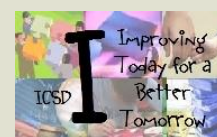
1:00 Early Dismissal

April 6

No School

April 9

No School -
5th Snow Make-up Day



From the Desk of Jean Peterson, Superintendent

School Improvement Advisory Committee:

To meet the requirements of Iowa Code Section 280.12(2), our School Board of Education appoints and charges a School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) with making recommendations to the Board on an annual basis. Based on the committee members' analysis of the needs assessment data, they will make recommendations to the Board about the following components:

1. Major educational needs
2. Student learning goals
3. Curriculum, assessment and instruction
4. Long range and annual goals that include, but are not limited to, the state indicators that address reading, mathematics and science achievement
5. Bullying and harassment prevention goals, programs, training, and other initiatives
6. Any other issues which relate to school improvement

The School Improvement Advisory Committee membership consists of representative teachers from across the district, representatives of the classified personnel, all building principals, the superintendent of schools, the director of curriculum, a guidance counselor, a school board member, parent members and student representatives. This committee's task is to make decisions that impact students and create conditions that foster high academic achievement. The SIAC makes decisions based on the best interest of students aligned with the district's mission, vision, and beliefs. Members of our SIAC serve a term of three years with roughly half of the committee replaced every two years.

Our next SIAC meeting is scheduled for February 21st. One of the items on the agenda will be a discussion in regard to our Bullying/Harassment Prevention Program. We will be discussing what we currently have in place to work with our students and staff in regard to preventing bullying/harassment. We will be seeking this committee's advice on how we can do things better in regard to this initiative.

The SIAC also reviews our curriculum and student learning goals. Once we receive our data in regard to the ITBS/ITED results and various other student assessments for this year, we will share these with this committee. They will then help us establish our student learning goals for the 2012-2013 school year which will have to be approved by our Board of Education as well.

Our SIAC is a very valuable component for our school improvement process. We look to them for their input and advice on all things critical to our school. We facilitate parent, teacher and student surveys during the fall of every school year. These surveys ask several



**Jean Peterson,
Superintendent**

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questions about our total school program. We analyze those results and share them with our SIAC. We also facilitate surveys in the spring in regard to Bullying/Harassment. We will analyze the results of those surveys and share them with our SIAC too. The information gleaned from these surveys helps us determine our school improvement goals for the next school year.

If you wish to locate a discussion point from a SIAC Meeting held this year or last year, visit the Publications link on our website and click on SIAC minutes. If you have a school improvement issue you would like the committee to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me. My office phone number is 319-334-7400. My email address is jpeterson@independence.k12.ia.us

New Junior-Senior High School Project:

FEMA Safe Room Application:

The school district, with the assistance of HSR Architecture, (our architectural firm), and INRCOG, (the company who helped us write this grant), submitted the Safe Room Grant Application in December. The grant has cleared the State of Iowa's review process and is now under final review by FEMA. It is estimated that FEMA could make a decision in about 60 days. The final grant application requested approximately \$800,000. The final determination was to make the four locker rooms in our new junior-senior high school as the Safe Room space. This location provides the best opportunity for cost savings and safety of our students. It also eliminated some additional issues related to having the auditorium as our Safe Room location.

Floor Plans/Interior Design:

HSR Architecture, school district representatives and staff continue to develop and finalize the facility and interior room layouts. HSR is incorporating detailed specifications into the floor plans to prepare for bidding.

On January 11th, Board Members, Brian Eddy, Eric Smith, and I traveled to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, to meet with the HSR Team to discuss interior design ideas and considerations. We met with two interior design specialists who provided their initial thoughts on how to incorporate the school colors into the new facility, the type of flooring to be used, and the exterior appearance. We are in the first stages of this type of design and all recommendations will have to be approved by the entire Board.

Site Plan Development:

On December 20, 2011, HSR attended the School Board Meeting to present the proposed location of the new facility on the 92 acres. The Board gave unanimous approval to proceed with finalizing the draft site plan with the facility facing west, approximately 600 feet from Iowa Avenue.

The Board also discussed the access road across the 92 acres. The Board decided to have the access road end behind the new school instead of continuing all the way across the 92 acres. The advantages of this decision were to reduce the cost of the project and to eliminate safety concerns with having the access road hook into the parking lot at West Elementary. The Board did agree to incorporate a biking/walking trail from the new facility to the West Elementary Building and football field.

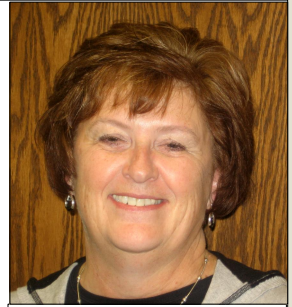
The Board also held a work session on January 5, 2012, to review the long term facility plan for the 92 acres. Discussion was held on the future needs, such as a new bus barn, tennis courts, soccer fields, and baseball/softball fields and where these things would be located on the 92 acres. These projects will all be done as part of our long range facility plan. We will add these things as funding from the penny sales tax allows us to do so.

It is truly an exciting time to be a part of the Independence School District!

Independence Academic Achievement

Increasing the academic achievement of our students has always been of the utmost importance in Independence. The federal government decided to make it their priority with the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2002. School districts were given the challenge to have **every** student proficient by 2014. Each state could determine what their proficiency level was to be. Iowa chose 41% on ITBS/ITED as our determination of proficiency. That means that by 2014 **every** student in Iowa is to be at or above the 41%ile on ITBS/ITED. The attached graphs illustrate how the No Child Left Behind legislation mandates this is to be accomplished and how we are progressing in Independence at each reportable grade level, 3-8 and 11.

The state does not make No Child Left Behind determinations based on grade levels however. They average the scores from all grades in a building to determine building scores for the total population and each subgroup having 30 or more students in the group. The tables below represent how our buildings scored last year on ITBS/ITED. There are 3 tables, 1 for the total population, 1 for our At Risk subgroup and 1 for our IEP subgroup. For each building there is a column indicating whether the group (total population, At Risk subgroup, or IEP subgroup) met the No Child Left Behind target in reading/math and the percent of students in that group that met the target. The comments column for the subgroups also gives the number of students in the subgroup who were proficient. This demonstrates that there are several students in these subgroups who are meeting the state targets.



Sandy Merritt,
Curriculum/School
Improvement Director

The red line on the graph illustrates the targets that districts must reach beginning in 2005. Note that up until 2011, the target remained the same for 3 years and then increased. Beginning in 2011, the target changes each year. This line represents the expectation for **every** student. It is also important to know that the ITBS/ITED tests have not remained the same over the years and have been rewritten again for this school year.

The heavy dashed line represents the average percentile of what **every** student in that grade level achieved each year. This line indicates that our students are, for the most part, at or above the state targets each year. Our district sets annual student achievement goals. Those goals align with Iowa Department of Education recommendations. The Department has set a standard of 80-85% proficiency. This means that the Department of Education suggests that districts should strive for 80-85% of their total population of students to be proficient. There are no recommendations for subgroups suggesting that the remaining 15-20% refers to that portion on the population.

