New Year, New Format at Independence

Dear Stakeholders,

We have reached the mid-point of the academic year, and I want to update you on the Blended Learning format employed at Independence. Students and staff are using face-to-face classroom and on-line options to maximize academic potential each day. Qualified students are making use of flex-scheduling to work at their own pace as well as tend to family and employment responsibilities. As students continue to enroll in our school this year, it has been interesting to witness them learning important life lessons in addition to the academic content of their scheduled courses. They quickly realize that the flexibility offered at Independence comes with additional personal responsibility and in order to achieve their goals, they need to manage their time well and take charge of their education. With the new format, students can take six on-site classes in a typical school day and work at an accelerated pace if they so choose. Highly motivated students may add a seventh class during Extended Day, which enables them to finish courses quickly and move on to additional classes when they are ready. By successfully completing the maximum number of classes each semester, it is possible for students to graduate early, on time, or as close to on time as possible. To succeed in this fast-paced environment, students must develop organizational skills, self-discipline and the ability to focus, habits that will serve them well in school and in the workplace.

The students who attend IHS because they prefer the smaller class size, appreciate more personalized attention from the faculty and staff, or feel that a large, traditional school setting is just not for them, will need to adopt the same life-skills as the students who are driven by personal timelines. The most successful Independence students are those who take ownership of their studies, attend classes regularly, co-plan with their teachers to set short- and long-term goals, and who never lose sight of the end results.

I take pride in our school, our staff and our students, and look forward to celebrating their collaboration, dedication and successes this year.

Sincerely,
Tabatha Taylor, Principal
Student Highlights

Roswell Rotary Recognizes IHS Interact Member

Interact Club member, Fernanda Garcia, was presented with the Roswell Rotary’s “Service Above Self” award in September. Fernanda was recognized for her participation in all Interact activities, on and off school campus. She has assisted with building the Interact float for the Roswell Youth Day Parade, taken part in the Atlanta Heart Walk, collected and packed canned goods for a local food drive and helped organize the LifeSouth blood drive. Fernanda has also served as a school ambassador during past December and May graduation ceremonies and receptions. Ms. Gaganjot Singh, the IHS Interact Faculty Advisor, commented, “Fernanda takes on a leadership role with her peers and is always eager to support any school activity.” Fernanda was sponsored by the Roswell Rotary to attend the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) program last summer. The annual program focuses on:

- Fundamentals of leadership
- Ethics of positive leadership
- Importance of communication skills in effective leadership
- Problem solving and conflict management
- Rotary’s purpose and service to the community
- Building self-confidence and self-esteem
- Elements of community and global citizenship

IHS Design to Be Used on FCS Holiday Cards

The students in Mr. Campbell’s 5th Period Art Class put the finishing touches on the design they created for consideration by Fulton County Schools as one of this year’s holiday greeting cards. The students learned last month that their image, a winter sweater with seasonal colors and patterns that evoke a knitted texture, was selected to be mailed to FCS stakeholders with the holiday greeting, “Stay Cozy.” In addition to Printmaking, art courses at Independence include:

- Intro to Art
- Printmaking I & II
- Ceramics I & II
- Drawing & Painting I & II
- Sculpture I & II
- Photo Design I & II
Special Events

Financial Aid Lunch & Learn

The purpose of the October Lunch & Learn was to provide students an opportunity to learn about ways to finance their post-secondary plans. Ms. Atua Emu from the Georgia Student Finance Commission explained the differences between scholarships, grants and loans and scheduled time for student Q & A. A portion of the hour-long session was devoted to assisting the attendees as they began to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This proved to be especially helpful for those students who will be finishing their studies and graduating this December.

Students and parents interested in learning more about financing education after high school can visit GAfutures.org for additional information and available resources.

Check It Out!

For 25 years, young ladies in area high schools have benefitted from Check It Out!, a health program addressing breast cancer prevention and the risk factors associated with the disease. Each year, the Oncology Department of Northside Hospital and the Greater Atlanta Hadassah, a volunteer organization focusing on promoting issues of women’s health and family well-being, partner to provide educational materials and a nurse/speaker for our school. The attendees at this year’s October event learned that one in every eight women will have some type of breast cancer in her lifetime; that the number one risk factor in getting breast cancer is simply being a woman; and that a mammogram is still the best test for early detection.

We were privileged to host Ms. Annie Kohut of the Greater Atlanta Hadassah, Ms. Susan Casella of Northside Hospital and Ms. Debra Sharker, a breast cancer survivor who shared the personal story of her battle with breast cancer. She explained to the students that she doesn’t only think of herself as a “survivor” but also a “thriver,” because she has survived and chooses to thrive every day. She encouraged the young ladies in the audience to take ownership of their health care, to make smart choices and to practice good habits now to reap the benefits as they move into adulthood.

“The #1 risk factor for breast cancer is being a woman. The best method of early detection is still the mammogram.”

Apply to College Day

The annual IHS “Apply to College Day” took place on Tuesday, October 30 with representatives from eight schools, businesses and branches of the military in attendance. Ms. Atua Emu of the Georgia Student Finance Commission was kind enough to return to Independence for the second time that month to answer students’ questions about financing their post-secondary plans. The recruiters were complimentary of our students and their questions and indicated that, based on the number of students attending, the percentage of applications they received rivaled that of a much larger event. Sixteen Independence students submitted college applications that morning and look forward to hearing from Georgia State University, Paine College, Clayton State University and Gordon College.

Students who spoke with military recruiters plan to explore those options further as they get closer to graduation.
Faculty Spotlight

Ms. Kerry Shorr, English Language Arts teacher, Department Chair and Vanguard team member, was recently spotlighted in the District’s Vanguard Newsletter for going “above and beyond, not only supporting her own mentee this school year, but all members of the teaching staff. Ms. Shorr has dived in and supported teachers on Edgenuity, along with other technology that can support blended learning.”

Mr. Campbell was invited to present his Master’s thesis, “Teacher Self-Care,” at the Atlanta High Museum of Art on November 5, 2020.

Ms. Ashley Ellis, Ms. Kerry Shorr, and Ms. Tashema Atkinson traveled to Denver, Colorado as presenters on the topic of “Personalized Learning in Alternative Education” at the 2019 National Dropout Prevention Center. The conference was attended by educators, principals, program specialists, consultants and coordinators who are engaged in learning different techniques and strategies to help reduce the dropout of today’s youth. Please visit our website at www.fultonschools.org/independencems for details about their presentation.

Gaining New Heights in Dropout Prevention 2019 National Dropout Prevention Conference Denver, CO

Congratulations to Ms. Penny Najar, IHS Support Staff Professional of the Year and Mr. John Chase Campbell, Independence Teacher of the Year! They were honored at the Legacy of Excellence awards luncheon on November 1, 2020.

Independence High School is Beating the Odds!

Beating the Odds (BTO) is a statistical analysis that compares a school’s actual performance on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) with the performance of schools with similar characteristics across the state. Schools that perform higher than similar schools are considered “Beating the Odds.”

Prior to the winter break, the Georgia Department of Education (GA DOE) released the 2019 list of schools that are “Beating the Odds,” and Independence has earned that designation.

Gaining New Heights in Dropout Prevention 2019 National Dropout Prevention Conference Denver, CO

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