

Volume 7 Issue 2
Winter, 2012-2013

District Events:**Feb 6**

1:00 Early Dismissal

February 15

SNOW MAKE-UP DAY

Feb 18

School Board Meeting -
 Independence **5:00 p.m.**

Feb 20

1:00 Early Dismissal

February 25

No School

February 25-26

P/T Conferences K - 6

February 26

2 Hour Late Start

Mar 6

1:00 Early Dismissal

Mar 18

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

Mar 20

1:00 Early Dismissal

March 29

No School

April 1

SNOW MAKE-UP DAY

Apr 3

1:00 Early Dismissal

Inside this issue:

Curriculum/ Student Services	3-11
ECC/East News	12-15
West Elem News	17-20
Junior High News	21
Junior-Senior High News	22
Activities	23-24
Volunteer & Mentor Program	25-28



From the Desk of Jean Peterson, Superintendent

New Junior-Senior High School Facility

The construction is really progressing for the Independence Community School District's new Junior-Senior High School. The following information is the most current update provided to the School Board at their January 21st meeting.

Wrestling room, Weight room, and Gymnasium:

- ❖ Above ceiling mechanical and electrical continues.
- ❖ Press box masonry is complete.
- ❖ Terrazzo floors have started at hallway.

FEMA Safe Room:

- ❖ Structural concrete floor, roof, and walls are complete.
- ❖ Exterior masonry wall is complete above the FEMA Room.
- ❖ Masonry non-bearing walls will commence at the FEMA Room during the week of January 28th.

Band, Vocal, Backstage, and Kitchen:

- ❖ Above ceiling mechanical and electrical continues.
- ❖ Masonry is complete.
- ❖ Walls are being painted.

Auditorium:

- ❖ Footings and foundations are near complete.
- ❖ Masonry walls continue.

High School Wing:

- ❖ Above ceiling mechanical and electrical is complete.
- ❖ Terrazzo is 90% complete.
- ❖ Painting is complete.
- ❖ Cabinets are in progress.



**Jean Peterson,
Superintendent**

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Junior High School Wing:

- ❖ Above ceiling mechanical and electrical continues.
- ❖ Painting is 80% complete.

Science/Industrial Tech Area:

- ❖ Above ceiling mechanical and electrical continues.
- ❖ Masonry walls are complete.
- ❖ Painting to commence in two weeks.



Office Area/Media Center/Locker Areas/Center Corridor:

- ❖ Steel studs and drywall are 50% complete at office area.
- ❖ Block walls are complete.
- ❖ Skylights to start the week of January 28th.

We would also like recognize and show our sincere appreciation for the In-Kind Volunteers for their service this past month. They are:

John Behan, Jerry Franz, Scott Chesmore, Clayton Chesmore, Scott Frye, Bruce Neeley, Jeff Jensen, Julie Osborne, Jim Frye, Jay Frye, Mike Lenius, Brian Eddy, Shawn Eddy, George Lake, Keith Donnelly, Michael Doyle, Jessica Weber, Matt Shannon, Eric Weber, Josh Weber, Mike Zimmerly, Jim Ohr, Jason Ohr, Norm Mills, Kevin Mills, Kevin Klotzbach, Zach Osborne, and Jimmy Grover.

We would like to start giving tours for Community Members again beginning sometime in March. We will be sure to get those tour dates posted on our school's website and on Channel 8 when they get decided.

Agriculture Education Program

After hearing the Independence Agriculture Education, Inc. "Plant the Seed" Committee's presentation at the January 21st School Board Meeting, the Board did unanimously approve adding this program to our school's curriculum starting in the 2013-2014 school year. This program will be completely funded by donations and revenue from the crops grown on a portion of the school's 92 acres which is located out by the new Junior-Senior High School.

I am so very appreciative of the work the committee did to make this curriculum area a reality for our students. Agriculture Education and FFA will be truly valuable opportunities for our students. I also continue to be extremely impressed with the generosity of our community. We would not be in a position to add a program such as this without their backing, donations, and in-kind work. As a Superintendent, this has been such a rewarding experience to watch all of this unfold. Adding a program like this is one more piece of the puzzle for ICSD to become a school "second to none"!

Curriculum/Student Services

by Deb Donlea, Director of Curriculum/Student Services

Curriculum

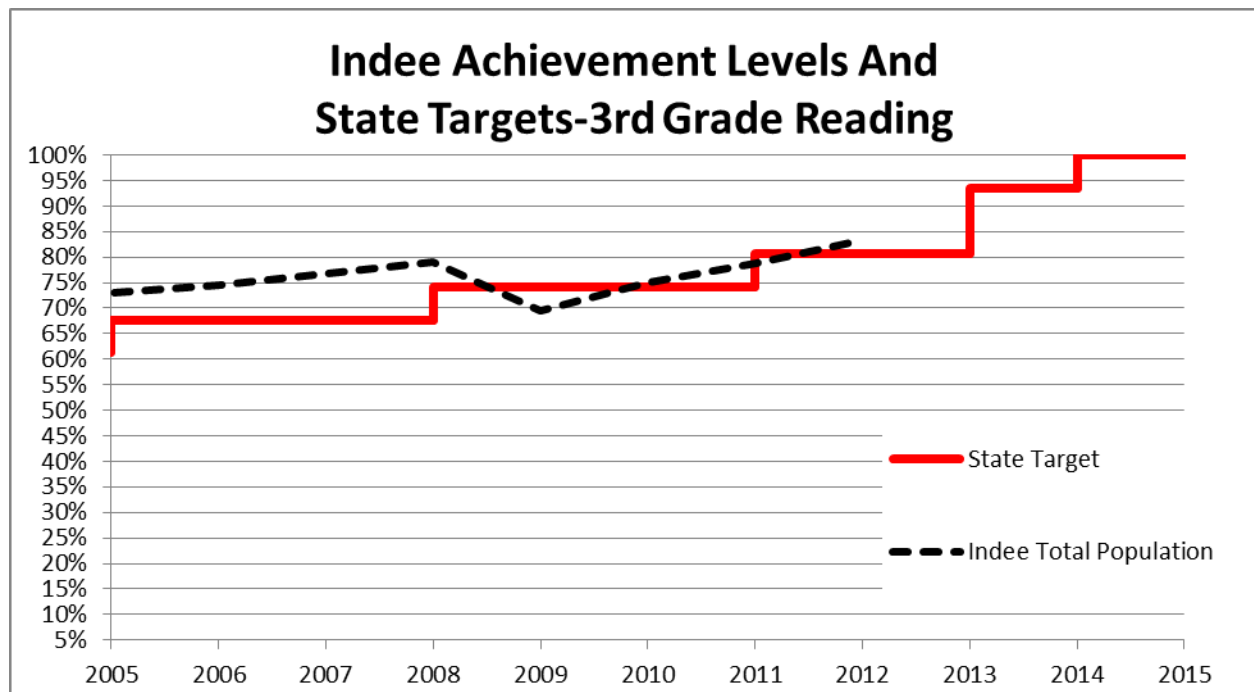
Academic Achievement/Assessment Data

As you may recall, in 2002 No Child Left Behind gave school districts 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 needs to be at or above the 41%ile on the Iowa Assessments. 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. Below each graph you will see the State Target percentage, the Independence percentage for the graph indicated grade level, and the percentage of growth from 2011-12 for the graph indicated grade level.