TOTAL POPULATION 2010-11

| Building | Reading | Math | Comments |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------|---|
| West | Met target | Met the target | 79.12% (288 of 364) students met the target (reading) 84.89% (309 of 364) students met the target (math) |
| Junior High | Did not meet target | Met the target | 61.54% (96 of 156) students met the target (reading) 75% (117 of 156) students met the target (math) |
| 11th grade | Met the target | Met the target | 86.96% (80 of 92) students met the target (reading) 88.04% (81 of 92) students met the target (math) |

The dotted line represents a portion of our total population. When a building has at least 30 students in a subgroup, the district must report the data. One of the subgroups we report is our low socio economic group (at risk). This includes 148 of our 364 students at West, 58 of our 156 students at the Junior High, and 58 of our 92 11th graders at the Senior High (11th grade is the only reportable grade at this level). It is the expectation of No Child Left Behind that these students meet the target (the red line) as well. Our at risk subgroup has not made the same level of progress and because of that, West and the Junior High have been put on the list of Schools in Need of Assistance. (SINA).

AT RISK SUBGROUP 2010-11

| Building | Reading | Math | Comments |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| West At Risk | Did not meet target | Met the target | 71.12% (106 of 148 students designated as at risk) met reading target 77.03% (114 of 148 designated students) met math target |
| JH At Risk | Did not meet target | Met the target | 50% (29 of 58 designated students) met reading target 67.2% (39 of 58 designated students) met math target |
| 11th Grade At Risk | Met the target | Met the target | 71.88% (23 of 32 designated students) met reading target 78.1% (25 of 32 students) met math target |

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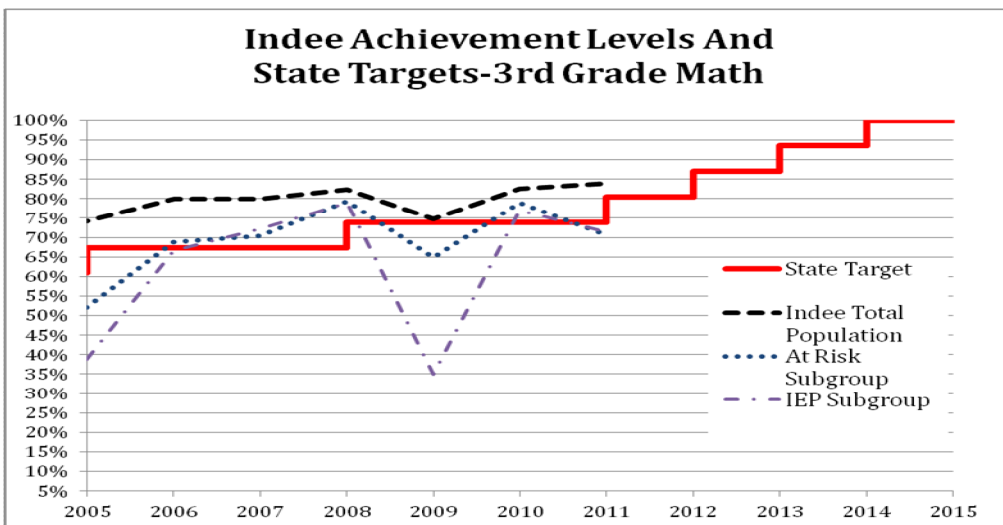
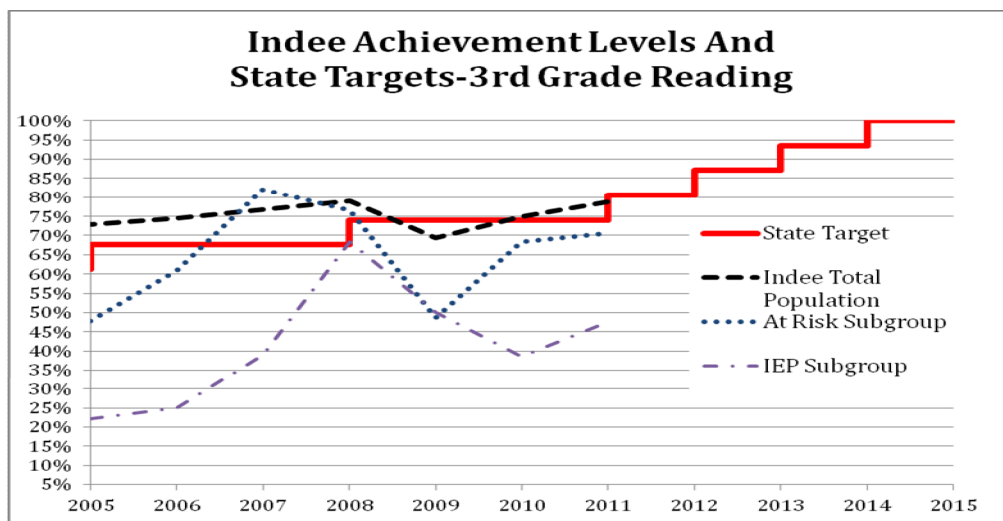
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The dot dash line represents another subgroup, those who have an IEP. This includes 68 students at West, 30 students at the Junior High, and 12 students in the 11th grade. Again, it is the expectation of No Child Left Behind that these students meet the target (the red line) each year. Our students on IEPs have not met that target and West and the Junior High are on the list of Schools in Need of Assistance.

