

Volume 8 Issue 2
Winter, 2013-2014

District Events:**Jan 29**

1:00 Early Dismissal

Feb 12

1:00 Early Dismissal

Feb 17

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

Feb 21

Regular School Day -
4th Snow Make-up Day

Feb 26

1:00 Early Dismissal

March 3

No School

March 3-4

P/T Conferences K-6

March 4

2 hour late start

March 12

1:00 Early Dismissal

March 17

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

March 26

1:00 Early Dismissal

April 9

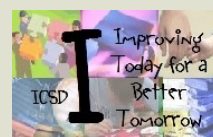
1:00 Early Dismissal

April 18

No School-Good Friday

April 21

Regular School Day -
5th Snow Make-up Day



From the Desk of Jean Peterson, Superintendent

It is hard to believe that we are half way through the 2013-2014 school year. I have been in the education profession now for the past 35 years. The older I get, the faster the time seems to go. I truly cannot see myself doing anything else. Watching children grow and learn is the most rewarding aspect of any educator's job.

One thing about education is that it is always evolving and changing. We are constantly learning new things and obtaining more effective strategies for teaching our students. Being a lifelong learner is a part of all of our teachers' DNA. They are constantly being hit with new state/federal regulations, new professional development initiatives, and the needs of our ever changing society. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to all of our staff members for the work they do with our students on a daily basis. They do continue to make a difference in the lives of our students.

Needs Assessment

A Needs Assessment enables our school district to analyze assessment data, get feedback from our community about its expectations of students, and determines how well students are meeting their learning goals. According to state requirements and our own board policy, our school district is to conduct a needs assessment once every five years, soliciting information from our community stakeholders regarding their expectations for student preparation as responsible citizens and successful wage earners. These results also assist us in determining the priorities of the school district in addition to the basic skills areas of the education program.

We facilitated our Needs Assessment for the community this past November. We worked with the Iowa Association of School Boards to help us with this Needs Assessment. We now have the results from that assessment back to us. The Administrative Team is studying the results. We will also present these results to our staff and our school board in February. We will have these results available on our school's website after we present to the staff and the school board. If you would like a hard copy of these results, just contact my office and we will send one out to you.

School Calendar

Effective July 1, 2014, school districts in Iowa have the option to choose between 180 days or 1,080 hours of instruction. If a district chooses 1,080 hours of instruction, lunch is excluded; however, passing time and parent-teacher conferences may be included. School boards are authorized to determine the days or hours of their school calendars. A public hearing is to be held prior to the Board's adoption of the calendar.

To give you some idea what the 1,080 hours would look like. Our current school calendar comes in at 1088 hours. If a school decides to go 180 days and then has an early out or late start because of weather, the whole day must be made up. If a school decides to go the 1,080 hours and has a late start or early out due to weather, just the hours are to be made up. So, the committee will need to decide which scenario is the best for our school district.

Continued on page 2

Inside this issue:

Curriculum/ Student Services	3-4
ECC/East News	5-7
West Elem News	9-11
Junior High News	12
Senior High News	13
Activities	14
Volunteer Mentor Program	15



**Jean Peterson,
Superintendent**

Continued from page 1

School Calendar continued

We have a district wide committee who is working on next year's calendar. They will be making a recommendation to our school board on this in February. There are teachers, parents, our Director of Transportation, one school board member and all administrators on this committee. The committee members are as follows:

East Elementary Representatives:

Mary Jean Blaisdell
Kay Reidy
Julie Flickinger
Kelly Dolan Lange

West Elementary Representatives:

Sandy Merritt
Brenda Hearn
Keith Donnelly
Amy Kelly

Junior-Senior High Representatives:

Jennifer Sornson
Rob Arnold
Tracy Curtis
Jason Lang
Sue Henkes
Tony Davy
Todd Wheelock

Director of Transportation:

Burt Van Horn

Board Member:

Eric Smith

District Administration:

Deb Donlea
Jean Peterson

Teacher Leadership and Compensation System

Iowa school districts are currently working to design and implement a Teacher Leadership and Compensation System which was passed by the Iowa Legislature in the 2013 session.

