

The ICS Link

A monthly newsletter for families at Independence Charter School

“Opening Worlds of Opportunity”

February 2009

Spring is finally in the air in Philadelphia – or at least that’s what we tell ourselves when the sun warms up the air just enough to take your mittens off for a quick walk down the block! In all Philadelphia schools, the end of winter and beginning of spring is also the time for many of our students to sit for the reading and mathematics portions of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Although this test is only one indicator of a child’s success in the classroom, it is a piece of the puzzle that, when put together, helps teachers design units and lessons that best support the strengths and needs of each student. Finally, PSSA reading and writing exams are mandated by the state of Pennsylvania for students in grades three through eight. The exams will be held March 16th - 20th, with make-ups March 23rd– 27th.

The PSSA is a standards-based exam; i.e., it measures a student’s performance in relation to a standard of expected skills and knowledge in a particular area. Performance is measured in “Performance Levels,” which delineate one’s test performance in that area. The performance levels are determined as

- **Advanced** - indicates superior academic performance and exemplary display of the skills included in Pennsylvania’s academic standards
- **Proficient** - indicates satisfactory academic performance demonstrating a solid understanding and satisfactory display of the skills included in Pennsylvania’s academic standards
- **Basic** - indicates marginal academic performance, and shows that the student’s work demonstrates partial understanding and limited display of the skills included in Pennsylvania’s academic standards
- **Below Basic**, - indicates inadequate academic performance that shows little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards

In a few months you will receive a report regarding your child’s performance levels on each test. You should discuss the report with your child as well as with his or her teacher next year. Again, it should be ONE PIECE of the discussion regarding your child’s academic progress at ICS. Students progress at different rates. Of course, they also all react to testing differently. Finally, students in the immersion program often take a few years to “catch up” on standardized test performance as they learn to organize both languages in their brains.

In our effort to support children, it is most important that we at ICS and you at home provide a comfortable environment for testing so that they can show off what they know without experiencing anxiety about it. Therefore, we ask that at home you ensure that you child has adequate sleep and a healthy breakfast (if he or she does not participate in school breakfast). Talk with your child about the test – however, do not “study” for it. This exam is a test of his or her skills – not memorized knowledge. Please do not schedule out-of-school appointments during exam week if at all possible. Finally, please do not send a sick child to school, as it is unlikely he or she will perform as well as when healthy. The test can be made up before March 27th.

I look forward to seeing our 3rd-8th graders demonstrating their strong reading and math skills during testing next month. I thank you for supporting our efforts to provide the best possible testing environment for each student. If you have any questions about the PSSA, please contact me.

**Thank you,
Principal Stephanie**

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I.C.S. Bulletin Board

UPCOMING EVENTS

3/5– National History Night, 6PM

3/11– Board Meeting, 7PM

3/16-PSSA Reading & Math Testing (Grades 3-8) Begins

4/2– Report card Conferences

4/3 Professional Development Day,
No School for Students



Thank you to all the students that read inspiring words during morning announcements for Black History Month. March is *Music In Our Schools* month. Tr. Tracey and Maestra Ronith will be working with students that are interested in sharing words from a favorite song during morning announcements.

Any interested singers should see Tr. Tracey or M. Ronith to sign up. Also look out for Music Trivia Fridays.

Facilities Committee's first meeting
Monday March 16th, 4pm at ICS.

For info contact Robin at
robink@independencecharter.org

SAVE THE DATE-

ICS Spring Book Fair

Monday, April 20th – Friday April 24th.

For Volunteer opportunities, contact

Tr. Tracey at ext. 2222 or

traceyh@independencecharter.org.



COMING SOON!
Mother's Day/ Father's Day
Cookbook Sale!

Reminder: The Reading and Math PSSAs will be taking place March 16th-20th, with make-ups the 23rd-27th. Please do not schedule doctor's appointments at this time. Also, please ensure that your children have a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast (if they don't eat school breakfast). Finally, if your child is sick, please do not send them to school. They will be able to take a make-up test when they return (if before the 27th).

2008-2009 Yearbook

The winner for the "Design your own page" raffle will be announced during morning announcements on Monday, March 2nd. All orders placed before Friday, February 27th will be eligible for the raffle.

Yearbooks will be available for purchase throughout the year.

