

**Volume 9 Issue 1**  
**Fall, 2014 - 2015****District Events:****Nov 17**

No School-Prof Dev

**Nov 17**School Board Meeting -  
Independence 6:00 p.m.**Nov 24 & 25**

1:00 Early Dismissal

**Nov 26-28**No School;  
Thanksgiving Break**Dec 15**

No School-Prof Dev

**Dec 15**School Board Meeting -  
Independence 6:00 p.m.**Dec 24 - Jan 2**No School;  
Winter Break**Jan 5**

School Resumes

**Jan 19**

No School-Prof Dev

**Jan 19**School Board Meeting -  
Independence 6:00 p.m.**Inside this issue:**

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***From the Desk of Jean Peterson, Superintendent***

It truly is a great time to be a Mustang! We have had a super start to our school year. All of our new teachers and new administrators are fitting in very well and are learning the "Mustang Way"! Both our students and staff have settled into their teaching/learning routines as well. It has been fun watching all of them participate in their various activities this fall.

I want to sincerely thank all of our parents and community members for their continued support of our school district. We simply would not be where we are today without everyone's valuable support!

**Certified Enrollment**

Each year we take the certified count of our students on October 1<sup>st</sup>. However, there are so many variables with this certified enrollment reporting system that we are unable to know what our true count is until the report is certified to the Department of Education on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

From October 1<sup>st</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, we work with other schools to track down students who may be open enrolled in or out or who may be tuitioned in or out. We also track our homeschooled students who may be dual enrolled for classes or extracurricular activities. We have some non-public students who take classes with us as well. We track our special education students, our students who are at risk, our talented/gifted students, and our English Language Learner students. There is some additional funding for each of those categories. This funding is driven by our count of these students and must be accurate.

We did certify with the Department of Education on October 15<sup>th</sup>. It looks like we are up in enrollment of resident students by 4.70. We have an increase in total school age students by 15.64. That total takes in the resident students and then all of the other categories mentioned in the previous paragraph. So, last year our student total was 1357.04. This year it is 1372.68. These totals may seem strange but if a student is only with us for a class or two, we cannot count them as a whole student.

Even though this is not a huge increase, it is a positive one for us. Any time we can be up in enrollment is a good thing!

**Jean Peterson,  
Superintendent***Continued on page 2*

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## **2013-2014 Annual Progress Report**

The Department of Education requires that each school district provides a yearly report to the community that outlines the district's progress toward achievement of student learning goals.

School districts are judged on their performance on the Iowa Assessments, formerly known as ITBS and ITED, in the areas of reading, math, and science for the total population of students plus the various sub groups as well. The data presented in our 2013-2014 Annual Progress Report illustrates how Independence Community School District students performed as compared to others in the state and in our AEA.

A copy of our Annual Progress Report is located on our school's website. Click on the District Information Tab on the Home Page and you will see the Annual Progress Report on the drop down menu. If you would like a paper copy of this report, call my office at 319-334-7400, and ask that a copy be mailed to you.

## **Iowa Core Curriculum**

There is a new website for teachers, parents, and other community stakeholders to better understand, access, and deliver our statewide standards both in the community and across the state. You may find the new website, **IowaCore.gov**, a good source of information as we work to implement the Iowa Core standards. I would encourage you to explore it.

The website includes the Iowa Core Standards in a user-friendly format that is searchable by grade level (K-12) and subject. The "Parents and Community" section of the website includes parent guides developed in partnership with the National PTA. The guides provide an overview of the Iowa Core, examples of what students may be working on at school and activities to help at home.

**IowaCore.gov** is managed by the Iowa Department of Education, which is working to improve and expand the website. The "Contact Us" section of the website includes a form to contribute feedback.

The Iowa Core Standards set consistent expectations for learning in schools across the state. The standards are a set of academic goals, not curriculum, so decisions about how to help students reach the standards remain in the hands of local schools and teachers.

## **Iowa Department of Education Comprehensive Site Visit**

All accredited public school districts are to receive a school improvement site visit led by the Iowa Department of Education Staff. These visits occur on a scheduled cycle which is once every five years. The Independence Community School District is on cycle for a visit this year. Our Site Visit is scheduled for November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.