Every school district may have different needs from a teacher leadership system. Those needs will depend on goals for supporting student learning, current gaps in staffing and leadership of all kinds, the profile of the teacher workforce, and how well prepared teachers and administrators alike are for shifting roles and other factors.

This voluntary program is designed so schools can develop new roles for teachers. Participating schools will receive an additional \$309 in per-pupil funding each year from the state. This initiative allows successful teachers to receive additional pay to mentor other teachers, develop curriculum, and/or take on other leadership roles.

We are currently designing what our school district's plan will look like. We have a district wide TLC Committee working on the application. The members of that committee are: Joel Dinger, Mark Torgerson, Rachel Thomsen, Sara Thome, Erin Blasberg, Penni Gaul, Melody Malek, Deb Donlea, Rob Arnold, Jennifer Sornson, Sandy Merritt, Mary Jean Blaisdell, and Jean Peterson.

Once we get our plan finalized, we will share this information out with our staff, our school board, and our community.

School Counselors Appreciation Week

School Counselors Appreciation Week will be celebrated from February 3-7, 2014. This special week honoring school counselors provides recognition for school counselors who implement comprehensive school counseling programs which are a vital part of the educational process for all students.

Our school counselors are actively engaged in helping students examine their abilities, strengths, interests, and talents. They partner with parents as they encounter the challenges of raising children in today's world. They also focus on positive strategies to enhance students' social/personal, educational and career development. School counselors work with teachers and administrators to provide an educational system where students can realize their potential and set healthy, realistic, and optimistic aspirations for themselves.

Many thanks go out to our school's counselors for all of their efforts:

- Bret Adams – Jr/Sr High School
- Shalon Frye – Jr/Sr High School
- Greg Moen – West Elementary
- Holly Honey – East Elementary/Buchanan County Success Center

Curriculum/Student Services

by Deb Donlea, Director of Curriculum/Student Services



Deb Donlea, Director of Curriculum/Student Services

Curriculum and Student Services

EdCampIowa is for educators, students, parents, board members, policymakers, community members, and anyone that cares about education. Laptops, tablets, smartphones, and other electronic devices are encouraged. Oh, and it's FREE!



EdCamp sessions are NOT 'sit and get' presentations. EdCamps are about discussion and thinking and problem-solving. We build the agenda first thing in the morning and then spend the rest of the day talking, sharing, and learning. Come prepared to participate!

Do some of the questions below resonate with you? If so, then you are a prime candidate for EdCampIowa.

Join us for what may be your most powerful day of learning all year! Go to: <http://edcampiowa.org/>

- What is the future of learning? And what implications does it have for how we do teaching and schooling?
- How can we help kids think more deeply?
- How can schools better empower students' agency and voice?
- What are some great learning technologies for students in math (or P.E. or science or ...)?
- If we organized our calendar around hours instead of days (as new laws permit), what new things could we do that would be amazing?
- How can we keep from feeling overwhelmed all of the time?
- What if we didn't ignore that most of the time students are bored?
- What if students were in charge of school discipline?
- How can we better learn from other educators and schools?
- Do students still need to memorize anything?
- How can we make standards-based grading work in MY school?
- What might school look like if students were in charge of teaching at least 20% of the time?
- What is getting in the way of us changing faster?
- How can preschool and elementary students use digital tools in powerful ways?
- What are better ways to involve our parents and community with our students?
- Do we really need grades?
- What would school look like if we didn't have administrators?
- How is the Common Core different from what we're doing now?
- What if students got to choose what they worked on?
- Are tablets or Chromebooks viable 1:1 devices?
- How can we better facilitate school-university partnerships?
- What might be some ways that our students could REALLY contribute to their community?
- In a multimedia world, what is the future of reading?
- and many, many more...

If you would be interested in attending an EdCamp I encourage you to visit their website at <http://edcampiowa.org>. A great opportunity for all learners and it's close to Independence!

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Equity Coordinator

One of the procedural requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 banning discrimination on the basis of sex, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 barring discrimination on the basis of disability and Chapter 95 of the Iowa Administrative Code banning discrimination in employment and requiring affirmative action plans is that educational agencies assign an employee the responsibility of coordinating their compliance efforts.

