

International Community School

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – FALL 2017



from the principal

Greetings ICS Community,

Welcome to the first edition of our newly launched Donor Newsletter! I am thrilled to be starting my second year as the principal of ICS. Over the past 5 years, ICS has changed dramatically, especially across administration and strategic development. Building on all of these changes and shifts administratively, our ICS Students, Faculty, Administrators, and Community have collaborated to fulfill our mission and vision of being the Beloved Community.

With the start of this school year, we enter a season of stable growth, including consistent staffing, curriculum upgrades, and an exciting year. Generous funding from our donors during the 2016-2017 school year has gone to improve our science curriculum through the purchase of Full Option Science Systems (FOSS; a widely used and popular primary school science curriculum known for remarkable student STEM performance) kits in all K-5 homerooms, as well as the creation of a new leveled reading library. This latter initiative will help ICS fulfill our continued focus on balanced literacy. I look forward to sharing how your gifts continue to impact student achievement and development in the coming months.

As a public charter school, ICS receives less local and federal funding than traditional public schools. Other charter schools don't provide transportation. Given our population, having school buses is a necessity. Donations like yours will help us cover the costs for buses so our students can come to school, and for transportation for athletic activities outside of school hours.

If you are returning to the ICS Community and we have not met, please send me an email at Chad.Velde-Cabrera@icsgeorgia.org, and we can set up a time to speak with one another. Reach out to Lauren Ivey at Lauren.Ivey@icsgeorgia.org if you are interested in taking a tour of our school. The ICS story is unique and compelling and is sustained through generous donors like yourself. I appreciate your financial gifts and dedication to ICS and look forward to our continued partnership moving forward!

Sincerely,
Chad Velde-Cabrera



Dates to know

Friday November 3
UN Day
Parade starts at 9:45 am

Saturday November 4
ICS Runs the World –
5K & 1 Mile run/walk
Fundraiser

in our classrooms

The Evolution of Our Class Name: Giving Voice and Choice to Children.

Nicole Olauson – 1st Grade Teacher

The children have had multiple opportunities to practice collecting, tallying and analyzing data in different forms. First, the children voted on whether they could run in the rain before indoor recess with a T-chart on the board.

Secondly, the children were offered six different garden herbs, but only three pots, and participated in a silent vote, where they wrote their choices on paper.

Throughout the week, the children offered suggestions for the classroom name and compiled them on a list. The children were encouraged to keep an open-mind to ideas different than their own. On voting day, because of the number of suggestions, the children sat at their desks with their heads down and raised their hands to vote. We tallied the results to find the top three, which we numbered: 1. The Superheroes, 2. The Dancing Superheroes and 3. The PopTarts. The children then wrote the number of their choice, and again, we tallied the votes. The winning classroom name is The Superheroes.

I believe that this has established a sense of belonging amongst our classroom community and an opportunity to highlight historical figures as real-life superheroes. The name has created an excitement for the school year, as the children are enthusiastic to develop their own characters and customs!

A student in Ms. Nicole's class writing on their bulletin board in the hallway.



Hopes and Dreams for the Year Poetry

Jackie Webb and her 3rd Grade Class

As the children filter into the classroom on the first days of school, they look around with curiosity as if trying to determine what the new school year will be like. Who will their friends be? Where will they sit? They are eager and excited to finally be on the "older Kids" side of the school building and their excitement is contagious!

In our third grade class, we have been focusing on our hopes and dreams for our learning this year and getting to know our classmates. This process allows us to create rules together that will keep our learning safe and will help us make great friendships throughout the year. Here are a few examples of how the children introduced themselves to their classmates and shared about their hopes and dreams for the 2017-2018 school year.



In this picture Gus shows his hopes to fill his brain with new ideas.

This symbolizes Ecessia's hope to do science experiments this year.



Development Update

It is the Fall semester of the 2017-2018 school year and we have many Development goals in mind for our 15th anniversary! Our fundraising goal is \$ 175,000 and, in order to begin reaching this, we have identified many opportunities. If you are interested in helping with or participating in any of the following, please contact Lauren Ivey (lauren.ivey@icsgeorgia.org) and visit our website for details and dates (www.icsgeorgia.org)

- Fundraising through our 15th Anniversary Weekend Events (see the next page for details)
- Establishing corporate sponsorships and offering tours of ICS
- Developing a team to research and write grants

founding principal - Bill Moon

To Move Forward, Let's Go Back to the Beginning

By Bill Moon, Founding Principal of ICS



It is vital that we remember why ICS began. In the late 1990s 4/5 of all refugees coming to Georgia were settling in DeKalb County, many of them in and around the city of Clarkston. At that time, schools were ill equipped to integrate large numbers of refugee children into their academic structures. Sr. Patty Caraher and Barbara Thompson had been working with refugee families in DeKalb County, and when I met them, they and I (as well as others) were interested in starting a school that could meet the needs of refugee children and other underserved populations. The initial Mission Statement of the school included: ...**to provide refugee, immigrant and local children with an international education at the elementary school level**, and we had to be intentional about how we recruited our families and our staff.

