
Pennsylvania Department of Education



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Charter Annual Report **Tuesday, October 09, 2007**

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SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organization Description

Independence Charter School (ICS) is a K-8 school located in Center City Philadelphia. ICS is completing its sixth year of operation. The school is located in the historic district of Philadelphia. The school began as a K-3 school in September 2001 and has graduated its first 8th grade this

2006-2007 school year. Ninety-five percent of our graduating eighth graders were accepted to select admissions high schools.

ICS was founded by parents who were committed to the city of Philadelphia but wanted to provide a challenging internationally based program for their children and the children of Philadelphia. There were 657 students enrolled in 2006-2007. With the exception of a handful of ICS students whose families have moved to the suburbs of Philadelphia, the rest of the students are from Philadelphia. We employ a lottery system which assigns numbers to submitted applications. Then numbers are chosen randomly by a computer for the number of openings in Kindergarten. Sibling preference is also given to existing ICS families as long as the student is of the correct age of admittance and if there is an opening in that grade. In every year since our opening, our waiting list has continued to grow such that the waiting list for the coming school year number over 500 with 230 on the Kindergarten wait list.

Our school has gone through one renewal phase in 2004-2005. We were renewed and our new charter permits our school to operate until 2010.

Our points of pride include

- a strong faculty who are committed to working in an urban school,
- a strong integrated curriculum that includes our own authored curricular frameworks together with published, research based curriculum,
- strong parent involvement
- teacher participation in curricular writing and recommendations
- a unique country studies program
- an exceptional second language studies program
- notable special education service
- growing utilization of community based resources
- solid test scores with four years of AYP in the four years we have been eligible

ICS has an administrative model that focuses on providing expert service to the needs of the students. There is a Principal/CEO who has been a teacher for many years. ICS is moving from a Vice Principal administrative model to two Deans of Students (upper and lower), two curriculum specialists (one general, one primarily in Spanish language development and general social studies), and beyond that are counselors, nurses, special education staff, reading specialists, and the like. In addition, recognizing that students come with varied levels of skills, we provide a part time classroom assistant in each classroom to help with flex grouping and to support the teacher. An average classroom size is 22.

Core Purpose

Mission

The Independence Charter School (ICS) is a community-oriented educational institution for elementary school-age children. The primary mission of ICS is to provide an intellectually stimulating curriculum with an international focus, emphasizing the arts, languages, ideas, and histories from an array of cultures from around the world. To meet its goals, the school draws heavily on the resources available in Philadelphia- the museums, historic landmarks, businesses, schools, parks, communities, and families. ICS emphasizes multi-lingualism starting in Kindergarten, incorporates modern communications and computer technology to facilitate dialogues with, and learning from, children around the world. ICS emphasizes an active, hands-on, multi-dimensional approach to learning and development. While the focus is squarely on an international approach, the school does not lose sight of two of the key traditional goals of public education: teaching young children the fundamental values of our pluralistic democracy, and the acquisition of basic language, literacy, and computational skills necessary to function

productively. It is never too early to begin the process of teaching children to become competent, thinking citizens.

Vision

The world cultural component of our curriculum is the defining feature of our school. The curriculum encompasses second language instruction, international music, arts, history, geography, and cultures, with a regular rotation of cultures being studied. Teachers at ICS work to incorporate the world cultural component across the curriculum to give students an appreciation for a wide range of world cultures and languages. Exposure to and involvement with other cultures at an early age will contribute to an increasingly important intercultural competence.

A key commitment is also to second language acquisition. Spanish is the language upon which we focus in grades K-8. We will also be introducing a pilot program of Japanese in the sixth grade in the coming year. Each child in the school receives Spanish language instruction. As the students progress through the grades, an increasing amount of this instruction is content-based, giving our students a proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in Spanish. Not only does this give them competency in Spanish, but it underscores daily the reality that they live in a world comprised of languages other than English. Parents have the option to place their children in a total immersion or a language intensive program. The immersion program features total instruction in Spanish with English being introduced starting in third grade. Spanish intensive classes focus on the development of conversational Spanish.

We actively invite parents to participate in the life of the school with plentiful opportunities for volunteering. We seek and establish relationships with community organizations and resources. After school and summer programs provide students with further opportunities for growth and for remediation when necessary. We also approach each ICS student as an individual and understand that students will need varying levels of support academically, socially, and emotionally.

