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ICS INSIDER

6,000+ Thinkers

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Engage, Educate, Empower

From the Superintendent

Dear ICSD Community,

Achieving our vision of 6000+ Thinkers would be impossible if we did not engage and empower each member of our learning community. After all, it is only by working with you — calling upon your expertise and learning from your experiences — that we can confidently make decisions to benefit our students, employees and community.

In the fall, we asked for your participation in our 2014 Goals & Priorities Survey, which included questions about our mission, school and community relationships, curriculum, events and communication, among other topics. In total, 1,849 people responded to the survey — 1,611 parents and community members, and 238 students. Our strategic communication and outreach resulted in a phenomenal 163% participation increase from 2013!

I appreciate everyone who shared his or her feedback. Establishing appropriate goals and priorities aligned with your perspectives is essential to developing and maintaining your connection to the Ithaca City School District.

Your responses showed us that we are making gains in many important areas. Seventy-five percent of participating community members said information received from the district is timely and 77% said the information is clear. Our school district website (71%) remains the top way respondents receive information, showing us our efforts to improve this resource are paying off.

A large majority of student respondents (86%) indicated they had a very positive relationship with at least one teacher, while 87% said their teachers encourage them to do well in school. While 71% of student respondents said they would recommend their school to a friend, only 59% said their classes were rigorous and preparing them for college and their career. We are proud that most students have positive feelings about their school experience. We are committed to continuous improvement.

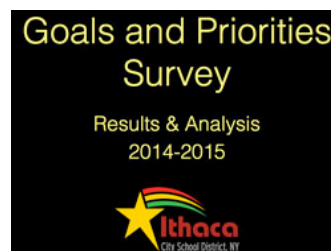
Some respondents said the district needs to involve stakeholders when making important decisions. We agree, and this survey represents just one aspect of our comprehensive community engagement strategy.

You are our most vital resource, and we hope you will continue to engage with us about your education and school priorities.

Sincerely,



Dr. Luvelle Brown
Superintendent of Schools



Please visit our data presentation [here](#).

From the Board of Education

The Board of Education met on December 15, 2014. At this meeting, Chief Operations Officer Amanda Verba presented a comparison of revenue and expenditures, which showed that expenditures have been exceeding revenue and depleting fund balance. She spoke about the need to reverse that trend and work toward replenishing the fund balance.

After her presentation, Ms. Verba asked the Board for guidance on budget development. When asked how much fund balance the district should commit to maintain Board members spoke in support of maintaining one to two percent fund balance annually. Board members agreed that they were not interested in trying to exceed the tax cap, but remain at or slightly below the cap instead. The Board also discussed the importance of advocating to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment.

The first Board meeting of 2015 was held on January 13 and featured a presentation on professional development in the district. This

presentation highlighted the upcoming January 30th PLC Day, curriculum work, professional development for education support professionals, technology implementation professional development, and other targeted offerings. Superintendent Brown also discussed results from the recent Goals and Priorities survey at this Board meeting. Individual responses increased 163% from 2013, which gave district leaders strong data on which to base future education decisions.

All Board of Education and Board Committee meetings are open to the public. For a schedule of upcoming meetings, please visit the district's online [calendar](#). To locate meeting agendas, minutes, and other Board documents, please use the "Board Meeting Minutes and Public Documents" link on the [Board of Education page](#) of the website. Board meeting videos are streamed live on the bottom of this page and archived for later viewing.

If you would like to speak briefly at a Board meeting, just show up and sign in on the speaker sign in sheet by the door. If you have a more detailed item you would like added to the Board agenda, please email the district clerk at danielle.desilva@icsd.k12.ny.us

Upcoming Dates of Importance

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec. 15, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. Finance Committee meeting • Jan. 15, 2015 at 5:45 p.m. Policy Committee meeting • Jan. 20, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. Facilities Committee • Jan. 26, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. Finance Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan. 27, 2015 at 4:30 p.m. Curriculum Committee • Jan. 27, 2015 at 7 p.m. Monthly Voting Meeting • Jan. 28, 2015 at 5 p.m. Human Resources Committee • Jan. 29, 2015 at 5:45 p.m. Policy Committee |
|--|---|

The next
BoE Meeting
will be
12/16/14

Lehman Alternative Community School

by Chris Sperry



LACS students celebrate the 40th anniversary at the Ithaca Festival.