Deb Donlea, Director of Curriculum/Student Services

INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN COMPARISON TO NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND 2005-12



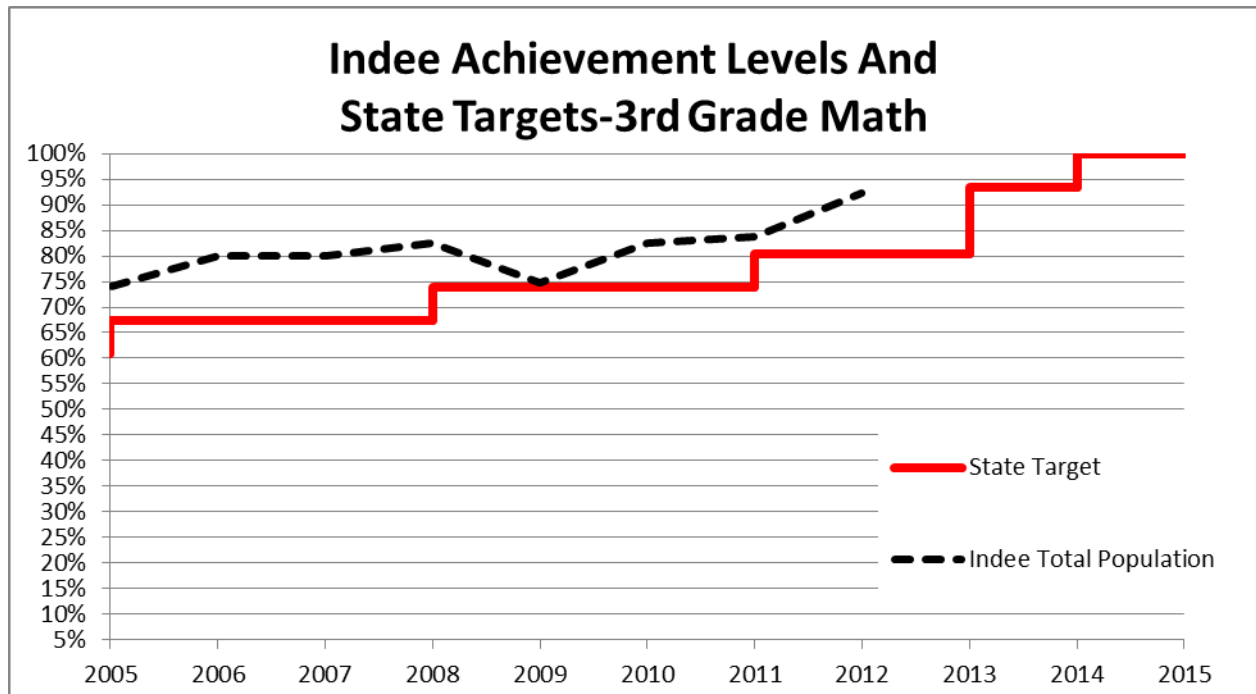
2012 State Target- 80.6%

2012 Independence-83.33%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +4.54%

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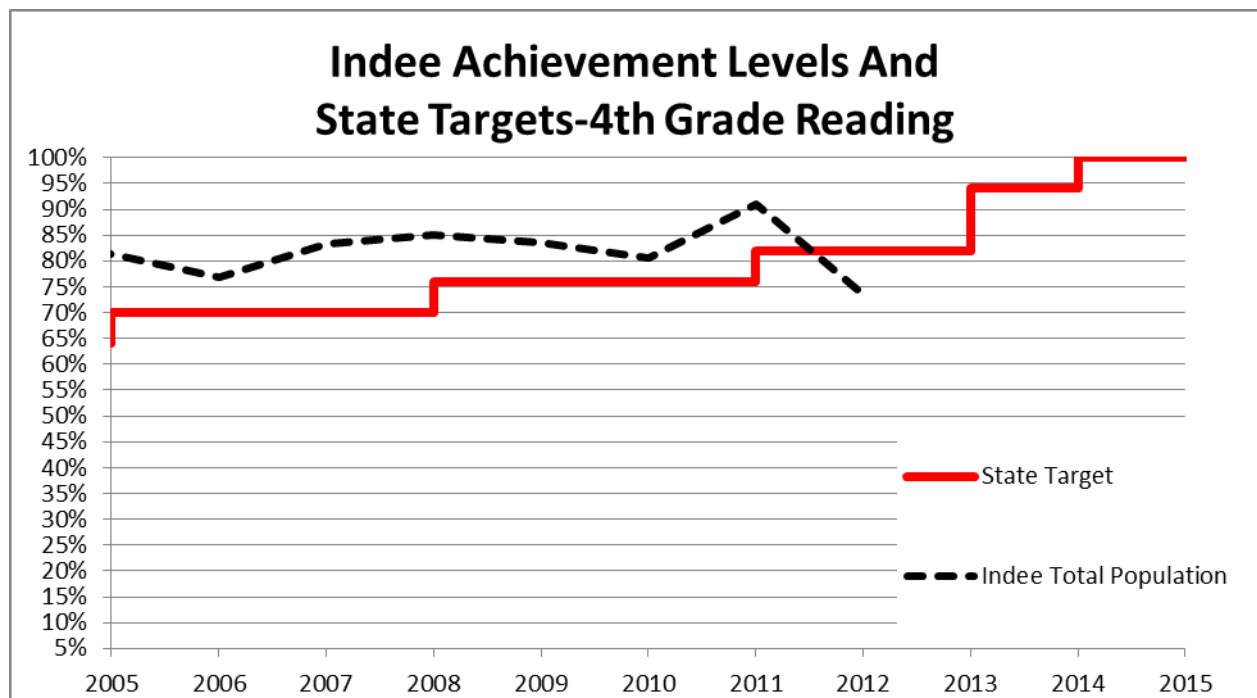
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2012 State Target- 80.5%

