



The Inyo Insight

An Education Newsletter from the Inyo County Office of Education
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A Letter from County Superintendent of Schools

By Barry Simpson, Superintendent

Hello Inyo Educators,

Welcome back! I hope everyone enjoyed a fun and restful summer! Let me be one of the first to wish you a happy and successful new school year.

As you know, the past 18 months have been quite difficult. Like you, I was hoping we would be able to begin our school year as normally as possible. Sadly, it appears that the ground is once again beginning to shift beneath our feet. As many of you know, masking will be a requirement at school once again this year. I am also sure you have become aware that locally this has become somewhat of a divisive topic. As your County Superintendent I felt it important to offer my thoughts on this growing debate.

Like many of you, I bristle at any particular mandates that appear to trespass against my own personal freedoms. I also believe wholeheartedly that we should all be able to make our own choices where our health and safety is concerned. I mean, I know that double bacon cheeseburger is not good for me, but darn it I'll have one! And for this reason, when I first began to hear that we would be requiring masks for all staff and students regardless of vaccination status, I'll admit I was disappointed. In fact, I took part in a few unsuccessful lobbying efforts at the state level in hopes that they would not implement a 'one size fits all' approach to the masking issue. I'd hoped that there would be some local control given to small and rural counties with low transmission rates. Unfortunately, this did not occur.

It was also during this time that I began to give some serious

thought to what my core mission as an educator truly is and it was then that my thinking began to change. I hope you can agree, our core mission, and I mean job number one is to keep the children in our community safe. Before we can teach a student the sound that the letter 'a' makes, or solve an equation, or develop an argument in a persuasive essay, we must first make sure our students are safe and in a loving environment where they can thrive. It's only there that a true education can begin.

I also recognized that I am wholly unqualified to make any health decisions that affect the more than 2000 families with children in our county. So when faced with this dilemma, I did what any good educator should do, I did some homework and I sought out the advice and guidance of the people who are qualified to speak to these issues. After meeting on numerous occasions with our local public health officials it was clear to me that the way to move forward was to have our students and staff wear masks. A position that our local public health officials, individuals I trust and respect, have made clear.

In the end, many in our community and even many of my friends will disagree with me. I respect and admire their conviction, but on this we simply have to agree to disagree. Believe me there are hills to die on, this is not one of them. So when you see me on campus this year, just know, there is a smile under that mask and also know that I believe in the gifts that each of you shares with our students each and everyday. I am with you, have a great school year!



Beat the Heat with Some Cool PD!

2021-22 After School Learning Opportunities

How can we help you meet your learning goals? Consider joining one of these free or low cost workshops:

~**English Language Development** workshop series brought to you by CABE for Inyo and Mono educators. Open to *all teachers of English Learners*. Join our *ELD PLC* and get customized support from our CABE expert partners. See this [flyer](#) for more information. Series begins September 9.

~**Getting Reading Right** (K-5) led by Reading experts from the Los Angeles County Office of Education. This year-long series will be based on Scarborough's Reading Rope. Meet monthly with experts

to review the Science of Learning starting August 16. See this [flyer](#) for more information.

~**Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction** Virtual Professional Learning Network meets monthly starting August 19. Join educators from our region to discuss providing equitable math instruction K-12. See this [link](#) for more information.

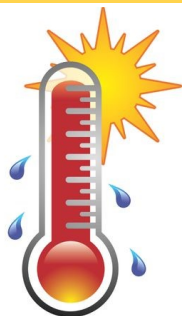
~**Culturally Responsive Teaching** with Mirko Chardin. Mirko has been implementing culturally responsive practices for the past eight years in Cambridge Massachusetts and will be sharing best practices for creating a culturally responsive environment. View a video with Mirko sharing

['Why Culturally Responsive Practices are Important'](#) and see this [flyer](#) for more information. Series starts September 14.

~**Universal Design For Learning with Katie Novak** series starts August 10th. Get your feet

wet for UDL PD that is coming to Inyo this year by participating in this series with UDL expert Katie Novak. For more information, see this [link](#).

~**Check our [PD Calendar](#)** for additional events; the calendar will be updated regularly throughout the school year.



CalSNAP Accounts Available

ICOE has again purchased *some* licenses for CalSnap so that those that would like to continue to access that resource can do so. CalSnap is a searchable, curated collection of safe and vetted K-12 resources for teachers **and** students. CalSnap includes resources available through the California State Library database including Encyclopedia Britannica (also available in Spanish), ProQuest, and Teachingbooks.net. In addition to the California State Library resources and other open sources, CalSnap includes a subscription to California Streaming. For a complete list of CalSnap partners, see this [document](#). If you would like a login for CalSnap, please fill out this [form](#) by September 20th.



innerEXPLORER™ for Inyo County Teachers!

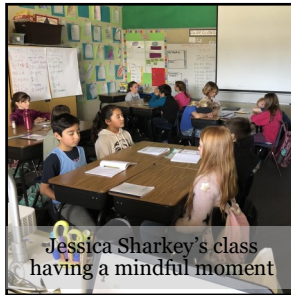
Inner Explorer is a lesson-based program that promotes effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices for the classroom, school, and home environment. Inyo County Office of Education (ICOE) started a county-wide SEL committee including different school admin, teachers, and staff to prioritize and implement SEL into our schools curriculum and climate. SEL focuses on enhancing students self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision making skills. Because students mental health, social skills, and academic achievement rely on these 5 core competencies of SEL, ICOE has extended their license and is ready to get you signed up and using this program.

The Inner Explorer program is a series of daily 5-10 minute audio-guided mindfulness practices. The program focuses on key areas of development, bringing mindfulness to education and helping students prepare for learning. Daily practice teaches kids the practical techniques to appropriately handle difficult emotions such as stress, anxiety, anger and more. Inner Explorer offers programs for all age-groups (PreK-12) that help students with following themes:

- Discovering Breathing and Relaxation Exercises
- Learning Awareness of Senses
- Using Thought and Emotional Regulation
- Developing Compassion and Connection
- Promoting Social Emotional Learning

Inner Explorer research indicates:

- 28% higher grades
- 43% decrease in teacher stress
- 60% decrease in behavioral issues
- 15% increase in G.P.A.



Jessica Sharkey's class having a mindful moment



Carla Eckland's students counting their calm breaths



Trisha Wallace's class practicing "sharkfin"

For more information or to sign up for Inner Explorer, please contact Shelby Dolim (sdolim@inyocoe.org).

Be Internet Awesome



We are so thankful to be starting the school year in person. Students will still have access to technology and Digital Citizenship instruction is an important part of a successful start to the school year. Being a good digital citizen means many things: demonstrating and practicing safe, responsible, and legal use of technology; using technology in a positive way; and being courteous and thoughtful of others when interacting online.

ICOE has again purchased a premium subscription of Pear Deck for all Inyo county teachers and administrators. Pear Deck is an interactive tool that allows teachers to integrate interactive questions directly into Google Slides. [The Orchard](#) also has some pre-made slides that teachers can use. Visit this link to view 35 ready-to-teach [Google/Pear Deck activities](#) on Being Internet Awesome.

ICOE has also curated and developed a series of Digital Citizenship lessons for [K-5](#) and [Middle School](#) classrooms. For more information, or to request high school lessons please contact Ilissa at ext. 2197 or via email itwomey@inyocoe.org.