Yearbook Cover (front & back) Contest submissions
due Friday, March 13th.

A Message from the Board of Trustees

At our February meeting we were given a very healthy report from the Finance Committee. Given the trying financial times in our country and the world, the ICS Board of Trustees has been happy to hear that ICS's financial situation remains stable. Although there has been a decrease in anticipated interest from banking accounts, etc. our administration and business office are ensuring that ICS expenses are within its budget. We are also very fortunate to have such active parents, who are generous with volunteering their time and making financial contributions as they are able. Through its development efforts, ICS is continually researching potential avenues of additional funding in order to keep our many creative initiatives going. At this month's meeting we were so pleased to graciously approve acceptance of a grant from the Patricia Kind Foundation; the grant (\$10,000 for each of two years) will help fund our summer school program.

Another topic of interest is public use of the playground. At our February meeting we discussed whether it would be possible to open the playground for public use while school is not in session. One of the concerns of the Board of Trustees is the cost of the additional insurance coverage that would be necessary to do that. We are continuing discussions on this topic with our legal counsel and the neighborhood civic association.

The March Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 11th at 7p.m. at the school.; please note that our April meeting has been changed from April 8th to April 15th. Everyone is welcome to attend and/or to submit written comments via feedback@independencecharter.org for the public comment period.

Nicole Kilcullen, Co-President
ICS Board of Trustees



ICS Chili Cook-Off

Think your Chili is the best in Philly? Prove it! Make your best batch and enter it in our 1st chili cook off competition here at ICS Sunday afternoon March 22nd, 3-5pm. To enter & for more details, email or fill out this form and return to Tr. Tracey by Friday, March 13th.

*Entrants must be ICS staff, family member or recommended by ICS staff or family member.

ICS Chili Cook-Off entry form

Name _____ Phone # _____

Email _____ Student's Name _____

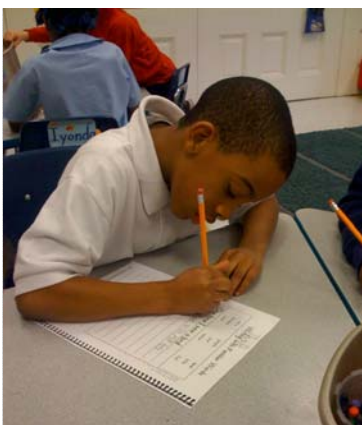
please return this form to Tr. Tracey by Friday, March 13th

All proceeds to benefit the 8th grade class trip to Canada

Ni hao! We've been as busy as can be in Kindergarten this past month. We now know most of our letter sounds and are learning to read and write sentences. We enjoyed taking part in our first school-Spelling Bee. G-O I-C-S! We have also been honing our geography skills and learning all about China. We are looking forward to touring Chinatown with Chef Joseph Poon in March. The Cat in the Hat asked us to invite you to celebrate Read Across America during the first week of March. For more information, check out: <http://www.seussville.com>.



Kindergarten



First grade is excited to have started our first country study and we are learning interesting facts about the Dominican Republic. We are currently investigating a possible trip to a Dominican restaurant. The first graders are working extremely hard in mathematics. They have been learning about fractions and telling time. We are able to tell time to the hour and half hour on digital and analog clocks. We are also doing a lot of reading and writing. Please continue to read with your first grader each and every night!

Grade 1

In Math, we are excited to report that all 2nd grade classes are practicing double-digit subtraction. We are continuing to develop as spectacular readers and writers in English and Spanish. In February, we really enjoyed our World of Art tours at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. After our visit word came back to the teachers from the tour guides who mentioned that ICS students were incredibly well-behaved and made very interesting comments and questions during the tours. Upcoming events: The March Fruit Market is March 10. Thanks to all the volunteers that will be helping on Monday 3/9 and Tuesday 3/10. Also, two 2nd grade classes will be going to the dress rehearsal of Cinderella on March 13.



Grade 2

The third grade is looking forward to taking a field trip to the Philadelphia Zoo on Thursday, March 12th. We are gearing up for the PSSAs which are quickly approaching. The testing will begin the week of March 16th. In math we are focusing on fractions, geometry and measurement. The Pennsylvania projects have been so much fun and we've learned so much from each other! Remember to keep reading and writing at home. Practice makes perfect!



