



Iftin Charter School

Petition

I. Educational Program Description

A. Mission Statement

Iftin Charter School (ICS) will endeavor to provide students in grades K-8 an academically rigorous English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies core curricula supplemented with a technology-intensive program supported by technology use and instruction, in a safe and caring learning environment. **ICS** will address the needs of students, their families, and their communities by building on the strength of students' cultural heritage and life experiences to enable them to become successful, lifelong learners, and valuable members of the global community. **ICS** will operate as a single charter school.

B. Education Vision

ICS will be a caring-centered elementary school (K-8) that involves members of students' families and communities as partners in the circle of education, both inside and outside the classrooms. **ICS** will draw on the strengths of its surrounding community to assist the entire family in finding the services and supports they will need to become active contributory members of their community.

ICS will develop the intellectual capacity in our students with a solid foundation in reading and writing. Mathematics extends cognitive development. The scientific method can then be taught and applied to real problems. An appreciation of language and arts will enhance sensitivity and respect for ideal forms. We will also study local and state heritage and culture, to promote greater understanding and appreciation of our diverse population. As part of our mission, we will seek to help our students develop the following academic and personal skills:

- curiosity;
- lifelong learning;
- clear oral and written communication;
- creative and critical thinking;
- logical thinking and the ability to make informed judgments;
- effective use of technology as a tool;
- adaptability to new situations and new information;
- problem-solving and analyzing skills;

- the ability to find, select, evaluate, organize, and use information from various sources;
- the ability to utilize small group work and learning centers
- the ability to make easy and flexible connections among various disciplines of thought; and
- respecting others' individuality and creativity, as well as one's own, while seeking to work within teams to create common solutions.

As a by-product, **ICS** believes these skills develop the following personal habits and attitudes:

- accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions;
- academic honesty and the ability to face challenges with courage and integrity;
- a healthy lifestyle
- empathy and courtesy for others and respect for differences among people and cultures;
- self-confidence and willingness to risk setbacks in order to learn;
- concentration and perseverance;
- managing time in a responsible manner;
- seeking a fair share of the workload; and
- working cooperatively with others, which includes the ability to listen, share opinions, negotiate, compromise, and help a group reach consensus.

ICS will educate students drawn from all of San Diego County, especially those students who have fallen behind in the traditional public school system. **ICS** intends to establish a school site in the City Heights or surrounding area within the District where the majority of the student population lives. In addition to any other requirement imposed under this part, **ICS** shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices and all other operations, shall not charge tuition, and shall not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. **ICS** will enroll students that represent the surrounding community and compares favorably to the District's demographic profile. Admission to **ICS** shall not be determined according to the place of residence of the pupil, or of his or her parent or guardian, within this state.

ICS is committed to providing its students the core and basics of a solid education--the knowledge, skills, habits, and ideals that will serve as the foundation of learning and good behavioral character throughout their lives. No matter how skilled the teacher, or elaborate the classroom, learning takes place in the mind and experience of the student. The ideal educational environment, therefore, is the one that stimulates and engages the mind of the student. The core educational philosophy of **ICS** is grounded in the belief that a highly challenging content in a safe environment is conducive to accelerated learning. **ICS's** core educational philosophy is that learning occurs when:

- learners construct meaning;
- learners see the connection between what they learn and the real world;

- learners are actively engaged in purposeful tasks;
- activities are integrated and meaningful;
- learners work individually and as members of a group
- learners work side by side with community members to develop solutions and opinions on issues that can be presented to local policy makers;
- learners are expected and encouraged to learn;
- learners internalize that what they learn and do in school makes a positive change in the community;
- challenged learners have an individual plan, and support is an intrinsic part of the educational program;
- learners are supported with teachers, mentors, and advocates;
- all learners have advanced learning opportunities; and
- learners see themselves as part of the community and find ways to serve the community.

