



Message from School Committee Chair, Chub Whitten

Our family had planned on making the trip to the far reaches of Beverly to celebrate Thanksgiving with our relatives. The pandemic has changed that, unfortunately. As a district we have been able to temper the effects of the coronavirus by adhering to strict protocols and so far, we have not had any in-school COVID transmissions. Masks and other measures are a major contributing factor to this. Unfortunately, as of last week, we have 26 active cases in Ipswich. We are experiencing the spike that has been predicted by our health experts.

Our school district messaging should be filled with curriculum advancements, student achievement updates, and arts events. Instead, you get to read about viral numbers and protective measures. A strict focus on staying healthy and keeping our students engaged is required right now.

Let's celebrate for a moment that we have just marked 10 weeks of learning in the Hybrid structure, we have had a very successful fall sports season for the teams that were able to run, and we all look forward to the next releases of our music programs on YouTube. These are our victories; we need to focus on the past methodologies to keep our schools open and students engaged.

Our collective efforts have been incredibly taxing on our students, parents, teachers, and staff. I remain concerned that we have a very thin teacher/staff bench. For example, many of our substitutes come from the ranks of retired teachers. Right now, because of their perceived high-risk category, they are unavailable to the District. While we have not yet had to shut a class down or a building, we must prepare for that occurrence.

The School Committee is thankful for the joint efforts of all involved. We need to remain vigilant, keep our circles as tight as possible, continue to be socially distant, and wear our masks. Celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday with all of those you love may bring the unwanted consequence of a COVID-19 spike (it happened in the two weeks following the Canadian Thanksgiving). We encourage those that welcome more people to their Thanksgiving table than those they have been with these long past months to join school remotely when we welcome our students back.

Thank you all for making this most unusual school year possible.

We remain grateful,
Chub Whitten, Chair, Ipswich School Committee

Updates: Return to Learn 2020

HOLIDAY GATHERINGS

With the Thanksgiving holiday coming up next week, please review the CDC's statement on [Holiday Celebrations](#). The district strongly encourages families to limit their travel and social interactions during the holidays so as not to jeopardize our ability to continue the hybrid schedule. In adherence to the state's [COVID-19 Travel Order](#), if students do travel out of state, they will need to participate in remote learning from home during the required quarantine period or produce a negative test before returning in-person.

COVID REMINDER

As we complete our 10th week of the hybrid schedule, we thank everyone who is doing their part to mitigate the spread of germs within the school. However, COVID-19 cases have doubled from 13 to 26 in the last week in Ipswich. Please read this [press release](#) from Town Manager Anthony Marino and Public Health Director Colleen Fermon. This alert reminds residents of Governor Baker's updated gatherings order and that masks are required in public at all times.

As a reminder, if your child is showing symptoms of COVID-19, the district's protocol states that symptomatic individuals should stay home and seek testing. Please remember to communicate with your school's front office and/or school nurse when your child is ill and cannot attend classes.

- Individuals with a negative COVID result may return to school when asymptomatic and cleared by the school nurse
- Individuals with a positive COVID result are contacted by a member of the Board of Health to complete contact tracing and isolation requirements.
- Individuals who do not get tested are required to stay home for 10 days following symptom onset.

FLU VACCINES

Also, please remember that per a [mandate](#) by state public health officials, all students in grades K-12 are required to be vaccinated for the flu before December 31st. Once your child is vaccinated, please send in a copy of the confirmation to your school nurse.

School Committee Goals for 2020-21

On an annual basis, the School Committee identifies core goal areas to focus on during a specific school year. On October 1, 2020, the following goals were unanimously adopted for 2020-21:

BUDGET

1. Develop strategy to manage COVID-related spending and savings and its effect on the district's FY21 annual and long-term budget. Complete by March 2021.
2. Monitor expenses to determine timing for the next operational override, presumed to be in Fiscal Year 2023, and develop strategy for override by May 2021.
3. Prepare budget analysis for next contract negotiations to provide guidance to the School Committee and contract negotiating subcommittee by December 1, 2020.

VISION 2030

Complete the Vision 2030 Plan by June 2021 including the following actions:

1. Complete the secondary education plan by December 2020
2. Conduct assessment of lessons learned under COVID response which should inform Vision 2030 and adjust plan accordingly, completing by February 2021
3. Integrate framework components and operationalize the plan by April 2021
4. Publish and distribute the plan by June 2021.

COMMUNICATIONS

Continue to provide access to timely information about Ipswich Public Schools for the community-at-large throughout the 2020-21 school year, to include five ongoing focus areas:

1. Newsletters: Publish a bimonthly School Committee newsletter and distribute to our school community and the community-at-large. Target publish dates: October, November, January, March, May, June.
2. Community Engagement Efforts: Foster increased community engagement throughout the school year, utilizing both remote and in-person connection opportunities, to include a budget presentation to the Rotary Club in February 2021 and a community forum in Spring 2021 to discuss elementary school(s) building project.
3. District Website: Keep the School Committee information on the District website up-to-date and comprehensive so that information can be easily found. Review School Committee pages and links to ensure that everything is up to date, including member bios and policy manual.
4. Social Media: Continue to broaden and increase communication outreach through social media channels. Establish Social Media Norms, using the existing town social media policy and MASC guidance.
5. Inter-Committee Communication: Foster a clear, consistent level of communication amongst the School Committee. Create a School Committee Calendar of Events, determine procedure for disseminating information from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) such as proposed resolutions, and maintain and keep up-to-date our existing School Committee documents such as the Subcommittee, Working Group, and Liaison assignments.

