

Volume 18 Issue 1
Fall, 2023- 2024

District Events:

Nov 22-24

No School;
 Thanksgiving Break

Dec 1

No School

Dec 8

2 hour Early Dismissal
 Prof Dev

Dec 15

2 hour Early Dismissal
 Prof Dev

Dec 18

School Board Meeting
 6:00 p.m.

Dec 21

2 hour Early Dismissal

Dec 22- Jan 3

No School;
 Winter Break

Jan 3

No School
 Prof Dev

Jan 4

School Resumes

Jan 5 and 12

2 hour Early Dismissal
 Prof Dev

Jan 15

No School



From the Superintendent's Desk...

Welcome to the 2023 - 2024 school year! I am pleased to serve as your new superintendent this year. I have appreciated the opportunity to meet many staff, students, families, and community members this fall, and I look forward to continuing meeting more of you throughout the year. Our theme this school year is capturing #MustangMoments that drive us toward the goal of creating high quality, engaging educational experiences for our students. We are #MustangsOnAMission!

In August, all staff participated in our district's kick off event where we learned what it means to be #MustangsOnAMission. It takes EVERYONE to make this Mustang team amazing! Each individual person is important, has a purpose in our system, and has a responsibility to show up each day to be the best you can be. And we also realize that when we bring the individuals together to create the larger school system, or team, we impact our school in better, stronger, and more powerful ways.

The same idea applies when our students show up to school each day and become #MustangsOnAMission. While each individual student is important and unique, every student comes together to contribute to the school's success! We are ALL an important part of the Independence Community School District in creating a great place to learn and grow together.

This newsletter will highlight several #MustangMoments from this fall. We see these moments when students are working hard and improving their academic scores as noted in our Iowa School Performance Profiles. We've had #MustangMoments in our extracurricular activity programs and when older students are mentoring and positively interacting with younger students. Our staff have created several special #MustangMoments this fall within their classrooms, on field trips, during special events, and during celebrations. #MustangMoments especially matter when we are going through difficult times and need support from one another. We believe that recognizing all of these #MustangMoments helps us stay focused as #MustangsOnAMission.

In my transition into the district, it is clear that the administration and staff at ICSD is dedicated to serving our students, families, and community well! We strive to support all students through our continuous school improvement efforts, offering high quality academic and activity programs, and caring for one another as a Mustang family.

We hope you will join us in recognizing your student's #MustangMoments this year and join in our work as #MustangsOnAMission to create a great school system for Independence CSD!



**Cynthia Phillips,
 Superintendent**

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With winter temperatures already upon us, we would like to remind our students and families of ICSD's plans for communicating weather-related school delays and cancellations.

These announcements will be made via the following channels:

- District Website: <https://www.indeek12.org/>
- Top banner
- Announcements
- School Messenger:
 - Phone number, text message and email with contact information from PowerSchool
 - The information came from registration. Please check with your building to update information
- TV
 - KGAN-TV (Channel 2) - FOX 28
 - KWWL-TV (Channel 7)
 - KCRG-TV (Channel 9)
- Radio:
 - KOEL 92.3 FM
 - KMCH 94.7 FM
 - KKHQ 98.5 FM
 - KCRR 97.7 FM
 - KOEL 950 AM
- Push Notifications: Search Independence Schools, look for the Red "I" with white background
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Mustangs319/>
- X (Twitter): <https://www.facebook.com/Mustangs319/>

Whenever we find the need to delay or cancel school, we will always make every effort to communicate quickly and clearly to ensure our families remain informed. If you have any questions about the process we use to communicate about delays or cancellations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

School Improvement by Erin Burmeister, Director of School Improvement

“Progress means getting nearer to the place you want to be.”
C.S. Lewis

Each year Independence Community School District gets nearer to the place we want to be. A place where ALL students can be successful and can feel connected and valued. A place where students learn to be effective communicators, critical thinkers, flexible and adaptable individuals, productive and accountable individuals, and collaborators.



Erin Burmeister,
Director of School Improvement

The Iowa School Performance Profiles don't tell the full story about schools, however for Independence, it continues to add to our story of progress in many areas. Each of our schools received ratings based on their overall score. There are four ratings, from lowest to highest, Priority/Comprehensive, Needs Improvement, Acceptable, Commendable, High Performing, and Exceptional. Both East and West Elementary received a **High Performing** rating and the Junior/Senior High received an **Acceptable** rating.