IEP SUBGROUP 2010-11

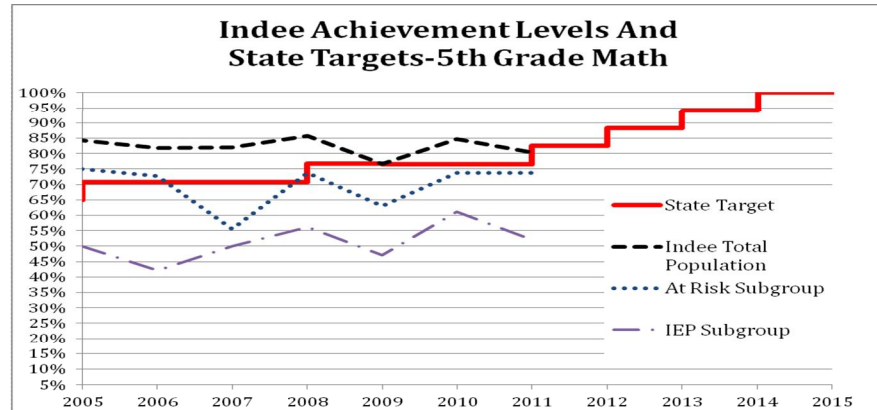
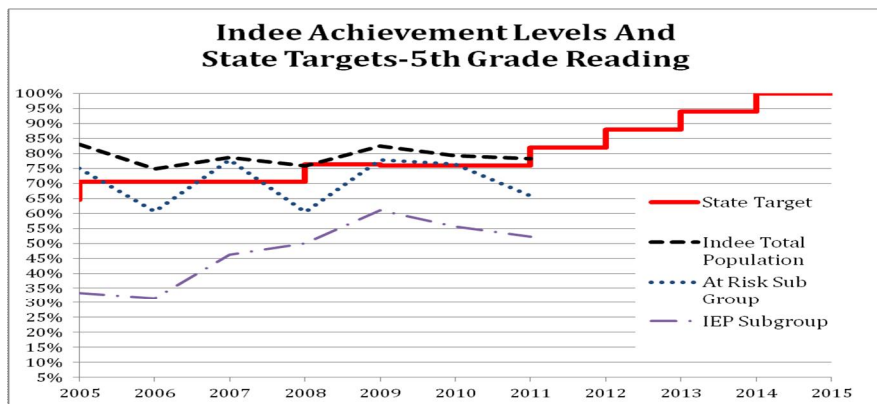
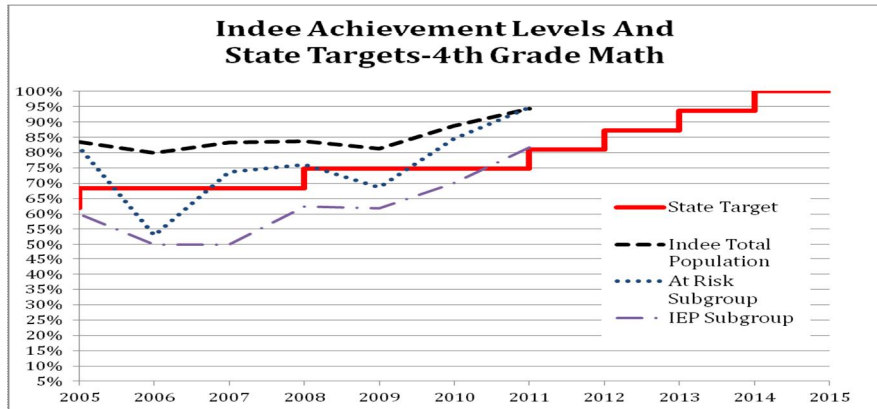
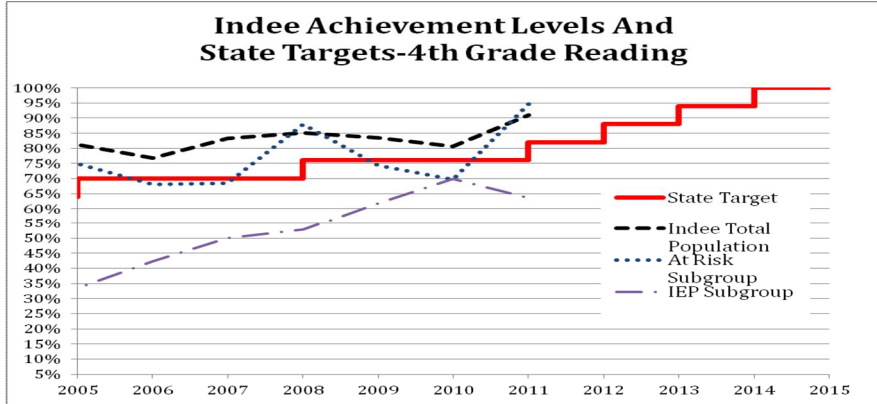
| Building | Reading | Math | Comments |
|----------------|---|-------------------|---|
| West IEP | Missed the target | Missed the target | 50% (34 of 68 designated students met reading target) 61.76% (42 of 68 designated students met math target) |
| JH IEP | Missed the target | Missed the target | 23.33% (7 of 30 designated students) met the reading target 40% (12 of 30 designated students) met the math target |
| 11th Grade IEP | Only 12 students in this grade have IEPs so they are not reported | | |

INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN COMPARISON TO NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND 2005-11