2012 Independence-92.13%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +8.29%



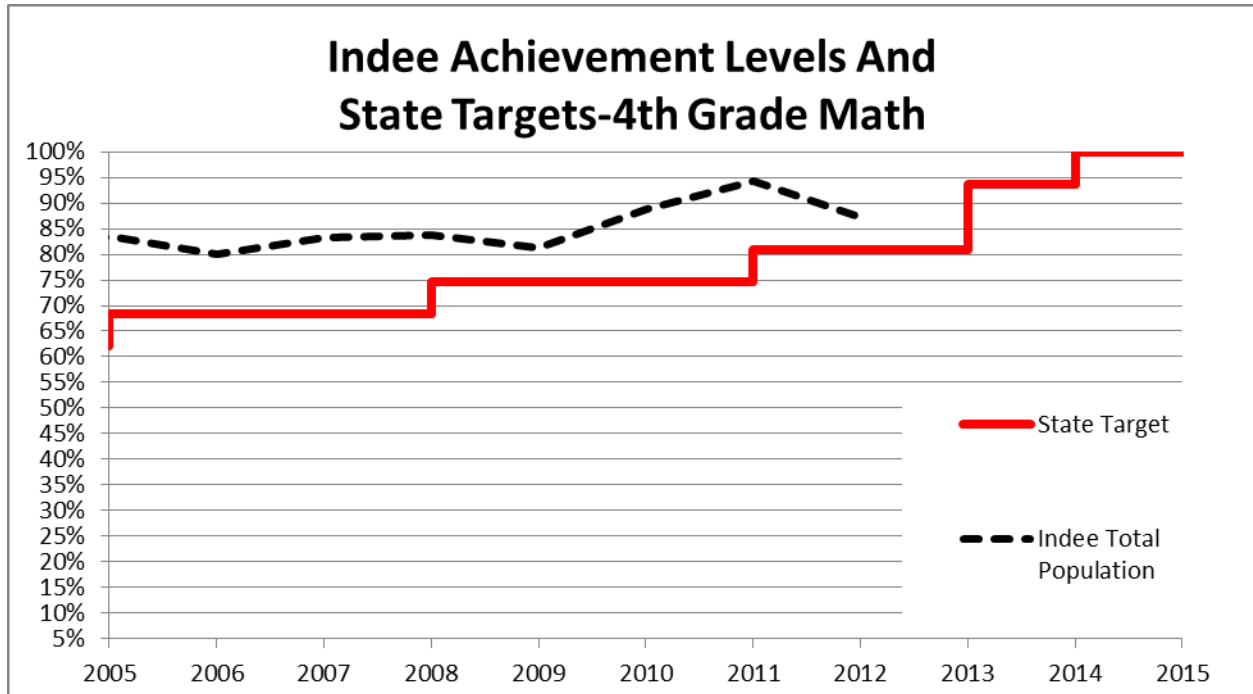
2012 State Target- 82%

2012 Independence-73.12%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -17.79%

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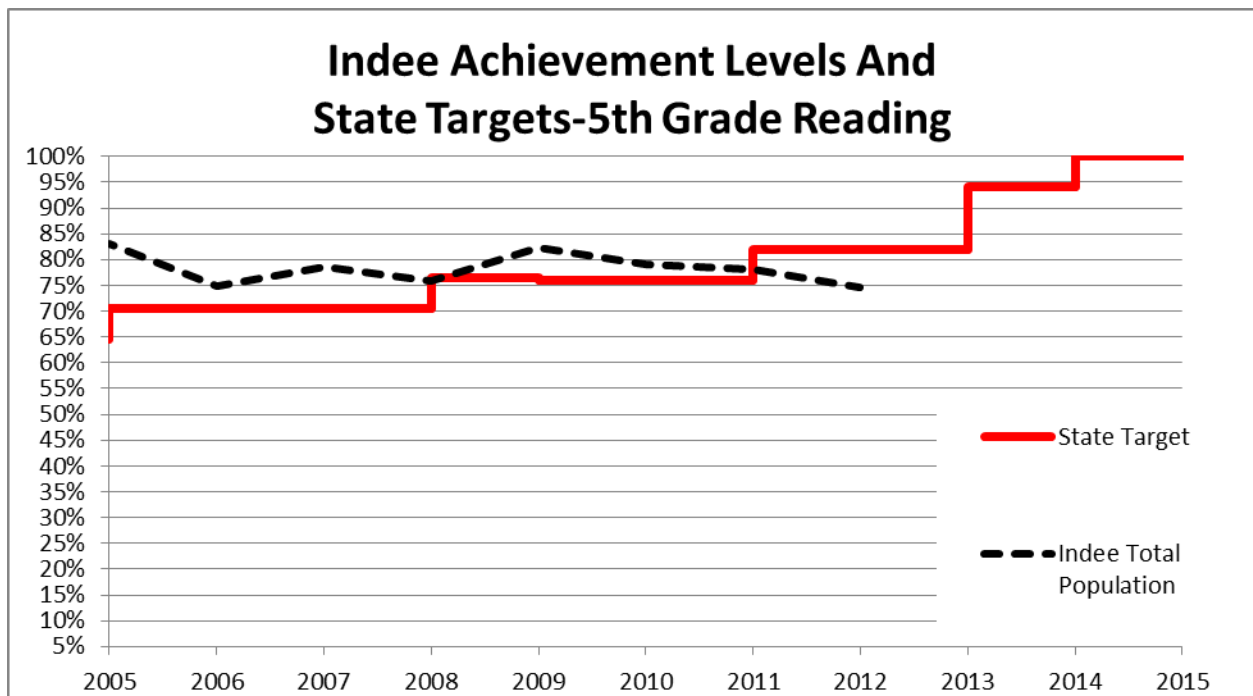
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2012 State Target- 81%

2012 Independence-87.37%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -6.95%



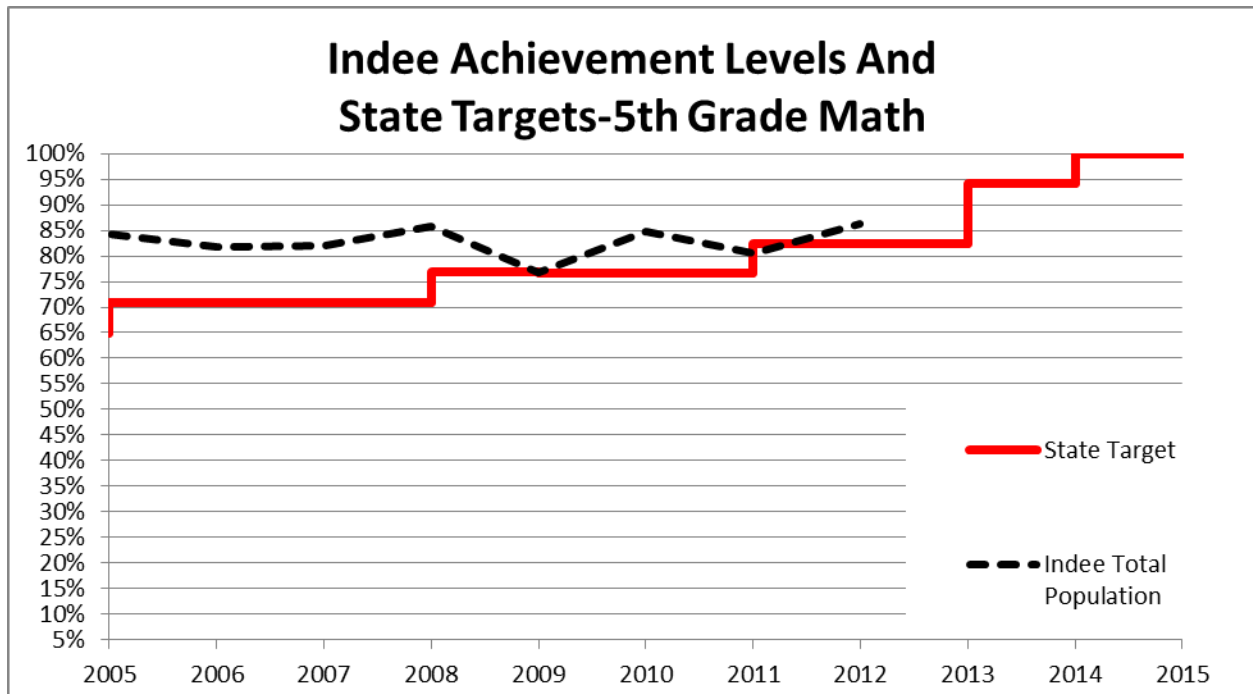
2012 State Target- 82%

2012 Independence-74.71%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -3.45%

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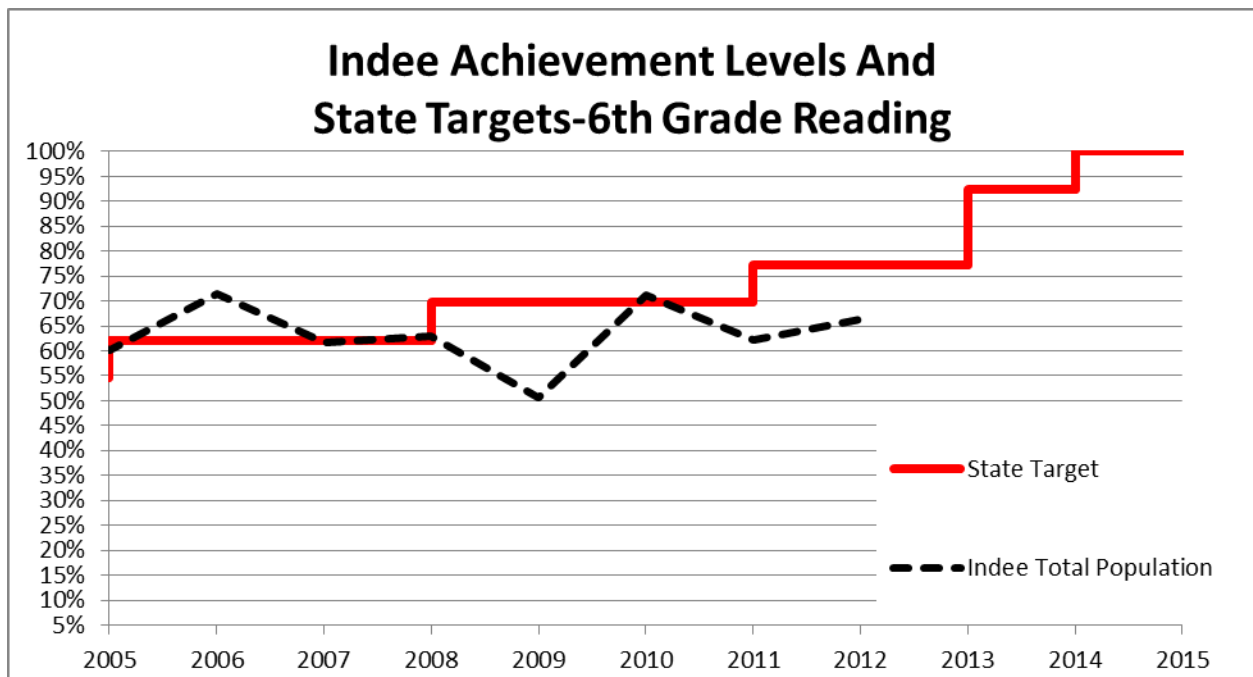
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2012 State Target- 82.5%