Overall scores are based on a set of accountability measures such as academic achievement, student growth, graduation rate (high schools), postsecondary readiness (high schools) and conditions for learning.

East and West Elementary earned:

- higher than the state average in six out of nine measures
- saw substantial improvement in the Conditions for Learning Survey results
- improved growth in math
- improved percent proficient in math
- improved rating from Commendable last year to **High Performing** this year

The Junior/Senior High earned:

- higher than the state average in nine out of twelve measures
- saw growth in 4-year graduation rate
- improved percent proficient in ELA
- improved percent proficient in math
- improved post secondary success scores

We are very excited about our positive progress in these areas and we are appreciative of all the hard work of our staff, students, and families. We have a lot to celebrate and we will continue to work together in school improvement efforts.

To see the data for our district and schools visit iaschoolperformance.gov.

We are already into November and the clocks have been set back one hour. The evenings are getting darker, but the school district is still bright with many students using computer screens to enhance their learning.

Our Kindergarten to 2nd grade students have an iPad assigned to them individually and the iPad stays in the classroom. Students may use the iPads individually or in small groups to practice skills. Students have some fun applications which reinforce classroom learning goals. The students play games such as AlphaBetty Saga, Dollars and Cents, Jungle Coins. Many of the applications are able to keep track of the student progress and they move through levels and reinforce classroom skills. Epic is a key application for students, they are able to read to themselves, have the iPad read to them and Epic keeps track of their progress.



**Steve Noyes,
Director of Technology**

West Students in grades 3-6 are using a Chromebook. The individual Chromebook stays in the classroom cart for charging and access as needed throughout the day. Students retrieve their Chromebooks and are able to write (type) documents, share documents and use Google Classroom for assignments. It is great fun to watch a classroom of students with their Chromebooks working on classroom assignments and listening to the teacher for instructions. Teachers are able to walk around the room and give additional guidance as needed.

Students at the Junior Senior High School are able to keep their Chromebooks and take them home. It is very exciting to see students on Main Street, in small gatherings and around the building using their Chromebook. Maybe they are watching YouTube videos, but most often they are using Chromebooks for educational purposes. The students do not try to hide the screens as I approach to see what they are working on nor do they attempt to shelter the screen. The students might be watching youtube, but it is related to a classroom assignment or personal learning. Students might be logged into PowerSchool to check their grades and Canvas working on assignments. I find students all of the time extending their learning and working together with the Chromebooks. The Chromebooks are used most of the day in many different classrooms.

Chromebooks allow the students in grades 3-7 to research, write and share their learning with peers. Students are able to turn in work and show learning progress to their teachers. The Chromebooks allow students to work independently with oversight from the teacher and a myriad of topics.

The Chromebooks are ideal devices for schools for several reasons:

1. There is no local data on the Chromebook itself. If the Chromebook is lost, misplaced or left at home, the student can log into another Chromebook and have everything available. The students do not lose work because their Chromebook is not working.
2. The cost of a Chromebook screen is about \$40 and can be replaced in about 20 minutes. Compare this to a \$600 MacBook screen and loss of the computer for two weeks since it has to go to Central Rivers AEA for repair.
3. Management of Chromebooks is reliable through Google admin with flexibility in options to meet differing student needs.

I want the community to know our iPads and Chromebooks are being used everyday and they do make a difference in the education of students at Independence Community School District.

East Elementary is off to a great start to the 2023-2024 school year. Students and staff have been hard at work tackling many new topics and becoming stronger readers and mathematicians. We have also been working on Living the Mustang Way. We focused our first 9 weeks on Showing Kindness. Currently we are working on Living Gratefully. A theme this year is #MustangMoments and we are well on our way to creating and maintaining many great moments this year!



Kay Reidy, Principal

Preschool

Our preschoolers have been busy learning colors, letters, numbers, and shapes. Additionally, we have been working on self-help skills, following rules and directions, and respecting others. With cold weather quickly approaching, we will be putting those self-help skills to the test. Please take time at home to help your child practice getting snow pants, boots, hat, coat, and gloves on and off by themselves. As you can imagine, it is quite a feat to get 20 students ready for recess.



