IMBODEN AREA CHARTER SCHOOL

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PUBLIC

2014-15

HISTORY AND GENERAL INFORMATION

The Imboden Area Charter School just celebrated 12 successful years in operation with the close of the 2013-14 school year. IACS opened in 2002 to provide an educational choice for parents and students in the area. We are a PUBLIC school which requires that we follow all the same rules and regulations as other public schools in Arkansas. We are funded by your tax dollars; therefore, NO TUITION is charged for attendance, and ANY STUDENT MAY ATTEND.

Students may TRANSFER AT ANY TIME throughout the school year WITHOUT PERMISSION from their local districts. Classrooms are small, providing a unique family atmosphere, without the bullying that exists at schools that are larger. Since numbers are small, teachers are able to provide enrichment for our gifted students as well as extra help for children who may have dificulties. Students are emotionally happy, fulfilled, and are given the academic tools for success.

IMBODEN AREA CHARTER SCHOOL FACTS

* Second oldest charter school in Arkansas
* Only charter school in Arkansas that provides transportation
* Only SCHOOL in Arkansas to provide an individualized learning approach to ALL students
* 100% attendance at Parent/Teacher Conferences
* Offers free/reduced price breakfast and lunch to individuals who qualify

MISSION STATEMENT

Teachers, parents, and community members unite to provide a need-satisfying environment where students will be given the skills and knowledge to enable life-long learning, successful achievement of future goals, and contribution to our society.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The Imboden Area Charter School is a public school and is fully accredited by the Arkansas Department of Education. In 2013-14, IACS was cited for a counselor working on an Alternative Learning Plan for certification.

The school operates under the specifications of a charter approved by the Arkansas Board of Education, the laws enacted by the federal and state government, the Rules and Regulations adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education, the Articles of Incorporation for the Imboden Area Charter School, and the policies formulated by the local school board. The school’s discipline policies are filed annually with the Arkansas Department of Education.

In June, 2013, the Arkansas Board of Education voted to renew the Imboden Area Charter School charter for an additional period of three years.

The Imboden Area Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or handicap as required by Title VI, Section 601; Title IX, Section 901; or Section 504.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A five-member board oversees school policy. Each member is elected for a five-year term. The board meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the Imboden Area Charter School. New board members receive nine hours of continuing education credit, returning board members receive six hours per year, and all board members visit the classroom at least once annually. Current board members are Shannon Ealey, President; Lori Corbett, Vice-President; Scott Rorex, Secretary; Lisa Lewallen; and Mary Buchman. All board members completed the required professional development hours.

FACILITIES

The Imboden Area Charter School facility is located at 605 West 3rd Street (adjacent to Highway 63) in Imboden, Arkansas. We have four classrooms, administrative office, Director’s office, special education/speech therapy/counselor’s office, nurse’s office, and a playground area with picnic tables, swings, merry-go-round, climbing dome, monkey bars, fitness area with specialized equipment, a basketball court, and a large open field for free play.

Two to four stationary computers are available to students in each classroom in addition to wireless laptop computers with internet access which are used to to enhance classroom learning through technology.

Each classroom is equipped with a document camera, projector and television with DVD/VCR. Direct TV is also available for classroom access to educational programming.

The school library is equipped with more than 3000 books of varying interest and level.

ENROLLMENT

The Imboden Area Charter School serves students in kindergarten through eighth grades and is free to the public. It is open to all students in all school districts, and transfers to the school can be made at any time during the school year. Future plans include the addition of grades 9-12.

Students must be five years old before August 1st to attend kindergarten, and parents must present a birth certificate, social security number, documentation of current immunizations, and a comprehensive physical exam for students to enroll.

Any student transferring from an accredited school will be placed in the same grade, and students transferring from home school or a non-accredited school will be evaluated and placed in an appropriate grade.

Enrollment for the 2013-14 school year was 55 students. The Imboden Area Charter School is approved for 150 students, and a small number of spaces are still available for the current school year.

Students who attend Imboden Area Charter School currently come from Imboden, Pocahontas, Black Rock, Portia, Hoxie, Walnut Ridge, Ravenden, and Cave City.

STAFF

Staff consists of a Director, four classroom teachers, one part-time classroom tutor, special education teacher, counselor, nurse, administrative assistant, part-time food service worker, bus driver, and custodian. All teachers are fully licensed in the area they teach, and the counselor is working on a state-approved alternative learning plan to add counseling to her certification. Teachers are contracted for 190 days; 178 student contact days, two parent-teacher conference days, and 10 days for staff development.

All teachers and administrators completed the required 60 hours of professional development through on-site and off-site professional training. For teachers, this includes educational technology, teaching special education students, teaching students of cultural and linguistic diversity, parental involvement, classroom mangagement, and child maltreatment. For administration, this includes instructional technolgoy, parental involvement, fiscal management, data disaggregation, and instructional leadership. All teachers, administrators, classified school employees, substitute teachers, and volunteers are provided with student discipline training, special education training, first aid training, safety and health procedures, Smart Core Curriculum, ethics, and drug-free workplace.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The Imboden Area Charter School employs a counselor to establish a guidance program that aids students in educational, personal/social, and career development and to ensure effective counseling to meet individual needs of students.

A health services program is under the direction of a licensed registered nurse and includes screening, referral, and follow-up procedures for vision, hearing, scoliosis, and body mass index. Student health records are maintained, and services and health care plans for students with special health care needs are provided which includes training for staff members.

Breakfast and lunch programs, meeting all USDA requirements, is in place. Free and reduced breakfast and lunches are available to students who meet the federal income guidelines.

