Independence, Missouri, Community Award Winner, 2007

Independence School District
Independence, Missouri

Results

Early childhood & family programming have resulted in over 80% of kindergartners having contact with the district before entering school.

Students involved in the extended program show improvement in almost every measurable area: participation, self-reliance, homework completion, attendance, academic achievement, and more.

Family School Liaisons have worked with families during 17, 170 home visits during the last 3 years.

The District won the state Distinction in Performance award for a perfect Annual Performance Report, as well as the Civic Star for Missouri, in 2006.

Who’s Who In Independence

Dr. Joanie Hartnett, Asst. Superintendent for Middle School/Professional Development
Jim Hinson, Superintendent
Gayle Hobbs, LINC President
Sanzi Kiehne, Asst. Superintendent for Elementary/ Curriculum & Assessment
Don Beimal, Mayor
Dr. Ed Streich, Asst.
Superintendent for High School/ Curriculum & Assessment
Jana Waits, School Board President

For more information, contact Elizabeth Streich at bstreich@indep.k12.mo.us or 816-521-2700

About Independence

With a city population of 113,288 the Independence School District serves 11,489 residents. Household median income in Independence is $45,761, with 54% of children qualifying for free/reduced lunch. All of the district’s 21 schools – 13 elementary, 3 middle, 2 high, and 3 others— are community schools. The District incorporates city, university, state, and local resources to support these schools and the range of services they provide to communities and children.

Some Key Partners in Independence

City of Independence
The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University
Independence Board of Education
Independence Chamber of Commerce
H&R Block Foundation
Local Investment Commission (LINC)
Ministerial Alliance
Missouri Children’s Division
Missouri Department of Education
Samuel Rodgers Health Services
Yale University School of the 21st Century

Everyone in Independence plays a role in educating young people. Each elementary and one high school has a School/Neighborhood Site Council that includes parents, teachers, community members, and students. These councils assess needs for their neighborhood and school and then implement action plans aimed at improving the well-being of students, families, neighborhoods and the community. In Independence, the public believes that a caring community builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for young people.

Initiated with the Schools of the 21st Century approach, the community schools approach has grown over time in the Independence School District and was solidified in 1996 with a new partnership called LINC Caring Communities. The Local Investment Commission (LINC) creates a community governance model driven by direct involvement of informed families and citizens.

The supports and opportunities use a strengths-based, holistic approach including family goal planning, resource referrals, parenting and child education, long-term informal support and interventions, and crisis intervention. Participation is voluntary. The Dental Clinic, serving kindergarten through fifth grade, is a partnership between the District and Samuel Rodgers Health Services, a non-profit dental provider in the community. Children are transported from one school to the Dental Clinic each day on a rotating schedule that allows all children to be served. Transportation is funded by the H&R Block Foundation. A Samuel Rodgers dentist provides free dental care by accessing Medicaid, private insurance plans, and local grants for every student in need. Currently the local mental health center is working with the Independence School District to develop an early intervention program that will provide children and families quick and easy access to psychiatric care and in-home therapeutic services. This new collaboration with agencies not previously involved in the school system is evidence of the impact of a community schools philosophy and commitment.

Buildings are used beyond the school day on a regular basis. Evening and weekend access allows buildings to become community centers during non-school hours. Volunteers within the schools, from mentors to boosters, improve the quality of education by increasing services to students during, before and after school and connecting the broader community to the lives of children. Volunteers from schools, “return the favor” by working in the community with groups like Hillcrest Ministries Homeless Shelter. These efforts build a sense of civic duty in students and create a valuable resource for the community.