Our fall Preschool Family Night Out was a huge success. We had Vonnie from the Public Library come read stories and do finger plays. We had a fun family ghost craft to create. Michael Bechtel from Bechtel Critters (Wartburg college) was here with an assortment of critters and information about them. Some of the critters were tortoises, hissing cockroaches, an albino python snake, a tree frog, and snake skin for everyone to touch and feel. Every child went home with a new book and a snack. A fun time was had by all.

Kindergarten

Fall has been a busy time in kindergarten! We have been learning about using environmental print to help us learn about "Reading the World." Students have learned how to retell using favorite storybooks. We love to read and retell stories! In math we have been working on building number foundation. At this time, we are focusing on answering "how many" questions, counting out, and comparing groups within 10. Students are also learning how to write a number to represent how many.



Throughout November we will be learning about Thanksgiving and sharing things we are thankful for as kindergarteners. Please continue to encourage and reading and writing at home.

Have a safe and wonderful Thanksgiving!

First Grade

If you need a Word Detective our first graders can help; as they have earned their Word Detective badges. Tricky words are no problem for our Word Detectives. We have also continued to learn high frequency words in a SNAP!



First grade has been working on solving addition and subtraction word problems in math. A Little Spot of Thankful has been our focus in SEL this month as we work on living gratefully and being responsible.



Second Grade

Second graders are hard at work learning about measurement! In reading, students are building their reading tool boxes with different reading strategies and developing their foundational phonics skills. We have also been reading about living gratefully and the importance of community through the different versions of the book, Stone Soup. This week each 2nd grade classroom will be working together to make and taste their own stone soup!

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 Val Maximovich at 319-332-0626 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 Val at 319-332-0626 and let her 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.

Mrs. Anderson - Art

We have started the year off in art class with a review and discovery of color. Color is a building block in creating artwork. It is one of the seven elements of art including shape, form, texture, space, value and line. In kindergarten, first and second grade we have studied how primary colors (red, yellow and blue) can mix to make secondary colors. We have read books, watched videos and experimented. We have been working on the correct use of art materials as well as improving our drawing skills through guided drawing activities



Mr. Loughren - K-2 PE

In Physical Education class, at East Elementary, the students are learning about the importance of physical activity. They have learned stretches, the proper way to do push-ups, sit-ups and burpees, ocomotor movements, and a variety of games. Right now, we are learning about hula hoop activities. The students are working hard, and I have enjoyed teaching them.

Mrs. Bancroft - K-2 Music

East Elementary students have done a lot of work in music so far this year! The kindergarten and first graders are focusing on becoming tuneful, beatful, and artful. That means singing in tune in a group and by yourself, keeping a steady beat with your body and using percussion instruments, and performing music and moving to music expressively. The second grade students are in their first rhythm literacy unit, focusing on quarter notes and eighth notes. They have also been learning folk dances and performing and composing with groups of percussion Instruments: woods, metals, shakers, and drums. The kindergarten students and second grade students have also been working hard to prepare for their winter concert on December 14 at the JSH Auditorium. The kindergarten students will perform at 6:00 p.m. and the second grade students will perform at 6:30 p.m. We hope to see you there!

Mrs. Grover - Computer Science

Once a month, JK, Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms have been building algorithms to allow their BeeBots to move to a given spot on their mats. Not only are they building their vocabulary and computer science skills, they are also working on their colors, shapes, and number skills.

In 2nd grade, classrooms sign up for two sessions a month. So far, they practiced building on their programming skills with the BeeBots as well as practiced their spelling and math skills. After getting feedback from students at West, we paused to have a cybersecurity lesson. Second graders learned how to be safe with their private information as they play online videogames with potential strangers. After gaining feedback from this grade about when they first started playing these online games at home, Kindergarten and 1st grade will be getting this lesson in the near future.

Social emotional learning is woven within all of the computer science classes as collaboration plays a huge part. Students are provided lots of opportunities to work in pairs and teams to support each other's learning. Students also learn about persevering when their programs don't go as planned the first time around. We will continue to build on these valuable skills each year!

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Mileage Club Volunteers Needed!

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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.

Greetings from West Elementary!

