

## **Social Media: A Message from the Ipswich School Committee**

According to the Pew Research Center, more than 70% of American adults use social media to “connect with one another, engage with news content, share information and entertain themselves.”<sup>1</sup> This data is from 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic and our subsequent increased reliance on technology, so this number is almost certainly higher now. While social media sites play an important and valuable role in the sharing of information, ideas and opinions, they can have a darker side as well: spreading misinformation and rumors, allowing online bullying, and exacerbating anxiety and other mental health issues.

Ipswich is full of kind, caring people, but we are unfortunately not immune from the downsides of social media. In an email to families last week, Ipswich Middle School provided some great social media recommendations for students that are relevant to all of us. Best-practice social media guidelines include a reminder of the illusion of any online privacy, not posting in anger or getting personal in remarks, directing complaints and concerns to the appropriate channels, and keeping in mind the three tenets of mindful speech (Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?) The intent of these recommendations is not to police or censor messages but to encourage us to be carefully aware and conscious of the words that we choose - especially with the knowledge that the audience may end up being much larger than originally intended.

The Ipswich School Committee historically hasn't had much of a member presence on social media. Our communications subcommittee is working to change that, with a first step of drafting some social media norms to help guide the process. We hope that broadening our communication efforts to regularly include social media will continue to increase the level of quality two-way dialogue with our stakeholders and community members. We continue to strive to do our very best in service of the schoolchildren and families of Ipswich and deeply appreciate your support and work towards this goal.

With gratitude,

The Ipswich School Committee

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>