
Pennsylvania Department of Education



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Charter Annual Report **Monday, November 10, 2008**

Charter School: Independence CS
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CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2008 - 2009

Name of School: Independence CS

Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval: July 2000/April 2005 renewal

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

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

Percentage of Certified Staff: 82% **Total Instructional Staff:** 52

Student/ Teacher Ratio: 22/1 **Student Waiting List:** 600

Attendance Rate/Percentage: 96.0

Second Site Address, Phone Number and Site Director:

We will move in to 1600 Lombard Street, Philadelphia. This will not be a second site but rather our new location as of September 1, 2008

Enrollment: 680 **Per Pupil Subsidy:** \$ 7,465/15,806

Student Profile

American Indian/Alaskan Native: 0
Asian/Pacific Islander: 20
Black (Non-Hispanic): 417
Hispanic: 95
White (Non-Hispanic): 142
Multicultural: 6

Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch: 53

Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December: 80

Number of:	K (AM)	K (PM)	K (FTIME)	ELEM	MIDDLE	SEC.	TOTAL
Instructional Days	0	0	177	180	180	0	537
Instructional Hours	0	0	1026	1044	1044	0	3114

SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organization Description

Independence Charter School (ICS) is a K-8 school located in Center City Philadelphia. ICS is completing its seventh 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 graduated its first 8th grade in the 2006-2007 school year. Ninety-five percent of our graduating eighth graders are 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 680 students enrolled in 2007-2008. 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 600 with approximately 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.

In 2007, the school purchased a new building, the historic Durham school building at 16th Street and Lombard Street. The school will begin the 2008-2009 academic year in the new building. 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 five years of AYP in the five 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. For 2008-2009, we are separating the two positions, and bringing on a new principal to focus on the immediate needs of the school. In 2008-2009, we will have two Deans of Students (upper and lower), one curriculum specialist, teacher leaders who also serve as immersion coaches (focused on Spanish language development and support for our Spanish immersion program), math coaches, etc. Beyond that we have 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 have also introduced a pilot program of Japanese in the sixth grade and will be introducing Arabic for 7th graders 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. Our curriculum specialists regularly utilize the PA standards and assessment anchors (in appropriate subjects) to align curriculum goals with

classroom experiences as well as to inform teacher training and guidance in those areas. Teachers meet in August and during the school year for professional development sessions that guide them through curriculum mapping and standards alignment. In 2008-2009, staff members are being trained and leading the implementation of "backward design" to our curriculum writing process. Teachers have begun the process of developing courses and units of study around unifying essential questions and enduring understandings that support our mission and vision as well as target the specific goals of each subject.

ICS has met all of the measured targets since the inception of AYP reporting.

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 remain strong at 94.99%.
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 some of our teachers have embraced this initiative, we still strive to have more of our teachers use technology more extensively by integrating it more regularly into their curriculum. We will continue to develop our knowledge base to guide that integration, but are always in need of increased funding for technology. With such funding, we would add another mobile lab, more LCD projectors, and a SMART board to our current equipment.
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 fifth year in a row, and has been consistently recognized for our unique programming, nonetheless, we continue to experience an achievement gap between some of our measured subgroups. Our African American students performed at least 10 percentage points below our Latino students and more than 30 percentage points below our Caucasian students in both reading and math, with the most significant gap appearing in reading proficiency. In addition, our Special Education students PSSA scores were significantly lower than those of the overall population. Finally, we investigated student performance on the 2008 grades four, five and six reading assessment and grades four and five math assessment, although our AYP scores average above the required performance level. We are looking forward

to analyzing PVAAS to determine the growth of these students relative to their standardized scores.

4. Curriculum: As we regularly evaluate and improve our curricular and instructional decisions, we have identified the need to provide more guidance in writing instruction in all grades, a need to further structure the Spanish language arts curriculum with more materials, and improve foreign language instruction in grades K-4. As a result, we have adopted some new curricular materials for the 2008-2009 school year (all of which are outlined in section III).

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, students receive instruction from more than 15 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 have plans to become highly qualified and are working on taking PRAXIS tests and college courses to qualify, however, citizenship regulations prohibit them from obtaining the final certification. Consequently, our certification average appears low.