The purposes of this school improvement site visit are as follows:

- to assess progress with the comprehensive school improvement plan
- to make recommendations with regard to the visit findings for the purposes of improving educational practices above minimal compliance
- to determine that a school or school district is in compliance with the Iowa Accreditation Standards
- to provide a general assessment of educational practices

We have been very busy getting ready for our upcoming site visit. There is a lot of documentation that we must provide in the areas of:

- elementary, junior high and high school programming
- attendance center, program, and course enrollment data
- school board policies
- personnel evaluation plans
- school calendar
- curriculum and professional development
- gifted/talented plan, dropout prevention plan, special education plan, homeless education plan, and English Language Learners plan
- school improvement advisory committee
- career technical advisory committee

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## *Continued from page 2*

The Department of Education Site Visit Team will also conduct interviews with the following groups:

- Administrators
- School Board Members
- Parents
- General Education Teachers
- Special Education Teachers
- Career/Technical Teachers
- High School and Junior High Students
- Instructional Support Staff
- School Improvement Advisory Committee
- Career/Technical Advisory Committee
- Learning Supports Staff – Gifted/Talented, Drop Out Prevention, English Language Learners, Homeless Education

The Site Visit Team will write up an official report of their findings. The site visit report is organized around seven characteristics of improving schools:

- mission, vision, and goals
- Leadership
- collaborative relationships
- learning environment
- curriculum and instruction
- professional development
- monitoring and accountability

We should receive their final report six weeks after the site visit. Once we receive our report, we will share it with the school board, the staff, and the community. We have several parents and community members serving as part of the interview teams. We are extremely grateful for all of their input!

## **Technology at Independence**

Many of us have thought, “When I was in school....

- walking 10 miles up hill in both directions
- pencil/paper
- chalkboard/whiteboard
- Latin (think Julius Caesar)

Latin? No? Let me tell my story.

I went to a public school in Delaware and took several years of classical Latin. Soon after I graduated in 1983, the entire Latin program was dismantled and other modern languages were emphasized. My Latin courses did not particularly help me in the military or in college.

As the 2014-15 academic year has started, think about how you are now using technology in your job. People are using more and more technology and the trend will continue.

The learning experience, expectations, interaction, and the thought processes all need to be different even compared to 1983. My high school was a “modern” high school when I graduated and constantly received awards for education and innovation. Latin was part of old curriculum and should have been eliminated long before 1983.

The Independence Community School district continues to implement our 1:1 Learning Initiative. A 1:1 learning initiative is commonly defined as one computing device assigned to an individual student.



**Steve Noyes,  
Director of Technology**

*Continued on page 16*

## School Improvement by Danielle Meyer, Director of School Improvement

I wanted to take this opportunity to say I am excited to be a part of the Mustang Community. In my current role as Director of School Improvement I will have many responsibilities. I will be overseeing Professional Development, Curriculum, Student Services, Special Education, Talented and Gifted, English Language Learners, and At-Risk Services.



**Danielle Meyer,**  
**Director of School Improvement**

In the short amount of time I have been here I have been so impressed with how welcoming the staff, students, parents, and community have been to me. With all the current initiatives happening in our schools, it is exciting time to be apart of the Independence Community. All of our initiatives are in place to a help us achieve our goals as a district.

I have had the opportunity to share our districts goals with the entire teaching staff. The goals for our district are very important, as they should be the driving force behind everything we do for our children. There are seven main goals for ICSD for 2014-2015:

1. Reading
2. Math
3. Science
4. Technology
5. Bullying/Harassment Prevention Goals
6. Communication with students, parents, and community
7. Building partnerships with local businesses and community

Staff has been reminded of these goals from the building principals and myself. All stakeholders (teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and students) have assisted in forming the goals. I am pleased with the Comprehensive School Improvement plans we have in place to achieve these goals. The teachers have taken advantage of the full day professional development to learn about strategies they can use in their classroom to enhance student learning.



## Principal's Corner

by Mary Jean Blaisdell

It's November already and we are looking forward to sharing student successes at school with parents at conference time this month.

