ISSAQAH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION DONORS HELP STUDENTS MAKE ‘CENTS’ OF FINANCE

How many 13 year olds know the difference between credit and debit, net and gross income or bonds and stocks?

If you’re in Issaquah School District, the answer is “all.”

Since 2009, Issaquah Schools Foundation donors have helped students make ‘cents’ of financial topics through support of a Financial Literacy Program. The popular curriculum features in-class lessons and culminates with a field trip to the Junior Achievement Finance Park in Auburn.

“Eight graders are not too young to consider the cost of living, the importance of budgets, wants versus needs, taxes and the use of credit and interest,” says John Mejlaender, 8th grade Social Studies instructor at Issaquah Middle School. “Teaching this curriculum is completely worth the time and effort.”

Meljander’s assertion aligns with that of US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Duncan has stated that financial literacy should be a staple of the American education system, praising it for helping students become savvy about money and for its ability to connect classroom lessons to real-life applications.

“It is a great way to teach math. Kids care about money. This isn’t an add-on or extra (to the curriculum); this is a really interesting way to engage students.”
- US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan

Yotam Govrin would agree. In a thank you letter to donors, the 8th grade Issaquah Middle School student enthused, “The JA Finance Park is by far my favorite trip. It was an interesting experience. It made me realize the reality of the future. Life isn’t easy and you have to make choices. I learned how to be smart with my money.

To buy food instead of a new videogame. Thank you, donors, the trip to JA Finance Park will help me in the near and far future.”

To learn more about the Issaquah Schools Foundation and more than 30 donor-funded programs helping students achieve their potential, visit isfdn.org.

TALKING TOUGHS ABOUT SAVING YOUR LIFE

Issaquah High School students shivered, rubbed away goose bumps, and averted their eyes as Gordy Fields, Registered Nurse and Clinical Supervisor at Swedish, shared photos and stories from his personal and professional life in the Navy and from trauma departments and intensive care units. While Gordy’s presentation entitled, “Talking Tough About Saving Your Life” had many graphic photos, but his goal wasn’t to scare students; the presentation was shown to help students make educated choices about driving, drinking and drugs, and to show students that they need to take ownership for their actions.

During the slide show, Gordy covered multiple aspects of driving. In a soft spoken, meaningful voice, he discussed impaired and distracted driving with students. Together they covered the events leading up to crashes, how the body reacts to trauma from a crash, the difference between seatbelts and seatbelts, the consequences of the actions taken by the individuals portrayed in the presentation, and what the smarter decisions would have been had they been in such a situation. Many students were surprised to see how people their own age had made poor decisions that led to serious consequences and disastrous results.

Along with driving safety, Gordy briefly covered alcohol and drugs. He explained from a medical standpoint why the legal drinking age is 21 and what drugs and alcohol can do to the brain as it develops. He also tied this information back into driving safety and shared how drugs and alcohol can affect students when behind the wheel.

Throughout the presentation, students asked meaningful questions and were in awe of the damage that can happen when impaired and how distracted driving leads to a crash. After their health class concluded, students walked away with a better understanding of driving safety and the consequences of poor decisions made by students just like them.
FOCUS ON ISSAQUAH SCHOOLS

ENDEAVOUR RECOGNIZED AS FIRST LEVEL 4 GREEN SCHOOL IN KING COUNTY

During a recent Endeavour Elementary School staff meeting, King County Green Schools Program Manager, Dale Alekel, praised the sustained efforts made by Endeavour and honored them as the first school in King County to reach Level 4 Sustaining Green School status. Dale shared, “My goal when starting this program 13 years ago was to make sure schools were sustaining green practices. Endeavour is an excellent example of what I have envisioned. Being a green school is a wonderful example for all students to learn how to become responsible citizens. With simple everyday actions they can learn how to help sustain the earth and be role models, just as teachers are role models.” A level 4 green school is one that builds off of the levels it has already achieved. This includes waste reduction and recycling (Level One), energy conservation (Level Two), water conservation and pollution prevention (Level Three), and expanding sustainability practices in the ways most relevant to Endeavour.