School districts may choose to designate one coordinator, or they may choose to assign two or more persons to serve as coordinators. This is often determined by the size of the district or educational agency. The Independence Community School District has designated Deb Donlea, Director of Curriculum and Student Services as the Equity Coordinator for the district. For more information in regards to the Equity Coordinator position please visit the Iowa Department of Education website.

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/search/equity%20coordinator>

Level 1 Investigator

All public and non-public schools are required each year to appoint a Level I Investigator and alternate(s) to investigate complaints regarding abuse of students by school employees and volunteers under Iowa Code Chapter 280, Section 280.17. The board-announced Level I Investigators and (at least one) alternates are to be posted with their phone numbers in every building. The Independence Community School District has designated Deb Donlea, Director of Curriculum and Student Services as their Level 1 Investigator. The alternate is Jr. High Principal/Activities Director, Rob Arnold.

Principal's Corner

by Mary Jean Blaisdell



Mary Jean Blaisdell,
Principal

It's February and we will soon actually be thinking about the 2014-15 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 20th 2:00-7:00

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 20th 8:30 - 11:00; 12:30 - 3:00

Friday, March 21st 8:30 - 11:00

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, 2014, 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.



Calling All 2014-2015 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, 2014 for entrance into Kindergarten in the fall of 2014. 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 14, 2014.

Child's Name: _____

Birth Date: _____

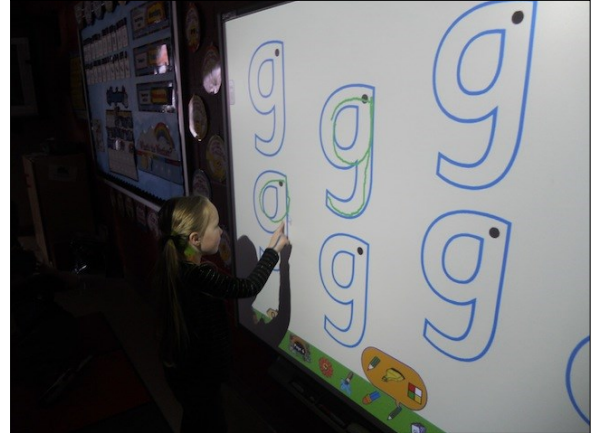
Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Preschool Press

This year, our Preschool and ECSE classrooms have implemented the Jolly Phonics program, used in the elementary grades to teach letters and reading skills. Each week, we focus on one letter and the sound that it makes, through activities such as writing or letter scavenger hunts. Each letter sound also has a fun song with actions and a story, and we love to sing the songs! Ask us to sing you one! We use our SMART board to practice our writing or to find the letters in poems or stories. The children have really enjoyed Jolly Phonics and are gaining strong pre-reading skills.



Preschool students use the SMART board to learn letters and sounds.

Kindergartner 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 tough winter. We will not miss having to put on snow pants :)



Kindergarten students attend an assembly on the ABCs – Always Be Caring.

First Grade Focus

In December, our first grade classes made tree ornaments using recycled items and things from nature during a visit with the Buchanan County Naturalist.

The beginning of January will bring a focus on snow and animals in their winter habitats. First graders will keep working on the "Rainbow Words" (high frequency words) to build sight vocabulary and improve reading skills. In math, we will continue to work on learning the addition and subtraction facts as well as time, money and measurement.

Our 1st - 6th grade students recently attended an assembly about anti-bullying.

Using the word SKATE, the students learned a strategy that went with each letter. S- Say no, K- Keep your cool, A- Ask for help, T- Treat others right, E- Encourage each other. Ask your children if they can remember them.



A Welcome to First Grade
Student teacher, Alissa Lichty working with a first grader.

Second Grade Scene

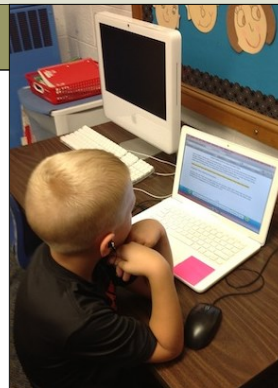
Happy New Year!!! We hope that your family had a relaxing holiday break. January is a busy month in second grade. Students need to continue to work hard on their addition facts as we are progressing toward larger, more difficult addition concepts. Basic subtraction facts should also be practiced. Students are 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 will be celebrating the 100th day of school by trying to collect 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!