From the beginning of the school (August 2002), it was a challenge to recruit refugee families. Often, they were not familiar with options within the public school system and for reasons of convenience tended to enroll their children in the nearest public school. We sought the help of

the refugee placement and service organizations and they organized meetings for us so that we could explain to parents how we thought the school would benefit their children. Even after the first couple of years, we continued to work with the agencies to ensure that ICS would have 50% refugee children in the student body. Once the school year had begun, most of the local families who had not been placed at ICS through the lottery had found other schools for their children. So when the percentage of refugee students went below 50%, we would work with the refugee placement agencies to propose families whose children qualified for admission. In this way, we were able to maintain the balance between local and recently arrived refugee children. However, we realized how important ESOL was, and we knew that regular classroom teachers would have to adapt their teaching methods to the needs of individual children, whatever their deficits and gifts were.

Our Vision Statement inspired us to make the adjustments we had to make.

"The International Community School seeks staff and families who are committed to our vision of creating a supportive community of students, staff and parents, learning from each other and celebrating the diversity among us. We seek to build and nurture the Beloved Community that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. worked for." We saw our Core Values as coming from the Vision Statement: ***Academic Excellence, Community in Diversity, Service-Oriented Education and Family and Community Partnership.***

Our Vision and Core Values helped us to make the adjustments we needed to make in order to serve our children and their families, and made it possible for us to connect with the greater Atlanta philanthropic community who found the STORY of ICS very appealing.

Here are two stories of how we reached out to families and adapted to the needs of the children. Before school opened, I remember a meeting we had at an apartment complex in Clarkston. There were several refugee mothers there, mostly from Bosnia and Sudan. As we spoke to the group about what ICS could mean for their children, one Bosnian mother kept staring at me. Finally, she spoke to me and the translator said, "She wants to know if you, Mr. Moon, will be on the bus the first day of school." I didn't understand what she meant until my cinematic mind created a film of a school bus, loaded with children leaving a Bosnian village. The bus would never arrive at school. It would be attacked and all the children killed or wounded. I looked at the mother from Bosnia, "Yes, I will be on the bus the first day." She spoke again. The translator said, "Okay, Mr. Moon, she says that she will put her three children in the school." We were becoming more and more conscious of what some people had been through, what it means to escape a worn-torn country with little more than the clothes on your back.

And then on that first day of school in August, 2002...I saw her, the little girl from Sudan. Atong and her brother had ridden the bus from Clarkston. Her hair was matted, her teeth were deformed, some of them black. She could not smile and she had no words in English. We didn't know how old she really was. Later in the day, I heard from her kindergarten teacher that when she came into the classroom, she went under one of the tables and stayed there. The teacher felt that this is where Atong had to be for now. So, every day for a period of a few weeks, the teacher would distribute work to the children seated at the tables, and then she would go under the table to give Atong some work that she might be able to do. Gradually, day by day, the child grew in confidence, until one day the teacher sitting with great difficulty in the crawl space under the table said, "I'm sorry Atong, but I can't fit down here with you. You have to help me by coming up and sitting in a chair." And Atong did come out, and did sit in a chair with other children. Two weeks later, I was seated at my working table in the office and saw Atong's face in the little window of the office door. She was smiling. When I opened the door, I saw that her hair had been washed and that her teeth had been fixed with shining strips of metal in different vibrant colors. She

Numerous stories bring us back to the initial Mission, Vision and Values of the school, and what it was that we had to do for the sake of the children and to fulfill our mission, vision and values.

1. ICS would have to adapt to the emotional needs of our kids.
2. ICS would have to be understanding and flexible with parents and staff members. Mr. Moon understood early on that “my way” was not necessarily the best way, and was never the only way.
3. We understood that without these adaptations, academic work would be fruitless.

So we held fast to our Mission and our Vision of Beloved Community. Our collective desire was to serve one another, to understand the ones who are not like us, to realize that each person, even the most suffering and oppressed, has gifts to share with us. I believe that ICS will be able to be even more successful in the future, partly by applying the lessons we learned at the very beginning – over 15 years ago.

Celebrating ICS’ 15th Anniversary



Anniversary Weekend in November!

On Friday the 3rd, the school will hold its annual **United Nations Day**. UN Day brings the diversity and uniqueness of ICS to life! Representing over 60 countries, the celebration showcases the cultures that bind our community.

On November 4th, we will have our 1st annual **ICS Runs the World Fundraiser**. Run or walk 5K or 1 Mile around the Medlock neighborhood, sponsor our race or a runner, donate or volunteer. More information on our website or at ICSrunstheworld@icsgeorgia.org

An ICS Story

Crystal Kennedy –
Kindergarten Teacher

“I am a new teacher with ICS and I can not put into words the amount of love and support I have already felt just in the past few weeks. The first morning I walked into the building administrators, support staff and teachers were clapping and welcoming me as I walked in. I have worked in three systems over the past eleven years and I have never felt such a warm and happy welcoming as I did at ICS. As the past weeks have progressed, it has been very obvious that everyone here truly loved their children and seeks only the best for them. All of my questions have been met with open hearts and smiles. I am so excited about working with this amazing team and getting to know all my new students!”



Get in touch with us!

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