Shared Values

These Shared Values or core values were developed by a diverse strategic planning committee:

1. We have high academic standards which apply to all students.
2. We are committed to graduating bilingual and multilingual students.
3. We value small class sizes. Teaching and learning should be personalized.
4. We value diversity, and that is reflected in our students, staff, families, Board, and international curriculum.
5. We respect one another and practice honest, open, and direct communication, assuming positive intent.
6. We teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills so that our students become life-long learners who really "understand" rather than merely "know" things.
7. We have high behavioral expectations for our students and believe that, given a nurturing environment, children can succeed.

Academic Standards

Independence Charter School (ICS) has selected academic standards that complement the PA academic standards. In addition, we have chosen curriculum which supports student learning and teacher preparation for classes. For example, we have updated our Scott Foresman Addison Wesley Math series in 2005 because the updated publisher's version coincided strategically with PA standards. Our curriculum specialists regularly study the PA standards and utilize the "PA grow network" for viewing anchors that will inform teacher training and guidance. Teachers meet in August inservices and in professional development days to create year long plans that support work through standards.

ICS pays close attention to participation standards and we have maintained acceptable participation in all PSSA testing. Our average is usually an average of 98-100%.

Graduation standards do not apply to us since we are a K-8 school. However, we do pay close

attention to "graduating" our students from elementary to high school in a timely fashion. Attendance at our school is currently at 96%. Our achievement standards are within the required yearly growth.

Strengths and Challenges

STRENGTHS: Independence Charter School demonstrates the following strengths:

1. Quality second language teaching (Spanish) for all students K-8 in two language programs. In the Spanish Intensive (FLES) program, students have 30-45 minutes sessions daily in Spanish to develop conversational Spanish language skills. In the Spanish Total Immersion program, students have all major subjects taught in the Spanish language in K-2, then in grades 3-8 there is an increasing amount of English language instruction.
2. Exceptional and unique country studies program for grades K-8. This program is integrated across all subject areas.
3. Success in providing supports for the whole child in academics as well as social skills.
4. Solid teaching utilizing best practices that include use of manipulatives, experiential learning, learning at centers, flex grouping for skill levels, and heterogeneous grouping as well.
5. Strong teacher support in the areas of professional development, collaboration, teacher involvement in planning, support in substantial access to materials and resources.
6. Strong family involvement including a strong PTA. Parent turnout for Back to School Nights and report card conferences ranges 85%-100% in classrooms.
7. Highly qualified staff that is engaged and reflective.
8. Full inclusion of special education students in all aspects of programming.
9. Very strong arts program including the fine arts, music, and dance/movement.
10. Attendance continues to strengthen currently at 96.3%.
11. Strong and effective Code of Conduct.
12. Our Writing PSSA scores have improved considerably.

AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT:

1. Technology: although we have moved ahead considerably with the integration of a computer science teacher, and our kids Gr.1-8 have learned considerable skills in the use of computer resources and tools, and although five of our teachers have had the opportunity to participate in the HP grant and have gained more skills, we need to engage the rest of our teachers in a more extensive use of technology for teaching and resources. This is in part hampered by the need for increased funding for technology such as wireless mobile labs, LCD projectors, etc.
2. Attendance for at-risk students: because we are not a neighborhood school but rather attract students from all over the city, and although our attendance is enviable, the problem of late arrivals and absences are nonetheless greater for our at-risk students.
3. Academics: Although ICS has met AYP for a fourth year in a row, and has won various recognition for its unique programming, nonetheless, we experience fluctuation in PSSA scores, and continue to have low achievement with minority students who are from low income families although not exclusively. In the past two years in PSSA testing, we have had problems with test performance in the fifth grade both in reading and in math areas. Furthermore, the reading gap is greater among at-risk African American students although our AYP scores are averaging above the required performance level.
4. Certification requirements from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are a complicated challenge for ICS. This is because of the native speakers whom we must have to provide the intensive language program that is unique to ICS and part of the Mission of our school as stated in our charter. Because we have a Total Spanish Immersion Program, our teachers must be entirely fluent native speakers. Currently, we have 12 classrooms staffed by fully fluent teachers. Many of those teachers hail from over 10 Spanish speaking countries. Many were teachers in their native country but are having difficulties in obtaining certification in Pennsylvania due to regulations prohibiting them from obtaining permanent certification. All are taking PRAXIS tests and college courses to qualify, however, regulations prohibit them from obtaining the final certification. Consequently, our certification average appears low due to this.