The Daily 5 includes "Listen to Reading". It helps us become better readers because students learn and understand new words and stories. In the East Elementary, 2nd Grade classroom students can listen to reading with individual CD players, individual cassette players, and on the computer. A couple of good read aloud websites are:

Storyline Online <http://www.storylineonline.net/>,

SpeakaBoos <https://speakaboos.com/>

KOL Jr. <http://kids.aol.com/KOL/1/KOLJrStories>



A second grade student listens to reading during the Daily Five.



Second graders experiment with density with liquids and other objects.

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 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.

Happenings at West Elementary by Sandy Merritt, Principal

Arts and Crafts with Grandparents

On December 13th our building was bulging with visitors. We invited our students' grandparents and other special people to come to school and make crafts, decorate cookies, read books, and do Christmas activities with the students. We had a fantastic time!



Sandy Merritt, Principal



3rd Graders Are Busy Learning

Third graders recently completed an "Our City" Junior Achievement program. A local member of the community visited each classroom for five sessions to talk about cities, city planning and zoning, entrepreneurship, saving money, and banking. Students are currently studying lots of things: nutrition/digestion, writing skills, and multiplication and division. Emma Cornwell, from Food Corps, visits



third grade classrooms throughout our nutrition/digestion unit to give students hands-on experiences with many things we are studying.



4th Graders are Working Diligently

Fourth grade students are working on multi-digit multiplication problems. Fact mastery is very important in fourth grade. Students should continue practicing their multiplication facts at home. The animal unit in science is coming to a close and we will soon be learning about the respiratory system. The southeast region is our current topic in social studies. Each classroom is focused on an individual reading genre at this time. The students always get excited to learn about the new genre. Continue to encourage reading at home!

From the Desks of the Interventionists

It is hard to believe that we are already at the middle of the year! Students in reading and math intervention programs are building new skills while improving familiar skills every day.

In math half of our week is dedicated to the Everyday Math curriculum and the other half is dedicated to reviewing previously learned skills. We are also implementing writing into the program. The students write in their math journals daily to explain what they have learned, what they could have done better, or what they would like to learn next time. We are having a great year!

Reading students continue to work on decoding and metacognition skills (Does it make sense? Do I understand what I am reading?). We are also focusing on comprehension strategies. Look for additional information in upcoming newsletters that will be sent home.

5th Graders Are Improving Their Skills

The fifth graders have been working hard in all content areas. In math, students have learned about division with one and two digit divisors, adding and subtracting fractions, finding equivalent fractions, multiplying and dividing fractions, and using graphs.

There is a lot going on with literacy too. Five new vocabulary words are introduced every week. Students in Mrs. Kinseth's class are utilizing the reading strategies of determining importance and making connections to improve their comprehension. The students in Mrs. Holtzman's class have started reading Sign of the Beaver. Mr. Abildtrup's class has been reading mysteries and is now writing their own mystery. Ms. Larson's class has been learning about the editing process and perfecting their writing samples. Before Christmas, they wrote about Santa coming by helicopter and created their own Elf on the Shelf. They also wrote a letter to Santa as if they were a villain and explained to Santa their reasons for making bad choices.

Science and social studies have provided opportunities for great learning as well. In science the students have been learning about the different types of bones, joints, and muscles. In social studies, the focus has been explorers and Native Americans. Mr. Abildtrup's and Mrs. Kinseth's classes have been working hard on their Native American Codices and Explorer BioCards. Students are in the process of writing a skit about the relationship between their assigned explorer and a Native American tribe. The skit, called the Grand Encounter, will be presented to parents and 4th grade students.

From the Music Department

The sixth grade chorus is back to work following a great set of December concerts. After performing a mix of classical and modern music at their concert, they joined the high school band and choir for a winter spectacular, complete with a hand bell choir! We hope you can join us for our next concert on March 6th!