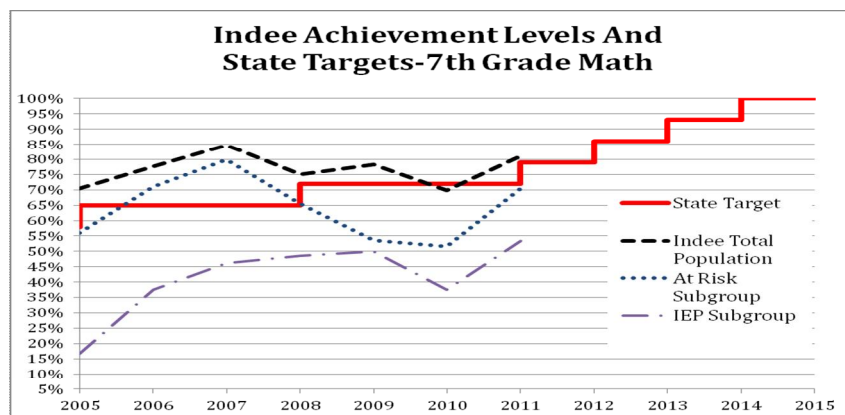
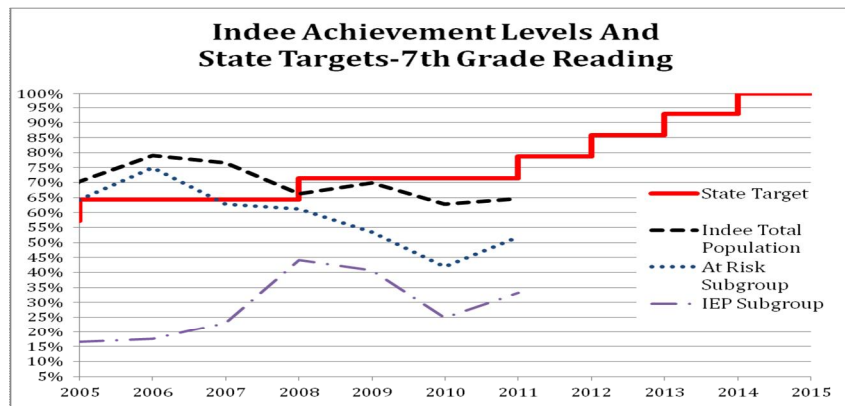
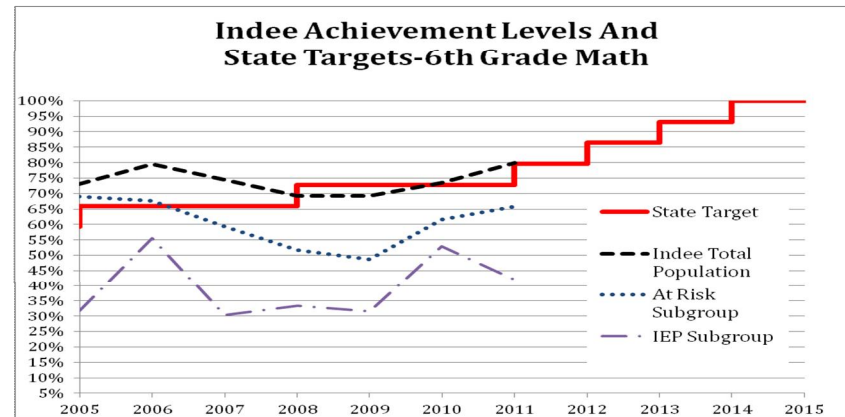
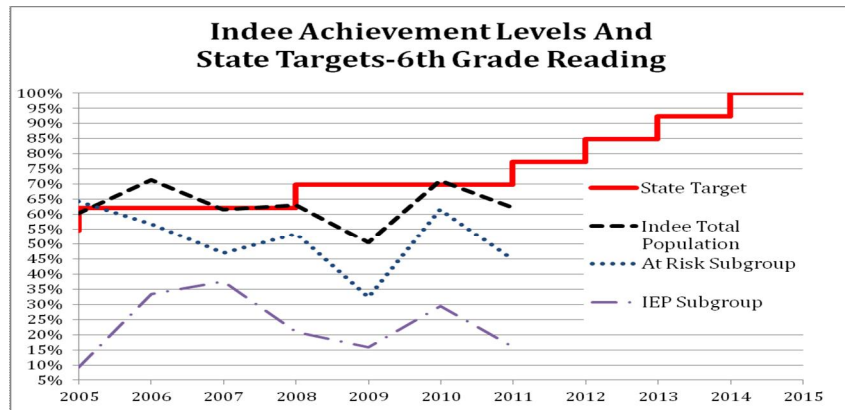
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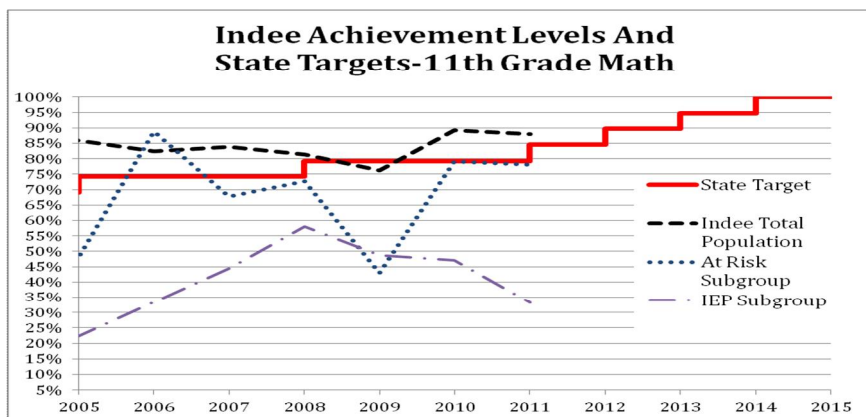
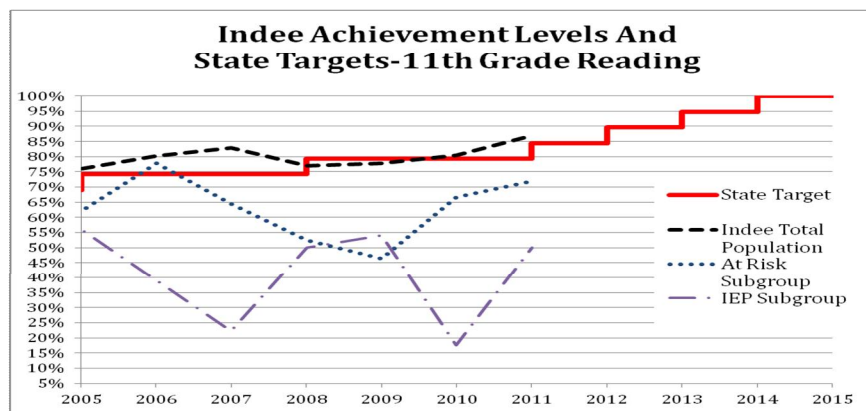
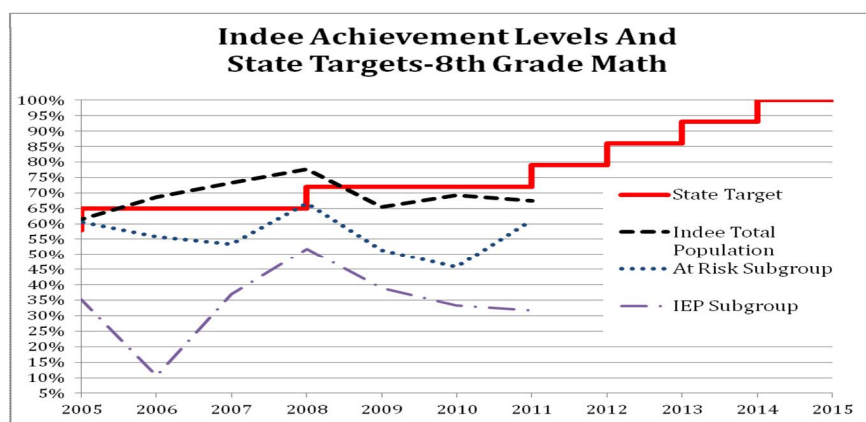
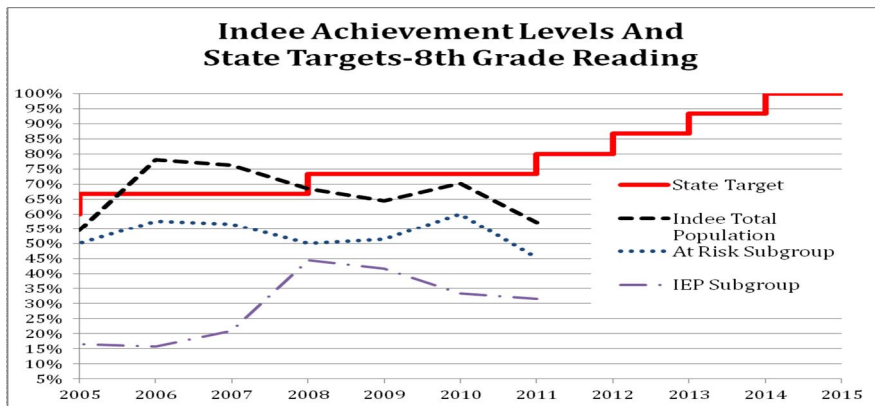
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Principal's Corner

by Mary Jean Blaisdell

Where has the time gone?! We will soon actually be thinking about the 2012-13 school year and incoming Kindergartners! There are two important dates to remember this spring:

Kindergarten Registration at East Elementary **1:30-7:00 Thursday, February 23rd**

At Kindergarten registration, you will have an opportunity to provide information about your child to the school, talk to a nurse about any health concerns you may have and important information regarding immunization will be available as well.