It has been a busy fall with a successful parent-teacher conferences, setting and meeting our wellness goals, collaborating and strengthening our curriculum and instruction, visiting and learning in new environments with Fontana, earning our high-performing designation on the Iowa Performance Profile, growing our capacity in Professional Learning Communities, and continually asking, “How can we best meet the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of all of our students?” Whew! What an incredible opportunity to learn and work with teams and a community completely dedicated to the success of the whole student.

When we talk about meeting the needs of the “Whole student”, we are talking about all of the educational opportunities and decisions we make in order to positively impact our students’ Intellectual development. To achieve this, all of us play a vital role. In each interaction with students and with each other, we are modeling and building a foundation for our future learning success.

Thank you for partnering with us to make West Elementary the very best it can be. We appreciate your support and look forward to continuing a positive and productive 2023-2024 school year.

Go Mustangs!

Cherilyn Reed, West Elementary Principal



Cheri Reed, Principal

Third Grade

Third grade students have been learning about how to build their third grade reading life, which means picking good-fit books, checking for understanding, and staying focused on their reading. They have worked hard to write a small moment story about their lives, making sure they are telling their story in order with lots of details and complete sentences. Third grade students have been learning about various ways to represent multiplication and how multiplication relates to the area of a rectangle. We continue to build on their ability to talk about math! In science, they have learned about life cycles and how plants and animals have similar life cycles. The third grade students also enjoyed a field trip to Boies Bend to look for fossils and learn about animal habitats. Our third grade students are excited to be at West!



Fourth Grade

We were fortunate to have Fontana naturalist, Sondra Cabell, come and teach our students about the different types of rocks and volcanoes. We were also able to visit Fontana Park and participate in several outdoor activities! It tied in well with our Birth of Rocks unit in science. All fourth-grade classrooms have covered basic multiplication, factors, and multiples. We are currently working on how to find an equivalent fraction, as well as adding and subtracting fractions. Students who met their at-home reading goal of 400 minutes celebrated their accomplishment by playing kickball and participating in a fall craft! Please continue reading for at least 20 minutes every night. Reading is the best way to increase vocabulary!



Fifth Grade

Reading/ Writing and Language Arts - Fifth grade students are working towards taking charge of their reading life. Students are learning how to respond to their reading by thinking analytically in their independent reading. Students will be thinking about the important parts of their book and supporting their ideas with evidence from the text. All year long we will be learning to dig deeper in our understanding about our reading. We are learning about themes in literature in the first unit of study.

Math - Fifth grade students are enjoying the new *Illustrative Math* curriculum resource. Unit 1 focused on concepts of volume. Students used blocks to build prisms, count its cubic volume, and to record an expression that represented their models. Students also learned how to use additive volume to find the total volume of combined prisms.

Social Studies and Science - Our 5th grade students are learning about how Native Americans adapted to their environments in social studies. In science, the students began to explore and question ideas about space such as gravity, specifically Earth's gravitational pull, apparent brightness of stars, and how seasonal changes are proof of Earth's orbit around the sun.

6th Grade

For five days of school this fall, our sixth grade students spent their days at parks in Buchanan County learning science, history, and math. Each of the five sections of sixth grade rotated through five different days of learning and team building experiences. The School of the Wild is a program out of the University of Iowa that promotes outdoor learning across the state of Iowa.

Day one for some students began at Jakway Forest. While there, students learned how to identify trees, used math to determine the ages of trees and went on two nature walks in the forest. A stop at the bird blind was a new experience for many. Students returned to Jakway Forest park another day for a tour of the 1851 historic house and studied a map where they learned about the history of the small town of Buchanan (that later moved to Aurora), the township of Buffalo Grove, and a bit about Buchanan County. Students had the opportunity to throw wooden darts using atl-atls and practice with compasses.



Survival skills was the topic of the day at Boies Bend

where students practiced building small fires and shelters, and creating a successful solar still to collect water. They also collected fossils they will use in a future science unit.