The 5th & 6th grade bands made their premiere performances of the year on the new auditorium stage with their concert in December. It was an exciting time for students, parents, and friends. The students were recognized for the band karate belts they earned thus far, and are looking forward to showing off their accomplishments at their next concert.

5th & 6th grade band dates for the rest of the school year are as follows:

6th Grade Solo Contest--Friday, February 14th, after school at West Elementary

5th & 6th Grade Band Concert--Thursday, March 6th, 7:00 at JSH Auditorium

6th Grade Band NEIBA District Large Group Contest--Friday, March 7th, during school at JSH Auditorium

Band Night Concert/Band Booster Spaghetti Supper--Monday, May 19th, 7:00 at JSH



6th Grade Excitement

The 6th grade play cast is making great progress in rehearsals and having a wonderful time! The directors, Catherine Smith and Gina Homan, are really enjoying working with the students. We hope that everyone can join us on January 31st at 7:00 to support the students when they perform “The Wizard of Oz” in the JSH auditorium. There will be a free will donation taken at the door, with the doors opening at 6:30.

As part of our genre study of historical fiction, 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 will be learning about the elements of that particular period in history during social studies. This will include topics such as the feudal system, castles, knights, and medicine. They 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 kinds of books, but with practice, the students will learn to identify the key features of each!

ECLIPSE Celebrations

In the Extended Learning Corner (ECLIPSE), the 6th grade Future Problem Solvers team did well on their second packet and earned many positive remarks from the evaluator/judge. The regional competition is February 3rd, so students are busy researching, strategizing, and practicing. Team members include: Connor Davison, Makenzie Homan, Jake Kurt, and Jenna Smith.

Congratulations to London Stoner for earning 100% in the Noetic Math Contest! Congratulations also go to the following students for making the National Honor Roll and National Honorable Mention.

National Honor Roll

3rd grade: Sydney Schwartz; 4th grade: Laura Smith, Dylan Kurt, Lily Giddings, Ryan DeBoer; 5th grade: London Stoner, Colton Covington; 6th grade: Kaleb Lamphier, Caroline Reyner, Emily Coonrad

National Honorable Mention

3rd grade: Caitlyn Hoglan, Cora Nabholz, Quentin Kroggman, Kylee Jacobsen, Layla Walker, Matthew Wieland, Carter Straw, Trace Thomas; 4th grade: Nick Homan, Nate Copenhaver, Teegan McEnany, Marcus Beatty, Lauren Troutman; 5th grade: Shalaya Armstead, Noah Weber, Spencer Campbell, Molly Rothman, Talon Rodriguez, Jacob Elzey, Jazlyn Smith; 6th grade: Tim Michael, Connor Davison, Jack Rummel, Troy Stelter, Brady Webb, Jenna Smith, Ethan McCormick, Jessica Justason, Avery Liss, Makenzie Homan, Alaina Butters.



Fun in the Snow

Students who met their December reading goals got an hour of fun in the snow on a fantastic winter weather day. The sun was shining and the temperature was in the 40s on December 13th when some 300 students were bused to the old JSH with their sledding equipment for an hour of fun in the snow. Students enjoyed sledding, building snowmen, snow forts, and snow angels. Please encourage your child/children to keep reading so that they can enjoy the January incentive, a free ticket to the February 3rd boys and girls basketball games. The winning class at each grade level will get a popcorn party and one student from each class will get a free book!



Junior High News By Rob Arnold, Junior High School Principal

Being a junior high student can be tough. Students in this age group are developmentally caught between childhood and adulthood. As a parent of Junior High student, I am sure you have noticed the emotional highs and lows of your student. They are sometimes tough to motivate and things can change at any moment. They may not be able to fully comprehend the consequences of their actions. They seem to be self absorbed and cannot think of anyone else's needs. The good news is that you're not alone and these are normal behaviors for this age due to their brain development.



Rob Arnold, JH Principal

So with the adolescent brain development lacking, how can Parents and Teachers work together to provide the framework of success for the students. The first thing to remember is that your student needs help. They will need help organizing their time for homework and staying organized. Encourage your student to do their best and provide alternatives for help.