Inservice time in October was spent learning about writing and the Iowa Common Core. Inservice is an important time for faculty and we thank you for your continued support in our efforts to improve the educational experience of your children.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled for Monday-Tuesday, November 24 & 25, 1:30-8:00pm. Conference time is crucial to the educational development of your child. It is a chance to learn more about your child's academic progress and to share information with the teacher who can help him/her to best meet your child's needs.



**Mary Jean Blaisdell,**  
Principal

## Preschool Press

Jim Gill, a nationally acclaimed musician and author, came to perform for our Early Childhood programs and their families in October. Several of our families were able to attend and enjoy his performance. Jim's amazing music encourages participation and movement from not just the children, but the adults as well! It was so much fun to see the children and their families singing, moving, and sharing a laugh together. All of our preschool programs use his music in the classroom, and we love to see the children engaged in his music at school as well!



## District Wellness Walk



### Kindergartners Give Thanks

In November we will be learning about Thanksgiving and sharing things we are thankful for as kindergartners. A highlight of our unit will be a Charlie Brown Thanksgiving Feast!

We will also be holding Parent/Teacher conferences on November 24th & 25th. We look forward to sharing your child's progress with you!

Kindergartners continue to develop their reading and math skills. Please continue reading with your child each night!



### First Grade Focus

The first grade classes started the school year studying insects. We concentrated on the life cycle of the monarch. One of the highlights of our unit was a trip to Fontana where we observed insects in the field and in the woods. We also visited many of the animals that East Elementary adopted last school year and are looking forward to helping them again later this year.

As we move into fall, first graders start to focus on specific reading and writing strategies as well as adding and subtraction during Math time. We change to studying about sand, silt, and rocks and National Symbols.

### The Book Fair is coming to East and West Elementary:

Reading for pleasure inside and outside of school has real and long-lasting benefits. It unlocks the power of information and helps children discover who they are. Our Scholastic Book Fair is a reading event that brings to school the books kids want to read. It's a wonderful selection of engaging and affordable books for every reading level. Please make plans to visit our Book Fair and be involved in shaping your child's reading habits.

Book Fair dates: November 24th & November 25th

Shopping hours: 1:30-8:00

Special activities: Family Night Drawing—Put your family's name in the drawing for a bag of books. NO purchase necessary.

Before you visit the Book Fair, be sure to download the Book Fairs app to help you find the right books for your child.

For more information, visit: [scholastic.com/apps/bookfairs](https://scholastic.com/apps/bookfairs).

And if you are unable to attend the Fair in person, we invite you to visit our online

Book Fair at [scholastic.com/fair](https://scholastic.com/fair). Our online Fair is available from November 12th to

December 2nd.

We look forward to seeing you and your family at our Book Fair!

Remember, all purchases benefit our school media centers.





## Art!

I am very excited to be teaching art this year! Students and staff are delighted to have art classes back in school. When I walk through the hall I get a ton of smiles. I started working in the Independence District in 2004 as a substitute teacher. In 2010 I was hired to teach math at West Elementary. Then, last year, I had a wonderful time teaching 4th grade. This year I am looking forward to exploring your child's creative side during Art.

We began the school year with each K-2nd grade student drawing a self-portrait. In May, we will create a new self-portrait and compare to the first. My hope is that every student will see an improvement in their drawing ability. East students celebrated International Dot Day around September 15th by reading the book The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds and creating a unique dot of their own. Dot Day celebrates creativity, courage and collaboration.

We have a lot to learn this year! We will be focusing on the 7 elements of art. These elements include: line, shape, color, value, form, texture and space. We will learn about different mediums, make sculptures, paint, draw, discuss famous artists, famous artwork and view each other's work. Some projects will be sent home right away while others I will keep on display. I am looking forward to an amazing year! Be sure to check out my website:

<https://sites.google.com/a/independence.k12.ia.us/mrsanderson/home> for updates and artwork.

You may email me at [aanderson1@independence.k12.ia.us](mailto:aanderson1@independence.k12.ia.us) with any questions or concerns.

Mrs. Anderson - Art



## 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:

#### Substitutes

If you are available to substitute occasionally as a classroom, office or media paraprofessional, (duties vary), please call 334-7425.

### We need YOU!

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

We continue to collect Pizza Ranch Wagon Wheels, Donuts to Dough, 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.