Most people probably don't know what a fen is, but our students do! At Rowley Fen, the students experienced its unique characteristics by jumping on the fen as well as learning about the

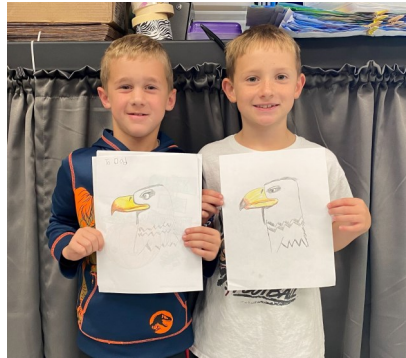
environment of the prairie. Students had the opportunity to compare how the land was used in the past compared to now and discuss the effects on the prairie and wildlife.

Although some of the students have had experience in canoes, this was the first time many of them paddled on a river. Students learned different strokes and were taught how to read the river, information about mussels (commonly referred to as clam shells), and participated in water quality testing.

Our students are more educated citizens of our county, learning to appreciate the beauty and opportunities that exist within our reach, and are eager to return to share the experiences with their family and friends.

Mrs. Anderson - Art

We have started the year off in art class with a review and discovery of color. Color is a building block in creating artwork. It is one of the seven elements of art including shape, form, texture, space, value and line. In third through sixth grade we have: engaged in a color review, discussed how colors mix to make new colors and how they work together in art. Third grade students mixed colors to make a pumpkin and fall leaf collage. In fourth grade, we learned about Andy Warhol and Pop Art. Students chose four color schemes to use in creating their piece of work. Fifth grade students studied Asian Koi art, drew a koi fish and used watercolors to complete their paintings. In sixth grade students studied the work of contemporary artist Jen Stark, and chose color schemes to color and finish their drip drawings. We are now studying line and will complete our line projects over the next few weeks. From there, we will see how lines are used to create shapes.



Ms. Cummings - 5th & 6th Grade Bands

The 5th and 6th Grade Band is in full swing at West Elementary! We have over 140 students participating in 5th and 6th grade bands this year, and they are sounding great! Fifth grade band students have tried all of the instruments, made their choices, and have learned their first few notes. We are starting to play songs together in full-group band and students are earning their Band Karate Belts in lessons. Sixth grade band students are continuing to work hard in their lessons to get further in their books. We recorded a spooky song around Halloween and had fun sharing it with families. It has been fun to pick music for this group because they are always up for a new challenge. They have been learning a lot about different tempos, dynamics, and articulations. Both groups are now preparing for their first concert of the year which is on December 7th at 7pm in the HS Auditorium.

Mr. Donnelly - 3rd-6th PE

In Physical Education class, students are working hard as we gear up to move indoors as colder weather approaches. We will continue to go outside for our warm up unless it is raining or below zero for temps. So far this year, we have covered the following units and activities in P.E: 23 scadoodle, football, soccer, throwing assessment, kicking assessment, mile run, memory, prison ball, bowling, basketball and volleyball coming up. All of these activities and units are helping your child lead a healthy, happy lifestyle. Continue to encourage your son/daughter to be active outside of school and don't hesitate to reach out if you ever have any questions.

Mrs. Fisher - 3rd-6th Music

Third-Sixth Music has been off to a great start this year, with students composing, responding to, and performing various types of music on a variety of instruments. Third grade students have had a focus on rhythm, adding sixteenth notes to their vocabulary. They have composed and performed together, and are headed into some more composition as we approach the holiday season. Fourth grade students are deep into their program preparation for Bring on the Snow! which will be performed on December 14 at 7:00 PM in the JSH Auditorium. Fifth grade students just wrapped up recorder karate and are now starting a unit all about music literacy, specifically articulation and how it applies to music. Sixth grade students are preparing for a debut unit of creating their own bucket drumming play alongs to holiday music. We are so excited to try this for the first time, and we look forward to seeing how each class composes! Finally, 5/6 Choir is preparing for their holiday concert on December 7 at 7:00 PM in the JSH Auditorium, and have been working hard on singing new styles in more challenging two-part arrangements!

Continued on Page 16



**Ian Kleman, Jr/Sr High
School Principal**

The rhythm of the fall is familiar to those of us in education: marching band, football, volleyball, excitement for the school year, moving into the regional and state cross-country meets, and, in many ways, concluding with our fall play the first part of November. That rhythm exists across the state and is anticipated every August as we get ready to go back to school. It's busy, hectic, filled with great performances, moments on the field, and academic successes in the classroom.