2012 Independence-86.21%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +5.75%



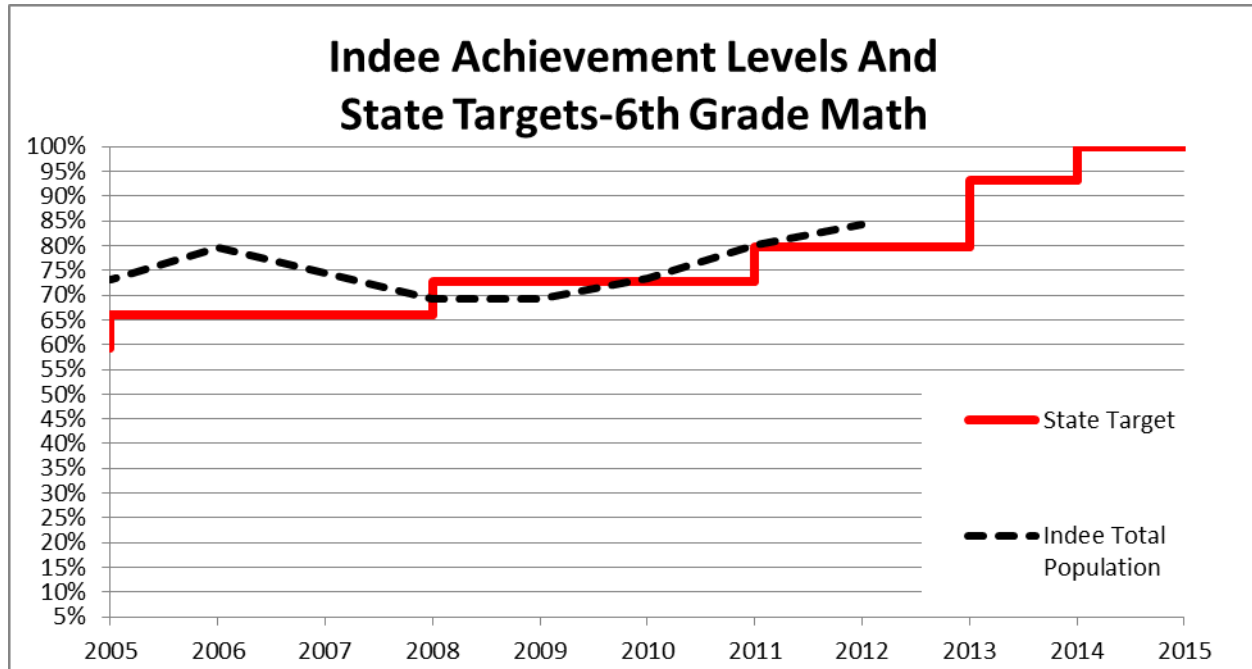
2012 State Target- 77.3%

2012 Independence-66.29%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +4.09%

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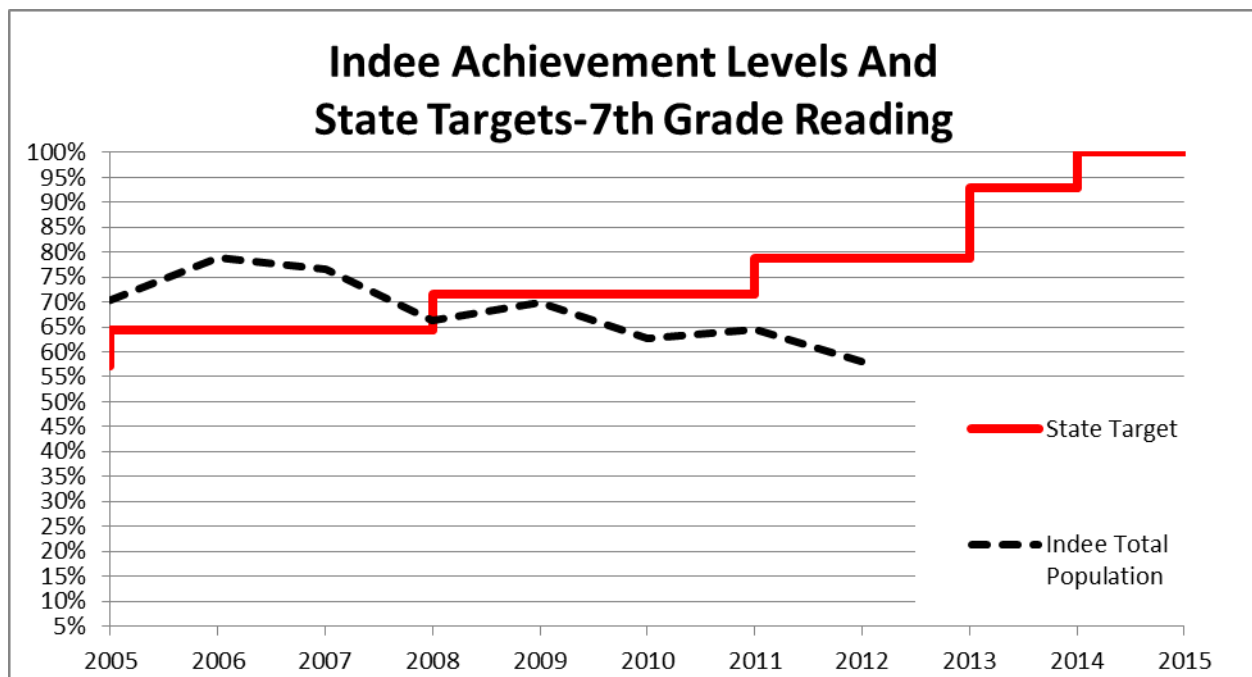
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2012 State Target- 79.6%