Kindergarten Roundup at East Elementary **Thursday/Friday, March 15th/16th 8:30 - 11:00; 12:30 - 3:00**

Kindergarten Roundup is designed to give teachers a chance to get to know your child and make recommendations regarding readiness for Kindergarten. If you know of any child who will be five years old on or before September 15, 2012, please fill out the form included in this newsletter and return it to the principal's office at East or West Elementary Schools.

Winter weather continues to make it necessary for students to dress warmly. Even though our buildings are heated, children should be wearing warm clothing such as long sleeved shirts and/or sweaters or sweatshirts to keep them warm inside. This will serve as an extra layer to help them when they are playing outside as well! Just a reminder: if there is wet or snowy weather, students will be required to wear boots, coats, hats, mittens and snowpants to keep them warm and dry. Students do not go outside for recess if the temperature and/or windchill is below 10 degrees.

Thanks,
Mary Jean Blaisdell



Mary Jean Blaisdell,
Principal



Calling All 2012-2013 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, 2012 for entrance into Kindergarten in the fall of 2012. 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 3, 2012.

Child's Name: _____

Birth Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Preschool Press

After arriving back from winter break, it was very hard to work on our typical winter themes. Those themes are usually related to snow and dressing for snow. However we didn't have any snow and the warm weather (especially with the 50 degree days we had!) felt more like spring. However, we have finally reached our official winter weather and so winter themes are in high gear.

We have been spending a lot of time being able to independently get all our winter gear on; from snowpants and boots, to hats and gloves. We have been practicing the best order to do this in as well (not to put our mittens/gloves on before we have our coats on). This is very important to keep having your child do this at home, they can do it on their own with a little encouragement!

Another theme we have finally enjoyed is that of snow. Finally being able to bring some snow into the classroom to explore has been enjoyable. It also helps when the days are now so cold we can't make it outside!

The "snow" activity we are enjoying in this photo is that of making shapes with snow balls (cotton balls). We were working on our fine motor skills by putting the cotton balls on the shape lines and then trying to do it without the shape lines. We also talked about the shapes we made and practiced our visual motor skills as well. This is another simple activity that you could try at home. The kids loved it and did a great job with it!



Preschool students make snow shapes with cotton balls.



February is Friendship Month in Kindergarten!

Kindergarten Corner

February is a friendship month in kindergarten! We will celebrate by giving cards to our classmates during our Valentine's Day party! February is also Dental Health Month and we will be learning about good dental health habits.

Thanks for practicing your child's address, phone number, birthdate, and how to tie shoes during these winter months.

We had fun celebrating the 100th day of school! We hope the groundhog doesn't see his shadow so spring will arrive early after having such a mild winter. We miss the snow, but not having to put on snowpants:)

Nurse News By Teri Schloss, RN

“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” How many times in our lives have we heard that expression? Research has shown that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A nutritious breakfast provides approximately one fourth of the recommended dietary allowances of many of our needed vitamins and minerals. Children that skip breakfast do not make up for lost nutrients later in the day. 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 to prepare meals, lack of appetite, and no access to nutritional foods is listed as some of the reasons that children skip this important meal.

Children who skip breakfast have trouble concentrating at school and can 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. 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 day with empty stomachs. Take time to “fill ‘er up!” before their school day starts.

First Grade Focus

To go along with our winter weather, Buchanan County Naturalist Sondra Cabell presented a wonderful program on examining and making unusual snowflakes. The hundredth day of school was celebrated late in January and gave us a variety of activities centered on the number 100.

Valentine's Day will bring an emphasis on friendship and kindness to our classmates. President's Day will shift our focus to our current and past presidents. We will learn about the duties of the president as well as some interesting facts about presidential families and their time in the White House. First graders are also continuing to work hard practicing their reading, writing, and math skills.



First Graders examine snowflakes



Frosty visits students at recess!



K-2 students earn STARS awards for Team-work!



K-2 students raised \$387 dollars in donations for Fontana Adopt-an-Animal.



Mrs. Malek's Kindergarten class showed good manners at lunch and earned the opportunity to produce a video. They were then given the "Golden Reel Award" for their video "Attitude." See this video on the principal's page of the PK-2 tab on the district website!



The following 2nd grade students competed in a National Math Competition called Noetic Learning Math Contest. They are as follows from left to right. Marcus Beatty, Caden Larson, Laura Smith, Nate Copenhaver, Dylan Kurt, and Teegan McEnany. Team winners included Marcus Beatty and Laura Smith. Scoring in the top 10% receiving the Honor Roll Award were Marcus Beatty, Laura Smith, and Teegan McEnany. Receiving Honorable Mention was Dylan Kurt, Nate Copenhaver, and Caden Larson.

WANTED!

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 the PE teacher, Brian Loughren at East 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!

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

We continue to collect General Mills Box Tops, Pop Can Tabs & bottle caps and bag tops from Kwik Star products.

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 334-7425.

News From West Elementary by Sandy Merritt, Principal

West is alive with lots of great activities. We are highlighting just a few of them for you!

Upcoming Events

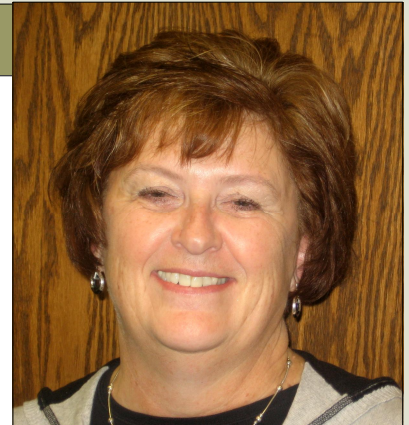
Back by parent request!

2nd Annual West Family Fun Night

When: Thursday, Feb. 2, 2012 6:45-8:00 p.m.

Activities will include goofy golf, making a healthy snack, dancing, and lots more.

AND we will have a book trade! Bring a book(s) that your child(ren) have read and swap it/them for a different book(s).



Sandy Merritt, Principal

Third Grade Happenings

Our third graders have had a very busy January! Students began the new year by solving addition and subtraction problems up to 4 digits using regrouping. In science, we began our GLE on Nutrients and Digestion. Students are learning about the 6 main nutrients as well as the digestive system. Sondra Cabell, from Fontana, came to our classes to teach us a lesson about this unit! Our next unit in social studies will be geography. Our third graders also finished Junior Achievement. This was a five week study of communities. Each class had a wonderful volunteer from the community teaching the unit. We look forward to the rest of the year!



Fourth Grade Highlights

Fourth grade students have started 2012 with lots of reading. New reading genres continue to be introduced in guided reading. We are continuing to work on multiplication and division facts. The processes can be a struggle, but the students are eager to learn the steps involved. The respiratory and circulatory systems will be the focus in science. We hope that the students are sharing all of their new knowledge at home!

Music Memories

In the General Music department our fourth graders just finished their holiday concert. They worked really hard with learning all the moves, words, and pitches. The concert was amazing and they all did a great job. The 5th grade class is just finishing up their piano lab and have learned all the notes and can play "Ode to Joy" very nicely. The 6th graders are going to be starting a project on different genres of music. They will be in groups and will talk about hip-hop, jazz, country and other genres that they are interested in. Lots of exciting things are happening and the new year has started off well.