Our students continue to lean into all of our co-curricular opportunities and we are also learning what it means to be challenged academically: 16 students are enrolled in

our AP Government class and over 150 students are participating in our concurrent enrollment program in partnership with Hawkeye Community College.

Part of that challenge is to prepare students for work outside of high school. Historically, about 60% of our students enter a 2 or 4 year college after high school, and about 35% enter the workforce. Helping students see their pathway through high school is critical to their readiness for college and the workforce and these pathways need to be clearly defined as students move from junior high into their freshman year. We have begun the work of defining and articulating those pathways and my hope is that as we refine our work around this, our students gain a clearer picture of what they want to do after high school and are better prepared for whatever that might be.

In addition to providing clearly defined and articulated pathways through our school, we also need to establish a foundation of caring, supportive student to student and adult to student relationships. When students feel supported by their peers, encouraged by their teachers, and challenged by those around them, they are more engaged in the school and achieve at higher levels. Our Conditions for Learning Survey data (the annual survey given by the State of Iowa) indicates that we have work to do in strengthening both peer and adult to student relationships.

That strengthening is occurring via a number of strategies:

1. A renewed commitment to the principles and practices of Capturing Kids' Hearts, begun here a few years ago.
2. A continued Peer-to-Peer Advisory Group I began last year to listen to students and engage them in problem solving around this issue.
3. Direct and meaningful conversations with students and families.
4. Engagement from our counseling staff, including a part time social worker.

As we continue this work, we know we are building a foundation for excellence in our school that will allow our students to succeed at high levels academically, socially, athletically, in the workforce, and in the arts. I'm excited to be part of this work and thankful for the support of our community at Independence Junior/Senior High!



**Dewey Hupke, JSH
Assistant Principal**

Each year on the first day of the school year for the staff the district hosts a welcome back for all staff. It is always an exciting time as everyone is excited for the new school year. This year Superintendent Phillips asked that all administrators and directors share points of pride they had for their respective departments. Normally, that type of activity is not one of my specialties and was not something I was particularly excited about if I am being honest. However, it was a great activity and really forced me to think about the things in our activities department that I and others are proud about. After thinking about our entire program, I settled on 3 main points that I am extremely prideful of and I have been spending much of the fall sharing them with groups. My points of pride for the Indee Activities Department are: what we offer, the quality of offerings we have, and what we allow our kids to do.



**Justin Putz,
Activities Director**

Over the years I have often been amazed at the number of offerings that we have at Independence. I believe one of our strengths is we allow students to pursue their passions whether they be in athletics, music, arts, or other clubs. We currently tie Marion with offering the most sports of any school in the Wamac Conference. Counting our sharing agreement with Cedar Falls in boys and girls swimming we have kids participating in every sport option offered by the IGHS AU and IHSA A. We currently offer 12 different sports, with swimming being the only one we do not offer fully ourselves. In addition, we offer a variety of band options, drama and theatre, speech, mock trial, FFA, robotics, vocal music, and clubs. I think one of the special things about the activities department at Indee is the variety. Students have many opportunities to participate and often participate in more than one.

The second point of pride is the quality of offerings we have. I am often very proud of how well our programs do and how well they are run. Whatever route or routes a student chooses I know we can provide them with a quality opportunity and a good experience. It is one thing to have an offering, it is another to have a high quality offering. We have teams, performances, and events that compete well at the state level on a regular basis. We have students working hard rehearsing, training and practicing to achieve their individual, team, or program goals. I truly believe we offer a wide variety of quality programs that enhance the educational experience and help students learn and grow.

My final point of pride is what we allow our students to do. I firmly believe that the 3A size school, and Independence in particular, is a great opportunity for our students. At the 3A size we are large enough to offer an opportunity in all sports and at the same time we can offer great arts, offer unique clubs, and have all-state and state championship level music programs and FFA programs. Additionally, we are big enough to have enough talent and kids to make these offerings quality while always allowing students to participate in a wide variety of activities even during the same time period. Oftentimes smaller schools cannot offer as much and larger schools do not allow students to do as many activities.