Grade 3



The fourth grade is looking forward to spring-time and everything that it brings with it! We've delved into learning about Ghana, our country-study for the semester. We've located the country and its geographic features, immersed ourselves with its unique and colorful culture, discovered its natural resources, and more. We will begin focusing on Ghana's independence and its constitution in the upcoming month. In Math, we look ahead to the PSSAs in mid-March. We have been adding and subtracting fractions, comparing and converting units of measurement, and are beginning our geometric shapes unit, in which 2 & 3 dimensional shapes, lines, line segments and symmetry will be our fo-

Grade 4

In Language Arts, the fifth grade launched a unit on poetry. Our students are incredibly excited, and have already produced some notable work. We also began our study of Afghanistan and, as always, would welcome any assistance or resources to help make our teaching of this unit as authentic and relevant as possible. Don't be shy about getting in touch if you have any personal knowledge or experience to share that would add to our country study experience! In fifth grade math, students have learned about all sorts of graphs and charts, and different ways of collecting data and probability. We are now learning about geometry, which is great fun.



Grade 5

ICS 6th graders continue to be very busy. In math class, students are studying a unit on geometry, testing their skills with Study Island, and have just finished learning about fractions. In social studies class, students are learning about Ancient Hebrews and are looking forward to beginning their unit on India. In Language Arts, students are reading in the fantasy genre and are about to begin researching and writing about pollution for their Need in Deed project. Science class brings the second round of Clay Mobile to our students, which incorporates the learning of earth science through clay. Students and teachers are also busy discussing ideas and designing their respective yearbook pages.



Grade 6



The 7th graders are working hard on their National History Day projects. It's great to see so much dedication from the students! National History Day at ICS is Thursday March 5th from 6:00-8:00 PM. Please come by to see their amazing projects. In math problem solving, they've just finished Stretching and Shrinking, their unit on similarity. They are now beginning Comparing and Scaling, a unit on ratios, proportions, and percents. In science they'll begin exploring the wonderful worlds of Fishes, Amphibians, and Reptiles. The students have been using Study Island to practice and prepare for the upcoming PSSAs.

Grade 7

The eighth grade has been very busy doing research, finding primary sources and putting final touches on their National History Day projects. Also, their original plays that they are writing for Young Playwrights are starting to take shape - they are focusing on revising the scenes and developing their characters. They are busy learning about compound interest and exponential growth - How does our money grow even in today's economy? A few weeks ago Tr. Elaine accompanied a small group of 8th graders to The Park Hyatt Philadelphia for a career shadow day.



Grade 8

The ICS PTA

News & Announcements

March 4th PTA Meeting: "Healthy New Year"

- Guests include ICS parent Debi Phillipotts, certified in Shiatsu massage & Thai Yoga bodywork and Ursula Augustine from Best of Philly 2008 About Phase Make-up Studio
- "Big Green Earth Store" fundraising kick-off
- Book Swap – adult & children's books (bring one bag of each to swap with other ICS families)
- Early savings tickets for April 1st ICS Roller Skating Party
- PTA & school updates

Online Parent Survey on Thursday April 2nd = Dress Down Day Pass

Be sure and stop by the computer lab on Thursday April 2nd either before or after your parent teacher conference and complete the Parent Survey online. You'll get your dress down day pass (one per child) right then and there. (Expiration date will be noted on the pass this time). Information will also be available about running for a Parent Seat on the Board.

Schedule of (March) Activities

- **February 9 – March 9:** Box Top Classroom Contest Period. Classroom envelopes will be picked up Monday March 9th. Winning classroom announced in next months LINK newsletter
- **February 23 – March 9:** Corbi Sales Period. Orders must be in by Monday March 9th.
- **March 4th:** PTA Meeting, 6:15 in lunchroom
- **March 11th:** BOT Meeting, 7pm in lunchroom
- **March 22nd:** Chili Cook-Off to benefit 8th grade International Trip
- **March 24th:** Corbi delivery arrives at school. Parents/guardians to pick up orders
- **March 28th:** 8th grade Walk-A-Thon

Coming this Spring:

ICS Roller Skating Party at JAMZ on
Wednesday Night, April 1st
Parent Teacher conferences on Thursday April 2nd