Fifth Grade Celebrations

Winter finally arrived! Fifth graders were excited to see the first snowfall. We are having a fantastic school year! We just finished up our study of Native Americans and Explorers in social studies class. We ended our unit with a culminating activity: "The Grand Encounter". Parents and other classes were invited in to see what we had learned in our expert study groups. In math we are practicing multiplication and division with decimals. We are busy studying skeletal/ muscular systems in science class.



We are working hard to reach our reading and math goals. Those of us who reached our December reading goals enjoyed a school-wide Arts and Crafts Read-in. Fifth graders enjoyed making holiday ornaments, decorating cookies, making pinecone bird feeders, and stringing popcorn with their grandparents. There was plenty of paint, glitter and popcorn left on the tables to clean up. Thanks to the many grandparents and our wonderful custodians who helped with the clean up. We look forward to our next Read-in, when we will go bowling.

Sixth Grade Appreciations

Sixth grade students have been busy in the last 3 months. Our fraction unit has been completed in mathematics. We are starting our geometry unit and are excited about using the interlocking blocks that will guide students in finding surface area. A big THANKS to PTO for the interlocking blocks!

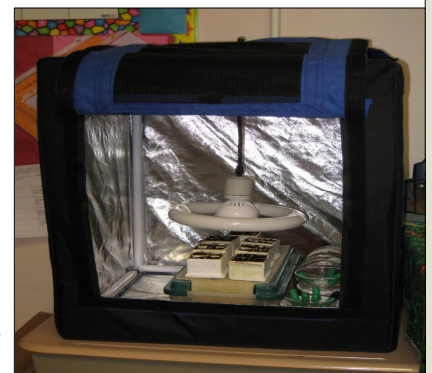
In science, several classes have grown Wisconsin Fast Plants. Sixth grade received classroom sized greenhouses from LEO Club this year and our seed harvest was AMAZING! Thank you LEO Club!

Adventure or mystery stories have been completed in language arts with lots of exciting plots and imaginative characters. Way to go to our 6th grade authors!

For social studies, Canada was studied and presented through PowerPoint presentations on each of the provinces or territories. Students did a wonderful job combining technology and content. We will be "traveling" to Latin America next.



Sixth grade ended 2011 with a read-in in the morning and a celebration for meeting reading goals in the afternoon. Students that met their reading goals created gingerbread structures. Several grandparents joined us as well for the afternoon. Everyone had great fun! Our next reading celebration will be bowling at the beginning of February.



Update from our After School Program

The after school program is providing extra support for students in reading and math. We have four teachers and an associate working with the students; Mrs. Alston, Mrs. Anderson, Ms. Leisinger, Mrs. Reinkoster and Mrs. Johnson. We currently have 46 students attending the program.

We begin our evening with a nutritious snack that is provided for us from West-Village Care Center. After their break, half of the group goes upstairs to work on the Headsprout Reading Comprehension Program with Ms. Leisinger. The rest of the students move from station to station playing math games, doing math drills and working on computerized math activities. Each student also spends time in a small group with a teacher working on their math skills. At 4:15, some students go home while the remaining students switch content areas. It is our hope that students will continue to grow in their confidence with math and reading by attending our program.

ITBS Testing

Students will be taking the ITBS test next month. Most students will begin the week of February 6 and end the following week, by February 17. Individual students who are allowed more time to take the test will begin earlier. This is an important district assessment that provides us information about individual, classroom, and grade level growth from year to year. The goal is for each child to make a year's growth in reading, math, science, language arts, and social studies each year.

New Policy for 5th and 6th Graders The state has determined the 41st %ile as being the score at which a student in Iowa is identified as being "proficient". It is essential that we have valid and reliable data for all of our students. We know that most of our students take the test seriously and give their best effort on it. We also know from talking to students that this is not the case for some of our students. Our district, in an attempt to encourage students to give their best effort on the test, has decided that we will have those students who score below the 41st %ile retake the test in the spring. Students receiving special education support services will be reviewed on a case by case basis. This policy will be in place primarily for those in 5th-11th grade.

What can parents do to help? Parents are very valuable partners in ensuring that our students are in a good mindset for taking the tests. Some things you can do: 1) encourage your child(ren) to do their best, to not give up. 2) ensure that they get a good night sleep during the testing period, 3) make sure that they get breakfast each morning, 4) talk about the test in a positive tone, reminding them of why we take the test and what the information is used for, and 5) reminding them that no one is expecting them to know the answers to every question. There are some questions that they will not know and when that is the case, they should make their best guess and then move on to the next question.

WALKING HOURS

EAST ELEMENTARY: 7:00-8:00 a.m. Monday through Friday (Enter Main Doors)

WEST ELEMENTARY: 6:00-7:30 a.m. Monday through Friday (Enter Main Doors)
4:00-6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (Enter South Doors)

JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL: 6:00-7:30 a.m. Monday through Friday (Enter Main Doors)

Buildings will be closed to walkers when...

- * there is a school activity in the building
- * there is no school
- * there is a late start (morning walkers only)
- * there is an early dismissal (afternoon walkers only)



Due to safety and to keep floors clean and dry, please bring shoes other than your street shoes to walk in. Thank you.

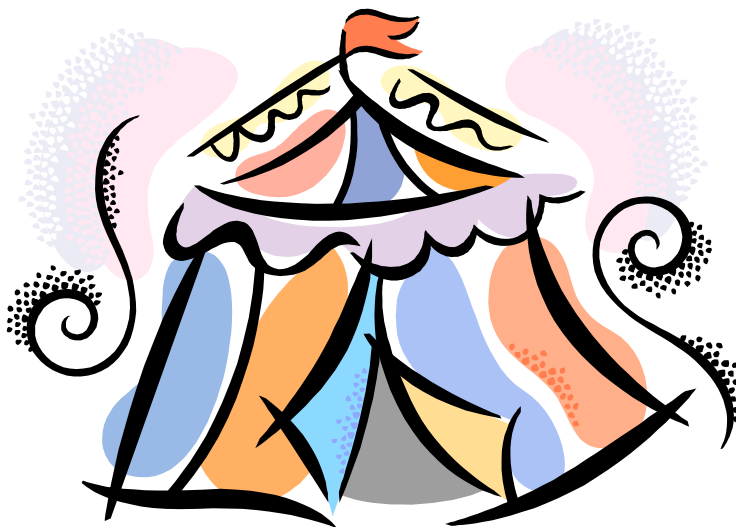
PTO Spring Carnival

West Elementary March 31, 2012 2:00 - 6:00 P.M.

Hosted by the Independence Community PTO

Raffle

PTO Funds
raised from
Carnival &
Raffle will
help support
programs &
activities for
East & West
Elementary
Schools



Prizes

\$2 Raffle Tickets
Buy your chance
to win
FLAT
SCREEN TV,
IPAD,
IPOD TOUCH
AND MUCH
MORE!

