

180 Days of Thinking with ICSD

Day 97: Focus on Breathing-Heather Zimar, Editor & ICSD Parent

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This summer I completed a master's degree in communications at Ithaca College. In preparation for one of my final presentations, I asked my daughter, a recent graduate of Boynton Middle School, what I should do to get ready to speak in front of my class and professors. She responded, "Well, Jesse Bush focuses a lot on breathing." (She had participated this spring in an Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) Teacher Grant, which brought Bush, associate artistic director and head of education at the Hangar Theatre,

into her English class for two weeks). Not only was my daughter's response reflective of the knowledge gained from an excellent experiential learning program, it was timely, as my approaching presentation happened to be based on an IPEI- related project. Over and over again, IPEI and its partners and affiliates have impressed me. I've had the opportunity to see firsthand through observations as a parent, and as an IPEI public relations committee member, the impact that innovative teacher and community partner programs supported by IPEI have had on student learning. Examples include the determination and confidence gained by students in a Lehman Alternative Community School (LACS) archery program; the curiosity of history ignited in fourth graders by an Enfield Elementary School unit on the Revolutionary War; and the professionalism developed by middle schoolers through a collaboration between Ithaca College and Boynton music directors. As a graduate student, I've engaged with IPEI leaders and volunteers, all of whom consistently demonstrate the values the organization promotes. Their responsiveness and willingness to share their time and knowledge has enhanced my own educational experience. I'm grateful for the work IPEI does, for my children and for the community as a whole.

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