ICS represents a partnership among its students, parents, faculty, administration, and staff. The ICS is committed to the concept that each child has the right to come to school without fear of taunting, teasing, or violence. Parents have the right to expect a school to provide a safe, kind environment for their children, but also have a responsibility to ensure that their child understands and appreciates the standards of behavior that is expected by the School. Teachers have the right to teach in an orderly environment without fear of violence. We strongly believe that a kind and nurturing environment creates the potential for peaceful elementary school years.

We draw not only on time-honored practices, but also on many valuable insights into childhood cognitive and developmental processes realized in recent decades. Moreover, we place strong emphasis on the relationship between the school and the home, recognizing the parent's critical role in fostering their children's education.

Above all else, we see ourselves as allies of the family, reinforcing parents' efforts to guide the intellectual, emotional, and moral development of their children. By providing and enforcing moral and ethical standards, the school prepares its students to accept the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. Every child is capable of achieving his potential to the fullest extent when afforded respect, fairness, kindness, discipline, and appropriate instruction.

C. Curricula and Content

The founders of Iftin Charter School want a curriculum that teaches students how to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Our curriculum should be based on our vision and mission. ICS will have an English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and technology focus. It will provide an enhancement curriculum that includes art, physical education, and foreign language. Students will be expected to be active in the community through various community service projects. Additionally, the curricula at ICS will align with the standards and goals adopted by the School and aligned with the standards outlined by the State. Students will not only be expected to meet the state standards, but to exceed them. The scope and sequence of skills to be taught across grade levels and the different subject areas the school intends to teach are outlined in Appendix

A for grade 3. ICS will adapt the K-8 curricula, methods, scope and sequence, and resources consistent with and support student progress toward meeting state standards.

The goals of ICS's core educational skills are the following:

English/Language Arts: The language arts goals are to develop learners who are effective communicators, who love literature, and who are lifelong readers and writers. Comprehension skills, vocabulary, and grammar are integrated within a literature program. Writing includes a personal journal and creative and expository writing. Communication areas of focus include speaking, writing and presentation skills using modern technological tools.

Mathematics: The constructivists approach is best highlighted in the school's approach to learning math. This program is based on major mathematical ideas and how those concepts are relevant to the learners' lives. Throughout all mathematics topics the concepts of numbers, operations, logic, algebra, geometry and graphics are sustained.

Social Studies: This curriculum develops learners who understand that history and social science are about real people, in real places, solving problems relevant to the learners' own lives. Students understand the interrelationships between the peoples of the world and study the past as a background and prelude to the present.

Science: The ICS science curriculum emphasizes hands-on experimentation and functional knowledge of scientific phenomena. While the specific disciplines are the same as presented in the California State Board of Education Science framework, the school curriculum differs in several areas. This approach involves experimentation, field trips and visits from guest scientists and local experts. Major concepts are re-emphasized as appropriate and relevant to the interrelationship of disciplines.

Foreign Language: Study of a foreign language is an integral and distinguishing aspect of the ICS curriculum. An expected outcome is that learners will communicate and interact effectively in at least one language in addition to their native language. The school uses local linguistic and cultural diversity to further the learners' development.

Physical Education: One of the ICS's stated outcomes is a 21st century citizen with a healthy lifestyle. The Charter Learning Center provides an atmosphere that encourages all learners to enjoy physical activity and to incorporate it into their everyday lives. This program emphasizes "lifetime" or "individual" activities as well as "cooperative" sports to perpetuate the concept of lifelong activity.

Technology: The ICS's technology program includes learning tools such as computers, interactive video equipment, audio-visual aids, scientific equipment and networks linked to local and nationwide resources. These tools help students guide their own education. They support a child's natural way of learning both through individual and group discovery as well as seeking solutions to real life challenges. ICS will develop a technology plan that will allow ICS to seek support from the E-rate Program and

Foundations. ICS will also seek donations and search surplus property announcements for technology equipment and software that will be useful to the Charter School.