SECTION II. STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Strategic Planning Process

Although the ICS Board of Trustees (BOT) and ICS administration and teachers undergo ongoing reflective review of the academic year and fidelity with Mission and Vision, we did undergo a comprehensive and formal Strategic Planning process in 2006-2007. In this process, the Board formed a committee which invited individuals representing families, teachers and community members as well as board members. The "layers" of strategic planning included:

1. forming a core committee that would be the receiver of information from many sources
2. the core committee facilitated the selecting of two other layers of interviewees:
 - A. - focus groups of parents
- focus groups of teachers
both of these groups being interviewed by the professional facilitator
 - B. single interviewees made up of administration, teachers, parents and community members.
3. The facilitator met with focus groups and individuals.
4. The core organizational group met in a retreat for two days reviewing the results of the focus groups, single interviews and worked on shared values, etc.
5. Goals emerged from this strategic planning process.
6. The results of the strategic planning process were posted on the website.

In addition, there are other regular, ongoing parts to the planning process that consist of:

1. a yearly survey of parents regarding aspects of school including: satisfaction with teachers, achievement, programs, curriculum, administration, code of conduct, transportation, and the like.
2. there are several Board level committees which include members from the school community. These committees regularly review and plan for school improvement.

Strategic Planning Committee

Name	Affiliation	Membership Category	Appointed By
Jurate Krokys	ICS	Administrator	strategic planning committee
Krista Pfeiffer	ICS	Middle School Teacher	Strategic planning committee
Claudia Lee	Independence Charter School Board of Trustees	Other	strategic planning committee
Barbara Kay	ICS	Other	strategic planning committee
Megan Steelman	ICS	Parent	strategic planning committee
Tracey Hill	PTA	Community Representative	ceo
Nina Jenkins	ICS	Parent	strategic planning committee
Rosina Miller	Independence Charter School Board of Trustees	Board Member	strategic planning committee
Ryan Boyer	ICS Board of Trustees	Board Member	strategic planning committee
Kristen Denahan	ICS	Ed Specialist - School Counselor	strategic planning committee

Sean Hennessey	ICS Board of Trustees	Board Member	strategic planning committee
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Goals, Strategies and Activities

SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN

Rigorous Instructional Program

ICS utilizes curriculum that is research-based and that provides the opportunity for successful learning for the various kinds of learners that populate each classroom. Wherever possible, ICS strives to utilize curriculum that allows for experiential learning, for full participation by students. However, we also look for curriculum that provides for acceleration and for drill and repetition where necessary. Our curriculum interfaces well with the PA Standards and provides skill based learning. Such curriculum also allows for creative projects, service learning, and for inquiry-based teaching. ICS uses the following core curriculum:

Grades K-2: Voyager Universal Literacy for FLES classes- language arts, Lectura for Immersion classes- language arts, Scott Foresman Addison Wesley for math in both groups, FOSS science, Prentice Hall Science, Collins Writing Program, Rebecca Sitton Spelling Program ,Spanish classes, DIBELS testing in all grades

Grades 4-5 Making Meaning and Guided Reading, Collins Writing, Rebecca Sitton Spelling, Scott Foresman Addison Wesley- math, FOSS Science, Prentice Hall Science, Same for Spanish classes

Grades 6-8 History Alive, History of US , FOSS, Prentice Hall Science, Prentice Hall math, Connected Math, Guided Reading, Young Playwrights, Collins writing, Rebecca Sitton Spelling

Support systems for all kids in need of additional support include Reading Stars, summer school and after school tutoring.

Behavioral curriculum: SWEBS school based positive behavior reward system, Second Step violence prevention program, Bully prevention program

Our curriculum reflects the content and processes necessary to prepare students using the Pennsylvania standards.

ICS approaches student learning with the understanding that differentiated learning and teaching are an acceptable approach and that it better meets the needs of most children. Our teachers teach in whole groups, small groups, individual students. We provide supports for pull-out and push-in specialists such as for ESL, Special Education, at-risk learners. We see a student struggling with a subject or learning as possibly only a temporary condition. We provide a part time classroom assistant who is highly qualified in every classroom for twenty hours per week. Our specialists which include three special education teachers, two "floating" reading teachers, one ESL specialist as ready to provide supports. Our CSAP process helps to support students not in special education. We have consultants (Pediatric Therapeutic services) who provide Speech, OT and PT services.

We have a consultant School Psychologist who does our formal evaluations.

We promote in-depth and inquiry-based teaching and learning through the curriculum we have chosen and through teacher training. For example, our Connected Math for gr.6-8 provides problem based math topics that are theme based and last over a longer period of time with hands on activities such as creating graphs, maps, etc as in the Great Bike Race. Our Prentice science allows for student hands-on activities. Our teachers are trained in how to create centers, how to integrate cross-thematic units. Teachers are urged to work with grade level partners and across grade levels. Teachers are encouraged to connect meaningful projects to in classroom learning.

