



**Independence**  
CHARTER SCHOOL

# Independence Charter School Annual Report



Published May 2010

Based on activities for the 2008-2009 fiscal year

# Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that it has been nine years since Independence Charter School (Independence Charter) was founded by a group of community-minded Philadelphia parents. They set forth to start a school because they wanted a quality educational experience for their children and the children of Philadelphia, one that prepared them to be citizens locally and globally.

Consistently regarded as one of the top charter schools in the city of Philadelphia, Independence Charter continues to reach new milestones. Recognized for the fourth consecutive year as a Keystone School for achieving adequate yearly progress benchmarks for six years, Independence Charter also obtained national visibility by winning the 2008 Goldman Sachs Prize for Excellence in International Education in the elementary school category. We are the first charter school in the nation to have received this award! Independence Charter's

reputation as a viable educational choice for Philadelphia families continues to grow as demonstrated by the 700 student waiting list for this academic year.

Last year (Fiscal Year 2008-2009) and extending into the current fiscal year, the school continues its trajectory for success. Most notably:

- We saw commendable growth in the percentage of ICS students achieving proficient/advanced scores that matched and exceeded the Pennsylvania state standardized test score average in reading and mathematics, respectively.
- Our eighth grade graduates were accepted into many of the top public and private high schools in the Philadelphia region.

We are a candidate for Middle States Accreditation which will be an important credential as we continue to enhance our curriculum so that our students are well prepared for the challenges of high school, college and beyond.

## Ronith Epelbón Hochman Music Teacher

"When I think about the meaning of being a Music Teacher at Independence Charter, **I think about how lucky I am to be a part of an Institution where the differences and the singularities of every individual are precious.** By being immersed in an environment with plenty of cultural options and by respecting other people's opinions and ideas, Independence Charter's students learn the value of being a citizen of the World. And we, the teachers, are encouraged and challenged to bring our best to every lesson to let it happen."

"I expect to pass through this world  
any good thing therefore that I can do,  
any kindness that I can show to any fellow crea  
let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it  
for I shall not pass this way again"

So what is next for Independence Charter? We have many exciting plans to enhance the Independence Charter educational experience for our students. Initiatives include increasing the number of students who receive access to free after school tutoring and precollege track experiences, broadening science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) instruction, increasing access to a diverse array of cultural experiences and service learning opportunities, and expanding the physical education program.

Independence Charter is also interested in sharing our successful urban education model with others by establishing strategic partnerships with organizations who share our commitment to educating global citizens and by hosting K-8 educator and leadership forums.

With the economy in recession, it is likely that we will continue to see cuts in public funding that negatively impact Philadelphia's youth. To navigate this challenging landscape, we must be forward thinking, creative, flexible and fiscally prudent. To date, these attributes have enabled us to grow and flourish. As believers in community and the value of community efforts, we will continue to reach out to you asking for your valued input and support to successfully navigate the current "tough terrain".

Sincerely,  
Jurate Krokys  
CEO

**Tina Kluetmeier**  
**Parent of two students**

"After visiting schools and talking to parents and teachers throughout the city, **we chose Independence Charter because it offered so many things that the other schools did not:** an international education incorporating art, music and dance as well as reading, writing and arithmetic; diversity among students and staff; and language instruction infused throughout the curriculum with the expectation that Independence Charter students will graduate with high proficiency if not fluency in Spanish."

**Yasmine Montgomery**  
**Class of 2007**

"**At Independence Charter, I could be myself.** The teachers really cared about me. They always made sure that I stayed on track with homework and class participation. Whenever I visit Independence Charter, I feel the love I felt when I was a student here."

**INDEPENDENCE CHARTER SCHOOL**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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Elsie Stern, Ph.D, Assistant Professor,  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College



**Maurice White**  
**Class of 2009**

“Other schools (I am familiar with) didn’t care about my future. Teachers didn’t care if you fell into the trap of ghettoism. It is different here. Teachers want to help you. They want to make sure students learn. **Everyone here is my brother and sister.** Independence Charter encourages you to be a better person. I can’t wait to get back to school every week.”