Winter/Spring Fundraising

As you know, the PTA conducts various fundraising programs throughout the year in order to raise funds for theatre trips, field trips, classroom presentations, families in need funds, meals at meetings, classroom needs, etc. Over the last few years, we've participated in Scholastic, Cherrydale, Corbi and the Silent Auction. In early March, we will introduce a "green" program through the Big Green Earth Store. We do not expect everyone to participate all the time but hopefully we at least offer a variety of donation options to engage ICS families. Below is the PTA lineup for the rest of the year:

February/March: Corbi Pizza & Cookie Dough Sales

March: Big Green Earth Store

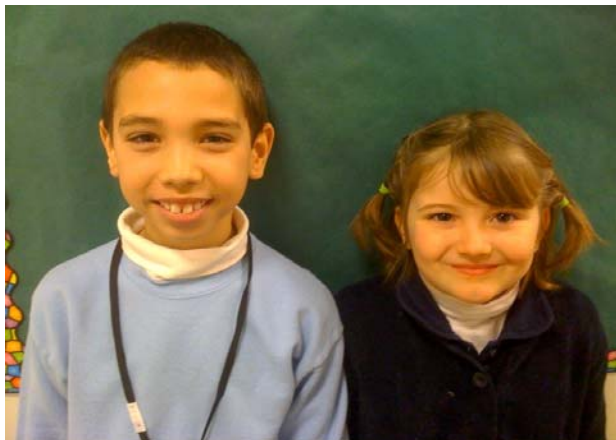
April: Scholastic Book Fair

May: Silent Auction

Corbi Sales Support 8th Graders

A new tradition is starting at ICS with this years 8th grade class: a year-end International trip! This year, 45 students set off for Montreal, Canada in early June. In an effort to support them, and future 8th grade International trips, the Corbi Pizza & Cookie Dough Sales is dedicated to supporting their travel needs. The 8th graders are partners with the PTA in this effort and have helped distribute catalogs to classrooms and will help distribute items upon their delivery to school. Not interested in Corbi but looking to contribute to their travel fund? The PTA offers the suggested amount of \$50 which is an average single sale. Even if your child is not in the 8th grade, as fellow ICS global citizens, we hope you will support this endeavor.

2009 IC\$ Spelling Bee Winners



Kindergarten & 1st Grade
Emma Martin-Zimmerman (1st Place)
Jared Sprague-Lott (2nd Place)



2nd, 3rd, & 4th Grade
Katie Goreski (1st Place)
Noah Gindin (2nd Place)
Declan Murphy (3rd Place)



5th Grade
Ilker Erkut (1st Place)



6th, 7th, & 8th Grade
Jona Brown (1st Place)

Congratulations to ALL students who participated in IC\$ spelling bees!
We are truly impressed with your poise and preparation!

Congratulations to the winners of the K/1st grade spell-off, the 2nd-4th grade spell-off, the 5th grade spelling bee, and the 6th - 8th grade spelling bee.
You are amazing spellers!

Jona Brown (6th grade) and Ilker Erkut (5th grade) will be representing IC\$ in the 2009 Philadelphia Tribune/Scripps Howard Regional Spelling Bee on Saturday March 14th at the Free Library of Philadelphia at 19th and Vine streets.
We will be rooting for you!



Cheesecake Sale



Cheesecakes are coming to ICS on April 2nd (report card conference day.) Attached you will find an order form for you, your family, and friends. We have priced the cheesecakes at \$18.00, a bargain, so they are affordable for you for the upcoming holiday.

All order forms and money are due in the office by March 23rd. Please enclose your order form and money (cash or checks made out to Independence Charter School) in an envelope labeled with your child's name and room number and the word: Cheesecake.

Cheesecakes will be delivered to the school on April 2nd. Make plans now for pick up. The cheesecakes are delicious and they freeze well.

We hope everyone take advantage of this offer and lets their friends and business associates know about our cheesecake sale.

Thanks for your support.
All process go towards the fifth grade camping trip.

Questions– Please contact Tr. Barb Kay
barbarak@independencecharter.org or Ext. 2307

Cinderella Cheese Cake Co., Inc.

