

Princeton International Academy Charter School Clarifications

Dear Friends and Parents,

Princeton International Academy Charter School (PIACS) received the approval from the New Jersey Department of Education in January of 2010 and will open this fall. To date, PIACS has received 103 students applying for enrollment for the 170 slots available from the three school districts comprising the region: Princeton Regional, South Brunswick, and West Windsor – Plainsboro Regional. We, the 12 founders of PIACS, sincerely thank the parents of different geographic, ethnic/racial, and linguistic communities for your trust and support as we build NJ and NYC metro's first public Mandarin-English immersion school using the International Baccalaureate curriculum framework.

We appreciate all the support and enthusiasm for PIACS, but we realize that there are some concerns about our funding sources, which may be fueled in part by misinformation being perpetuated in the media. We seek to correct any misinformation that you may have received. We are eager to address the issue of PIACS and property taxes. The most common misconception appeared in a February 5 West Windsor & Plainsboro News article about PIACS. In that article, the WW-P school district Superintendent Victoria Kniewel stated, “The problem is that we’re slated to have 75 students go to the charter school (PIACS). We have to send that money whether 75 students go there or not.” (http://wwpinfo.com/index.php?option=com_us1more&Itemid=6&key=02-05-2010%20charter)

This statement is false. Under New Jersey law and state Department of Education requirements, for students attending charter schools, state and local governments transfer 90% of the tax dollars budgeted for that student from the traditional public school to the public charter school. The remaining 10% of funds remains in the traditional public school. The transfer of education funds is in strict accordance with the number of students who attend the charter school. Parents of students determine whether their children go to traditional public schools or to apply to charter schools, including PIACS. Charter schools do not add to the taxpayers' tax burden.

The following is an analogy. If a student moved from the Princeton School District to the WW-P school district, his or her education funding (indirectly from the property taxes paid by her parents) follows her from the Princeton School District to the WW-P school district. By signing up their children with PIACS, these parents are simply exercising their right as taxpayers to choose which school (traditional public or charter school) they want to spend the education dollars. This money is allocated to their children by the state and local governments.

Another misconception is that charter schools are allowed to open only in struggling school districts. In fact, New Jersey state law and Department of Education support and encourage charters in all school districts: “... *the establishment of charter schools as part of this State's program of public education can assist in promoting comprehensive educational reform by providing a mechanism for the implementation of a variety of educational approaches which may not be available in the traditional public school classroom.*” (Charter School Program Act of 1995, N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-2 <http://www.state.nj.us/education/chartsch/cspa95.shtml>)

Princeton International Academy Charter School highlights Chinese-English dual language education in response to the rising enthusiasm for better Chinese-language education in the United States. Increasingly families of diverse ethnic/racial and linguistic backgrounds want their children to be fluent in at least two world languages via full-time learning in a dual language setting.

PIACS features two of the best educational approaches available: dual language immersion and the International Baccalaureate curriculum frameworks to ensure that children have the best in both dual language development and international standards for educational success. We believe PIACS success will further strengthen public education in New Jersey and in particular the Greater Princeton area. As a leader and innovator of world-class education, PIACS will nurture the development of students who are ethically, culturally, and linguistically capable of great success at home and abroad.

Sincerely, the PIACS founders

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