Food

Tickets available for purchase at East & West Elementary School
Offices, from PTO Members, at participating area businesses, or
call Deb Martin 563-920-8211 or Helen Lukes 332-0424

Games

Junior High News By Rob Arnold, Assistant Junior-Senior High School Principal

As the Junior High Students and Staff returned from break there was much to do before the end of the Quarter on January 11th. Students and Staff finished the last of their instruction and assessment for the semester. This is a time for constructive reflection by staff as we near the halfway point on our academic calendar. We have seen the Seventh Graders continue to mature and understand the expectations that are placed on them in the Junior High. I am also impressed with the quality leadership our Eighth Graders have provided them to help with the transition from an Elementary System to the Junior High.



Rob Arnold, Assistant Principal

The Junior High Students and Staff have also been working very diligently to improve our reading skills. Our last professional development time was spent reviewing and learning about instructional strategies to help promote the reading goal. Each teacher is to implement a strategy in the next month that best fits their curricular area and then report back to the group on what worked well and also report challenges they faced. This cooperative effort by our staff will allow us to see a correlation between activities and methods that best fit our individual student needs.

In an information age in which critical thinking is more important than ever before, a partnership with our families is key to having our children develop habits to read widely and think deeply. Sustained reading in school and at home is essential. Here are some tips for our parents:

1. **Lead by Example-**Whether parents read books, newspapers, magazines, or an electronic reader, they model for their children the value of reading. Going a step further, when parents discuss and critique what they read, children learn that reading is thinking! Expert readers formulate ideas and opinions based on what they read.
2. **Read with Your Child and Share Ideas-** As you read stories or informational texts together, discuss your reactions, questions, and interpretations. Talk about how re-reading clarifies confusions and deepens understanding. Explain what you have learned, or how a text has helped you. Encourage your children to share their ideas, too. Following your lead, talking about reading teaches children to be independent thinkers and critical consumers of information.
3. **Be Sure to Find Time to Read-** Help your child to plan time in his/her daily schedule for home reading. Some convenient times for reading may be after dinner or before bedtime.

Both student-selected and school-assigned readings are essential components in the development of literacy. By making sure that your child reads, you are supporting growth in reading fluency, as well as important critical thinking, vocabulary, and communication skills. Readers are successful in school and in life!

As a family, make your new year's resolution be a "read-solution" to increase home reading!

Rob Arnold
Assistant Junior-Senior High School Principal

The Wisdom of Calvin and Hobbes

The comics of the 1990s were exceptional. My favorites were Bloom County, The Far Side, and Doonesbury. But in my opinion the best of the best was Calvin and Hobbes. The strip followed the adventures of six-year old Calvin and his stuffed tiger, Hobbes. In Calvin's mind Hobbes is real. Hobbes is trying to understand life and understand Calvin so he is always asking a lot of questions. This gives Calvin numerous opportunities to share his thoughts and ideas.

For Christmas this year my sister gave me the book Looking for Calvin and Hobbes: The Unconventional Story of Bill Watterson and His Revolutionary Comic Strip. I had it read in a couple of days. I decided to find my Calvin and Hobbes collections that I have had packed away for many years. When I first read Calvin and Hobbes I was in high school and college. My interpretation of the comic strip has changed a great deal since then. It was fun to go back and enjoy the wonderful observations of Bill Watterson.

Calvin is in first grade. It is difficult for Calvin to attend school because Hobbes cannot be there for him. Calvin has to make it on his own. He struggles with everything at school: focusing, girls, lunch, PE, recess, his teacher and his principal. Miss Wormwood and Mr. Spittle do their best to help Calvin but it seems to have little or no effect on Calvin.

Calvin's thoughts on education:

öAs a math atheist, I should be excused from this.ö

öReading goes faster if you don't sweat the comprehension.ö

öHistory is the fiction we invent to persuade ourselves that events are knowable and that life has order and direction.ö

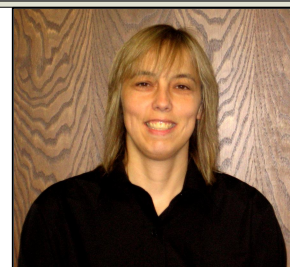
öI used to hate writing assignments, but now I enjoy them. I realized that the purpose of writing is to inflate weak ideas, obscure poor reasoning, and inhibit clarity. With a little practice, writing can be an intimidating and impenetrable fog.ö

öI go to school, but I never learn what I want to know.ö

öIf it was completely different, school would be great.ö

Calvin's creativity and imagination are his greatest assets. Sometimes teachers stifle creativity instead of fostering it. It is part of our responsibility as educators to understand every student and to keep creativity an active part of the education system.

Jennifer Sornson
Principal
Independence Junior-Senior High



Jennifer Sornson,
Jr/Sr HS Principal

Speech News By Dan Putz

Congratulations to the speech team on their fine showing Saturday, January 21st at the District speech contest in Cascade. The following groups earned 1 ratings and will advance to the state contest February 4th at Dubuque: The musical theater "Grease", The choral reading, the readers theater, the group mime "Potter vs Narnia", the ensemble acts "The Note", The Tragic Tale of Melissa McWhale", and "10 Reasons Not To Be In A Play", and the three group improves of Emily Goedken, Hannah Butler, and Zach Schulz; Aubrey Nabholz, Sarah Lake, and Madi Diesburg; and Stephanie McMillan, Abigail Goedken and Molly Gustafson. Those groups who received 2 ratings include the radio news team, TV Broadcast team, the one-act play, the musical theater "Wicked", The Short film "Freedom", and the group mimes "Best Friends" and "Be Nice To Your Toys".

Activities Newsletter by Activities Director Rob Arnold



Rob Arnold, Activities Director

Winners, I'm convinced, imagine their dreams first. They want it with all their heart & expect it to come true. There is, I believe, no other way to live. - Joe Montana

Our athletes deserve an opportunity to imagine their dreams and pursue them. This winter has seen some extremely exciting activities occurring in Independence. At the end of November we were able to purchase some weight room equipment with the cooperative help from the Booster Club and the Mat Club. We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of our four new lifting racks in the next couple of weeks. With this addition we will be able to completely outfit 2 rooms, one at the High School and one at West. This will allow lifting opportunities for both our in season and out of season athletes this winter as well as this spring. We will be continuing to develop our vision of a state of the art weight room for our athletes by the time we move into the new building. We have seen a very positive increase in the number of kids we have lifting in grades 9-12. Currently all of our winter athletes have been lifting in season at least two times a week. We have a contingency of athletes not involved in a Winter Sport who are lifting as well. Many of our student athletes are shining examples of what a quality strength program can do for our overall competitiveness in, what I believe to be, the most competitive conference in 3A.

Our Winter sports are getting prepared for their end of the season run through the conference as well as getting ready for the road to their respective state tournaments. The Boys Basketball team continues to work through the WaMac schedule. The boys have been working hard and need our support.

