



Parent News

Inside Look On Becoming An IMSA Parent

Parents Council Corner

Welcome to IMSA. This newsletter has been created especially for the families of prospective IMSA students. We are delighted that you have joined us today to learn more about the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. The Parents Council is proud of its role in providing a deep sense of community at IMSA.

Please feel free to contact any of the Parent Council Executive members PAC volunteers listed if you have any questions about what it is to be an IMSA parent.

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IMSA Parenting: Our Perspective

By John and Lorna Ruddy

Dear Prospective IMSA Parents,

We are Lorna and John Ruddy. All three of our children dreamed of attending IMSA and all three were able to fulfill those dreams, our son graduated in 2005 and our twin daughters graduated in 2001. We are a fifth generation Aurora family and feel a special closeness to IMSA. We witnessed her transform from an inspiring vision to a global leader in the field of education in our backyard!

For several years while the IMSA dorms were being constructed I would be driving on Randall Road with our children buckled in the back seat. They would often ask, "What is that going to be?" I would always reply that it would be a school that only the best and brightest students could attend. One day when our daughters were in the fourth grade they were sitting in the back seat of the car when they announced, "We are going there." I remember looking in the rear view mirror at our little blonde cherubs thinking, "I sure hope so." The first glimmers of hope of their bright future had begun to shine.

Even before they attended IMSA, IMSA gave them focus and direction. Throughout each of their middle school years they pursued every science project, history fair, math competition and speech event with Olympic-size commitment. The ever-present question that guided them was always, "Is it good enough for IMSA?"

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IMSA students have access to:

- Over 40,000 books
- 120 magazines and more online
- Interlibrary loan network
- Online catalog linked to 43 libraries
- Multimedia lab
- Knowledgeable and helpful IRC team

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the road less traveled by, And that has made all the difference—Robert Frost

Leaving friends, adjusting to a new school and living away from home takes courage and a confidence. Some students make the transition easier than others. One thing that you can be sure of is that IMSA takes tremendous care in assisting incoming sophomores with their transitions.

Orientation begins with the Summer Navigation Program. IMSA provides every sophomore with a junior or senior to be either a Big Brother or Big Sister to guide, welcome, and support them

as they adapt to the IMSA community. To help ease them into this transition, sophomores are scheduled to arrive at the school two days before the upper classmen and all sophomores attend IMSA's Sophomore Navigation program their first three days at IMSA.

The Residential Counselors host Community Building Programs and wing dinners to welcome the sophomores into their new home away from home, and before school (continued on page 2)



On Adjusting to The IMSA Environment

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begins there is a special social mixer for all IMSA students. These wonderfully designed activities fill the sophomores' first few days at IMSA and will help them bond with their new classmates and adjust to life at IMSA.

Upper class students serve as Community Developers and Fall Wing Guides to help your student. Orientation programs continue throughout the year to help students work through other issues that may arise as they continue to learn more about themselves and their new environment.

Remember, everything is new and different...even the meals they eat. Listen, be patient, supportive and encourage your student. Students



make life long friends here at IMSA and many develop great relationships with their RC's.



Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes. —Carl Jung

To Be Or Not To Be: Making The Decision

As an educational laboratory for Illinois, IMSA serves as an exemplar and catalyst to transform math and science teaching and learning. While IMSA is an incredible academic institution it is not for all students. The decision on whether or not to attend should be based on a fit between the student and IMSA.

Your student should have a major role in this decision. A child should not be sent to IMSA to fulfill a parent's dream. If your child has an interest in IMSA, take full advantage of VIP days to learn as much as you can about IMSA's

philosophy, goals, programs, and curriculum. IMSA has a world of unique opportunities available to students who are invited to attend the Academy. Success at IMSA is a collaboration of incredible faculty, peers, talent, drive, and vision. IMSA is for students who want to stretch beyond their comfort zone and unearth their full potential. Attending a school filled with brilliant faculty and gifted peers can be humbling. At IMSA, intellectual egos get put into check very quickly. Students who flourish work hard, embrace challenges, and have unconditional support.

Separation Anxiety

Most parents have found that the decision to allow their student was harder on them than it was on their student. As parents, guilt seems to be inherent in our makeup. It does not help when 'friends' back home blurt out, "YOU sent your child AWAY! I could NEVER send MY child AWAY. I LOVE him too much."

If your student truly wants to attend IMSA, *the most loving and unselfish thing* that you can do is to provide your child with unconditional sup-

port and encouragement.

Your relationship with your child will change. We IMSA parents surrender our privilege to hold on to our children three years sooner than most parents. This can be heart wrenching. However, when you start to see your child maturing, growing in confidence and self-discipline...when you see these things that you hoped were there in them...emerging full force...there is a sense of awe and gratitude in their IMSA experience.

Making a decision to have a child—it's momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.—E. Stone

On Studying...

IMSA has mandatory study hours for incoming sophomores. Many students who come to IMSA have been able to maintain a perfect GPA without ever having to put any deliberate effort into their homework or studies. When they come to IMSA they quickly realize that their days of leisure and haphazard study techniques are over.

The mandatory after dinner study hours help sophomore get into a regular study routine and encourage students to study in groups.

Some students lack time management skills and are overwhelmed with scheduling adequate time for school activities, homework, sports, and socializing. Your student can make an appoint-

ment with IMSA's Learning Strategies Specialist to improve their time management skills. They can also help students with their test taking skills and arrange for tutorial assistance. Every IMSA faculty member has office hours and is available to meet students and to review the course material.

Every student invited to attend IMSA has the potential to excel. However, students will need both self-discipline and a certain focus to begin to realize their potential.