## PTO Harvest Night!



## Nurse News

As colder weather approaches, remember to dress your child in weather appropriate clothing. Hats, gloves or mittens, winter coats, snow pants and snow boots are a necessity for a child to be able to feel comfortable while outside for recess in the winter months. All students will go outside for recess unless the temperature is below zero.

During the cooler months we see an increase in the number of students who are ill. If your child is ill, please keep them home. We are again providing the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) with the number of students absent and what symptoms the students are experiencing. When you notify the school that your child is ill, please provide some basic symptoms that they are experiencing. No personal or identifying information is given to the IDPH.



### Reasons to keep your child home from school include:

- **Fever greater than 100 degrees.** Students need to be fever free **without** the use of Tylenol, Motrin, Advil, or other fever reducing medicines before returning to school.
- **Diarrhea or vomiting.** They may return to school 24 hours after the last episode if they have been able to keep a full meal down.
- **Rash of unknown origin.**
- **Severe sore throat.** A minor sore throat without fever can be managed at school. You may send your child with throat lozenges and a written permission slip. The health office does not carry throat lozenges. Students with known strep may return to school after 24 hours of antibiotic therapy.

Not all illnesses will fit nicely into these categories. If your child appears ill to you, keep them home for their comfort and to avoid the spread of disease. As always, consult your health care provider with any questions or concerns you may have about your child's health.

Good hand washing and getting a flu vaccine are some of the best ways to avoid getting sick. It isn't too late for you or your child to receive an influenza vaccine.



**From the Principal:** I believe our school year is off to a great start. This is not saying we have not had some bumps along the way, but that is a natural process of education. Teachers are working hard with students, and students are learning! The staff at West Elementary is excited to have the opportunity to help shape the future of our terrific students.

Recently, several parents came together to meet to help our school improve the education of our students. One of the discussions we had was Everyday Math. This is the curriculum series West Elementary is using to deliver our math instruction. A question was brought up asking how can parents help their students more effectively. Let's face it; math instruction is not the same as when most parents/guardians were students. Here is a link to help better assist you in supporting your daughter/son with their understanding of math. These are games you may be able to play with your son/daughter: [https://emccss.everydaymathonline.com/g\\_login.html](https://emccss.everydaymathonline.com/g_login.html)



**Dewey Hupke,  
Principal**

Every child should have a log in. If they do not know their log in, please consult with your child's teacher to attain this. We appreciate the support you are giving your child to help them become a better student.

**Bullying and Harassment Prevention:** As principal, one of my primary roles is to ensure ALL students feel respected and safe. The following is a statement on a wall in my office: **Everyone has the right to be in a learning environment in which they feel safe, respected, and protected.** Recently, I visited with every classroom about the seriousness of bullying and harassment. All students along with their classroom teachers signed a contract/pledge to eliminate bullying. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns you might have regarding the safety of your student. Let's work together to allow our students to have a great year!!

Thank you for supporting your student and our school!

GO MUSTANGS!!

~Mr. Hupke

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## News from the Extended Learning Corner (Talented and Gifted) at West Elementary

### Lyrical Iowa Competition

The following students will have poems published in Lyrical Iowa 2014:

Lauren Troutman placed 1st for her poem, "The State of Iowa"; Laura Smith placed 2nd for her poem, "The Wood"; and Ashlyn Martin received 1st Honorable Mention for her poem, "The Beautiful World of Nature." The girls also received certificates and/or small checks for their entries. Lyrical Iowa 2014 should come off the press in early November.

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## Special Olympics

Mrs. Plein's Special Olympics Team has been practicing hard on their bowling skills. Treon Martinson and Brody Bevans competed in the NE Area Bowling Competition on October 11th, in Waterloo. It was with great excitement that both boys received 1st place ribbons and are moving on to the Special Olympics State Competition in Cedar Rapids, on November 22nd! They will compete against other 1st place winners from around the state. Good luck boys!

## Drum Roll Please! 5th & 6th Grade Band Notes

The new Indee 5th Grade Band is off to a great start with 70 students signed up for band. Students were very excited to receive their instruments and have first lessons. After learning to put their instruments together, all students played their first notes. It was an exciting time for all! They are now working in their small group lessons and will start full group band soon to prepare for their first concert which will be Thursday, December 4th, 7:00 p.m. at the JSH Auditorium.