## INDEPENDENCE CHARTER SCHOOL: HISTORY AND MISSION

Independence Charter School’s journey began with a group of visionary parents, committed community members and a dedicated Principal/CEO who set out to establish a different kind of school, one that “opens worlds of opportunity” for Philadelphia students. This monumental undertaking came to fruition with Independence Charter opening in September 2001.

Armed with research on the cognitive benefits of second language acquisition, and a strong sense that students can learn more about the world and languages starting in Kindergarten, the school’s founders set up the framework for a school focused on preparing students to become citizens locally and globally. This framework included a serious commitment to the development of skills necessary for success in school and beyond but also underscored the importance of the inclusion of the arts, global studies and second language acquisition. The ultimate goal was to develop a bilingual, interculturally-competent and high-performing student body.

Independence Charter School has come a long way since its early days. The school opened in 2001 with an enrollment of 287 students in Kindergarten through Grade 3. Independence Charter currently enrolls 747 students in grades K-8 with a waiting list of 700. The school’s student body is drawn from 46 of the City’s 50 zip codes and reflects the diversity of Philadelphia; 59% African-American, 14% Latino, 3% Asian, 3% mixed race and 21% Caucasian. In addition, 2% of the students are new immigrants and 54% are living at or below the poverty line.

Independence Charter is led by a 9-person Board of Trustees, with most positions filled by parents, a CEO who has 30 years of educational experience in the United States and abroad and a Principal with 16 years of educational experience in New York City and Philadelphia Public Schools. Students benefit from 46 full-time teachers, 27 teaching assistants and its active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).



**Brittany Pembleton**  
Class of 2009

“You can talk to the teachers. It feels like a home. It’s different from my friends’ schools. During my eight years here, I have had the opportunity to do a lot of different things. **Independence Charter provides a gateway to where you want to go—the freedom to try new things”.**

## WHAT MAKES INDEPENDENCE CHARTER UNIQUE?

### Urban Education That Works

Independence Charter is a leader among Philadelphia public and private schools for its effective and innovative educational programs. Independence Charter stands out from the crowd for the following reasons:

#### 1) Global Education Curriculum

- A study of nations, cultural groups, histories and global issues integrated into standards-based instruction across all subject areas.
- The curricular experience of each student includes regular participation in the arts: dance/movement, music and the fine arts related to country and historical studies.

#### 2) Second Language Learning

- Intensive Spanish instruction in all grade levels
- Introduction to Japanese in grade 6 (2007-2009) and Swahili in 2009-2010
- Introduction to Arabic in grade 7
- Introduction to Chinese in grade 8

#### 3) Learning Beyond the Classroom

- A year-long National History Day Project with the National Constitution Center
- Marine life study at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor
- An annual National Geographic Bee
- An annual Scripps Spelling Bee
- Offsite cultural experiences including plays, concerts and museum visits
- An annual International Festival
- After school clubs such as Italian language, Geography, Chess Club, Freedom Writers and Odyssey of the Mind

#### 4) Parent Involvement

The school’s parent community plays a central role in the success of the school, with more than 39% of parents contributing to its daily operations by:

- serving on the School’s Board
- participating in the PTA
- volunteering as classroom helpers
- organizing special events such as the KABOOM playground build

## SUCCESSES IN 2008-2009

- Independence Charter achieves Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the 6th consecutive year. Scores continue to rise with the 2009 graduating class scoring 86% proficient in math and 88% proficient in reading.
- The first three eighth grade graduating classes have been accepted at top public and private schools in the Philadelphia region including
  - Central High School
  - Constitution High School
  - Episcopal Academy
  - Girls High
  - The Haverford School
  - High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA)
  - Mastery Charter School
  - St. Joseph’s Preparatory
  - Science Leadership Academy

### Independence Charter received the following awards:

- National History Day Prizes for student teams at the regional competition qualifying for state competitions
- Young Playwrights program selected an ICS student’s original play for performance by the Temple University Theater at the Philadelphia Art Alliance.
- Winner of the 2008 Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education, Independence Charter was recognized for this honor with a citation from Philadelphia’s City Council.

### Aquila Waller Class of 2007

“The school provided me with lots of hands-on experiences. I had the opportunity to participate in outward bound programs and to attend the Junior Statesman Association program at Stanford University. **I would not have had these experiences without Independence Charter.** The principal and teachers always encouraged me. It is a family environment. If you extend, they reach back.”