Another key way to help your adolescent student is to take an active interest in their studies. Asking them what is happening in school and not accepting "nothing" is critical to opening dialogue with the student. Listening to your child is important so that they understand you are there help and provides them an outlet for their successes and failures.

As you work with your junior high students with their schoolwork, be sure to get to know the teachers they will have. For our seventh graders, the transition from having one teacher all day to having up to eight can be quite difficult. Reaching out to staff through email or phone conversation allows you know what's happening and gain a teacher's perspective on what is being asked of your student.

Finally, it is important that you allow your student to try new things while in junior high. Encourage your student to get involved and try activities they may not have thought about. Extra curricular opportunities may allow your student to excel in areas that you never thought possible. They allow students to learn leadership and the value of teamwork. It also can dispose of some of that extra energy that students at this age seem to have bottled up so well.

Raising a successful junior high student can be one of the most challenging times of parenting. You have to remain patient and allow them to make mistakes so they can grow and learn from them. Keeping in close contact with teachers, coaches, and other adults that have contact with the students, can help them find ways to be successful.

Citizenship

The mission of the Independence Community School District is “Educating people to be life long learners and respectful, responsible citizens.”



Jennifer Sornson,
High School Principal

Full participation in government and society has been a basic right of the country symbolizing the full citizenship and equal protection of all.

Charles Rangel

No other country on earth could have provided such tremendous opportunities and we should never take the privilege of our citizenship for granted.

Jane D. Hull

What it means to be a “good citizen” is not easily defined. If everyone wrote a definition, I am sure we would have numerous variations. The definitions would include many references to rights and protecting our rights. When an individual goes through the naturalization process and is sworn in as a U.S. citizen, they swear to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America.

So what is the role of teachers and the education system? How do we create “respectful, responsible citizens?” It is our duty to insure that every student understands the Constitution and what are the rights of every citizen. But it is so much more than that. I taught U.S. History for seven years. I constantly told my students that it is a duty and responsibility to vote. A democracy works because of the will of the people. It does not work very well when the will is not known. So I would drum it into their heads, “vote, vote, vote.” The last component for me is how to be respectful. How do you change things? How do you protect your rights? How do you get laws passed? How does the system work? So the last component is centered on how do you have an impact in an appropriate and respectful manner. It is refreshing when you see young people get involved in an issue, organize themselves, and let their voices be heard. So my final plea is be a good role model. Exercise your rights, be a part of the greatest democracy the world has ever known.

Jennifer Sornson, Principal
Independence High School

Activities Newsletter by Activities Director Rob Arnold



Rob Arnold, Activities Director

Our goal as an activity program is to provide all Independence athletes and participants an opportunity to excel. Whether that is on the activities field or courts or the auditorium stage. To achieve this vision we have to have full cooperation between students, coaches, and parents.

The following is an excerpt from an article by Steven Henson from February, 2012, entitled “What Makes a Nightmare Sports Parent-And What Makes a Great One.”

“Hundreds of college athletes were asked to think back: “What is your worst memory from playing youth and high school sports?”

Their overwhelming response: “The ride home from games with my parents.”

Those same college athletes were asked what their parents said that made them feel great, that amplified their joy during and after a ballgame.

Their overwhelming response: “I love to watch you play.”

This study offers great perspective that sometimes sports, athletics, and competitions can overshadow sportsmanship and character. It is important, as a parent, to remember the sole purpose of your student’s participation is to have fun. These events are called games for a reason and at times it is difficult to remember that. It is also important to remember that the fun can look different depending on the role your athlete has on the team. The lessons learned from the struggle and the challenges of competitive activity are the main reason they provide the framework for your student’s success.

Some warning signs that, as parents, coaches, and fans, we need to remember starts with the following:

- **Overemphasizing winning at the expense of sportsmanship.**

Everyone competes to win the game or the activity. However, it is critical that through that competition we learn humility and sportsmanship when things are good and when there is adversity.