Forty years ago the Ithaca City School District opened a *New Junior High Program* with 60 students in 7th through 9th grade. Under the leadership of the founding principal, Dave Lehman, the *NJHP* grew into one of the premier progressive public alternative schools in the nation. Today the Lehman Alternative Community School has 300+ students in grades 6-12 in its renovated campus on West Hill. Dave **Lehman** retired in 2004 but the founding principles that he helped to inspire continue to drive our school.

From the start LACS was to be an **Alternative** to the education found at Boynton and Dewitt middle schools and at Ithaca High School. While our school's unique graduation requirements incorporate New York State and Common Core standards, our students graduate not through "credits" and Regents exams but after demonstrating skills and knowledge in 15 different essential areas through portfolios and public performances. Our curriculum emphasizes in-depth project-based learning through student-centered pedagogy.



10th grade LACS students demonstrating their learning in the week-long Middle East Debates.



LACS students at an elementary school.

LACS incorporates learning outside of the classroom, including community service, career explorations and spring trips. During the last week in May the school divides into 20+ groups; backcountry canoeing the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania, working at the Akwesasne Freedom School, living in a Spanish speaking nation, building homes in New Orleans, and learning in more than a dozen other venues.

LACS uses the Ithaca and global **Community** as our school but also strives to be a just and caring community within our building. The fundamental decisions about the school are debated and decided, one-person one vote, at our weekly All School Meetings. Each student also participates in a committee that runs some aspect of the school, including Maintenance, Site-Based Council, Locovores and the Alternative Community Court. Close student-staff relationships are central to building a feeling of shared ownership and respect at LACS.



LACS students at an annual fall retreat.



Finally LACS is a **School** within the ICSD, serving and reflecting the academic, social and emotional needs of a diverse and ever changing student body. Perhaps the best reflection of our uniqueness came in the feedback from alumni at our 40th reunion this summer. LACS graduates reported that the school helped them to *find their passions*, to *think critically*, to *appreciate both community and diversity*, and to *work towards making the world a better place*.

LACS students at an All School Meeting.

Ithaca High School: English/Digital Media Class

by Steve Cass

This school year has brought great enthusiasm and learning by the students of the English/Digital Media class, co-taught by Steve Cass and Michael Reiff, and the Digital Media class taught by Cass. The classes have expanded to offer many sections related to the media field. The English/Digital Media classes produce a bi-weekly magazine format show and the double period class started producing the first ever daily video morning announcements, that is available to the High School, but also to anyone who wishes to view them.



Reiff has seen an exponential growth from last year's classes to this year's classes. "I would say that this year we got an increase in work ethic, because we have a lot of different new opportunities for the students. Not only producing segments that go on YouTube and TimeWarner Cable but also the morning announcements has been a big leap forward in opportunities. However we also, thanks to Mr. Cass, have college credit being awarded to some of our students, which I think has really shown the students what's at stake in their education, which is great."

Amy Shmoys, a senior, is thrilled with the opportunities she is able to take advantage of in this class. "This program offers me access to technology that I normally would never see and trains me to use all of this stuff in the studio, and camera work, which is a very useful skill, that I can come out of high school and get a job, and is also just a good skill to have."

Emily Powers is grateful for the opportunity which led her to pursue this in college. "English/Digital media taught me a lot during my junior year because it made me decide what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. And because of that, I applied at The Park School at Ithaca College and was accepted, so I will be editing for my whole life."