CALENDAR

Students have direct contact with teachers for 178 days. School began in 2013-14 on August 19th and ended on May 30th. School hours are from 8:00am to 3:15pm, with six and one-half hours per day devoted to instructional time.

CLASS SIZE

If the enrollment reaches the maximum of 70 students, the student to teacher ratio is 18:1. In 2013-14, kindergarten and first grade had an average ratio of 8:1; second and third grades had an average of 17:1; fourth and fifth graders had an average of 11:1; and sixth, and seventh, and eighth grades had an average of 19:1. Small classroom size allows students to receive the enrichment or attention needed for academic success.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

* Parent/community meetings are held to discuss issues such as task force on closing the achievement gap, student achievement, curriculum, physical activity and nutrition, student handbook, school improvement plan, and the parent involvement plan.
* Family Activity Nights and Parent Involvement Meetings are held several times during the year to give parents the opportunity to encourage their children.
* A family picnic is held at the end of the school year.
* A parent center is located in the school office where parents have access to various books and a laptop computer with internet access.
* A parent survey is completed determining their interests, talents, and willingness to volunteer, and a volunteer resource book is distributed as a resource to the teachers. Many parents volunteer to help throughout the year with classroom and school-wide activities.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

* Teachers send home a weekly progress report with students, informing parents of curricular topics, indicating how each child is progressing, and suggestions for parents on ways to help their children.
* Two parent-teacher conferences were held during the school year – October 23rd and March 19th – where parents could see samples of student work and progress.
* Teachers are available from 7:30-8:00 or from 3:15-3:45 for parent conferences or questions that might arise.
* Students and parents are informed of school policies, including discipline and homework policies and Smart Core Curriculum, through the issuance of a student handbook and a required signature documenting that the handbook was received.
* Informational packets are distributed at the beginning of the school year and to new students when they enroll describing the school’s parental involvement program; the role of the parents, students, teachers, and school; and ways for the parents to become involved.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Parents, community, and staff members have developed a directory of community resources for student services and support. Organizations active in the school are the numerous area churches, Master Gardeners, Koinonia Christian Fellowship, a local AARP chapter, and Cornerstone Community Counseling.

CURRICULUM

An annual review of each curricular area is conducted to ensure its alignment with the Common Core State Standards and the Arkansas Frameworks. All students receive instruction in each of the state-mandated content areas, and all instructional materials provide complete coverage of the curricular frameworks.

The learning program is differentiated for all students in language arts and math, and each student progresses at a pace that is commensurate with his/her ability and the individual time requirements for mastery level learning. Social studies and science are hands-on guided discovery.

The differentiated curriculum promotes a cooperative rather than a competitive atmosphere. Students are instructed in the five basic needs as stated by William Glasser, and every attempt is made to allow students to satisfy those needs within the structure of the learning program. Imboden Area Charter School sees a strong relationship between a student’s emotional needs and his/her academic achievement.

Research indicates that students who complete many hours of homework each evening achieve no better than students who complete no homework. Research also indicates the need for our brain to have a long period of rest after learning for proper retention. Students also need time to play, which is a necessary part of childhood development, and time for family and community activities and interaction. In keeping with this research, students in grades K-5 are only required to read assigned material for a maximum of 30 minutes and practice math computational skills for 15 minutes.

Because student management is non-coercive, students take responsibility for completing all tasks, quality work is evident, and class disruptions are at a minimum. Many of our students’ special education needs are met in the regular classroom eliminating the stigmatism of labels and promoting a collegiality among students.

The principles of democracy are also a focus since they involve choice, discourse, social responsibility, community, critical inquiry, authentic learning, a relevant and creative curriculum, and a caring relationship between teachers and students.

SCHOOL GOALS

Student performance was evaluated, and a comprehensive plan was formulated with the assistance of school administration and staff, parents, and community members and approved by the Arkansas Department of Education to emphasize improved student achievement in literacy mathematics, and wellness.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The Imboden Area Charter School has continued to meet the average yearly progress goals set by the state. Research data shows that the longer a child remains at the Imboden Area Charter School, their growth well exceeds that of their time spent at other public schools.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills

The following number of students took the ITBS: first grade – 11; second grade – 6. Because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act forbidding the release of information for small groups, the results of the tests cannot be released.

Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Exam

The following number of students took the Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Exam: third grade – 12; fourth grade – 8; fifth grade – 7; grade 6 – 5; grade 7 – 9; grade 8 – 4. Because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act forbidding the release of information for small groups, the results of all the tests cannot be released.

Retentions

The Imboden Area Charter School retained three students for the 2013-14 school year.

SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Educational field trips are planned to enhance student learning outside of the classroom. For the 2013-14 school year, all students received wildlife training at Lake Charles State Park, students in grades K-3 visited Pumpking Hollow in Piggot and attended a play at the Imperial Theater in Pocahontas. Students in grades 4-8 visited Blanchard Springs, and the grades 6-8 visited Parkin Archaelogical Park.

Summer school was held during the month of June for students not reaching grade level in reading or mathematics by the end of the school year.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is provided in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines developed by the Arkansas Department of Education. The bus stops in Black Rock, Portia, Hoxie, Walnut Ridge, Pocahontas, and stops along highways 63, 62, and 67 as arranged in advance.

PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting was held at the school on November 6th at 6:30pm, where Director Judy Warren explained policies, programs, and goals to the community with opportunities for questions and suggestions regarding the school program.

WEB SITE ACCESS

All required public information regarding financial and personnel data and school performance can be accessed on our website at: www.imbodencharter.com