2012 Independence-84.27%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +4.27%



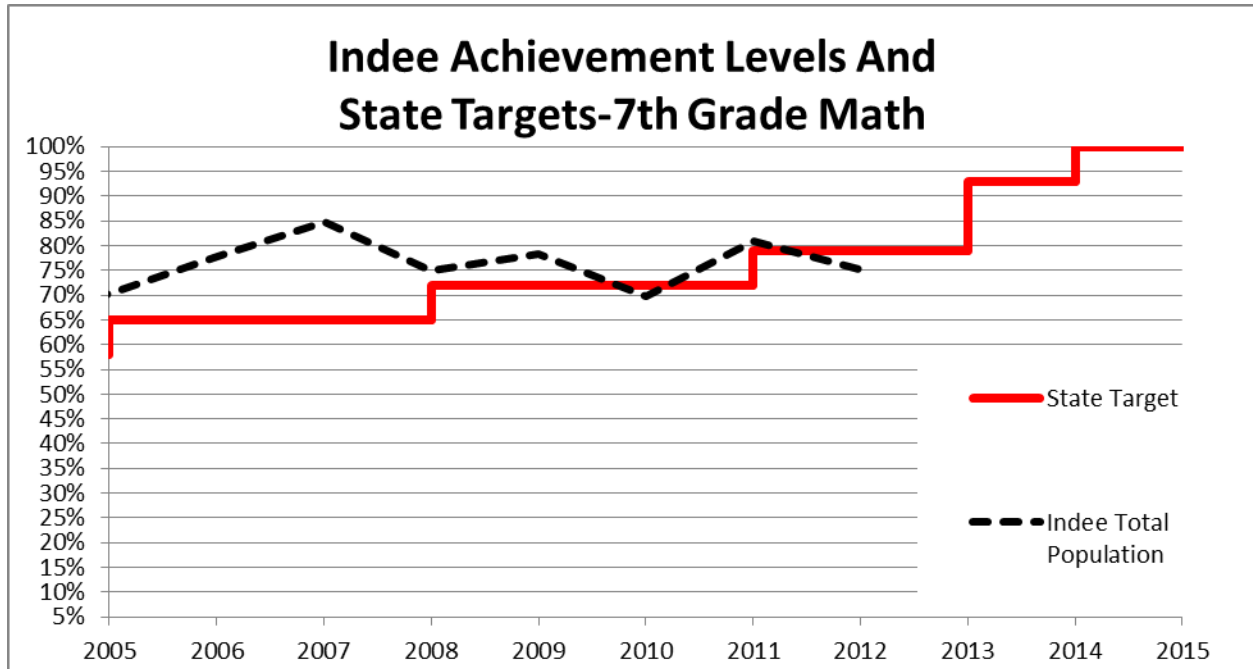
2012 State Target- 78.7%

2012 Independence-58.06%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -6.5%

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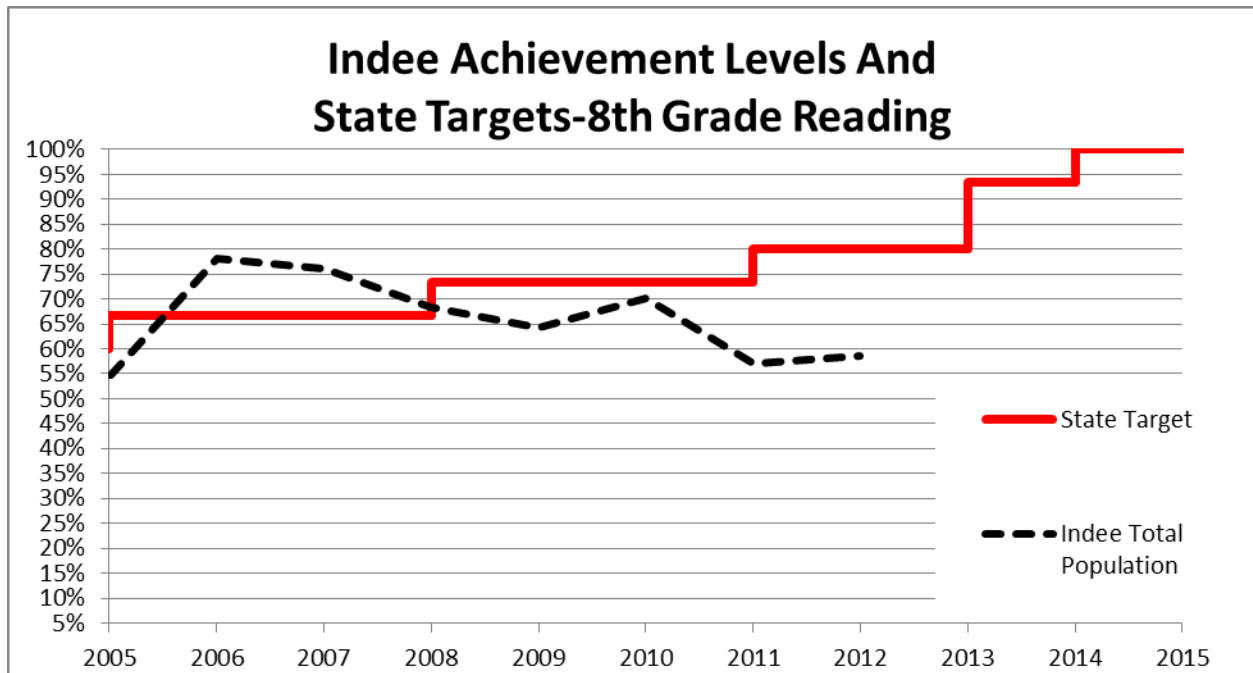
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2012 State Target- 79%

2012 Independence-75.27%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -5.74%



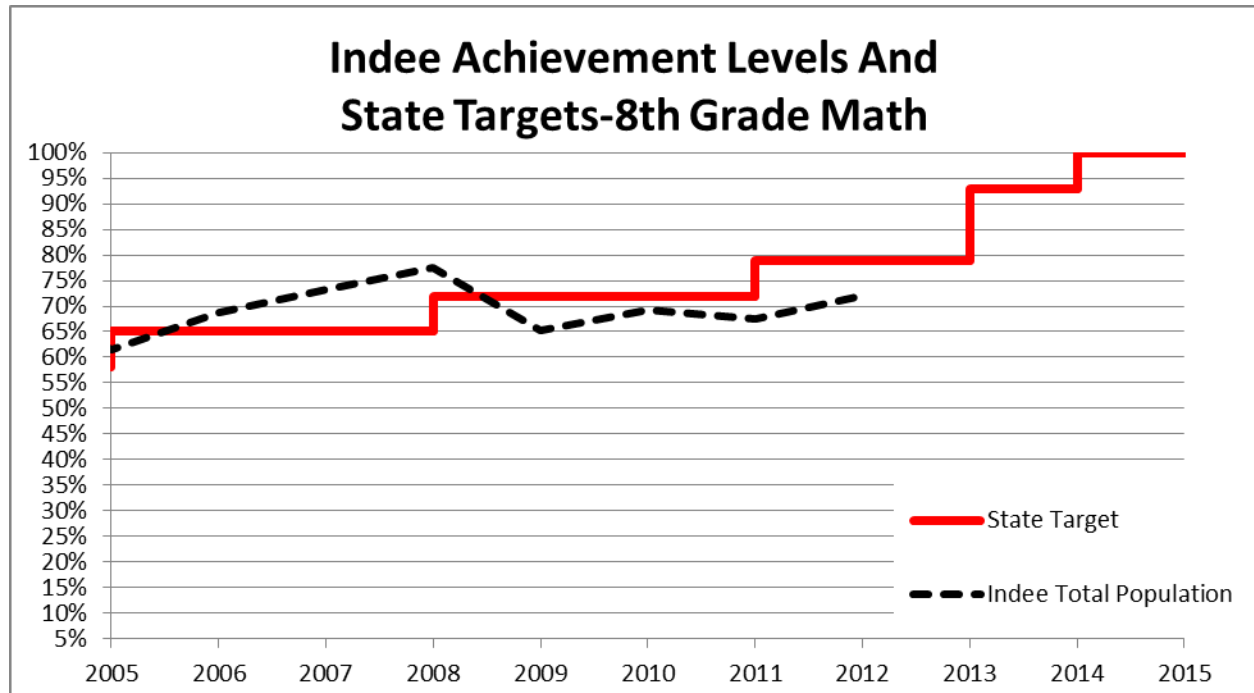
2012 State Target- 80%

2012 Independence-58.54%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +1.4%

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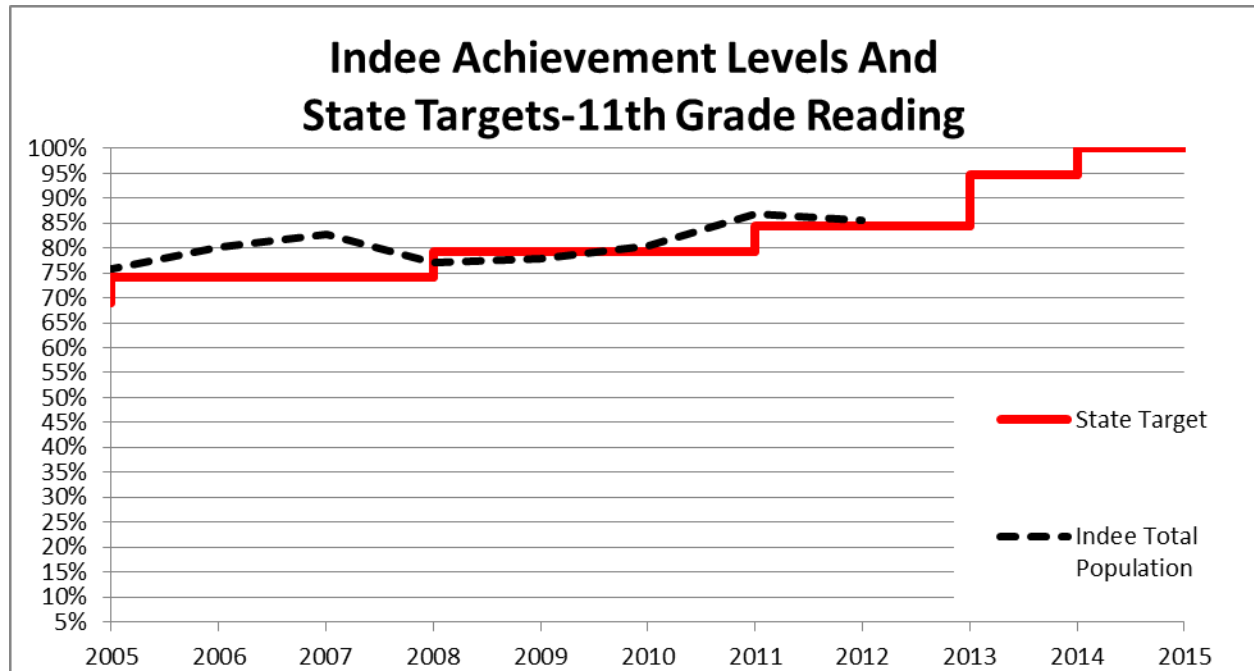
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2012 State Target- 79%