# INDEPENDENCE CHARTER SCHOOL STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2009

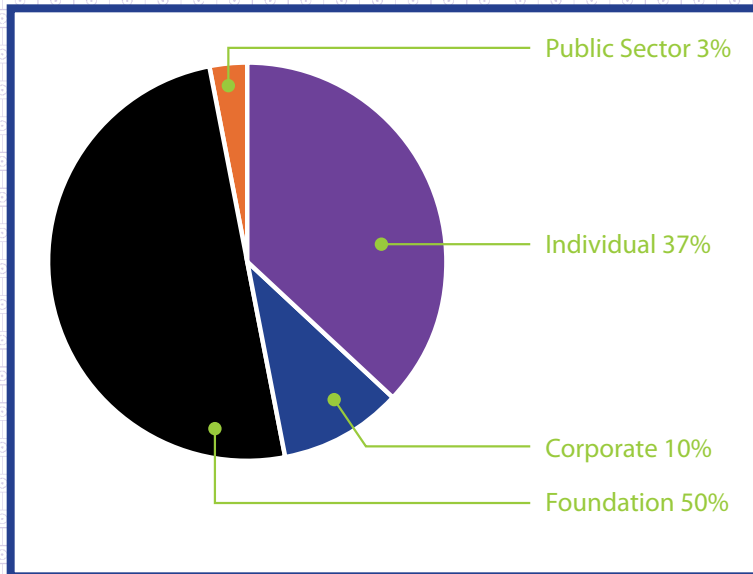
## Revenue

Local School District Subsidy	\$6,690,134.00	82.95%
Other Local Public Revenue	\$110,192.00	1.37%
Commonwealth of PA	\$447,053.03	5.54%
Federal	\$580,108.00	7.19%
Grants and Other Fundraising	\$190,583.91	2.36%
Interest Earned	\$26,811.98	0.33%
Other Revenue	\$20,751.65	0.26%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$8,065,634.57</b>	

## Expenses

Salaries/Benefits	\$5,097,207.16
Facilities Rental/Maintenance	\$1,731,048.52
Books, Software Technology, Supplies Furniture, Travel	\$467,261.67
Purchased Services	\$472,045.57
Debt Service	\$16,075.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,783,637.92</b>

2008-2009 Fundraising Revenue Sources \$190,583 Total



# 2008 - 2009 Donor Honor Roll

## Major Funders

Caroline Alexander  
Buck Foundation  
Goldman Sachs Foundation  
Patricia Kind Family Foundation  
Brook J. Lenfest Foundation

## Program Grants

IBM  
KaBOOM  
PA Department of Health  
SAP

## Event Presenting Sponsors

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## Event Program Sponsors

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## Matching Gifts

AARP  
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## Individual Donors

### Independence Charter Families and Employees

Genero Accooe and Talia Barrows  
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Anthony Iezzi and Kristin Bailey



**Annette Monnier,**  
**Annette Monnier Outreach Program Director The Clay Center**

“The Claymobile program visits every zip-code in Philadelphia and provides ceramic arts residencies for over 50 schools annually. As the program’s director I’ve been to a lot of schools; public, private and charter. Independence Charter School has always struck me as one of the best schools Philadelphia has to offer, the children who go there are able to reach their full potential in a wonderful learning environment, something that is more rare than it should be. **Independence Charter is an inspiration.**”

John Iodice and Jeanne Adamson  
 Rick and Laura Jackson  
 Seth and Jessica Jacquay  
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 Alison Sprague  
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Rae Whatley  
Blaine Wylie and Adriane Polen  
Robert Wylie and Rebecca Ecker  
Andrea Yañez  
Barbara Zisk  
James Zwolak and  
Gia Guadagnino

## Friends

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Amany Mansour-Awad  
Joel and Annie Baehr  
Frank and Suzanne Binswanger  
Tim Bosworth and Deborah Cole  
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Neil Sandvold  
Ruth Sarner Libros  
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Alan Wohlstetter  
Carolyn Wright  
James Wright