As mentioned previously, ICS supports all students in every way that is possible including CSAP review, formal testing to determine if specially designed instruction is necessary, pullout small groups for reading, online activities such as First in Math, and Fast ForWord. We utilize volunteers from the outside for Reading Stars. We even believe that outside support such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters help build stability and self confidence.

We provide professional development for teachers to support the use of centers, project-based learning. Best practices are expected to be utilized in lesson planning including active learning on the part of students.

English Language Learners

ICS' program for English Language Learners(ELL) begins with small group instruction of ELL students led by a certified ESL teacher. In these groups, students enhance their oral language and reading and writing skills. In addition, the ESL teacher conducts push-in instruction for students who are newcomers. The teacher serves as a resource for classroom teachers of ESL students by providing background information, professional literature, teaching "tips" and ideas for accommodating lessons to suit the needs of ESL students. The teacher also serves as a resource for parents of ESL students by encouraging participation in school activities, by providing advice about possible enrichment or after school programs, and by ensuring that classroom teachers reach out to these parents and involve them in their children's education. Finally, one main goal of ICS' program is to ensure that all ESL students feel comfortable and welcome at ICS by providing both emotional and social support and encouragement.

Graduation Requirements

This does not apply to ICS as we are a K-8 school.

Special Education

ICS practices full inclusion for all special education students. Three special education teachers provide "pull-out" and "push-in" instruction in small groups or individually for students based on their needs and the IEP. The intensity of the specially designed program is appropriate to the special needs of each student. For example, a student who needs most of his/her help in reading but is functioning very well in Mathematics, will get help in Reading as well as support for strategies in the reading portions of mathematics. Students who are lower functioning may need more intensive time in a resource type setting while other students perform better when the special education teacher sits side by side in the general classroom. Special Education teachers provide special support to teachers in the form of advice regarding testing, grading, accommodations.

Special Education teachers work with parents to write IEPs. Additional supports such as speech and language, occupational, physical therapies are provided for by an outside consultant Pediatric Therapeutic Services. Our School Psychologist performs cognitive testing and consults with parents.

Special Education teachers attend in-services providing by PATTan.

Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

Teacher	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
Barbara Zisk	.75	Learning Support	Independence Charter	18	Special Education Chairperson
Yerodin Lucas	1.00	Learning Support	Independence Charter	20	Works mostly with older children
Anita Hruby	.75	Learning Support	Independence Charter	9	works mostly with lower functioning students

Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

Organization	FTE	Type of class or support	Location	# of Students	Other Information
NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA

Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

Title	Location	FTE
School Counselor	Independence Charter	.15
Spec. Ed. Coordinator	Independence Charter	.25

Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual	Title/Service	Amount of Time Per Week
Pediatric Therapeutic Services	Speech and Language	.50
Pediatric Therapeutic Services	Occupational	.20
Pediatric Therapeutic Services	Physical	.20
School Psychologist	Formal testing for Spec. Ed.	.10

SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

Student Assessment - Primary

Test/Classification	K	1	2	3	4	5
PSSA	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
PASA	No	No	No	No	No	No
Terranova	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Student Assessment - Secondary

Test/Classification	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PSSA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
PASA	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Terranova	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Student Assessment

Independence Charter School has made AYP for four years in succession in the four years it has been eligible to make AYP. The scores in the PSSA tests indicate that our greater performance strength for all groups is in Mathematics but Reading has also shown great growth. This year, our overall average in PSSA scores for Grades 3-8 was 64% for Reading and 63% for Math. In all cases, we have been successful in beginning to lower the number of students who score below basic. We have also developed cohort studies comparing our students' performance as they move from year to year. The cohort studies indicate slow but strong progression. The PSSA and Terranova tests provide information in specific learning areas. Teacher professional development days in August and throughout the year help focus teacher training.

We have found that making sure to provide adequate testing environments including cutting down on the size of the group testing, preparing students with test taking skills such as reading questions carefully, reviewing to see if you have answered all of the question, and even working on handwriting for legibility are all valid technical areas that must be focused on. A larger question of curriculum, comprehension, content is reviewed yearly by the curriculum committee. It is clear from our most recent PSSA results that there continues to be an achievement gap for African American students in the area of reading. For two years we have funded an upper school reading teacher position. This teacher pulled out students for intensive fluency, decoding and comprehension sessions daily. Assessments indicated improvement for a majority of students. This coming year, we received a literacy center grant that supported after school sessions for gr.6-8. In addition, we work with volunteers from Philadelphia CARES who do Reading Stars for kids in Grades 2-5 in an after school program. In addition we set aside monies for after school tutoring in both math and reading with classroom teachers for about 12 weeks each year. And finally, we also fund an after school summer school program for kids who are most at risk.