Even though they’ve reached their level 4 status, Endeavour is already looking forward to what they can build on and improve for next year. Green Team leaders Karen Harmon and Gabrielle Herrling shared they are looking to build on the green sustainability programs they are already implementing at Endeavour. This includes the possibility of square foot gardening, enhancing recycling and composting signage, creating a PTSA garden docent sponsored program, and collecting fruit and vegetable labels to aid in composting. Principal Kathy Connolly shared, “Karen and Gabrielle are always thinking two steps ahead when it comes to our green team program. They are amazing!”

ISSAQUAH HIGH STUDENTS CRACK THE CODE TO PROGRAMMING PROBLEMS

Thirteen teams of Issaquah High School students participated in the winter 2014 programming competition hosted by the Puget Sound Computer Science Teachers Association and sponsored by the Technology Education and Literacy in School (TEALS) program. The students competed against 125 teams at the Microsoft and University of Washington campuses.

Teams were split into two divisions: Novice, for those currently taking their first programming class and Advanced, for those with previous experience. Both divisions were given three hours to solve 19 challenging programming problems as fast as possible.

“ar team performed quite well,” shared Brett Wortzman, Issaquah High School Computer Science Teacher. “We had 10 teams finish the event having solved at least one of the programming problems.”

NEW STATE ASSESSMENTS – NEW HIGHER STANDARDS

What will the new Smarter Balanced scores mean?

Currently, only 89 percent of adults in Washington have a high school diploma or equivalent, and just fewer than 50 percent of these adults have a postsecondary credential. By 2023, Washington State is aiming for all adults in the state to have a high school diploma and at least 70 percent of adults to have a postsecondary credential.

Getting students on the pathway to success after high school is where the Common Core State Standards come in. They provide clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in mathematics and English language arts from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The new Smarter Balanced assessments include computer adaptive tests and performance tasks in English language arts and mathematics. The computer adaptive tests, which are taken online, adapt to each child’s abilities. As a student answers questions correctly, harder questions will be asked. If one is answered wrong it may take a step back. The performance tasks address 21st century skills such as critically analyzing and synthesizing information presented in a variety of formats.

The results will be available through a secure, online reporting system that will map both student achievement and student growth with regard to the achievement of the Common Core State Standards.

We are raising learning expectations for all students at every grade level. As a result, it’s likely that fewer students will meet grade level standards right away. It may take a few years for students to meet and exceed the new standards. Results should improve as students have additional years of instruction aligned to the new standards and become better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

With the new standards and assessment system student scores will represent a “new baseline” to provide a more accurate indicator for educators, students, and parents as they work to meet the rigorous demands of college and career readiness.
Visiting Author Stimulates Interest in Poetry at Briarwood Elementary

Guitar chords and rhyming words greeted fourth grade students and staff at Briarwood Elementary as they joined guest author Eric Ode for an interactive writer’s workshop. Eric had previously spent the morning sharing his humorous poetry books during school-wide assemblies and discussed where he gets his ideas, how to organize ideas, and the writing process with students. During the writer’s workshops, fourth graders had the opportunity to delve into these ideas further and write descriptive poems with Eric.

To start off the workshops and learn more about the writing background of Briarwood fourth graders, Eric asked students to share the different styles of writing they have been working on in class. From there, he discussed the writing process and showcased his original journals full of scribbles, rough drafts, and revisions. Students were surprised to see the differences between Eric’s journals and his published poems that were inspired by his brainstorming processes.

After sharing some of his published poetry, Eric and the students brainstormed ideas for poems about spring. Together they worked to create a poem as a group and then students were challenged to individually create another poem using the class ideas. To Eric’s surprise, many students eagerly added personification and used descriptive words to bring their poems to life.

Writing Together for Success

Parents looking for ways to help their children with writing skills at home attended a family workshop held at Maple Hills Elementary School. During the first of two sessions, parents and students learned how reading plays a key role in the development of writing skills. Librarian Christina Stephenson and Title I/LAP Teacher Sheri Ogilvie offered tips for navigating through nonfiction texts and identified resources available for students in the school’s library.

In the second session, parents and students practiced their writing skills. Together they participated in an informational writing session similar to one that students would receive in the classroom. Maple Hills Head Literacy Coach, Jim Dew, led the writing workshop and worked to impart specific strategies that parents can use to help encourage the “inner author” in their students at home.