The Indee 6th Grade Band is busy learning new notes, rhythms and preparing songs for their concert on Thursday, December 4th, 7:00 p.m. at the JSH Auditorium. They have exciting “firsts” this year with their first solo contest on Friday, Feb. 13th and their first Large Group contest on Friday, March 6th. Students continue to earn band karate belts and will look forward to showing off their achievements at concerts.

Has your child been practicing? Here are a few tips to help!

1. Find a place to practice that is away from the family activity areas. There should be no distractions such as TV, radio, other children, pets or telephone. Ideally, the room should have a door that can be closed for privacy and to help concentration.
2. Make daily practice a part of your child’s daily routine, like brushing their teeth, or getting dressed.
3. Consider using the phrase “playing time” instead of “practice time”.
4. If possible, be a positive part of your child's playing time. Sit with your child while he/she plays and ask, "Show me what you're learning."
5. Never make negative remarks about how your child’s playing sounds. It takes time and effort to produce musical sounds.
6. Remember that there are always peaks and valleys in the learning process. You and your child should expect times of discouragement, accept them, and focus on the positive fact that they are learning to make music. Remind them that everything worth doing takes time and effort.
7. One of the benefits of persevering through those times is that the child learns problem-solving. Something that seemed impossible to play two weeks ago is suddenly coming much easier.
8. When your child finally gets it (whether it’s “Mary had a little Lamb” or a Beethoven Sonata) show genuine pride and excitement. Accomplishments, no matter how small, are always something to be celebrated.

6th Grade Band students also created a “Mustangs” poster this year to show school pride in our band!

Making music is fun in band!

Uber Cool!

Spectacular Musicians!

Try your best!

Always give your best effort!

Never give up!

Good attitudes!

Stupendous songs!



## 3rd Grade

Third graders have been working on writing narrative compositions and learning cursive letters. They participate in Daily 5 and work on reading strategies in small groups. Students have completed math units on number sense, addition, and subtraction, and are currently studying measurement and area. Science has emphasized the study of the three types of rocks, as well as weathering and the layers of the earth. We invited Sondra to visit each classroom and conduct a hands-on rocks investigation. The students were able to create their own sedimentary and metamorphic rocks!



## 4th Grade

Fourth grade students have enjoyed learning about vertebrates and invertebrates in science. They were able to visit Fontana Park in September to learn even more about mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and birds. The Northeast region of the United States has been the focus in social studies. Math has consisted of geometry, addition and subtraction review, data collection, and multiplication. Any additional practice at home with multiplication facts is beneficial. The non-fiction genre has been the focus in reading. Students have also been working on descriptive writing. Fourth grade teachers expect students to read at least 100 minutes each week at home. There are incentives for students that meet their reading goals. Consider making a routine time daily for homework and reading.

## 5th Grade

Ms. Ferres' class has been very busy so far this year. They have been working on sequential order in reading and writing. They are even working on writing their own cookbook using transition words! The kids have also been learning about Iowa's history and how Iowa got to be what it is today. In math, the students are learning about square numbers, factors, adding and subtracting decimals, and also prime factorization. The students are very anxious to start learning about the different bones and muscles in our body as well.

Mrs. Holtzman's class has been working on researching and constructing their classroom prairie mural. They have also been learning about Iowa's history and using some of their map skills throughout this unit, as well. In math, the student's have been learning about prime and composite numbers, and are now beginning to learn about estimation strategies. For literacy, the students have been participating in literacy stations. During this time, the students have been working on vocabulary, story writing, and identifying the main idea. The students are excited for a fun year in fifth grade.

Mr. Abildtrup's class has been working extremely hard this year. In Social Studies, we have been learning about the life and culture of Native Americans. In math, the students have been learning about factors, prime and composite numbers, squaring numbers and estimation practices. For reading, students have been working on increasing their vocabulary level, story writing level, using predicting and sequencing strategies for comprehension.