Sharon Wright  
Akilah Wylie

## In-Kind Donors

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Art of Wellness  
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Benjamin Lovell Shoes  
Betty's Speakeasy  
Birchtree Catering  
BluPath Design Inc.  
Bridgid's  
Camden Riversharks  
Center City Soft  
Pretzel Company  
CHI Movement Arts Center  
Chick's Cafe and Wine Bar  
Christian Street YMCA  
The Clay Studio  
The Computer Doctor

## Sandra Aidar Former parent

"When we chose Independence Charter for our daughter we were interested mainly in the Spanish language program because I was born in Argentina. What we didn't know at the time is that we would be immersed in a passionate multicultural community rich in ideas and resources. The open classroom policy eased the transition from Nursery school to Kindergarten (more for us than for our daughter!), and all the extraordinary art, music and movement classes gave us the feeling of private school in an urban setting. A very important aspect of the Independence Charter community is how open it is to parental participation. In our five years at the school, we have grown in our learning of education and have helped the school via committee work and volunteer work at the classroom, PTA and board level. For me in particular, Independence Charter embodies the best of the American spirit: ideas, community and a drive to succeed and do good. **Independence Charter School is a true treasure for the city of Philadelphia.**"



Creperie Beau Monde  
Dunkin' Donuts  
Eastern State Penitentiary  
Effe's Restaurant  
Fairmount Art Center  
Heather Femine  
Fresh on 47th  
Giovanni & Pileggi  
GreenSteps LLC  
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Kids on 12th  
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La Forno Ristorante-Trattoria  
La Locanda del Ghiottone  
La.Va Café  
L'Oca Italian Bistro  
London Grill  
Maryanne S. Ritter Jewelers  
Mi-Pals Deli  
The N Crowd

Omoi  
Park Hyatt Philadelphia  
People's Light &  
Theatre Company  
Philadelphia Bagel Company  
Philadelphia Java Company  
Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Pub & Kitchen  
Pumpkin Café, Market  
and Restaurant  
Roots Hair Studio  
Saxby's Coffee  
Settlement Music School  
Six Fishes Healing Arts  
Standard Digital Imaging  
Steve's Steaks  
Sue's Produce Market  
Today's Graphics Inc.  
Ursula's About Phace  
Rittenhouse Make-Up Studio  
Whole Foods Market  
Yoga Child

## Selected Community Partners

American Council on  
Immersion Education  
American Council on the  
Teaching of Foreign Language  
Asia Society Partnership for  
Global Learning  
Big Brothers and Big Sisters  
Center City Proprietors  
Association  
Center City Residents Association  
City of Philadelphia  
Mural Arts Program  
The Clay Studio  
Dancing Classrooms Philly  
Fair Trade Pen Pal Program  
Greater Philadelphia  
Chamber of Commerce  
iEarn  
International Visitors Council  
The Kimmel Center  
National Constitution Center  
National Network for  
Early Language Learners

Need In Deed  
Pennsylvania Council on  
International Education  
Pennsylvania Modern  
Language Association  
The Rock School of Ballet  
The School of Rock  
South Street West  
Business Association  
University of the Arts  
University of Pennsylvania-  
National Resource Centers  
The Walnut Street Theater  
World Affairs Council

### Catherine Passante-Contaldi and Ed Contaldi Parents of one current and one former student

“Our oldest son (who has special needs) started at Independence Charter School (ICS) in 2003. From Day One, the school’s leadership sent a message that it would be no problem to educate our son in the general education setting, and that his individuality would be celebrated. Whenever a new challenge came up, the school’s attitude was, “No problem.” The entire Independence Charter staff came to embrace our son as an unquestioned part of the school community. **This sense of belonging was a cornerstone for the wonderful social development that he accomplished.** Independence Charter was full of kind and caring people who cared about him and he felt that. This attitude carried through from the front desk, to the workers in the cafeteria, the computer room – in reality, the whole school. Our son loved going to Independence Charter and we loved supporting him through the five fantastic years that he spent at this cutting edge school. “





**Dr. Kathleen Hall,**  
Associate Professor in the Graduate School of  
Education and, Director of the South Asia Center  
*and*

**Haimanti Banerjee,**  
Assistant Director and Outreach Coordinator  
The South Asia Center University of Pennsylvania  
Resource Centers

“The South Asia Center has successfully partnered with Independence Charter School in promoting its mission of providing South Asia related expertise to students at the K-8 level. In particular, the Independence Charter School addresses Afghanistan and India in its curriculum for fifth and second graders and is to be applauded for being one of the very few schools in the region who incorporate the study of these regions at such depth at the elementary grade level.