Natural brilliance can get you in the front door; but it takes focus and discipline to open the windows of infinite possibilities.

Learning is the noble challenge of broadening our scope.



Health Services

IMSA has an on-campus Student Health Care Services Office staffed by registered nurses from Rush-Copley Medical Center. The office is open on weekdays from 7:00am until 3:30pm. A physician is also on-call 24 hours a day.

The IMSA Student Health Care Services Offices provides health assessment and treatment for illness/injury, first aid, health counseling, administration of medication as prescribed by a physician, and other appropriate therapeutic

interventions. Off-campus medical resources are also available, payable by the student's insurance.

The Residential Life staff, if contacted during the evening, will assess a student's medical situation and determine if a trip to the hospital emergency room or urgent care is necessary. In certain situations they may arrange for the student to get extra rest the following morning and then see the nurse.

**Parents' Association
Council Activities:**
Athletic Team Dinners
Academic Programs
Super Bowl Fest
Parent Partners
Senior Banquet
Summer Picnics
Friday Fests
Finals Fests

Communication

Once upon a time the advice most given by IMSA parents who wanted to maintain active communication with their student was to prepare for a LARGE phone bill. However, between cell-phone plans that include long distance and phone cards at Sam's Club, many find those large bills a thing of the past.

The advice we currently give new IMSA parents is get an email address, and maintain it. Many parents actively communicate with their student and other IMSA parents using e-mail or AIM.

E-mail is a primary method of communication we use to keep parents in the loop. IMSA administration, College and Academic Counselors and the Parents Council send out informational updates and newsletters regularly via e-mails.

Letters of encouragement and packages stuffed with goodies from home are wonderful ways of letting your student know that they are loved. A box of cookies or favorite treats is like a warm embrace from mom and dad.

My heart is happy, my mind is free. I had a father who talked with me.—Hilde Bigelow

What is the Parents' Association Council?

IMSA Parents Association Council

1500 West Sullivan Road
Aurora, Illinois 60506-1000

<http://parents.imsa.edu>

MISSION STATEMENT: The IMSA Parents' Association exists in order to enhance our children's educational experience by working collaboratively with students, faculty and administration in all aspects of academic and residential life. We are committed to the belief that quality education can be achieved only through parent involvement and support.

PAC COMMITTEES: Academic, Downstate Bus, Communications, College and Academic Counseling, Discipline, Multi-Cultural, Student Life, Technology

MEETINGS: Typically there is one meeting a month during the school year. These are held on a Saturday morning at IMSA. One meeting dur-

ing the year is designated as a "downstate meeting" and will be held off campus at a convenient location for parents living outside the metro area.

We are interested in providing opportunities for families to get involved with their students and their lives at IMSA. Parents are truly an important resource for IMSA and the students that attend. It is a difficult decision to have your child attend a residential school, however, being involved with PAC provides the opportunities to get to know other IMSA parents, become involved in campus activities and meet your child's friends. PAC serves as a wonderful resource and network for families.

When both Alison and Erica received their acceptance letter from IMSA, the longest summer in the history of the world began. From the beginning, they were packed and ready. The twins eagerly awaited Move-In Day. Our story ends here, the day they moved into the dorms. We never saw them again. (Just kidding! Who says money can't buy love?) Each of our children earned the privilege of attending IMSA; they were intent on enjoying every moment for the next three years. It was the happiest of times.

Academics, sports, friends and staff were all great. As parents, we considered IMSA the perfect high school experience. IMSA provided an environment that nurtured our children, and helped them flourish into independent young adults by providing them a wide array of constructive avenues to channel their dynamic energies. Comparing our 'parenting notes' with our friends we realized that we did not face many of the negatives that they experienced with your 'normal' high schools such as loss of focus on academics or negative peer influence. We were also spared the foolish daily quibbles that strain the relationship between teens and their parents. Today our children remain very close to their IMSA family and us. Erica and Alison graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2005, both summa cum laude. Erica is currently in her first year of law school at George Washington in DC and Alison is a CPA in Chicago. Jay is enjoying his freshman year at Columbia University in NY as a pre-med student. Without the support of a fine academic institution such as

IMSA, few parents could have been prepared or supported their children to this level of commitment. We give much of the credit for our children's varied successes to the IMSA community; or as our girls say "our IMSA family". IMSA truly develops our students in mind, body and spirit providing opportunities for academic success, support to develop athletic abilities and a healthy lifestyle.

Through IMSA our children gained an understanding of three golden responsibilities that continue to contribute to their success and provide direction in their life choices. First, IMSA reinforces the importance of caring for oneself, becoming the best student and person one can be. Next, IMSA demonstrated the responsibility we have to help others. Deeply grounded in IMSA's learning design are activities and enriching opportunities that encourages students to work together and to help each other. Students learn to support, care for and be respectful of their fellow classmates. Herein lies the heart of why the most wonderful friendships evolve here at IMSA. Finally, IMSA teaches their students to "leave the cornfield behind" and further educate oneself and do good for our world, achieve their greatest potential. IMSA is truly a launch pad of hope and compassionate world leaders.

We hope by sharing our family experience it will help you decide whether or not your child should attend IMSA. In our case, Alison and Erica made that decision in the fourth grade by declaring "we are going there!" We have only the highest praise for IMSA. We are forever grateful for the honor of having all three children allowed the opportunities IMSA provides. It is indeed a wonderful blessing to be a part of the IMSA family.

Lorna and John Ruddy

Parents of Alison and Erica, IMSA Class of 2001/ Jay, 2005