Mrs. Kineth's 5th graders are very busy this year. We are learning about the skeleton in Science class. We have also been studying about prairies in Iowa. We have tagged Monarchs with Sondra Cabell and visited our own prairie looking for a variety of plants. For literacy we have been reading selected books in Literature Circles. We are also working on a Non-Fiction packet to learn more about the text features of this genre. We are learning about problem solving strategies and number patterns in Math class. Mr. Nolan has been teaching us many of these things. He is a student teacher working with Mrs. Kineth. We just visited Fontana and Living History Farms. We are so happy that PTO help sponsor our trip to Urbandale. Thank you to all our parents for packing our lunches and making sure we were here on time to go on these great field trips. We are excited to be in 5th grade and learning so much.



## 6th Grade

Sixth graders completed a fantasy book unit using the book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis. The students learned to recognize the elements of a fantasy through the book's many examples. A plot chart was completed with the theme, conflict and resolution, events with the climax, and major and minor characters. They ended the unit by comparing and contrasting the book to the movie.

In science, students are learning to set-up and perform controlled experiments using pendulums and catapults. They used the scientific method to plan their investigation and present their conclusions to their classmates.

Sixth grade students have learned to solve one-step equations with the use of hands-on equations material. The students also learned to solve multi-step equations by using the idea of keeping both sides of an equation balanced.

## From the Art Room



## Live “The Mustang Way”

Positive Behaviors, Implementation and Supports (PBIS) year one was implemented last year, great work was completed last year. When you come in to the building look up as you go down Main Street, you will see signs in the rafters all the way along the hall. The team has created signage to put throughout the building. The locker pods



**Josh Payton,  
JSH Assistant Principal**



have seen signage also, locker end caps with quotes and the mustang head are seen throughout the pod area and signs on the pillars that promote “Live the Mustang Way, Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Show Kindness, and Live Gratefully.” The PBIS committee came together August 5<sup>th</sup> and discussed the next steps, it was agreed that Independence would continue to work through year one of PBIS. This is not uncommon and Independence provides an extra challenge of being a 7-12 building.



## Student Leadership Team (SLT)

The Student Leadership Team (SLT) has been created! We have 26 students who will consist of the team across 9th-12<sup>th</sup> grades; we did not have one student decline the opportunity. Students were recommended by staff and then were interviewed by me. I wanted to make sure the students understood what the expectations would be and they would be willing to commit their time and energy. The SLT will be tackling student-student relationships, adult-student relationships and climate. The first step will be for the students to collect data and then analyze the results.

It is a very exciting time to be a Mustang, staff and students are working hard and are committed to Independence Jr/Sr High School the best educational environment in the state!





“An Appropriate Commercial for  
Independence Jr/Sr High School”



**John Howard,  
JSH Principal**

As I was pondering what to expound on in my column as principal of Independence Jr/Sr High School, many details came to mind. There was the month stay at our local bed and breakfast (which was fabulous thanks to the Doan family), my family's change of scenery in late summer, the dose of reality that hit when I sat in the brown chair for the first time, the anticipation and nervousness I experienced before the initial staff meeting and first day of school, or attending the numerous extra-curricular activities we have had so far this year. All seemed worthy topics to discuss, but not the “right one” for my opening endeavor. What could I do? Then, as I watched television with Kaden the other night, my thought was....why not use a commercial? No, it is not political in nature. Hopefully, you enjoy my decision.

When I was growing up in the 1980's (which may be hard to believe and slightly depressing for some), there was a commercial with a smiley, highly excitable talking tiger named Tony. This feline's objective was to persuade people of all ages to purchase Frosted Flakes through his popular catch phrase, “They're Great!” My job with this article however has nothing to do with cereal, but with how the two words that Tony (or Kellogg's) patented adequately describe my experiences thus far with the Independence community, staff and students.

Since the day the moving van pulled into our driveway (on the Friday of RAGRAI), the townspeople have demonstrated great kindness. There have been pleasant oral exchanges, meals delivered, snacks provided, offers to help with home renovations, requests for a golfing companion and countless other “favors” to make us feel welcome. In essence, our family's transition has been even better than we had hoped for due to the graciousness of the Independence citizens.