Additionally, I want to make sure I note the quality of our staff. I am extremely proud of the quality of coaches and sponsors we have and the work they do for our programs and students. Without great coaches and sponsors these points of pride would not be possible. Additionally, the work they do to allow students to achieve their best and be part of multiple things takes additional work and coordination. Educational based activities are shown to enhance the high school experience. We have a dedicated staff that helps make our department a true point of pride for our school district and allowing students to grow, flourish in activities, and pursue and develop passions.



Val Maximovich,
Volunteer & Mentor
Coordinator

mix.



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

The Mustang Mentoring adventure begins for the 2023-24 school year!

On Sept. 12 we began our back to school mentoring adventures by hearing about camping adventures from retired principal Dr. Mary Jean Blaisdell. Students had the opportunity to try a hiking backpack, ask questions about white water rafting, how to find a camping location and much more! And before the evening ended everyone made a healthy trail



We Are Celebrating 30 years of Mentoring!



Thank you to Mentor Tom Jones for driving in the 4th of July Independence Parade!
And to Mentors Vicky Neumann (driver), Daryl Roberts, Brandy Schultz, Rita Williamson, and Terri Janaszak for joining us at the Homecoming Parade! Come join the Mustang Mentoring Team!

GO MUSTANGS!

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November is a good time to **Give Thanks** for all we have.

I am thankful for all of our volunteers, mentors, students, and staff for being part of and supporting the Mustang Mentoring Program. The time given to support others is invaluable. It's always time to shine a light on the nature of mentoring, and to show our gratitude to young people that are part of our lives.

Independence Community Schools Volunteer & Mentor Program Update by Val Maximovich



A TIME FOR GIVING



It's that time of year for reflecting on what you have done and what goals you have achieved. Have you thought about being a mentor, giving a few minutes a week to make a difference?

There are always students waiting for that extra person in their life that listens to them, plays a game, reads with them, and encourages them to be the best they can be. Can you do that for one of our students? It's an easy process to be that friend, that person that cares. Just let us know and we will get you started with a student that needs you! Call today



Reading Buddies Needed

Make an impact on the lives of young students through the Reading Buddies Program. Volunteers meet with students once a week to practice their reading skills and comprehension in the hopes of increasing their reading skills by the end of the year. The perfect volunteer is someone who is great with kids, enjoys reading, patient, kind, and understanding.

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP connects volunteers 55+ with volunteer opportunities to use their experience, skills, and talents.

To get connected reach out to Jake Bass at 319-327-6935 or email jake_bass@vccv.org



January is National Mentoring Month

Each January we come together to celebrate mentoring. Be watching on Facebook, school webpage and the newspaper in your community for more information

BECOME PART of THIS LEGACY – Please consider sending a gift of time or resources. All contributions are welcomed and greatly appreciated.

For more information: Phone Val Maximovich, Coordinator, 319-332-0626, vmaximovich@indeek12ia.org or mail to: Mustang Mentoring, West Elementary office, 1301 1st St W, Independence, IA 50644.



Please like our Facebook page [Independence Mustang Mentoring!](#)

Mrs. Grover - Computer Science

We're on the Web
<http://www.indeek12.org>

At West, 3rd through 6th grade students have had varied lessons around cybersecurity as well as programming BeeBots with advanced challenges. Now they are applying what they've learned with the BeeBots to work in a couple of different online coding platforms as a way to build their knowledge around block-based coding. This will prepare them for using Ozobots and other devices that we will explore this school year. For those ready for the next level, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery within block-based coding and begin exploring Python, a more advanced coding language.

Social emotional learning is woven within all of the computer science classes as collaboration plays a huge part. Students are provided lots of opportunities to work in pairs and teams to support each other's learning. Students also learn about persevering when their programs don't go as planned the first time around. We will continue to build on these valuable skills each year!



EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

It is the policy of the Independence Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, 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: Erin Burmeister, Director of School Improvement, 1207 1st Street West, Independence, IA 50644, (319) 334-7400 or eburmeister@indeek12.org

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.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

It is the policy of the Independence School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, 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: Erin Burmeister, Director of School Improvement, 1207 1st Street West, Independence, IA 50644, (319) 334-7400 or eburmeister@indeek12.org

ANNUAL NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Independence Community School District offers career and technical programs in the following areas of study:

Agriculture
Business
Family and Consumer Science
Industrial Technology
Marketing

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