At ICS, we measure student progress at regular intervals during the school year. This is very important so that teaching and learning goals can be created for each student. The assessments used are DIBELS, Voyager testing, GRADE (for older classes). QRI's are also available for testing individual students. Teacher observations note the use of flex grouping for student instruction, opportunities to practice and apply skills, homework that is meaningful, and teacher's progress through the curriculum so that standards are covered. Report cards are in trimesters and reflect the curriculum being taught. At ICS, the following list provides evidence of a student support framework:

After school Voyager, Bright Sky/Reading stars after school, summer school for at-risk kids at no cost, CSAP, reading specialist small group work, Math tutoring after school, Counselors work with individual and small groups, full inclusion of special education students, ESL pull-out and push-in, behavioral support in the form of behavioral plans and charts, SWEBS: school-wide effective behavior system.

Students are first supported in the classroom with whole and small flex group instruction. A classroom assistant is provided in each classroom for 20 hours per week for the purpose of supporting flex grouping. Students who continue to struggle are referred to tutoring after school, or work with the reading specialist. CSAP may indicate eventual testing for learning needs. Parent support is elicited where outside support may be needed.

Teacher Evaluation

a.) *List the main features of the school's teacher evaluation plan.*

Teacher evaluations take place formally twice a year. Teachers are given the form and it is reviewed and discussed with the group as a whole. Formal evaluations are done by the Principal. Following the evaluation, a meeting with the teacher occurs to review the observation/evaluation. Several informal observations also take place utilizing quick-forms created by educators in Tasmania. These forms give feedback on strengths and areas in need of improvement. Teachers who are struggling in various areas are referred to specific specialists or mentors who meet with the teachers to give them training and support.

b.) List entities/individuals who are responsible for teacher and staff evaluation.

Teacher formal evaluations are given by the Principal. Informal evaluations are done by the Curriculum Specialist and the Immersion Specialist. Non-teaching staff evaluations such as for cafeteria staff are done by the Operations Manager. Administrative staff evaluations are done by the Principal. The Principal's evaluation is done by the Board of Trustees, including surveys of teachers and parents.

c.) Describe professional development for the evaluators, particularly in the areas of special education and instructional techniques that are unique to the mission of the charter school and support student success.

At ICS, professional development begins in August. In the third week in August, the teachers new to ICS begin a week long seminar in which ICS Mission and Vision, basic information about code of conduct, special education law, classroom management, best practices, induction procedures are presented. In addition, the new staff is taken on a tour of the local community and community resources. They are joined in the following week by returning ICS teaching staff. Here we have curriculum sessions such as Collins Writing, Kidspace workshops, Math workshops, and the like. During the school year, we have several professional development days. In addition, we have weekly early dismissals on Wednesdays for teacher staff meetings. Our Professional Development Committee helps to plan those days and we utilized much of the skill on hand for turn-around training. These included workshops on spelling, using math manipulatives, accommodating for special education instruction, and the like. Our Special Education coordinator presents best practices for best inclusion. For the past two years, we have invited parents to speak to teachers about students in the mainstream. Time is also set aside to provide grade level meeting time to establish working relationships as well as cross-grade projects.

SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

Leadership Changes

There was no change in school administration.

Two board members left at the end of their terms in June 2007.

One board member resigned due to family and job commitments.

The board currently numbers 10 out of 15 possible seats.

It is currently discussing whether they would like to downsize the size of the board to fewer seats following the strategic plan which calls for more governance and less operational oversight.

Board of Trustees

Name of Trustee	Office (if any)
Rebecca Baehr	Board President
Nicole Kilcullen	Vice President

Sean Hennessey	Secretary
Rosina Miller	Treasurer
Ryan Boyer	officer
Joana Davis Diaz	officer
Eric Cramer	officer
Pamela Prell	officer
Lisa Nelson Haynes	officer
Anyabwile Bankole	officer

Professional Development (Governance)

The ICS BOT did not hold orientation since there were no new members in the 2006-2007 school year. The Board did however, seriously embark on a strategic planning process. They hired a facilitator and the process took approximately three months and involved many stakeholders. That process resulted in a three year strategic plan to be completed in 2010. The board also decided to revamp its fledgling development program and underwent an evaluation through a development consultant. Two ICS BOT members took part in Charter School conferences wherein they participated in workshops designed for Board members. They returned and made presentations to the entire Board.

Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School

The ICS BOT meets once a month as a whole Board. In addition, the Board supports active committees in all major areas pertaining to the governing and administering of the school; these committees are Curriculum, Finance, Human Resources, Community Relations, Diversity, Development, Discipline, Facilities, Healthy Kids, Policy, and Legal. All committees meet monthly or bimonthly and provide reports to the full board at the monthly BOT meetings. The Executive Committee also meets monthly with the CEO to review and discuss matters pertaining to governance and direction of the school. In addition, each Board meeting includes a CEO report. In this manner, BOT members are informed and involved in all areas. The CEO maintains a regular dialogue and good relationship with the School District of Philadelphia.

Community and Parent Engagement

ICS was founded by parents and the BOT remains committed to the principle and implementation of parent involvement. In addition to the 10 seats of the Board filled by members with children enrolled at ICS, the Board also supports two additional parent seats that are elected by parents for two-year terms. Parents are often solicited to be candidates for the other open Board seats and to join BOT committees. ICS also partners with community organization in many different capacities (for example, for programming and instruction). The Development Committee of ICS invites guests from the community to visit our school during special events. ICS has also recently joined some neighborhood community groups. In addition, the BOT supports programs within the general budget that provide additional support for at-risk students, such as tutoring without cost to the family.

SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Major fund-raising activities

The Home and School Association and the school's development office conducted several fundraising activities and plans to organize similar events during the next fiscal year. A comprehensive fundraising plan has been developed for the future.

Fiscal Solvency Policies

The Board of Trustees has adopted financial policies and procedures which include the topics - budgeting, accounting practices, procurement, contracts, internal control, cash management, grants management, time and attendance, contracted services, etc.

The school's budget, adopted in accordance with the timetable prescribed by the Commonwealth, serves as a blue print for financial decision making during the fiscal year. The budget provides for the educational, building and administrative needs of the school community and also includes a reserve for contingencies. All purchases and personnel decisions are reviewed for budgetary funds available prior to the issuance of a contract or purchase order.

The business office provides interim financial reporting for the board of trustees and CEO on a monthly basis. The business manager meets with the school administrative team regularly and attends all board and finance committee meetings. Through careful monitoring of expenditures and revenues the school is able to assure that all expenditure and revenue categories remain within budget.

Accounting System

The accounting system is Quickbooks and is loaded with the State Chart of Accounts. Transactions are posted by the Business Manager's Office staffed by experienced school business administrators. A trial balance, statement of revenue and expenditures and a statement of disbursements are prepared monthly. Reports are generated in compliance with State requirements

Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances - Attachments

- PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES & FUND BALANCES
- Annual Audit

Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit

The school's auditing firm is Larson Allen. The last audit is dated March 17, 2007 for fiscal year 2005-2006 and has a clean unqualified opinion with no findings. It is impossible to submit an audit for 2006-2007 by August 1, 2007.

Citations and follow-up actions for any State Audit Report

The school has not been audited by the State Comptrollers Office.

SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Acquisition of Facilities, Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment During the Last Fiscal Year

The school leases a facility at 105 South 7th St. All furniture and equipment was purchased after obtaining quotations from various vendors

Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs

The School's Board of Trustees has agreed to purchase a former public school building located at 1600 Lombard Street in Philadelphia. The school expects to renovate the existing structure and construct a three story addition. Financing for the project is expected to be provided through the issuance of tax exempt bonds. The project is will be completed in 12 to 18 months.

SECTION VIII. HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students

ICS has complied with all health and safety requirements including fire prevention, fire drills, shelter in place, evacuation, intruder drills. The records for this are available in the front office. In addition, these records are inspected by Licensing and Inspection and the fire marshal yearly.

The registered practical nurse, our school nurse who is employed directly by ICS, is the caretaker of health and immunization records for students. No student may enter ICS as a new student without complete records. Students who are enrolled and require updates receive reminders of the need for immunization updates and are not allowed to attend until those requirements are met.

Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs

Personal Choice, Keystone Health Plan, Worker's Compensation, General Liability, Corporate Officers Error and Omissions and Contents Insurance, wage continuation, life insurance.

SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS

Quality of Teaching and Other Staff

There are 44 teaching staff. Of these 68% were returning staff. 3 staff were replacements for staff that left in the middle of the school year. 2 of the new staff who were there for the whole year replaced staff that left for long term maternity leave. 6 staff filled newly created positions of Reading Specialist, Computer Science Teacher, and 3 were for eighth grade positions, a new grade in our school. 5 staff members from the previous year decide not to return to our school: 4 took teaching jobs in the suburbs and 1 left the teaching profession. Those who left for the suburbs left for higher salaries. This is an unusually high rate of turnover for us.