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 with fidelity to 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.
3. Strategic Plan updates are given to the Board as we move to reach our targeted goals.

Strategic Planning Committee

Name	Affiliation	Membership Category	Appointed By
Amy Leigh	ICS	Middle School Teacher	teachers

Andrea Soelter	ICS	Other	education specialists
Barbara Zisk	ICS	Special Education Teacher	education specialists
Jurate Krokys	ICS	Administrator	administrators
Kristen Long	ICS	Other	teachers
Megan Steelman	ICS	Community Representative	board of trustees
Noga Newberg	ICS	Elementary School Teacher	teachers
Pamela Prell	ICS Board of Trustees	Board Member	strategic planning committee
Rosina Miller	Independence Charter School Board of Trustees	Board Member	board of trustees
Stephanie Bungard	ICS	Administrator	administrators
Steven Gendler	business	Business Representative	board of trustees
Susan Burrows	PTA	Parent	board of trustees
Tracey Hill	PTA	Parent	board of trustees

Goals, Strategies and Activities

Goal: MATHEMATICS

Description: At least 60% of all students will be proficient in Mathematics, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.

Strategy: Improve performance of underperforming subgroups

Description: Analyze PSSA and local assessment data to identify gaps in lower-performing students' skill and knowledge base. Apply new information to instruction.

Activities:

Activity	Description	
Analyze Data	Analyze PSSA and local assessment data to identify gaps in lower-performing students' skill and knowledge base. Apply new information to instruction.	
Person Responsible	Timeline for Implementation	Resources
Stephanie Bungard	Ongoing	\$500.00

Statement of Quality Assurance

Charter school has met AYP.

SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN

Rigorous Instructional Program

ICS utilizes curriculum and materials that are research based and that provide 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 to help ensure full student participation. However, we also seek curriculum and materials that help balance the need for project-based learning with that for direct instruction. Using the Pennsylvania standards as our guide, our curriculum reflects the content and processes necessary to prepare students for success as developing learners and global citizens. ICS uses the following materials to support the core curriculum:

Grades K-2 - 2007-2008 — *Voyager Universal Literacy* (Enhanced language arts classes), *Lectura* (Immersion language arts classes), *Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley* for math in both programs, *Scott Foresman* science, *Collins Writing Program*, *Rebecca Sitton Spelling Program* and *DIBELS* testing in all grades.

Beginning in 2008-2009, students will stop using the *Voyager* program after grade 1, and replace that with the Developmental Studies Center's *Making Meaning, Systematic Instruction in Phoneme Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS)* curricular materials as well as employ *Guided Reading* in grade 2.

Grades 3-5 — *Making Meaning, Guided Reading, Collins Writing, Rebecca Sitton Spelling, Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley math, Prentice Hall Science, Scott Foresman Science, Junior Great Books* (grades 3 and 4)

Grades 6-8 — *History Alive, History of US, Prentice Hall Science, Prentice Hall Math, Connected Math, Guided Reading, Young Playwrights, Collins Writing, Rebecca Sitton Spelling*

Beginning in 2008-2009, the middle school language arts curriculum will be supplemented with the *Step Up to Writing* program

Other curricular additions for 2008-2009 —

Grades K-5 — Developmental Studies Center's *Being a Writer*, Rand McNally's *Storypath* series

Grades 3-7 — *Nuevo Siglo* — Spanish Immersion language arts

Grades K-4 — *Nuevo Bravo*

Behavioral Curriculum: In 2007-2008, we continued to use the *School-Wide Effective Behavior Support (SWEBS)* school-based positive behavior reward system, but have begun the transition to the *Responsive Classroom* system in the elementary school and *Developmental Designs* system in the middle school. Both programs, which are philosophically and practically connected, and are designed to meet the combination of social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of children and young adolescents, will be fully implemented in the 2008-2009 academic year.

Support systems for all students in need of additional support include *Reading Stars, Study Island, Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET)* program and after-school tutoring.