2012 Independence-71.95%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- +4.42%



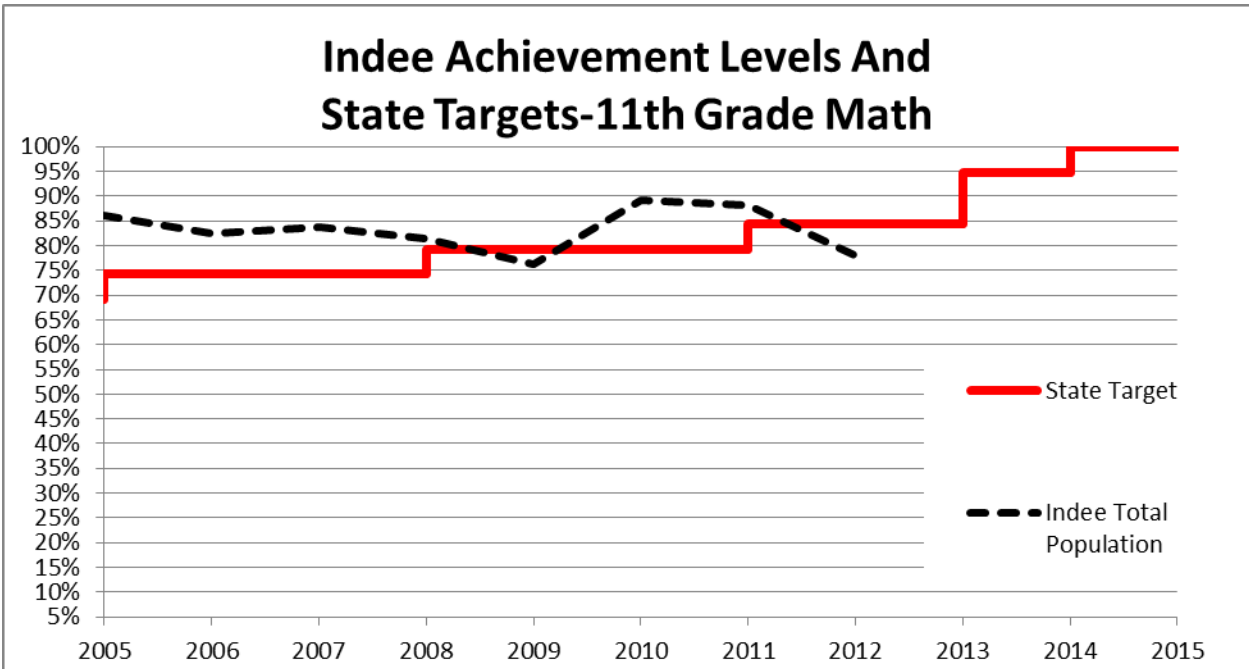
2012 State Target- 84.5%

2012 Independence-85.71%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -1.25%

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2012 State Target- 84.5%

2012 Independence-78.02%

2011-12 Total Independence Student Pop. Growth- -10.02%

Response to Intervention

Some of the above graphs indicated our students are below the state targets. In response to these lower scores, the Independence Community School District began implementing the Response to Intervention framework in all schools.

Response to Intervention is a proven procedure to help schools identify and diagnose learning problems quickly, customize instruction to correct the problems, and monitor student progress along the way. This framework also allows educators to evaluate the overall health of their schools and to target resources to areas that need it.

Response to Intervention is not a packaged program, set of assessments or curriculum. It is an approach to general education, although it has been effective for students served in special programs.

Iowa Department of Education Director, Jason Glass stated, “We know that students learn in different ways and at different paces. While we should have high expectations for all children, the way we deliver instruction should be tailored to fit each student’s needs. The Response to Intervention framework provides that customization and uses data and information to determine whether instructional approaches are working or whether they need adjustments.”

At Independence Community School District, the teachers and administrators continually assess our student’s needs to ensure every student progresses. Response to Intervention is one way we can cater to those students who may be struggling and need supplemental instruction.

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

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.

At our October meeting, the School Improvement Advisory Committee broke into groups and brainstormed the strengths and areas of growth of the Independence Community School District. It was great to see the many strengths! However, with strengths also come areas of growth. The committee took a look at these areas of growth, deliberated and discussed each one, and after much thought set two goals for the 2012-13 school year.

Goal #1- Improve communication with students, parents, and community.

Goal #2- Building partnerships with local businesses and community.

Principal's Corner

by Mary Jean Blaisdell

Oh my, it's February! We will soon actually be thinking about the 2013-14 school year and incoming Kindergartners! February is the beginning of a very busy and exciting part of the year. There are two important dates to remember this spring:

Kindergarten Registration at East Elementary

Thursday, February 21st - 1:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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.

Kindergarten Roundup at East Elementary

Thursday, March 14th - 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.; 12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Friday, March 15th - 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

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, 2013, 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 snow pants to keep them warm and dry. Students do not go outside for recess if the temperature and/or wind chill is below 10 degrees.



Mary Jean Blaisdell,
Principal



Calling All 2013-2014 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, 2013 for entrance into Kindergarten in the fall of 2013. 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 13, 2013.

Child's Name: _____

Birth Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Preschool Press

It is hard to believe we are in the heart of winter, you just never know when that next snowstorm might arrive. One thing we have been working on very hard in preschool is being able to independently get dressed to go out for recess and to go home. Now that we have coats, boots, snow pants, hats, mittens and sometimes scarves it becomes much more difficult. To help with this, we have been reading "The Jacket I Wear in the Snow". With this book we have practiced sequencing how we put on our winter gear.



Preschoolers "dress up" paper dolls.

We talk a lot about not putting on our mittens before we have coats

zipped and boots on. One activity we did, was with paper dress up dolls. We put on the winter gear in the correct sequence. Practicing is really the only way to help kids become more independent with this task. So remember to let your child dress themselves, even though it does take longer. Also, if zipping a coat or tying boots/shoes is hard, wait for your child to ask for help. Independence is a lifelong skill!



Preschoolers go caroling at East

Kindergarten Corner

February is 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 snow pants. :)



Mrs. Kress's class show their smiles after studying kindness to others!

First Grade Focus

January brings New Year's Resolutions, snow and cold, and mid-year testing.

Traditionally, January and February are the months when many first graders really start putting it together and move forward at a quicker pace. Here are some suggestions to help your child make the most of their opportunities:

1. Please help them get into regular going-to-bed and getting-up routines. Young children need 8-10 hours of sleep each night to do their best
2. Get into the habit of checking your child's binder looking for teacher notes, important papers and your child's work. Also, please discuss their work with them, noting both things that are great and things that could be improved upon. Comment on the effort you see in your child's work.
3. Don't forget homework—both the daily Everyday Math and spelling assignments that help our students become more organized and independent. In years to follow, you will appreciate the effort you put into helping establish this homework routine.
4. Most importantly, READ TO your child and LISTEN to your child read. Reading to children helps develop a strong listening vocabulary they will need in the future. Listening to them read and talking about the books helps children make connections to their world and understand the language of books. 40-50 minutes a week or 10 minutes a day, every day, can make a huge difference.

Routines that are well established help kids "just know and grow." As always, we thank you and appreciate it when students come to school, on time, and ready to learn.



First graders measure with "feet".

Second Grade Scene

We hope that your family had a relaxing holiday break. It's been a busy month in second grade. Students were working toward our next STARS goal of displaying a positive Attitude. Students who have consistently displayed a positive attitude will be honored at an assembly in early February. Toward the end of the month we celebrated the 100th day of school by collecting 100 items for the Independence Area Food Pantry. A list of food pantry item ideas will be coming home soon. Please keep encouraging your child to read each day. We appreciate your support!



2nd graders learning how to draw shapes.



2nd graders build stamina reading.



Mrs. Knott's 1st grade 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!

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!

K-2 students earn STARS awards for Teamwork!



National Math Competition

On November 1st, students from Independence East Elementary led by Mrs. Megan Rawlins competed in Noetic Learning Math Contest. This is an elementary math problem-solving contest held twice a year. 11,989 young students representing 621 teams across the country participated in this fall contest.

Sydney S. was the team winner. The following students won the National Honor Roll title: Sydney S. and Matt W. This title is only awarded to the top 10% of participating students in the country. Students receiving National Honorable

Mention were: Quentin K., Nora C., Caitlyn H., Sam B., Kylee J., and Cora N.

The purpose of participating in the contest is to stimulate our students' interest in math and to inspire them to excel in math. The contest results demonstrate our students' great math skills and talents.



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

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.

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 that 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.

Teri Schloss, RN

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.

News From West Elementary by Sandy Merritt, Principal

There are always great learning activities happening in our building that help our students achieve to their highest levels. Teachers continually look for ways to make learning engaging, challenging, and fun. Here are just a few examples of what our students have been doing in their classrooms.



Sandy Merritt, Principal

Third Grade Learns About Communities

Many great things are happening in third grade this winter! One of them is Junior Achievement! Each of the third grade classes had a volunteer come into their classrooms to present a community awareness unit. The program lasted for five weeks beginning in November and ending the first part of December. The program went along with our communities unit in social studies. The third graders learned about what it takes to build a city, especially where different types of buildings should go. They also learned about running a restaurant, writing a check, and writing an article for the newspaper! The students received a certificate for completing the program. It was much enjoyed by everyone!



Fourth Graders Are Eager Learners

Fourth grade students have started 2013 doing 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 are also learning about animals and writing animal reports, incorporating reading, writing, and science. We hope that the students are sharing all of their new knowledge at home!