- **Having different goals than your student athlete.**

It has been recommended that you sit down with your athlete and each of you write what your goals are for the season. This allows you to discuss the differences so you’re both focusing on the same enjoyment. Kids will usually write have fun, be around friends. Parents may write make the starting lineup, get a scholarship, win championships. It is important to reconcile these so that you’re supporting appropriately. This is also true for coaches.

- **Undermining the Coach**

Young athletes need a single instructional voice during games. That voice has to be the coach. Kids who listen to their parents yelling instruction from the stands or even glancing at their parents for approval from the field are distracted and can’t perform at a peak level. Second-guessing the coach on the ride home is just as insidious.

- **Living your own athletic dream through your kids.**

A sure sign is the parent taking credit when the child has done well. Another symptom is when the outcome of a game means more to a parent than to the child. If you as a parent are still depressed by a loss when the child is already off playing with friends, remind yourself that it’s not your career and you have zero control over the outcome.

As a parent there many things you can do to over come those traps. We are all emotionally invested in the outcomes, but we must focus on the experience rather than the scores. No matter the outcome, be sure to know your role. The best thing you can say, no matter the outcome, is “I sure enjoy watching you play!”



Independence Community Schools

Volunteer & Mentor Program Update by Val Maximovich

2013-2014 School Year

It's January 2014! A lot of activities and many volunteer opportunities have been completed so far this year by our high school students involved with the "Silver Cord" volunteer program. The program continues to grow and there is now 143 students from 9th to 12th grade signed up for the program! The students have volunteered over 550 hours so far this school year! The 2012-13 school year ended with 1,712 total hours.

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

Reading Naturally program at West Elementary, Mentoring, Heartland Acres Fishing Day, coaching Football & Basketball, assisting the elderly or neighbors, Community Christmas tree lighting, assisting with the Public Library Art Shows and Book Sales.

We, as a community, are proud of the 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".



January is National Mentoring Month!

It's National Mentoring Month! And we are still celebrating, last year we marked 20 years of mentoring in Independence and celebrated by Silver Cord students making a mentor movie – "The Joys of Mentoring, 20 Years in the Making". It was created and produced by Jackie Huang and Tryston Brown, with assistance by Meg Rawlins and Nate Whited. It was enjoyed by everyone in attendance at the Nov. 1 celebration. Desserts were prepared by the Family Consumer Science Culinary Tech II students and "Silver Cord" students were on hand for building tours of the new High School.



The evening had a special guest speaker, Stan Slessor, past Superintendent of Independence Schools. He was instrumental in starting the program in our district and gave an inspirational message about mentoring and making a difference.



This year for Mentoring month, the mentors and students will enjoy a movie at the Starlight Theatre on January 25th! We will view the Disney Pixar movie "Planes". It will be a great time together!

January also held training for mentors Jan. 8, 9 or 13 at the Public Library Community Room. Matt Zanger, Riverview Center, Dubuque, conducted the workshop entitled, Nurturing Healthy Relationships. This training is required by the Iowa Mentoring Partnership that certifies our school mentoring program.



If you know of someone that would like to mentor or volunteer to read with a child, 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! Be that someone who matters, to someone that matters.



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 School District

1207 First Street West, Independence, Iowa 50644



EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The board will not discriminate in its educational activities on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, socio-economic 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, socio-economic 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

Students, parents, employees and others doing business with or performing services for the Independence Community School District are hereby notified that this school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, age (except students), socio-economic status, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in admission or access to, or treatment in, its programs and activities.

The school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, age (except students), socio-economic status, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in admission or access to, or treatment in, its hiring and employment practices. Any person having inquiries concerning the school district's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), § 504 or *Iowa Code* § 280.3 is directed to contact:

Director of Curriculum/Student Services, 1207 1st Street West, Independence, IA 50644
319-334-7400

who has been designated by the school district to coordinate the school district's efforts to comply with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, the ADA, § 504 and *Iowa Code* § 280.3 (2007).

We're on the Web

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



INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS VOLUNTEER MENTOR PROGRAM

If you would like to be a mentor or a volunteer, please contact Val Maximovich at 319-334-7400 ext. 626 or email Val at vmaximovich@independence.k12.ia.us or download the volunteer registration form at

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