The staff at Independence Jr/Sr High School is the best I have been associated with during my time in education. Every person, no matter his or her responsibility or job description, cares about students, displays an enthusiastic attitude, works to create an appropriate learning culture, respects every stakeholder, cooperates and collaborates with others and is working hard every day to reach our goal- BE the BEST Educational Environment in the state of Iowa. True, some might say; “you are still in the ‘honeymoon stage’ and things will change”, but there is no doubt, from this author, that this dedication and professionalism has been present for a long time and will continue. Therefore, I again quote my favorite Frosted Flake tiger in saying, “They're Great!”

Last, but certainly not least in my comparison, is the most vital aspect of any school district—the students. The pupils of Independence Jr/Sr High School are top-notch, and the evidence is overwhelming. Test scores are above average; academic achievement is the norm; cooperation is evident; respect is shown, and self-improvement is practiced daily. The administration has been so proud of the majority of decisions our students make on a daily basis. As a result, just like the community and staff, the best description of our students is, “They're Great!”

In conclusion, I would personally like to thank the marketing personnel at Kellogg's some three decades ago for giving us a famous saying. For void of this slogan, this article would not be possible, and the community, staff and parents would not know how I think about them. That is to say, “They're Great!” Now, I am off to eat some cereal. Go Mustangs!





We started grades 9-12 with individual computing devices in 2013-14. This year, grades 7 and 8 received iPads. As we continue to implement our plan, K-6 students may not take the devices home, but their access to computing devices will dramatically improve.

**We're on the Web**  
<http://www.independence.k12.ia.us>

Districts all over Iowa are working on a 1:1 Learning Initiative. Some have been 1:1 for years and others are still in the planning stages. Independence is in our second year of giving students individual access to a computing device.

Having the computing device is important. Does this mean Independence has arrived at our instructional goals? No. Having a computing device in the hands of all 7-12 students changes the student, teacher, and instruction. The actual device is not as important as the skills and opportunities the computing device will offer.

**Students have access to incredible amounts of information.**

Students have the ability to Google and find the answer before the teacher is able to finish the questions. "Who was the fourth president of the United States?" (James Madison). Total time for search is four seconds.

**Students have access to people.**

Students are able to contact people who live in China, Russia, and Mexico as easily as students in their own classroom. Not only people in other countries, but experts in all kinds of occupations/fields and experiences. Students are reaching out to other students with a common bond.

**Students have access to institutions.**

Growing up I went to Washington D.C. at least four or five times a year for one reason or another. My experience with Washington D.C. was great, but not all students have this same opportunity. In 1983, there were no virtual tours available. In 2014, students are able to virtually tour the Smithsonian in Washington, the Acropolis in Greece and the State Hermitage in Russia. Students are able to search NASA, National Geographic, universities and thousands of other places. The possibilities are only limited by imagination.

**Students have access to an audience.**

Do you remember when you wrote your term papers way back when? Your teacher read the paper and gave you a grade. Now student work can be shared with the world. Students continue to write term papers, research, and write drafts. The Internet enriches the process and product.

A pencil was adequate for 1983, but inefficient in 2014 and eventually pencils might not even exist except in museums. Students need an atmosphere to collaborate, interact, create, lead a conversation, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Students still need to learn and teachers still need to teach. However, as we move forward, teaching and learning are evolving. Teachers are required to guide, direct and hold students accountable. Students will always be expected to learn certain facts, but must also learn skills related to a rapidly changing world.

The money, time and energy the district is spending on technology will not be wasted, but gives our students a world-class education. Our students will be able to "Start Here and Succeed Anywhere."

**EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

The board will not discriminate in its educational activities on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status.

The board requires all persons, agencies, vendors, contractors and other persons and organizations doing business with or performing services for the school district to subscribe to all applicable federal and state laws, executive orders, rules and regulations pertaining to contract compliance and equal opportunity.

The board is committed to the policy that no otherwise qualified person will be excluded from educational activities on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Further, the board affirms the right of all students and staff to be treated with respect and to be protected from intimidation, discrimination, physical harm and harassment.

**NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

It is the policy of the Independence School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact: Danielle Meyer, Director of School Improvement, 1207 1st Street West, Independence, IA 50644, (319) 334-7400 or [dmeyer@independence.k12.ia.us](mailto:dmeyer@independence.k12.ia.us)