Summer Enrichment Camp

Our Summer Enrichment Camp is gearing up for another fun summer. We will offer 2 sessions during the weeks of June 24th and July 8th operating from 8-12, with drop off times provided from 7:30-8:00 and pickup from 12-12:30. The camp is open to 3rd-6th graders. Activities will include cooking, science, outdoor games, and arts and crafts. Registration forms will be available at conferences. Fees are the same as last year, \$65 during early registration, which runs through April. Fees then go up to \$75 per session.

Holiday Arts and Crafts

Over 300 of our students met their November “At Home Reading Program” goal and were able to spend the afternoon of December 14th making holiday crafts. Grandparents were invited to join the fun too. Needless to say our walls were bursting that afternoon with lots of smiles, laughs, and cherished time together. Activities included decorating sugar cookies, making pine cone bird feeders, making tree ornaments, making gingerbread houses, and more. It was a great time for everyone. More photos are posted on Mrs. Merritt’s page of our West Elementary website under recent activities. Here are just a few of the photos.



Fifth Grade Hands on Learning

Have you ever thought about dissecting owl pellets? Well our fifth graders had a great time doing just that as part of their skeleton unit. Here are some pictures showing the students dissecting owl pellets.



In social studies, students researched different European explorers and became experts on their voyages and discoveries. They were able to make the connections of their explorer's contributions to our present day world. Students presented their information to classmates; many in full costume!



Caroline Reyner and Alexis Shupe present their information on Explorer Amerigo Vespucci in full costume!

Sixth Grade Unit Combines Literature and Social Studies

The sixth grade is very excited about their upcoming play “The Princess Who Had No Name,” about a princess who forgets who she is. Thankfully other fairytale characters help her recover her memory. Over fifty-four sixth graders tried out for the parts. Anyone not earning a speaking role will be an essential part of the production through creating scenery, doing makeup, and creating costumes, as well as other backstage jobs. The play is being directed by Mrs. Whitaker, with Ms. Keber, assistant director. Mrs. Maximovich is assisting with costumes and scenery. There will be a free performance for the public on Friday, February 22nd at 7:00 pm.

As part of our genre study of historical fiction, the sixth graders will be learning about the time period known as the Middle Ages. Each student will read a novel set in that time period, and we will be learning about the elements of that particular time in history during social studies. This will include topics such as the feudal system, castles, knights, and medicine. We will compare and contrast historical fiction to other fiction in addition to biographies and works of fiction. Sometimes it is very difficult to differentiate among these books, but with practice the students will learn to identify the key features of each!

Iowa Assessments

Students will be taking the Iowa Assessments, formally known as ITBS, next month. Most students will begin the week of February 5th and end the following week, by February 15th. Individual students with IEPs 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 all content areas, particularly reading and math, each year.

Building and district data provide valuable information about our curriculums and instruction, areas that we are doing well and those that we need to focus more attention. Individual student scores from the test are used to determine who needs more support from reading and math specialists, who meets the criteria for ECLYPSE (Gifted and Talented), and for 6th graders, how to place students in classes next year.

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. We need your help in reminding your child/children of the importance of the test.

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.

Junior High News By Rob Arnold, Assistant JSH Principal



**Rob Arnold,
Assistant Principal**

The Junior High Students will be preparing over the course of the next few weeks to take the Iowa Assessments. We will be taking the assessments during the week of February 18th. These are our standardized tests that the school district administers yearly to assess our students growth from year to year. We use this data to make instructional decisions for our students. As a parent there are many ways to help your child prepare to do their best come testing week.

Before The Test

Before the test, parents can do many things. You can help your child in any areas that they have struggled with by providing practice opportunities at home. Keep the sessions short with manageable goals to raise your student's confidence. These do not need to be elaborate assignments; they can be simple review and discussions with the parent. If there is a subject area you are concerned with, be sure to contact the teacher of that subject for recommendations for extra practice. There are many on-line tools as well. If you have concerns about any issues associated with the test, please contact a teacher or administrator.

Day of the Test

The night before the testing begins be sure your child gets a good night's sleep and eats a healthy breakfast. By ensuring they are rested and fed, your child will be able to focus on the test and not be distracted by fatigue or hunger.

Be sure your child is prepared. Be sure that your student has a #2 lead pencil, an eraser, and a calculator. We will have these items available if a student doesn't have them, however it is best if they have their own. The school will give them opportunities to get a drink and stay focused; however having their own materials is one less thing for them to worry about.

Finally, on the day of the test remain positive. Staying calm will help your child stay calm. If they get nervous about the test or are likely to experience anxiety during the test, help them practice some relaxation techniques that they can employ during the test.

After the Test

The results for your child's test will return around the end of March or the first part of April. We will review the results in Advisor with each student. We will also review their results at our 4th Quarter Parent-Teacher Conferences. If at any time you have questions about the results please contact the school and we will be happy to explain them and help your students. Be sure to talk through with your student specific areas they do not understand.

On a Daily Basis

There are many strategies parents can use on a daily basis to enhance their child's performance on the Iowa Assessments.

Some of these strategies include:

- Assisting your child with homework and ensuring that your child is completing all homework assignments
- Helping your child to develop good study habits, thinking skills, and a positive attitude towards education from an early age
- Ensuring that your child has good attendance at school
- Staying in communication with your child's teacher
- Encouraging your child to read as much as possible, and to increase their vocabulary - even reading magazines, newspapers, and comic books regularly will help improve his/her reading skills
- Looking for educational games and programs that engage your child
- Helping your child learn how to follow directions carefully.

Finally, remember that standardized tests and grading systems are not perfect; each format has its own limitations. As you help your child do their best on the tests they take and in all of their schoolwork, remind them that testing is just one part of their education. With your support and involvement, they will be well on their way to their own bright future.

40 HOURS ON A BUS

Over break, I had the pleasure of accompanying the Senior High Music students on their trip to Florida. It was an incredible trip. Student behavior was excellent. It was exhausting; four different parks, a trip to the beach, and Downtown Disney. But the bus ride to and from Florida was an adventure in its own regard. As most people are aware, attempting to sleep on a bus is almost impossible. You might fall asleep for a while but it is not productive sleep.



Jennifer Sornson,
Jr/Sr HS Principal

So you are left with reading, watching a movie, or thinking about the major concerns of society. I was able to watch a couple movies and read two magazines. So that leaves about 20 hours of thinking time.

The good thoughts, the world did not end because one of the Mayan Calendars came to an end on December 21, 2012. The Mayan Civilization was very advanced and they had a deep understanding of the Universe. Most experts believed that this was not a sign of an apocalypse but that it marked a beginning of a new age. That sounds great as long as it is not the Dark Age.

The troubling thoughts, I was consumed with the events of Newtown, Connecticut. Hours to think, think, think. I was teaching high school History when the Columbine massacre took place in 1999. I continued to think back to that time. Over twelve years have passed. Not much has changed. Schools are still targets, in current terms “soft” targets. Columbine shook the foundation of education. Lockdown drills, security experts, and more doors and locks.

What is painfully clear is that many changes are needed. So much debate and controversy over gun control has already occurred. Controlling high capacity magazines seems to be the focus. But other ideas and concepts need to be considered. Mental health services need to change. Families need more access to assistance. The other piece of the puzzle is how to protect students and staff. There will be many proposals; armed security personnel, training and arming staff, or having law enforcement assigned to schools. It comes down to one simple principle; learning occurs when basic needs have been met. This is no different than it was twenty years ago; students need to feel safe to be productive learners.

Jennifer Sornson

Principal

Independence Junior-Senior High

Activities Newsletter by Activities Director Rob Arnold

Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you couldn't. - Rikki Rogers.

This winter has been a very exciting time for Independence Activities. Our Basketball teams have been very competitive. Our Wrestling team continues to have great success. The Speech Team has continued to develop and looks to do great things. The Vocal and Band groups performed at Disney over the holiday break in Florida.

This time of the year reminds us that being a parent or supporter of these participants can be incredibly rewarding if done appropriately. The National Federation of High Schools has published a document entitled "The Role of the Parents in Sports." Although this is athletically based, there are many lessons that can be applied to the fine arts and other activity groups as well.

The NFHS cites the following as ways parents can support their child appropriately:

10. Reinforce with your child to be a good sport.
9. Limit conversation about sport.
8. Have realistic expectations of your child's success in sport.
7. Support the coach and don't try to coach your child.
6. Keep it fun.
5. Push to follow through on commitments, work hard, and be a good person.
4. Have them play for their reasons, not yours.
3. Remain calm and composed during games.
2. Support, support, support.
1. Make your love and support unconditional and never contingent on performance.