Student Enrollment

Independence Charter School's enrollment policy is as follows: an open lottery system that does not discriminate is held every year usually in October for the following school year. Applications are accepted starting in September. These applications are available in the front office and on line at our website. Preference is given to Philadelphia residents and that is why we ask for proof of residency. This is because we always have more applicants than openings, with rare exceptions in our upper Total Spanish Immersion classes. The blind lottery is conducted by the Principal with a witness present. Sibling preference is also given to families that have students currently at ICS as long as those parents have indicated an interest by submitting an application in September or October. Three notices are sent to parents in that regard. Kindergarten spaces are filled first as they are the only true openings. All other openings are dependent on student enrollment, retention due to failure, and the like. Therefore, all applications for gr. 2-8 are selected randomly and placed in that order on a wait list. ICS currently has 450 students on their wait list with well over 150 of those for the Kindergarten spots. Students on wait lists are admitted as openings occur, whether during the summer or during the school year. Parents are notified of openings by mail or telephone and are given an appointment to present all necessary paperwork. If a parent does not respond, one more attempt is made to contact the family. If there is no response, we move on to the next person on the wait list and the aforementioned is removed from the wait list.

Kindergartners must be age 5 by September 1st to be eligible for enrollment at ICS.

First graders who are not yet 6 and are coming from a Kindergarten experience must show proof of completion of a Kindergarten program successfully and/or may be required to pass a simple proficiency test to gauge skill levels.

Average Daily Enrollment

Note: this is the total number of students in the grade with the average daily attendance percentage

Grade	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
K	79 (94%)	86 (90%)	*	84 (94%)	83 (95%)	88 (95%)
1	82 (90%)	94 (93%)		87 (93%)	90 (95%)	91 (95%)
2	55 (90%)	85 (91%)		84 (95%)	78 (94%)	96 (95%)
3	39 (90%)	48 (92%)		90 (94%)	87 (96%)	80 (95%)
4	N/A	47 (95%)		63 (92%)	88 (96%)	88 (96%)
5	N/A	N/A		40 (93%)	61 (93%)	82 (94%)
6	N/A	N/A	N/A	45 (92%)	39 (93%)	51 (94%)
7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	42 (92%)	40 (94%)
8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41 (95%)

** For the 2003-2004 school year all attendance data has been lost due to external complications with the record keeping company. Understanding that in the history of ICS attendance has never been below 90% and that steady improvement is measurable through the 5 years of available data, best estimates indicate approximately 93% overall average daily enrollment throughout the 2003-2004 school year.*

Family Retention (new kindergarten class has been subtracted from each year's total)

Year	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Enrollment	179	251	371	419	496	577

Retained from Previous Year	NA	192	350	360	439	550
Retention %		76%	94%	86%	89%	96%

There were no expulsions in 2006-2007. Two students left voluntarily.

ICS retains approximately 95% of its students and families from year to year. We have a high return percentage because of the quality of the program that we provide for students and because of the support available for families. One of our biggest challenges is distance and transportation. Our location equals congestion, traffic jams, problems associated with weather which exacerbates traffic. Because Kindergarten parents must provide their own transportation, it is often the source of withdrawal due to the frustration of traffic. We also have some families leave because they do not like our Code of Conduct. We work hard to inform all new families of this code of conduct but some families find us intrusive. Currently, 654 students completed the school year. Minus 41 students who graduated from 8th grade and include only those in grades 1-7: $577-41=536$, of those 530 are intending to return to the best of our knowledge.

In terms of retention for academic reasons, we use multiple teams to assess the need for retention. We avoid that in most cases for upper grades, but use it judiciously in the lower grades. We are currently slightly under-enrolled. This is due to the cramped conditions of our building. However, we also prize knowing our students and families and therefore slowly acquiring students is better than filling all spots available.

Transportation

All students in grades 1 to 6 are eligible for yellow school bus transportation if they live 1.5 or more miles from school. Approximately 225 ICS students ride yellow school buses. There are nine such busses. Our special education students ride these busses if their parents choose to do so. In some cases, some special education students require an assistant for the bus and we acquire such assistance by petitioning the School District of Philadelphia for such a bus. The School District of Philadelphia obtains a bus company that services our school through a bidding process. Typically, bus companies are assigned to a school for three years.