All ICS students in grades K-8 receive quality second language (Spanish) instruction in one of two language programs. In the Spanish Enhanced program, students receive 30-45 minutes of Spanish language instruction to develop conversational Spanish language skills. In the Spanish Immersion program, students receive all major instruction in the Spanish language in grades K-2, and then in grades 3-8 receive instruction in both the Spanish and English languages, each year increasing the amount of English instruction. In grades K-5, students participate in intensive,

cross-curricular “country studies” which support our goal of developing a community of global citizens who are prepared to fully participate in the international society of the future. In addition, our middle school students study other non-European languages, further supporting this goal as well as our desire to help students develop familiarity with global language systems. This past year, the students had a course in Japanese language and culture, and in the 2008-2009 year, we are adding a course in Arabic language and culture.

ICS approaches student learning with the understanding that differentiated learning and teaching best meets the needs of a varied student population. Our teachers employ whole group direct instruction, small group instruction, and individualized instruction as needed. We provide supports for pull-out and push-in specialists such as English as a Second Language (ESL), Special Education and at-risk learners. We believe that a student’s struggle with a subject or learning is possible only a temporary condition and seek to quickly provide support to assist the student’s development as a learner. We provide a part-time, highly-qualified classroom assistant in every classroom for twenty hours per week. Our specialists, which include three special education teachers, two reading teachers and one ESL teacher provide support as needs are identified. In addition, our CSAP process helps support students who are not classified as Special Education students. Our consultants (Pediatric Therapeutic Services) provide Speech, occupational therapy and physical therapy services. We also have a consultant school psychologist who completes 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* program for grades 6 through 8 provides problem-based math topics embedded in theme-based units that last over longer periods than traditional units of study. These topics are supported by hands-on activities such as creating graphs and maps to “connect” math with real-life experiences. Our Prentice Hall science program allows for students to work with hands-on activities as well. Our teachers are trained in how to create centers and how to integrate cross-thematic and cross-curricular units. Supported by a “village” structure, teachers are urged to work with grade-level partners as well as across programs and grade levels. Teachers are encouraged to connect meaningful projects to in-classroom learning. They are provided professional development to meet these requirements. Best practices are expected to be utilized in lesson and unit planning, as well as in establishing an environment of active learning in the classroom.

As mentioned previously, ICS supports all students in every way possible, including CSAP review, formal testing to determine if specially-designed instruction is necessary, pull-out small groups for reading as necessary, online activities such as *First in Math*, *Fast ForWord* and *Study Island*. We utilize volunteers from the outside for the *Reading Stars* program. We advocate connecting with the community outside of the school building, as we believe that outside support such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters build stability and help instill self-confidence in our students, while serving the dual purpose of furthering our goal to develop our students into true global citizens.

Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments

- act 48 approval letter

- induction plan approval letter

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 - Attachment

- special education policies and procedures

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	19	Special Education Chairperson
Thomas Henry	1.00	Learning Support	Independence Charter	20	Works mostly with upper school children
Michael Farrell	1.00	Learning Support	Independence Charter	20	works mostly with lower school

					children
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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	.25
School Counselor	Independence Charter	1.00

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	No	No	No

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	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Student Assessment

ICS has shown continued academic growth, meeting AYP performance threshold standards for five successive years (since AYP measurement began). PSSA test scores indicate that our greater strength for all groups is mathematics, but our reading scores have shown significant growth. This year, our overall percent proficient and/or advanced for grades 3-8 was 73.5% in math and 69.8% in reading. We continue to decrease the number of students who score below basic, and 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 results provide information in specific learning areas, and we train our teachers to use that data to help guide their assessment of student needs and growth throughout the year.

ICS pays close attention to participation standards on all standardized tests, and has maintained a 99.8%-100% participation rate on all PSSA exams since participation measurement began in 2005, including a 100% participation rate on the 2008 exam. Graduation standards do not apply to our school, as we are a K-8 school. However, it is a primary concern for us to “graduate” our students from elementary/middle to high school in a timely fashion. Regular student attendance is a priority at ICS, and we have maintained an attendance rate average of 95% since attendance measurement began in 2003.

