



International Community School News

Hello ICS Families!

I will continue to share the steps in our journey with the IB Diploma Programme over the next few weeks. This week the focus will be the reason(s) we were considering any sort of adjustment to ICS programming in the first place.

I started at ICS in the 2023-24 school year. For those of you that are new/newer to ICS, we have had difficulty retaining students in HS through grade 12. I reviewed historical retention data over a 10-year period. Ideally, ICS would have the same number of students in each grade level from 6 to 12. This means that the percentage of MS students at ICS should be around 40%. In 2014-15, MS students comprised about 45% of the student population at ICS. By 2023-24 this number grew to almost 60%. This resulted in less course offerings for HS students and contributed to overcrowding at the neighborhood high schools.

During my first months at ICS, I met with a variety of stakeholder groups that included parents, students and faculty. During those initial meetings I was able to identify what our community appreciated most about ICS and where their concerns lay. Each stakeholder group shared the importance of a small school environment where each student was known and cared for by both students and adults. They also praised the school's efforts around experiential learning. The most identified and highlighted of these were fall camp and Focus Week. Focus Week happens during May each year and is an opportunity for students to explore their passions or experiment with something new for a week. Kids can learn archery, golf, video game coding, sports, or travel overnight to places inside and out of Washington State to mention a few. During my first PTSA meeting back in September of 2023, I was inundated by parents before and after the meeting asking if the school was going to cancel Focus Week. This was related to discussions about changing the nature of Focus Week the year prior to my arrival. What I gathered from these formal and informal encounters with parents and students was the importance of experiential learning at ICS. I realized that making significant adjustments or eliminating Focus Week would probably reduce the retention of students at ICS even further.

Our school worked closely with the PTSA over my first two years to find ways to make Focus Week more predictable to parents and students and more sustainable for teachers to develop and implement. The time and effort that teachers put into Focus Week was massive. As principal, I realized the importance of FW in our community but did not want the time to negatively impact

what matters most at ICS, classroom instruction and preparation for college. I also recognized that even robust experiential learning opportunities would not guarantee the retention of students through graduation.

Next week, I will write about how we identified potential “tractor beams” (for Star Wars fans)/magnets as a community that would provide compelling reasons for students to graduate at ICS. As a community, we began to embark upon what that tractor beam might be.

Have a wonderful weekend with your families!

Jacob

Important Camp Arrival/Departure Times

Camp takes place next week for HS students from Monday September 29 to October 1. HS students need to arrive at ICS with their overnight belongings by 8:40 on Monday morning to ride the bus to Stanwood. MS students have school as normal on Monday starting at 7:55. They depart on Tuesday and need to arrive at school with their overnight belongings by 8:40. All students return by bus to ICS at 12:00 on Wednesday. We will use Parent Square to update you on their arrival time.

Label Personal Items

Please label all personal items with your students' name. If the item is lost, we can connect it back to them. Last year students lost headphones and cases, cell phones, backpacks, clothing, glasses, water bottles, jewelry and wallets.

Attendance

Phone: **425 936 2381**

Email: **ICSAttendance@lwsd.org**

Please report student absences, late arrivals and early dismissal via email or phone call to Attendance. Include your students' name, grade, and reason in your message. Informing via teachers' emails, the main office, or responding to the newsletter email which is set to 'do not reply' is not recommended.

Parents Bringing Items

There is a shelf inside the school entry for dropping off any items, such as lunches, books or homework for your student. Please make sure that the item is labeled with your students' name and that you have informed them. Laptops must be brought into the office.

Contact Information

Principal: Jacob Hendrickson

Associate Principal: Mike O'Donnell

Office Manager: Mamoona Zia

Attendance/Safe Arrival: 425-936-2381 or Email

Main Number: 425-936-2380

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