Race, Equity, and Social Justice Working Group

The Race, Equity and Social Justice Working Group continues to focus on community engagement and outreach. On November 12, 2020, the working group met with several representatives from the town and school district to hear what initiatives are already underway and discuss how the School Committee could better support those initiatives and build on the work that has already started. The School Committee supports our town leaders and educators as they undertake the job of enriching our hiring process and building an antiracist community of learners and is working to build an environment that supports all respectful discussions that flow from this work. To that end, we invite all members of our District to participate in a [remote listening session](#) on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 4:00 pm. The goal of this session is to hear from those who wish to share about their families' experience within the school district as it relates to race, equity and social justice.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85094257381?pwd=WmxhbjN1SC9OR1htZEdlcG4yVFZxZz09>

Meeting ID: 850 9425 7381 Passcode: 958440

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

Meeting ID: 850 9425 7381 Passcode: 958440

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kbCEloDEmW>

Feoffees/ Traverso-Weatherall Grant Updates

The annual distribution from the Feoffees Trust is an important supplemental funding source for our schools. Each year, the distribution is allocated by the School Committee into two separate pools of grant funding. Paine Grants are larger and tend to be focused more on district wide initiatives. Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants, capped at \$7500 per grant, are applied for by teachers to meet any needs they see in their schools which aren't covered by the annual school budget. These biannual grants are named to honor Edmund Traverso and Robert Weatherall who together spearheaded the push to make the assets controlled by the Feoffees into a more substantial and sustainable income stream for our district. Our spring and fall 2020 grant cycles resulted in the approval of 33 grants totaling approximately \$192,000 in funds to benefit our kids.

This year's Traverso-Weatherall Grants are being utilized to fund important professional development opportunities for teachers. In addition, the grants are helping to enhance current class offerings, add technology improvements to benefit our music and arts programs, provide more diverse works of fiction in our school libraries and offer eight weeks of swimming lessons for all kindergarten students. The twice-yearly funding cycle gives teachers the ability to access programs and opportunities shortly after school begins and then again as the school year is wrapping up. A good portion of Paine and Traverso-Weatherall grants this year are being used to fund educational tools and programs that our students and teachers can use to navigate these challenging times of hybrid/remote learning.

The Ipswich Schools are fortunate to have the Feoffees Trust to lean on to provide funding for the enrichment and enhancement of our educational curriculum. The positive impact can be seen within each of our four schools. Our students directly benefit from the prudent management of this exceptionally unique resource.

School Committee Meeting Highlights

October

- Return to Learn Updates and Discussions
- Tri Board Meeting
- Presentation of Superintendent Goals

- Fine Arts Program Presentation
- Summer and Fall Professional Development

November

- Feoffees Update
- Review of School Committee Self-Evaluation
- MASC Resolutions Discussion and Vote
- Tri Board Recap
- Secondary Education Plan Presentation

Upcoming District Events

- **November 23:** Select Board Meeting - Public Input on Long Term Strategic Plan, 7 p.m.
- **November 25:** Thanksgiving Early Release
- **November 26-27:** No School; Thanksgiving Break
- **December 3:** School Committee Open Session Meeting*
- **December 17:** School Committee Open Session Meeting*
- **December 24-January 1:** No School; Winter Holiday Break

* School Committee Open Session Meetings are typically held on the first and third Thursday of the month in the MS/HS Ensemble Room located at 134 High Street, Ipswich and begin at 7:00 PM. Meeting agendas, minutes, folders with applicable meeting documents, and calendar may be found on the district website. These meetings are broadcast live on ICAM. To view these meetings, please tune into Comcast Channel 98 and Verizon Channel 31. Meetings can also be viewed on the ICAM Ipswich website: www.icamipswich.com. On March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an executive order suspending certain provisions to the Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing. As such, while the School Committee members meet in person in the MS/HS Ensemble Room, these meetings are simultaneously held over Zoom to ensure real-time public access.

Contact Information

schoolcommittee@ipswichma.gov

Chub Whitten, Chair: cwhitten@ipsk12.net

Carl Nylén, Vice Chair: cnylen@ipsk12.net

Emily Cannon: ecannon@ipsk12.net

Sara Gilliam: sgilliam@ipsk12.net

Pavica Kneedler: pkneedler@ipsk12.net

Hugh O’Flynn: hoflynn@ipsk12.net

Greg Stevens: gstevens@ipsk12.net

Brian Blake, Superintendent: bblake@ipsk12.net; 978-356-2935

The Ipswich School Committee places great value on feedback from our community and welcomes the opportunity for dialogue and transparency. Per our policy, communication sent to the School Committee as a group is replied to by the School Committee Chair.

Ipswich Public Schools Links



[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[School Newsletters](#)