Alex Wolzcanski, a senior, is taking advantage of these skills so he can utilize them for college: "I'm getting a lot of experience and using this different technology that I never really been exposed to before and I get to be exposed to cameras and learning how to use all the equipment and editing. It's helpful in the future if you want to go into a job where media is prevalent, which is pretty much every job."



"For only being in its second year of existence here at I.H.S., we've seen our enrollment triple. It's nice to see that the students are excited. By the word of mouth from student to student, we've seen the excitement grow. We have students that come and tell us, 'I wish I signed up for this class, because I'm hearing great things about it'. We were also able to do sporting events this year. We've done 7 already in the fall. We plan on doing a lot more in the winter and spring seasons. The different types of opportunities that the students get here is very valuable because they can take these skills to college if they want to pursue it as career and have a leg up on other students who don't have a program like this in their schools."



Click on image to see WRED video

NYS Lawmakers Visit ICSD Schools

NYS Senator Thomas O'Mara and NYS Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton visited the Ithaca City School District on January 9th. The lawmakers were interested in seeing examples of teaching and learning at ICSD. Superintendent Dr. Brown facilitated a tour of learning spaces at Fall Creek Elementary School and Ithaca High School. At both schools, the honored guests remarked about the high-levels of engagement and instruction as they met students and staff.



Fall Creek Elementary School



IHS Digital Media



IHS Technology



NY Senator Thomas O'Mara,
ICSD Superintendent Luvelle Brown,
NYS Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton

Staff Highlight: Steve Cass



Steve Cass wears two hats in the Ithaca City School District – one as a technology teacher and another as an AV Media Engineer. From Oswego, N.Y., Cass came to Ithaca after earning his master's in vocational teacher preparation from SUNY Oswego and teaching at Oswego High School, his alma mater. In Ithaca, Cass teaches five television production classes, including three English/Digital Media course with Michael Reiff.

As AV Media Engineer, Cass works year-round to keep the TV studio running, manage the equipment and make sure it runs properly. This is his third year with the District, and his second year teaching. He's been involved in building the high school's TV/Digital Media program and is proud of what the program can offer to students.

By the time students leave the program at the high school, they have the opportunity to earn up to 16 college credits through concurrent enrollment at TC3 and Cayuga Community College. This year, Cass' students are producing morning announcements for the school and

streaming sporting and fine arts events on YouTube.

"Considering what the students can accomplish in this program, they should be able to take these credits with them, because they are the skills students would be learning in college," says Cass.

Cass says not only do students learn how to use the equipment in the TV studio, they learn how to work in a professional environment. "We stress teamwork in our production classes. Students have to fill out job applications for the role they want in the English/Digital Media classes. They have to work together to get a show completed, so we really get to teach students to rely on each other and work as a team."

Like many teachers in the ICSD, Cass says working with students is the biggest reason he likes his job. "I enjoy coming and learning from the students and getting their perspective on how they learn," he says. "Students give us feedback and we try to tweak what we're doing to try to create a more responsive learning environment."

Cass sees his students engage with technology every day, which he considers a practical example of the District's mission to Engage, Educate and Empower. "I feel connected to the District's mission, because the students I work with are going to continue to pass the knowledge they get to other people and continue to educate themselves."

Recent Updates from our Schools

Click the images below to view updates from our schools on their websites:



DeWitt Career Day



CHES Pizza and Books



BJM Music Program



Fall Creek Literature Celebration



BJM Past & Present



Boynton Pandemics & Geography



CHES Great Escape & Great Give Back



South Hill Winter Concert



Belle Sherman Lightbot



Caroline Winter Market



Boynton Hour of Code



I.H.S. Craft & Food Fair

Recent District News

- [ICSD Reports Increased Graduation Rate for Fourth Consecutive Year](#)
- [ICSD Teachers Receive IPEI Grants](#)
- [ICSD Board of Education Commendations](#)

Newsletter Contact: icsdcommunications@icsd.k12.ny.us