Food Service Program

ICS uses the Food Service Program of the School District of Philadelphia. We participate in the Free and Reduced lunch Program and we have 54% of students who are eligible for this program. The Service provides breakfast and lunch for our students. Those who are eligible receive free or reduced price lunches. However, other students may purchase lunches from the service. Many of our students bring bagged lunches. The service provides a "satellite" lunch and breakfast.

Student Conduct

Our expectations for student behavior are spelled out in our Mission and Vision statements as well as in our discipline policy. We recognize that students come from various environments and may or may not have the tools to negotiate, to share, to accept criticism, to be constructive in their comments, to be able to focus for long periods of time, to demonstrate respect for peers and supervising adults. We consider it our goal to help students learn those skills if they do not already possess them. We consider it our obligation to involve parents in that same process of teaching, learning, and supporting. We also believe that all students have the right to an

environment conducive to learning. Therefore, students who are highly disruptive and not amenable to the complex supports that we attempt to put in place may be brought up for expulsion. This happens only after exhaustive efforts are put in place to support the student including resources inside and outside the school such as outside agencies. The supports that we put in to place are:

1. Parent consultation
2. Teacher consultation to help target behaviors and to give behavioral support
3. Possible classroom switching.
4. Behavior charts with rewards and consequences
5. Progressive discipline as per our code of conduct
6. Referral to outside sources including: Crisis Centers, Partial Hospitalization, Wrap-around services, family and child counseling.
7. Testing by our school psychologist when indicated
8. CSAP process.

Student cases which may be brought up for expulsion are reviewed by the head of the BOT Discipline Committee who always attempts to mediate first. Cases may also be dropped if evidence for expulsion is not indicated. When students receive suspensions in excess of two days, parents are informed of due process to contest the suspensions and may request a hearing.

In respect to expulsion hearings, the parents are informed of all of their due process rights to representation and the like in a letter provided to each parent.

No expulsions.

There were 77 kids who had a total of 96 suspensions.

CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2007 - 2008

Name of School: Independence CS

Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval: July 2000

Length of Charter: 5 years **Opening Date:** September 2001

Grade Level: K-8 **Hours of Operation:** 8:30- 3:15

Percentage of Certified Staff: 57% **Total Instructional Staff:** 44

Student/ Teacher Ratio: 14/1 **Student Waiting List:** 511

Attendance Rate/Percentage: 96.3

Enrollment: 654 **Per Pupil Subsidy:** \$ 7,248/15,346

Student Profile

American Indian/Alaskan Native: 0

Asian/Pacific Islander: 17

Black (Non-Hispanic): 411

Hispanic: 86

White (Non-Hispanic): 130

Multicultural: 10

Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch: 54

Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December: 73

Number of:	K (AM)	K (PM)	K (FTIME)	ELEM	MIDDLE	SEC.	TOTAL
Instructional Days	0	0	175	178	177	0	530
Instructional Hours	0	0	1023	1041	1035	0	3099

ASSURANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

School Year: 2007

The Independence CS within Philadelphia IU 26 assures that the charter school will comply with the requirements of 22 PA Code Chapter 711 and with the policies and procedures of Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE will specify, in writing, policies and procedures to be followed. Requests for any deviations from these regulations, policies, and procedures must be made in writing to PDE. The charter school assures:

1. There are a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the charter school.
2. The charter school has adopted a "child find" system to locate, identify and evaluate children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the charter school's jurisdiction. "Child find" data is collected, maintained, and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for effectiveness. The charter school implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies, and individuals on at least an annual basis.
3. The charter school has adopted policies and procedures that assure that students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
4. The charter school will comply with the PA Department of Education annual report requirements including special education information.
5. The charter school follows the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and charter school-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
6. The charter school assures the Pennsylvania Department of Education that funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

This assurance must be signed by the Board President and the Chief Executive Officer for the charter school to operate services and programs.

Board President

Date

Chief Executive Officer

Date

2007 - 2008 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete

YES _____ **NO** _____

SIGNATURE PAGE

Identify the charter school's Chief Executive Officer.

Name Jurate Krokys

Title Principal/CEO

Phone 215-238-8000

Fax 215-238-1998

E-mail administration@independencecharter.org

Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date

Identify the charter school's President of the Board of Trustees.

Name Rebecca Baehr

Title President

Phone 215-238-8000

Fax 215-238-1998

E-mail adminsitration@independencecharter.org

Signature of the President of the Board of Trustees and Date

Identify the charter school's Special Education Contact Person.

Name Barbara Zisk

Title Chair

Phone 215-238-8000

Fax 215-238-1998

E-mail administratin@independencecharter.org

Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date