At Independence, we must work to be an example for our students and support them as they compete and perform. As a parent this list seems extremely simple and easy, however we all know that isn't always the case. Being a parent to an athlete or performer, means opening those kids up to celebration but also ridicule. I know with my own kids I strive to remain positive, find the joy in the daily work, and push their horizons to try new things. However, I find myself falling into the Fanatical side of "Fan" at times. To step into the spot light means great adulation but there is also a risk of criticism. As parents, we need to work hard to protect those kids at home from too much of each. Be positive with your students and praise them for their time, commitment, and being a good teammate. Celebrate the wins with them and help them through the losses.

In the stands, support your athlete with positive cheers. Model how to react when we disagree with a call or an action of the opponent by urging our athletes to take advantage of the next opportunity. Allow the coaches to coach and the players to play. Remember to stress that not everyone can be a starter but to be the best at their role on the team. Above all, demonstrate positive sportsmanship when winning or losing. Remembering that all extra curricular activities are meant to be fun and enjoyable grounds us back to a simple truth, kids won't remember the words we use but they will remember how they were treated.



Rob Arnold,
Activities Director

Speech News

The Independence Speech Team traveled to Vinton for the WaMaC West Large Group Speech Contest on Monday, January 14th. We had 12 entries and 7 received 1 ratings. Independence scored 37 team points to place 3rd. Benton Community took 1st place with 49.5 points and Center Point -Urbana placed second with 41 points.

Those earning 1 ratings include The Ensemble Acts “Intervention” (1st place), “If Girls Asked Boys For Dates”, Group Improvs of Adam Goedken, Kaylee Eilers, and Zoe Harrison, Group Improv of Madi Diesburg, Aubrey Nabholz, and Sarah Lake (1st Place), The Readers’ Theater, The Choral Reading, and Radio News Broadcasting.

The Speech Team is coached by Mary Burkett, Bill Burkett, and Dan Putz.

SPEECH TEAM ADVANCES 6 GROUPS TO STATE

The Independence Speech Team traveled to Cascade on Saturday, January 19th for the District Large Group Speech Contest. Congratulations to the six events that earned 1 ratings and advance to the state speech contest being held on February 2nd in Dubuque. Those earning top honors were: the Readers’ Theater “Porch Lies”, Radio News Teams “Bolt 102.1”, the Group Improv of Madi Diesburg, Sarah Lake and Aubrey Nabholz, The One-Act play “The Most Massive Woman Wins” and The Ensemble Acts “Intervention” and “If Girls Asked Boys for Dates”.

Those earning 2 ratings were; the Group Mimes “The Haunting”, and “Young At Heart”, the Choral Reading, the Musical Theater, The Short Film, and The Group Impov of Adam Goedken, Kay Lee Eilers, and Zoe Harrison. Thanks to all the parents and friends who came to support us.

Next for speech team is State Large Group being held on February 2nd at Dubuque Senior.





Independence Community Schools Volunteer & Mentor Program Update by Val Maximovich August—December update for the 2012-2013 School Year

It's time to look at where we are this school year with the Volunteer Program! We have had many volunteer opportunities this year – especially with the Silver Cord program and mentoring! We have matched 8 new mentors with students in the last 2 months, and they are having a great time! We have also had the group mentoring Reading Clubs as well, and we are gearing up for another group opportunity to meet at 5th, 6th and 7th grades!

The most exciting growth for the volunteer program, is the “Silver Cord” program at the high school. This program was initiated in September, and 89 students from 9th to 12th grade are currently signed up for the program! We have 50 students that have volunteered over 700 hours, so far!



Here are just some events and activities they have volunteered for:

After school program at West Elementary	Community Christmas Tree Lighting
Mentoring	Assisting w/the Public Library Art Shows & Book Sales
Heartland Acres Fishing Day	Shoveling sidewalks for elderly or neighbors
Coaching Football & Basketball	

We, as a community, are proud of these Silver Cord students! Thank you for representing Independence Schools!

If you have any activities that you would like to include on the Silver Cord website, please contact Val Maximovich, 332-0626, email vmaximovich@independence.k12.ia.us or go to the school website and complete the form. It will be found under the activities tab, Silver Cord Program, then choose under forms “Volunteer Opportunity Submission Form”.

An Old Fashioned Cake Walk was held on Sunday, December 2nd at the Buchanan County Healthy Lifestyles Center. This is an annual event when the ICSD Mentoring Program partners with the Lions Club for their breakfast brunch.

The cakes were decorated & donated by the members of the ICSD Family Consumer Science Culinary Techniques 2 class, the students were under the direction of FCS teacher, Marcia Kreutner. Many beautifully decorated cakes were available for the Cake Walk participants to choose from, plus everyone that participated received a mini cupcake! Silver Cord high school members

Aunna Marzen and Ashlei Cashen helped coordinate the activity. Other students that volunteered for the event were Mackenzie Cummings and Cindy Huang.

It was a great time enjoyed by everyone attending!



Independence Community Schools Volunteer & Mentor Program *by Val Maximovich*

January marks a special time for the Mentoring Program!

It's not just National Mentoring Month; we are Celebrating 20 years of mentoring in the Independence Community Schools!



The first mentor pairs met in the schools in January 1993. During this yearlong celebration, everyone will be asked “Who Mentored You?” When we think about the answer to this question, we realize that we have had a mentor, some time in our life! It’s time to reflect on who that may have been. Perhaps it was a neighbor, co-worker, boss, grandparent or teacher. If possible, be sure to say thank you!

Some events for this month were:

January 17th was “Thank your Mentor Day” – the students wrote thank you notes to their mentors and staff and community members we asked to thank their mentor too!

January 26th was “Movie Day” at the Starlight Theatre – Mentors and students were invited to the Starlight Theatre for the movie “Shrek Forever After”. Special thanks to members of the Audrey Fitzgerald Believe 5K run for sponsoring this event, & to Connie Arend for making a photo backdrop of Shrek’s home in the swamp.

Be sure to see the billboard south of Independence near Wal-Mart that says “20 years of Making a Difference”!

I need your help with the “Mentor Memories” movie being filmed to be presented this fall. It is being created by Silver Cord students and will be shown at the new Junior-Senior High School auditorium. Help is needed in finding those people who have mentored in the past, and their mentee (if known) during the last 20 years! I have identified mentors who have been involved the last 7 years, but need to find them in the 13 years previous to 2006. Any help with this would be greatly appreciated. So please contact me through my school email or call me vmaximovich@independence.k12.ia.us or phone 319-334-7400 ext. 626.

Thank you to everyone for their continued support, and be sure to take just a moment out of your day to thank your mentor!



A proud moment!

Mentor pair Norma Gates and Clarista had a goal in mind when they decided to make a baby doll quilt in November. They discussed what they could do for a donation to Operation Santa Claus. It was quite an undertaking for the 2nd grader, but she was ready to sew! They spent 4 weeks making the small quilt by hand during their mentoring time every Monday. Clarista was very proud to present the quilt to Brenda Thompson with a new baby doll for some little girl for Christmas. They made a presentation to Mrs. Lake’s 2nd grade class on how to choose your colors, lay them out and get ready to sew! Thank you both for giving back to the community!

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 _____

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

Association with Community Groups/Organizations: _____

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

**Friday, February 15th and
Monday, April 1st
are now Snow Make-Up Days!
There will be school on these days!!**

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 _____

Volunteer Preferences

Please select any and all areas you where you are interested in volunteering.

Teacher Support

☐ In class assistance & clerical support

☐ Grade Papers

☐ Field Trips

☐ Sewing Assistant

☐ Classroom Special Events

☐ Specific Grade Request

Grade: _____

Student Enrichment

☐ Mentoring (lunch time)

☐ Material Preparation

☐ Reading Club for 5th Grade

☐ Reading Club for 6th Grade

☐ Reading Club for 7th Grade

☐ 1 on 1 Reading

☐ 1 on 1 Math

☐ Morning Door Greeters (K-6)

☐ After School Homework Help

Outside Assistance

☐ Drama Help

☐ Music Program Help

☐ Athletic Program Help

☐ Sew Costumes

☐ School Garden

☐ Farm to School Projects

☐ Library Book Fair

☐ Volunteer & Mentor Committee

☐ Other: _____

Additional Skills/Talents/Interests Not Mentioned Elsewhere: _____