



THE PATRIOT

December 2017

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Each year, Illinois encourages schools to participate in the 5Essentials Survey online. The purpose is to provide school leaders input to help develop school improvement plans through asking students about their school experiences. Schools are required to administer this survey at least once every two years.

IJHS is once again participating in this survey to gain valuable information from our students, staff, and parents. A letter will be coming home this week notifying parents about the parent and student survey. I ask that you take a moment to read this letter. Results from the survey help as at IJHS better support and prepare our students for a successful future.



Happy Holidays

As we are nearing the end of the calendar year, I want to wish all of our families, on behalf of everyone at IJHS, a happy, healthy holiday season!

be traveling, we wish you safe journeys.

The Independence office will be closed at this time.

Our winter break will run from Monday, Dec. 25 - Friday, January 5. Classes resume on Monday, January 8th. For all of our families who will



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE: Our NJHS will be volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House in Oak Lawn on Dec. 6th. Our students will be preparing and serving lunch to those families. We wish them all the best!



WINTER CONCERT: We hope our community can join us for our annual winter concert on Thursday, December 14. Our band and choir performance begins at 7:00p.



WINTER BREAK: Independence JHS will be on winter break from December 25 - January 5. We will return back to school on Monday, January 8. We wish everyone a happy, healthy holiday break!

Utilizing Mistakes to Drive Learning

Recently, the IJHS math team took a look at an innovative new way of looking at student assessments - highlight the mistakes!

A common concern that begins to develop in children at and around the junior high level is students begin to draw their own conclusions that they "are not good at math."

Unfortunately, this mentality typically ends up sticking with them for the rest of their lives. Picture the scenario of a large group of adults being asked, who is not good at reading - nobody raises their hands; however, when the same group is asked who isn't good at math, half the room responds.

This year, the math team has been engaged in a book study on Jo Boaler's, Mathematical Mindset. An excellent read for anyone interested that takes the concept of growth mindset (which I discussed in my Sept. newsletter) and applies it to math instruction. One of the tenets of this book focus on how often times in math classes, it is getting the right answer that is overemphasized. Students focus on the right answer and not the conversation of what process did I take or what mistakes can I anticipate. The true premise of math is lost and what students take away is strictly computation.

As we continue to explore and apply the eight mathematical practices (8 mathematical practices) in our instruction, our hope is to further



encourage that productive struggle and perseverance often mentioned when discussing math class.

One way we are looking to support this concept is through the way in which we review summative assessments with our students. Often times when a test is passed back, students focus only on what score they received. We are using a new strategy that encourages students to focus on the learning process, by highlighting mistakes that were made and solving them. The idea itself came from a video we came across (<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/math-test-grading-tips>). Our students still receive a grade, but it is not the first thing they see when tests are returned. Instead they work through their mistakes and identify where they went wrong. Essentially,

making students accountable for what they learned over the course of the unit.

This is certainly a new approach, but one that we not performing alone. Just last week, Diane Muller, our district's math coach was attending a conference through the National Council of Mathematics Teachers where a team from Naperville Central High School presented on this very practice that they implemented in their own high school - which has begun to change the mindset students have for math!

One of our goals is still to encourage our students to be more intrinsically motivated, a task that is difficult for students of this age. However, strategies such as this one, have the potential to help shift that belief.

~~mistakes~~
Mistakes
are
opportunities
to learn.

Students Wrap up Future Cities

Our 8th grade students are in the final stages of their future city designs.

Pictured are Colton Sterling and Joe

Cinkus as their group works on the building a scale model of their city for science class.

Students will be

presenting their models to the school



when we return from winter break in January.

While all of our 8th graders are developing models for their cities, two of our groups are going on to the regional competition.

Congratulations to Lush Land city (designed by Shea Fitzgerald, Krysta

Reveche and Clare Filipiak) and Flextopia (designed by Marius Kerulis, Liam Gayduck, Colton Sterling, and Joe Cinkus). These two groups were selected based upon their research papers on the design and purpose of their cities. Staff had the opportunity to read everyone's papers, which were submitted anonymously and select the two cities that they felt best met the unit's objectives.

Great job to all of our 8th graders and best of luck to our two groups that are moving on!

2017 Student Senate

Before Thanksgiving break, on November 17, a group of six IJHS students were selected to attend the SSSJHSC (South Suburban Junior High School Conference) Student Senate. Those six students were Kelly Greene, Aidan Foertsch, Isabelle Neme, Owen McGovern, Gianna Donato, and Ethan Byrne. Our students joined 54 other students from all 10 conference schools in what started several years ago as a way to bring our students together in a leadership conference.

This year's event took place at Wilkins Junior High School where all students participated in three activities geared towards teamwork, leadership, and collaboration. In speaking with the students afterwards, they were thrilled at the opportunity

to attend and had an enjoyable time. One of the greatest benefits of this is that it allows our students to work with others and hone their leadership skills in an unfamiliar setting.

I want to thank Doreen Durant, Denise Werges, and Heather Meskimen for joining our students this year. Along with chaperoning the students, they were tasked with an additional responsibility:

to help plan next year's event which we will host. Together with the students, they came up with some great ideas and can happily say that



the general agenda for the event is already planned!