Issaquah School District Refinances Bonds — Saves Taxpayers $9.2M Over 10 Years

The Issaquah School District recently refinanced its callable 2007 and 2008 bonds in order to take advantage of lower interest rates; a move that will save the District’s taxpayers a total of $9,291,500 million during the next 10 years. “These savings flow directly to taxpayers through reduced tax levies and are not available for District expenses,” notes Superintendent Ron Thiele. “This is a direct savings to our community members in the form of taxes they expected, but will not have to pay.” The Issaquah School Board accomplished these savings by approving the issuance of $98,945,000 in refunding bonds on March 11, 2015. The District has been monitoring bond market conditions and recent low interest rates allowed the District to exceed its savings target. Interest rates averaged 2.25% on the new bonds compared to 4.76% on the old debt.

Bond Feasibility Committee Begins Work

Due to swelling enrollment, continued development and population increases in the Issaquah School District, and decreases in available land, Superintendent Ron Thiele has asked forty-nine community and District representatives, including parents, principals, students, staff, and a wide range of community members to form a Bond Feasibility Committee. The committee will meet in April and May to study, discuss, advise, and make a recommendation to the Superintendent with regard to a potential Capital Bond measure for a 2016 ballot proposition, including proposed content, total cost, and tax impact of a Capital Bond Measure for District facility and infrastructure needs. Information is online at www.issaquah.wednet.edu/2016-school-bond-feasibility

Ron Thiele, Superintendent
EXPLORING CAREER PATHWAYS WITH INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

Two hundred and thirty high school students stood and posed as Wonder Woman, Superman, or Olympians as they discovered the confidence boosting effect of “power poses” during Deanna Carlisle’s opening presentation at the Great Careers Event. Deanna, Founder of Youth Career Compass, shared with students how their future careers could affect their overall health and happiness and implored students to explore their options when reflecting on their futures. Along with sharing career insight, Deanna explained how students could make the most of their career workshops and what steps they should take after the Great Careers Event. Keeping this insight in mind, excited and pumped up, students then broke into small groups during the first of three career exploration workshops, led by industry professionals.

Career workshops ranged from culinary to forensics, nursing to automotive, and cosmetology to video game creation. Workshops were led by local industry professionals eager to share their career passions with students. In turn, students were interested in gaining valuable career insight, connections, and knowledge of potential career fields.

During the culinary workshop, Jessica Arthur, Executive Chef at the Hilton Garden Inn, shared insight into working in both corporate and independent restaurants and many of the pros and cons that can come with working in the culinary industry. Doug Medbury, Dean of Culinary Arts at Renton Technical College, shared his varied culinary experiences and two students from Renton Technical showcased areas of expertise in the culinary field and provided information about the training needed in the industry.

During her workshop, Erika Miller, Graphic Designer at Costco, explained how the field of graphic design is constantly changing. While showcasing some of her work samples, Erika discussed the technical skills needed for the design industry, the advantages of completing a two year certificate program, and the importance of continuing education to constantly hone design skills, trends, and techniques.

During the computer science workshop, led by Alexandra Vaschillo, Information Technology Application Development Instructor at the Lake Washington Technical Institute, students were introduced to foundational skills needed in the information technology industry. Alexandra explained how often IT professionals are like problem solvers because they work to put small puzzle pieces together to form the big picture.

Along with career workshops, students enjoyed lunch and had the opportunity to talk with local technical colleges, career agencies, and recruiters about other possibilities for their futures.

The Great Careers Event is an annual conference for high school students to explore potential future career pathways. The all-day conference was sponsored by the Issaquah School District Career and Technical Education Department, the Issaquah Schools Foundation, the Issaquah Chamber of Commerce, and Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, and a number of other private and public partners.

DIVING INTO THE WILDERNESS

Third graders inched cautiously toward the North Fork Issaquah Creek as they carried their cups full of water and baby salmon. Each student had the opportunity to release a baby salmon into the creek. Max, an Apollo Elementary School third grader, shared, “Today is an amazing day because we get to release salmon!” Prior to the salmon release, Apollo Elementary third grade students learned about the anatomy and life cycle of salmon in the classroom and visited the Issaquah State Salmon Hatchery to make real-life connections to their classroom learning. Throughout their lessons, salmon provided countless resources and intrigue for students as they watched them grow. Another third grader, Hannah, shared, “One of the things I learned about salmon is that they can get stuck in sand. I’m worried some will get stuck in the creek.” Other students were less worried and eagerly released their salmon with the wish of safe travels.