Curricula

ICS is building its curricular foundation upon the California State Standards and Framework in conjunction with the Core Knowledge Sequence (E.D. Hirsch). The latter detailed and nationally respected outline of specific grade-level content will be used as a reference for all K-8 instruction in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, History, Geography, Science and Art. The Core Knowledge Sequence offers a planned progression of specific knowledge in history, geography, science, English, Mathematics, and arts. It is a guide to coherent content from grade to grade, designed to encourage steady academic progress as children build their knowledge and skills from one year to the next. School leadership and teachers will utilize materials and/or training from the Core Knowledge Resource Center to ensure a deep understanding of the Sequence.

ICS teachers will collaborate to align elements of the Core Knowledge Sequence (referenced in Appendix A of the ICS Petition) with California State Framework and Standards. An example of such alignment can be found in the proposed amendment to Appendix A (see Attached).

http://www.coreknowledge.org/CK/schools/alignments/CA_Sample_K-8.pdf

Core Knowledge Is:

Solid

Many people say that knowledge is changing so fast that what students learn today will soon be outdated. While current events and technology are constantly changing, there is nevertheless a body of lasting knowledge that should form the core of a Preschool-Grade 8 curriculum. Such solid knowledge includes, for example, the basic principles of constitutional government, important events of world history, essential elements of mathematics and of oral and written expression, widely acknowledged masterpieces of art and music, and stories and poems passed down from generation to generation.

Sequenced

Knowledge builds on knowledge. Children learn new knowledge by building on what they already know. Only a school system that clearly defines the knowledge and skills required to participate in each successive grade can be excellent and fair for all students. For this reason, the Core Knowledge Sequence provides a clear outline of content to be learned grade by grade. This sequential building of knowledge not only helps ensure that children enter each new grade ready to learn, but also helps prevent the many repetitions and gaps that characterize much current schooling (repeated units, for

example, on pioneer days or the rain forest, but little or no attention to the Bill of Rights, or to adding fractions with unlike denominators).

Specific

A typical state or district curriculum says, "Students will demonstrate knowledge of people, events, ideas, and movements that contributed to the development of the United States." But which people and events? What ideas and movements? In contrast, the Core Knowledge Sequence is distinguished by its specificity. By clearly specifying important knowledge in language arts, history and geography, math, science, and the fine arts, the Core Knowledge Sequence presents a practical answer to the question, "What do our children need to know?"

Shared

Literacy depends on shared knowledge. To be literate means, in part, to be familiar with a broad range of knowledge. For example, when sportscasters refer to an upset victory as "David knocking off Goliath," or when reporters refer to a "threatened presidential veto," they are assuming that their audience shares certain knowledge. One goal of the Core Knowledge Foundation is to provide all children, regardless of background, with the shared knowledge they need to be included in our national literate culture.

Core Knowledge Improves Academic Performance in All Schools Evaluation Data

Complete measurement of improved academic performance demands that multiple measures be used. Assessments and evaluation of Core Knowledge have established that students at schools using the Core Knowledge program experience dramatic gains in academic achievement according to most measurements. Academic improvement occurs regardless of socioeconomic situation of the schools evaluated. Complete research reports are available upon request.

➤ Oklahoma City Study. May 2000:

A study of schools in Oklahoma City showed that students at Core Knowledge schools made significant greater one-year gains in reading comprehension, vocabulary, science, math concepts and social studies than students at non-Core Knowledge schools. The Oklahoma City study is significant because the impact of Core Knowledge was felt immediately and significantly contradicting long-standing statistical assumptions about the rate schools can improve student academic achievement.

➤ Johns Hopkins University study, 1999:

A nationwide study of Core Knowledge schools found that Core Knowledge improved student academic performance and enthusiasm for learning. It also was found to increase teacher enthusiasm and the level of professionalism in schools using the Sequence. Sample findings:

- **Implementing Core Knowledge improves the professionalism lives of teachers.** “Core Knowledge was viewed very favorably by teachers and seen as an enhancement to their lives. Overwhelmingly, teachers enthusiastically encouraged their teacher friends to implement Core Knowledge. This is very important finding.”
- **Implementing Core Knowledge led to increased teacher collaboration.** Such “genuine collaborative work among teachers that has a focus on the curriculum and instruction is all too rare in education,” the researchers note.
- **Core Knowledge enriched students’ classroom experience.** “Teachers reported that it was not just certain students who were excited by Core, but all students... The benefits are great for teaching those children who would normally not be exposed to such subjects at home.”
- **Core Knowledge challenged conventional assumptions about student ability.** “Many teachers reported being initially skeptical that Core Knowledge content was developmentally inappropriate for elementary students. However, almost all teachers interviewed found that no matter what students’ starting points were, --- low achieving average or high achieving—they were able to gain from learning the Core material.”
- **Core Knowledge increased students’ interest in reading.** Teachers reported that “students are learning to read bigger words sooner. There is an interest to read and to learn.” At a number of schools, “educators cited the fact that students are more interested in reading non-fiction as one of the main benefits of Core Knowledge.”
- **Core Knowledge increased parent satisfaction.** “Parents are thrilled, thrilled, thrilled,” according to one teacher. Another said, “Our parents are elated with the results of Core.”
- **Test scores in all Core Knowledge schools increase.**

➤ **Cale Elementary, Albermarle County, VA:**

A statistical analysis commissioned by the Albermarle County Schools reported results that support the Core Knowledge idea that a strong core curriculum can help narrow the performance gap between students of low socioeconomic status and others. At Cale Elementary, the only Core Knowledge school in the Albermarle County district, about 35% of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Students at Cale Elementary score well above expectations on all academic measurements. Similar to the Oklahoma City study, students at Cale Elementary score well above expectations given the socioeconomic make-up of the school. Only one school in Albermarle County (16 total schools) scores above Cale in academic assessments.

➤ **Hawthorne Elementary, San Antonio, TX:**

A study published in the Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk examined how students At Hawthorne Elementary compared to students in the other 65 elementary schools in the San Antonio Independent School District on the Reading Performance section of the Texas Assessment of Academics Skills (TAAS).

Hawthorne is an urban school with a predominantly Hispanic student population; 96% of the approximately 500 students receive free or reduced-price lunch, while 28% are designed as limited English-proficient. Hawthorne began implementing Core Knowledge in 1992. According to the evaluator, “although district reading performance is generally consistent across grade levels with a student pass rate of about 55%, Hawthorne’s results shows a steep increase in the reading pass rate at consecutive grade levels. At Grade 3, Hawthorne’s pass rate of 34% is well below that of the district. By Grade 5, however, these same students’ pass rate 67% far exceeds the district’s 56% pass rate. TAAS reading results show that Hawthorne’s third graders achieved a much higher pass rate of 51% in 1995... The performance of Hawthorne’s fifth graders exceeded the district’s pass rate in reading by about 11% in 1994 and 1995...although Hawthorne students tend to be more at risk of failing academically than students in district as a whole, because of larger percentages of economically disadvantaged and LEP students, snapshots indicate that the school has succeeded in raising achievement levels beyond the aggregate performance of all other elementary schools in the district.”

➤ **Core Knowledge Schools in Colorado:**

One of the states in which the Core Knowledge idea has caught on is Colorado. There are currently more than 50 schools using Core Knowledge in the state. The following chart shows that Core Knowledge schools are doing quite well on the state’s CSAP exam. The results of the 2002 exam are summarized below. They show that large percentages of Core Knowledge schools are posting scores ten, twenty, and even thirty points above the state average. This is additional evidence that implementation of Core Knowledge can go hand-in-hand with success on state exams.

	% of schools above state average	% of schools at least 10 % points above state average	% of schools at least 20 % points above state average	% of schools at least 30 % points above state average
3rd Grade Reading (41 schools total)	80%	63%	32%	0%
3rd Grade Writing (41 schools total)	80%	66%	54%	24%
4th Grade Reading (41 schools total)	78%	71%	46%	17%
4th Grade Writing (41 schools total)	80%	59%	44%	24%
5th Grade Math (42 schools total)	76%	64%	55%	26%
5th Grade Reading (42 schools total)	88%	64%	43%	21%
5th Grade Writing (42 schools total)	79%	55%	50%	33%