**The quality of instruction offered to students at Independence Charter is very impressive.** The Units created by the school’s teachers address the most pertinent essential questions related to these world regions. It is indeed encouraging to note the efforts of the school and its staff in internationalising the curriculum for elementary grades.

We look forward to continuing to work with Independence Charter School in the future.”

## WAYS OF GIVING TO INDEPENDENCE CHARTER SCHOOL

Independence Charter receives less funding per student than other Philadelphia public schools. A gift to the School will support our ability to offer curriculum enrichment, after school and summer school programs, increase available technology, ensure that our teachers are well-compensated and fund priority enhancements for our new building.

### Individual Giving Ways to make a personal gift

#### Credit Card

Donate quickly and securely by making an online contribution on the Independence Charter School page at [JustGive.org](https://www.justgive.org).

#### Check

Send a check, made payable to  
“Independence Charter School” to:  
Independence Charter School  
1600 Lombard Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19146  
Attention: Development Office

#### Matching Gift Programs

Many companies offer to match gifts given to nonprofit organizations by their employees or spouses. Please check whether your company has a Matching Gift program. If they do, ask your employer for a matching gift form. Complete it and send it to Independence Charter with your gift.

#### Planned Gifts

Gifts that are part of an overall financial plan and benefit you as well as Independence Charter are planned gifts. Since planned giving must be tailored to individual circumstances and goals, the Development Office is ready to work with you and your advisors to develop a strategy that benefits you, your family and the School. Please contact Leonora Cravotta in the Development Office at 215-238-8000, ext. 2430 for more information.

## Corporate Support Event Sponsorship

Independence Charter offers several corporate sponsorship opportunities including the Independence Charter 365 Event and other initiatives which directly benefit our students and teachers.

### Independence Charter Anniversary Event

In 2010-2011 when our first graduates enter college, Independence Charter will be celebrating a double-anniversary Event. In addition to celebrating the School's ten year anniversary, we will also be celebrating the 100 year anniversary of our building, which was previously home to the Durham Elementary School. Many sponsorship opportunities will be available for this event.

### The Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC)

Corporations can also receive tax credit for their donations to Independence Charter School through the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC). Companies which are eligible to do business in Pennsylvania can receive tax credit for 75% of the business's contribution to Independence Charter School, up to a maximum of \$300,000 annually.

For more information about sponsorship, EITC, and other corporate giving programs, please contact Leonora Cravotta at 215-238-8000, ext 2430

The Annual Report covers the period of July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009.

These lists have been prepared with great care. Despite our sincere efforts to avoid inaccuracies, we know they can occur. If any are noted, please accept our apologies and advise us of the error.

### Development Office

Independence Charter School  
1600 Lombard Street  
Philadelphia, PA, 19146  
Phone: 215-238-8000, ext. 2430

Photography: Tom Lennon,  
Lennon Media Production and Post Production  
Graphic Design: Bill Rees, a+b Studios

## Michael Farrell Special Education Teacher

"I often remind myself of how fortunate I am, so early on in my career, to have found Independence Charter. **Each day I find myself surrounded by 'whole teachers' approaching the 'whole child.'** Our inclusive and integrated approach to teaching and learning brings out the beauty in our children and showcases it to our community. We take our work seriously as we know we are preparing our students to be leaders in our local and global communities."





## Independence Charter School's 10 Year Anniversary

Celebrate the 10 year anniversary of Independence Charter School and the 100 year anniversary of our home the former Thomas Durham Elementary School.

----- ● -----  
A series of events are planned to commemorate this special occasion.  
Visit our website for future updates.

**Our School Building's (the Durham) 100 Year Anniversary November 16-17, 2011**



**Independence**  
C H A R T E R S C H O O L

Independence Charter School  
1600 Lombard Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19146  
(215) 238-8000  
[www.independencecharter.org](http://www.independencecharter.org)