In our effort to provide an adequate testing environment for each student, we have decreased the size of individual testing groups and prepared students throughout the year with test-taking skills and techniques to guide them through the actual process. A larger question of curriculum, comprehension and content is reviewed yearly by the curriculum committee. We continue to experience an achievement gap for African American students, specifically on the reading assessment (details outlined in Section I: Improvements), and consistently review our practice in an effort to decrease and eventually eliminate that gap. Our reading specialists focus on the needs of our struggling readers. We also supplement reading instruction with the aforementioned academic support programs (listed in Section III: Rigorous Instructional Program). Finally, we fund targeted after-school tutoring in math and reading as well as an after-school support program for students most at risk.

At ICS, we measure student progress at regular intervals throughout the school year. This is integral to the process of creating teaching and learning goals for each student. We use the following assessments: DIBELS, Voyager testing GRADE (for older students), EDL (Spanish version of the DRA — for Spanish Immersion students). In addition, QRI’s are available for testing individual students. Teacher observations note the use of flexible grouping for student instruction, opportunities to practice and apply skills, the relevance of homework assignments, and teacher’s progress through the curriculum so that all standards are addressed. Report cards are disseminated for each trimester and reflect the curriculum taught. The following list provides evidence of a student support framework:

After-school - *Voyager, Bright Sky/Reading Stars, math tutoring, Study Island, Spanish Plus*

During School day — reading specialist small group work, counselor small group and individual student work, full inclusion of special education students, ESL pull-out and push-in, behavioral support in the form of behavioral plans and charts, *SWEBS*

Students are first supported in the classroom with whole and small flexible-group instruction. The classroom assistant’s main role is to support this grouping. Students who continue to struggle are referred to tutoring after school, or work with the reading specialist. CSAP review may indicate eventual testing for learning needs. Parent support is elicited where outside support may be needed.

Student Assessment - Attachment

- ICS PSSA scores 2008

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, Special Education Chair and the Math and Science Coach. 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. Our evaluators continue their professional development through involvement in challenging seminars and workshops.

Instructional techniques unique to our mission include TPR: Total Physical Response used in the Conversational Spanish and Japanese lessons, which means using all modalities. TTotal Immersion for the Spanish program which means having teachers speak only Spanish to english based kids which means that absorb Spanish by being immersed in it. We also utilize as much project based and experiential learning as possible including meeting and working with people from all over the world.

Teacher Evaluation - Attachment

- Teacher Evaluation Explanation

SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

Leadership Changes

There was no change in school administration.

We had some changes in the Board of Trustees. Four board members resigned at the end of their terms citing work related commitments.

Two new board members joined. The number of seats to be filled is 10 total, therefore there is one vacancy. We have a candidate for that vacancy.

Board of Trustees

Name of Trustee	Office (if any)
Pamela Prell	Board Co-President
Nicole Kilcullen	Board Co-President
Anyabwile Bankol'e	Secretary
Rosina Miller	Treasurer
Ryan Boyer	officer
Kristin Nocco	officer
Eric Cramer	officer
Rebecca Baehr	officer
Pedro Rodriguez	officer

Professional Development (Governance)

The ICS BOT did not hold orientation since there were no new members in the 2007-2008 school year. The Board did however on 2007, 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. This strategic plan took effect in Spring 2007. The various committees in charge of enabling the strategic plan are making reports to the Board on the progress. The board also empowered its fledgling development committee and hired a development consultant to support the development committee. This Board of Trustees operates faithfully to the Sunshine Law and the Public Officials Act. Board Meetings are open to the public, posted in advance. Board Meetings include a time on the agenda for public comment.

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, Development, Discipline, Facilities, and Policy. 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.

Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School - Attachment

- Independence Charter School BOT meeting schedule

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 8 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

Independence Charter has hired a development firm which has helped to revamp and revitalize the development committee. Some of the following activities are new, some are old.