Our Girls Basketball Team has continued to shock the WaMac taking now #1 ranked Benton Community to double overtime. The Girls Team is currently 4th in the WaMac West behind 2 top 10 teams and Marion. Coach Rod Conrad and the girls play a very physical style that is really fun to watch. The girls believe in each other and are working great together. They are a testament to teammates supporting each other and working together to achieve a goal larger than one's self.

Our Wrestlers have also continued to have success this winter. They have competed well in their duals as well as their Saturday Tournaments. Coach Doyle has reached an amazing coaching milestone. At the Osage Duals on January 14 he collected his 200th Dual win. This is an amazing accomplishment and a reflection of the consistent program Coach Doyle has in place. It is also a great reflection of the athletes that have competed in that program. The Wrestlers will begin their march to the State Tournament with Sectionals on February 4th and Districts on February 11th. The State Tournament will be February 16th-18th.

Our Speech participants excelled once again this January as we hosted the WaMac Conference Large Group Speech Contest. Once again our kids represented our school district with a great showing. A special thank you to Dan Putz, our speech sponsor, who organized and ran the event. The Speech team has a busy winter as they continue to Cascade for District Speech and Large Group State Speech in Dubuque on February 3rd.

Our Jazz Bands are preparing to enter their competitive schedule with many events in February. The Jazz Band has a contest on February 18th at the Tall Corn Festival, followed by the Coe Jazz Festival on February 25th and the NEIBA District Jazz Fest on March 3rd. Our Vocal and Drama groups will be working hard the next few months in preparation for the High School Musical on March 15th-17th.



Independence Community Schools Volunteer & Mentor Program Update by Val Maximovich

August ó December update for the 2011-2012 School Year

This report reflects the many hours that volunteers have donated to our schools in the first four months of the school year.

The year began with the volunteers giving their time this summer with the ðFarm to Schoolö program. Then they helped with the annual library Scholastic Book Fair in October. More help was given to junior high students with sewing projects. Many others served as lunch greeters and door greeters. Parents served on the Advisory Committees. Some volunteers facilitated the Fifth Grade Reading Book Clubs, and helped with the district's first day of school activities and much more!



Statistically, this gift of time, (over 1200 hours!) given by over 130 volunteers so far this school year, when calculated conservatively at an average wage of \$8.25 per hour, means that our volunteers provided services worth nearly \$10,000. But, even more, volunteers are involved with what we do, they show us how much they value our school district, by building friendships, and sharing their time and talents to our students and that cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

Included in the Volunteer Program hours are the mentors who volunteer 30 minutes every week to mentor students. They interact with them one on one, and become that extra person who cares. They spend time with their students during their lunch hour and recess, playing games, reading, and just visiting with them. We are very fortunate to have 60 mentors in the district who make a difference in these students' lives.

Facebook

We are making progress on the Volunteer & Mentor Facebook account that will be available soon to keep you updated on what is happening. We look forward to being Your FRIEND!

Mentoring Events and opportunities

January was National Mentoring Month

Every year we celebrate National Mentoring Month with the Mentors and the students in a variety of ways.

January 25th was ðThank your Mentor Dayö ó the students wrote thank you notes to their mentors!

January 28th was ðMovie Dayö at the Starlight Theatre ó Mentors and students were invited to the Starlight Theatre for the movie ðRioö. This event was sponsored by Independence Light and Power.

Reading Clubs for 5th and 6th Grade

Have you heard?? Since last school year we have had several 5th grade book reading clubs. They have continued this year thanks to our wonderful volunteers, teachers and students who love to read! We currently have 3 book clubs meeting over lunch and recess on Tues., Thurs., and Fri. This year has seen the rise of several book clubs in the 6th grade also!



When asked what they like about their book clubs, we have had some great comments from the 5th graders:

ðIt helps me read better.ö

ðWe can read books we might not have otherwise.ö

ðWe get to read a book and then talk about it.ö

ðI like the discussions.ö

ðWe have fun and I read more.ö

If you would like to be a mentor or a volunteer, please contact Val at 319-334-7400 ext. 626 or email vmaximovich@independence.k12.ia.us, or download the volunteer registration form at <http://www.independence.k12.ia.us/district-departments/volunteer-information/>

INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS VOLUNTEER MENTOR PROGRAM VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM

Volunteers are an important resource to the educational process in the Independence Community Schools. Please complete the information below and on the back so that we may best utilize your time and talent. If you have questions, please call (319) 334-7400 Ext. 626 or email Val at vmaximovich@independence.k12.ia.us Thank you!

RETURN THIS FORM TO: Independence Community School District
Attn: Volunteer Mentor Program
1301 First Street West
Independence, Iowa 50644

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ - _____ - _____ Cell phone _____ - _____ - _____ E-mail _____

Employer _____ Business Phone _____

Current Occupation _____

Other occupational experiences _____

Retired? _____ yes _____ no Names and grades of any children in school _____

Do you have any health or physical limitations that might affect certain types of volunteer positions? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, please list: _____

In case of emergency, contact: _____
Name Phone Relationship

Where and when are you available?

____ District (anywhere needed) ____ ECC (PK) ____ East Elem (K-2) ____ West Elem (3-6) ____ Jr/Sr High School (7-12)

Time(s) available: ____ Daily ____ Weekly ____ Variable, Occasional Other: _____

If you have specific hours on specific days, please list here: (Example, 8:00-9:30 on Tuesdays)

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Do you have a specific class or teacher request? _____

**PLEASE FILL OUT THE BACKSIDE TO LET US KNOW YOUR
INTERESTS/TALENTS.**



Independence Community School District

1207 First Street West
Independence, Iowa 50644



Non Profit Org.
PAID
Permit 197
Independence, Iowa

We're on the Web

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

VOLUNTEER PREFERENCE CHECKLIST - Please check any and all areas you would help in.

Name _____ Today's date _____

Home Phone _____ - _____ - _____ Cell phone _____ - _____ - _____ Orientation date _____

Teacher Support

- ☐ Small group(s)
- ☐ Computer data entry
- ☐ Any in-class assistance
- ☐ Assist handicapped
- ☐ Clerical support
- ☐ Field trip chaperone
- ☐ Media center/library
- Specific grade request _____
- Specific teacher request _____
- Other: _____

Special Projects/Programs

- ☐ Classroom special events
- ☐ Volunteer bulletin board help
- ☐ Mentoring (lunchtime)
- ☐ After-school homework help
- ☐ Career exploration speaker
- ☐ Camp Ewalu (Junior High)
- ☐ Book fair help
- ☐ Music program help
- ☐ Athletic program help
- ☐ Drama help

At Home Help

- ☐ Computer work
- ☐ Material preparation
- ☐ Food/treats preparation
- ☐ Telephoning parents
about events, reminders
- ☐ Grade papers
- ☐ Assemble projects
- ☐ Make costumes (sew)
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Skills/Knowledge You Could Share Not Listed In Above Categories: _____