Student Name _____
Homeroom _____ Seller Phone _____

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| _____ Plain | _____ Washington Cherry |
| _____ White Chocolate Peanut Butter | _____ Almond Amaretto |
| _____ Pineapple | _____ Southern Pecan |
| _____ Pumpkin | _____ Egnog |

@ \$18.00 Dollars Each

Total Amount Enclosed _____

A Message from the Executive Direc-

Do you *LOVE* to walk like I do? Then please JOIN ME and the ICS EIGHTH GRADE as they sponsor a **WALKATHON** on **Saturday, March 28th**. We will be gathering at 9am at the Rocky Statue by the Art Museum and will walk together back to 16th and Lombard Streets. This “rain or shine” event targets raising funds to support the 8th grade graduation trip to Montreal, Quebec, Canada. This is the first INTERNATIONAL trip for our kids. Come and join us, whatever the grade, and we promise to help your student raise monies for future 8th grade graduation trips in the years to come. Whether RAIN or SHINE, spend just a couple of hours helping fellow ICS kids earn monies necessary to travel to francophone Montreal!



There is no set pledge amount, big or small donations will be accepted. Your students can pick up a pledge sheet at the front desk from Teacher Tracey. All pledges are due March 27th. If you have any questions please call Dean of Students Yerodin Lucas or write to him at yerodinl@independencecharter.org

News from the ICS Food Services Committee

Please ask your child for his/her opinions about the *a la carte* options that have been available since the beginning of February. If your child is buying an *a la carte* item, s/he must have **cash** (40cents for each juice or extra milk and/or 50cents for each snack item).

As indicated in previous reminders, starting on MONDAY (March 2nd), any student who has a “reduced-price” or “full-priced” meal status who have a negative meal account balance of \$20 or more will not be able to eat school meals until the balance is brought below (and stays below) \$20. A meal account statement was sent home with every child during the last week in February. Meal account payments (**cash** and **money orders** only) can be sent in on any school day. You can contact Tr. Neyza at any time to get information regarding your child’s meal balance.

As noted on the March menu, the cafeteria menu is subject to change. Whenever possible, notices will be given about such changes. Likewise, although we ask students to complete the monthly meal order form, that is used primarily to give the cafeteria staff an idea of how much food to order. Students can always change their mind once they get in line on any given day. Also, please note that we do not serve any peanut butter nor pork products. So, if the menu says “turkey ham” or “sausage,” please know that it’s a turkey or beef product. The committee is also looking into the possibility of purchasing more local food items next year. If you are the parent of a 6th grader, your child might have mentioned a special dessert they sampled recently, which was prepared through a “farm to school” program.

A small number of ICS families have very large outstanding meal account balances that need to be paid off before the end of this school year. We want our program to succeed and financial solvency is one key to that success. If your child has a large outstanding balance, please be sure to be sending in payments regularly.

The committee welcomes your Feedback about any aspect of the food service program;



A Global Gift



Last month, Independence Charter's families received a special mailing asking them to make a donation to a World Cultures Library and Resource room for our students and teachers. The library will house internationally focused books, student magazines, audiovisual materials, geography resources, and other educational tools that will support classroom instruction and expand students' global horizons.

Below is a sampling of what your valuable gift at any level can provide for our students. Each family's gift will be recognized on a donors' plaque in the room when it has been completed.

Thank you to the many parents who have already donated! Your generous spirit of giving enables Independence Charter School to offer the best possible education to all of our students.

\$5	Purchase one world cultures/country study book for early readers
\$10	Purchase one world language book (Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, Italian)
\$25	Purchase one world cultures/country studies book for intermediate readers or one musical CD
\$50	Purchase five student fiction or non-fiction books with an ethnic or world cultures theme or one Teachers' Best Practice book
\$100	Purchase one subscription to <i>National Geographic Kids</i> , one subscription to <i>Time for Kids World Report</i> , and two world cultures DVD's
\$250	Purchase ten world cultures/country study books
\$500	Purchase a collection of audio CD's representative of six continents
\$1,000	Purchase a collection of maps, atlases and globes

I wish to support Independence Charter School's World Cultures Library and Resource Room!

Enclosed is my gift in the amount of (check one):

\$5 \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other: _____

This gift qualifies for a corporate matching gift (forms enclosed).

Please make check payable to Independence Charter School and fill out the form below. Return materials to school in an envelope marked: **Leonora Cravotta, Development Office.**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

To make a gift by credit card, visit www.independencecharter.org and click on 'DONATE NOW' on our homepage.

Independence Charter School is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.