Old:

- 1. We have an annual Calendar event wherein we celebrate the calendar art work that our kids have produced. This allows for us to do a small fundraiser as well collecting advertisement in the calendar.**
- 2. We do a yearly letter writing fundraiser to all of our families.**
- 3. Our PTA does a yearly silent auction that raises money for our arts program. Their fundraising is separate from ours however.**
- 4. The PTA also does various promotions such as Scholastic book selling or pizza and cookie dough selling to earn more money to support our programs.**

New:

- 1. We have increased the number of grants we are writing. We have been successful in getting a YET grant for after school reading literacy for two years. We received an HP grant in previous years. We received a Discovery grant for \$ 5000 and a Best Buy grant for \$ 2000.**
 - 2. We are also trying to build our network of larger funders and this will be the role of the CEO in the coming year.**
 - 3. We have received two large grants from the Brooke Lenfest Foundation.**
- These grants, and the fundraising is all clearly written in our budget reports. All grants are accepted or rejected through resolution at the Board Meeting level.**

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 Controller 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 Controller'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
- Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances Signed

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

The school's auditing firm is Yampolsky Mandelof Siver & Ryan. The last audit is dated December 21, 2007 for fiscal year 2006-2007 and has a clean unqualified opinion. There are no materilas finds or questioned costs. It is impossible to submit an audit for 2007-2008 by August 1, 2007. We expect the 2007-2008 audited statements to be completed by 12/31/08.

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

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

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 currently leases a facility at 105 South 7th St. The school expects to move to a renovated building at 1600 Lombard Street on September 1, 2008. The building is owned by an affiliated non profit, The Worlds of Opportunity Foundation. It was purchased and renovated with funds derived from tax exempt financing.

The school purchased incidental furniture and equipment after obtaining quotations from various vendors during Fiscal Year 2008

Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs

The School's Board of Trustees (through its affiliate, Worlds of Opportunity Foundation) purchased a former public school building located at 1600 Lombard Street in Philadelphia. The school/foundation is renovating the existing structure and constructing a three story addition. Financing for the project was provided through the issuance of tax exempt bonds. The project will

be completed by September 1, 2008. Costs and planning for this project are in accordance with the school's strategic plan and long-term financial plan.

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.

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

- letter regarding evidence of submission to request reimbursement
- Wellness policy

Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs

For medical Insurance the school offers the following plans in accordance with Act22 to employees:

- Personal Choice,
- Keystone Health Plan,
- United Concordia Dental Plan
- Wage Continuation
- Life Insurance

Please see attached certificate for other liability insurances:

- Worker's Compensation
- General Liability
- Corporate Officers Error and Omissions
- Contents Insurance

Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs - Attachment

- Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs

SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS

Quality of Teaching and Other Staff

There are 44 teaching staff. Of these 59% were returning staff. 4 staff were replacements for staff that left in the middle of the school year. We had two teachers leave for extended maternity leave, and 3 teachers move to far away locations in the country. 3 staff filled newly created positions since our school is still growing. Generally, we have good staff retention but were hit hard due to maternity leaves and those teachers moving away. We have been concentrating so much on teacher certification that for some teachers and are supporting their move to full certification.

Quality of Teaching and Other Staff - Attachment

- pde 414 verification 2007-2008

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, the Principal's Assistant, the Technology Specialist with an audience of parents who attend if they wish to. In 2007-2008 we used a computer generated selection system. It was painfully quick and so in the coming year plan to use an old fashioned system of pulling names from a drum. Sibling preference is also given to families who 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 600 students on their wait list with well over 200 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 to our phone and mail inquiries, 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 and readiness for first grade.

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 250 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 and for attendants if indicated.

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. Because we do not directly select the bus company that provides our service, and because they are granted a lengthy contract, there are problems with the quality of drivers, the response of the

company. We work as closely as possible with those individuals and with the School District of Philadelphia which has granted the contracts.

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 53% 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. Next year, we will contract with another agency as we are not satisfied with the quality of the food that the School District provides.

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. Students who are failing academically are never considered eligible for expulsion as a single

criteria.

43 students were involved in 53 suspensions.

One expulsion due to weapons violation.

Student Conduct - Attachment

- ICS student code of conduct(discipline)

ASSURANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

School Year: 2008

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
2008 - 2009 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

Date

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 Nicole Kilcullen and Pamela Prell

Title Co-Presidents

Phone 215-238-8000

Fax 215-238-1998

E-mail administration@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 administration@independencecharter.org

Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date

Signature Page

Signature Page - Attachment

- signature page note