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Focus Week Update

Jacob Hendrickson • a day ago • Monday, Sep 23 at 9:00 AM • **International Community School**

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As we get ready for Camp Phoenix in October, we are already making plans for Focus Week later this year. Focus Week is an essential component of our community and is an opportunity for students to explore their passions outside of the classroom through experiential learning. In the past, students were able to choose from options like learning to sail, going to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, learning to golf, or immersing themselves in the world of ceramics.

Options for Focus Week were limited during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we began expanding options for our students last year. At the same time, the district and our faculty have established parameters to make these experiences both meaningful, sustainable, predictable, and equitable over time.

Many families do not know how complex and time consuming it is to create these experiential learning opportunities each year. Countless hours go into the creation of each of these Focus Week experiences. Our overnight options add an even more complex and time-consuming layer of planning.

The faculty has spent significant time reimagining the future of Focus Week that is sustainable for our faculty to plan. Delivery of quality educational experiences in the classroom and support of our students' extracurricular activities will continue to be our priority. Additionally, we have worked closely with the PTSA to find ways to create support structures to help teachers with Focus Week logistics and to ensure that equity plays a pivotal part in our overall planning. Starting this school year, we are introducing a systematic plan to expand Focus Week within a new set of parameters.

Below is an outline of some of the systematic changes we will be bringing to Focus Week:

Dates and Length

- FW will be moved from the week after Memorial Day as that week has a snow make-up day. This make-up day complicates planning and makes it impossible to have experiences that last longer than 3 days.
- FW will be moved to the weekend before Memorial Day weekend. This will expand our programming to 4 days for most experiences from May 19-22. May 23 is a district directed LEAP Day required for teachers.
- Overnight trips will have the option to travel the weekend before starting as early as the evening of May 16. This could extend overnight trips from 4 to 6 days in length.

Structure

- All grade 9 students will attend an overnight experience together in the state of Washington. This will be a lower cost option to ensure that all students are able to attend. All students can attend regardless of family finances through PTSA scholarships.
- Grade 12 students will continue to have an overnight experience as an entire class in the state of Washington. This will remain a lower cost option to ensure that all students are able to attend. All students can attend regardless of family finances through PTSA scholarships.
- Grades 10-11 students can choose from overnight experiences in the United States. School-sponsored international travel by any student in our district is no longer permitted during school days. Long-term plans will establish a rotation of experiences over the course of 2-3 years which are consistent and predictable for families. Additionally, the rotation of these experiences will streamline and simplify planning for teachers.
- Grades 6-8 and 10-11 students can choose from mixed grade experiences where they return home each night. To clarify, the day experiences could include a mix of students from 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11.

Cost

- Day Experiences: The school will make a strategic effort to offer free and low-cost options. At the same time, we understand that some programming may cost more money. The school has established a \$500 maximum price.
- Grade 9 and 12 Experiences: A \$600 maximum price has been established to ensure that all students are able to attend regardless of personal finances. The PTSA has earmarked scholarships for these trips to ensure that all students are able to attend.
- Overnight Experiences for Grades 10 & 11: A maximum price of \$2000 has been established.

*Transportation is often the biggest factor in the overall cost

Lots of exciting changes are coming to Focus Week. More information about specific Focus Week programming will come before winter break.

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