

A Message to Parents/Guardians regarding the PSSA tests and ICS

This is the 8th consecutive year that ICS has made Adequate Yearly Progress! This means that ICS has made AYP in each of the 8 years the ICS students were tested.

- Pennsylvania has set a standard of 67% growth expected from year to year. This year, ICS students **across all racial and ethnic groups** average 80-90% “growth” year to year in Mathematics and 82-89% year to year “growth” in Reading. Growth scores are reflected in PVAAS scores (Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System: not shown here, as yet not available to the public).
- ICS students who received special education services average 68.8% “growth” year to year in Mathematics and 77% “growth” year to year in Reading. “Growth” is the true measure of year to year achievement.
- PSSA scores are scores that compare grades to grades. This is different than student growth. Although ICS PSSA overall school scores have grown year to year, there have been occasional dips in scores. This year is one such example:

	Mathematics	Reading	
2011	77.8	68.7	Met AYP
2010	81.3	73.9	Met AYP
2009	77.8	68.8	Met AYP

We will be studying these dips carefully and intensively starting in September and throughout the year. We realize that kids are learning well as evidenced by an average 80-90% growth from year to year. In addition, we have put the following intensive tools in place:

- We have assigned a new position of Achievement and Testing Coordinator. In this position, T. Odamis Fernandez-Sheinbaum will focus on achievement and will work with the Principals to target specific areas, organize tutoring, support teachers, and more.
- We have moved tutoring from an after-school service to in-school tutoring with two floating, seasoned teachers providing tutoring in math and reading to students in K-8.
- We have purchased a new online program called Achieve 3000 which allows for gr.3-8, in school and at home practice in reading (available in English and Spanish!). It is constructed to complement the PSSA testing.
- When there is a dip in overall scores, we always seriously consider reasons for the dip and how we could improve. We have reviewed variables such as additional new students in the middle school, special education student performance, an increase in English Language Learning students, and our own instruction. Our review to date does not pinpoint any one specific variable as the factor causing a dip in scores. It is important to note however that the test this past year was given a whole month earlier than in previous years. We will continue to study these changes with the goal of focusing laser-like at those variables which we can influence and change.
- We also realize that when a school reaches higher scores, as we have, it becomes increasingly difficult to continue growing in scores. We are a school that operates with an open lottery and welcomes all of Philadelphia’s children. We are proud of our students’ considerable performance. For example, our graduating 8th graders this year scored: 73% Advanced/Proficient in Math, 86% Advanced/Proficient in Reading.

Parents and Guardians can be very helpful in this process as we advance toward excellence by helping with the following:

1. Strong attendance and punctuality are very important and support optimal learning.
2. For students in grades 3-8: they have received their sign-in and passwords for using Achieve 3000 at home or at a computer center. Please remind your child to practice using Achieve 3000 to increase performance and skills. You can contact the teacher to get more information.
3. Read, read, read. Reading for fun will increase scores not only for the PSSAs but also for those eventual SAT tests going to college. Please make time and room for reading in your home. Designate reading *before* allowing TV/electronics time.