



Message from School Committee Chair, Barry W. Hopping

As English novelist Charles Dickens proclaimed in his *A Tale of Two Cities*, “*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.*”

As world health officials and economists continue to navigate through the “*minefield*” that has become the COVID-19 pandemic, we hear accounts of everyday people playing hero roles as they step up in support of neighbors, friends, and in many cases, total strangers. The strength and resilience of the human spirit has never been more evident than in the actions of our health care providers, first responders, grocery store clerks, and other essential service personnel. Setting their own health and well-being aside so that the afflicted, medically compromised, and destitute among us can receive the basic necessities of life. We are all indebted to these selfless individuals that without hesitation and without being asked to do so, took it upon themselves to help so many others in desperate need.

However, just as noteworthy are those people who have either totally ignored prescribed steps to slow the spread of the virus or have capitalized on people’s fears and uncertainties for their own gain and profit. Scam artists selling bogus medications and substandard personal protective equipment (PPE) are among the most egregious. Trying to determine why some people choose a path of compassion and kindness while others opt for a lifetime of deceit and opportunism at the expense of those less fortunate is way beyond my training as an educator, but once again, trying times have brought out the best and worst of society.

I choose to focus instead on those patients that weeks ago were diagnosed with COVID-19 and today, are being discharged into the waiting arms of loved ones. In each case, we have been witness to hospital lobbies lined with health care staff that applaud as the now healthy patient passes between them. I choose to focus instead on the unassuming newspaper delivery gentleman who took it upon himself to deliver much needed groceries to well over 100 elderly customers along his route. I choose to focus instead on the countless fundraisers that have been established by good samaritans in support of local businesses that struggle to survive.

I choose to focus instead on the dedication, commitment, and efforts of our local educators as they work tirelessly from home trying to juggle their responsibilities as parents, sons, daughters, husbands and wives while at the same time ensuring that our students remain engaged, connected, and challenged.

Dr. Blake reported that the results of an impromptu survey by school personnel revealed that approximately 85-90% of our students are joining their teachers and classmates online and participating in a variety of learning activities. Discussions continue as to how we can enlist the support of parents to ensure that all students are connected during these difficult days where virtual teaching and learning sessions are our only viable options. The outreach continues as building administrators and other caring staff members make phone calls, send emails, text, and try any means possible to connect with every student and family.

We express our sincere gratitude to the parents that have suddenly been thrust into the roles of teacher, tech specialist, counselor, school nurse, and recess monitor. And let's not overlook the work of our other local "heroes," the district's food service employees that faithfully prepare and deliver over 100 meals a day, five days a week, to families in need throughout the community. Their sacrifice of time and their willingness to look beyond possible exposure to COVID-19 is a testament to the genuine goodness of people and how in times of greatest need, no one will ever be forced to go it alone. One last shout out to our talented IT staff and how they have managed to keep us up and running in spite of a system network that is obviously taxed to the limit, new online teaching tools that require immediate screening and approval prior to allowing access, and techno-challenged individuals like myself and my litany of "how to" questions each time I try to join a hang-out, chat room, or change a virtual background.

We as a School Committee and school district are so thankful to live in a community that fosters teamwork, promotes volunteerism, honors the rightful place of every resident, embraces diverse thought, and overlooks no one. So instead, I choose to focus on the true essence of Ipswich, my hometown, and as Dickens said, "... *the season of light*" and "... *the spring of hope*," ever-confident that better days are just ahead for us all.

Ipswich Public Schools 2020-21 and 2021-22 Calendars

The academic calendars for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years have been approved, with the first day of school in 2020 scheduled for Wednesday, September 2nd. Thank you to the Ipswich Education Association and our Ipswich Public Schools administrative team, who collaborated to develop two years' academic calendars as a more beneficial planning tool for families and staff. See below for the two calendars, or you can also find printable PDF versions on the [district website](#).

IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020-2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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MARCH						
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School Hours		
Elementary	8:40 AM	3:05 PM
Secondary	7:45 AM	2:21 PM

Important Dates	
August 31	Opening Day for Teachers
September 1	Teacher Workshop
September 2	First Day of School
June 17	Last Day of School-181 days
June 24	Last Day of School - 5 snow days

Holidays and No School Days

September 4	No School
September 7	Labor Day
October 12	Columbus Day
October 13	Professional Development
November 11	Veterans Day
November 26	Thanksgiving
November 27	Thanksgiving Break
December 24-	Winter Holiday Break
January 1	Winter Holiday Break
January 18	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 15-19	Winter Break
April 19-23	Spring Break
May 31st	Memorial Day

Early Release Times (ER)

Elementary Schools	1:50 PM
Secondary Schools	1:17 PM

Thanksgiving Early Release (TER)

Elementary Schools	11:55 AM
Secondary Schools	11:20 AM

Key:	
FD	First Day
TW	Teacher Workshop
PD	Professional Development Day
ER	Early Release
TER	Thanksgiving Early Release
H	Holiday
V	Vacation

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DECEMBER						
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October 12	Columbus Day
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November 25	Veteran's Day
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FEBRUARY						
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MARCH						
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APRIL						
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MAY						
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JUNE						
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Why the Count Counts: 2020 Census is Critical to School Funding

The 2020 Census is happening now, and is available by phone, mail, or [online access](#). The national census is conducted once every decade to count and collect demographic data for every person living in the United States. The census, which is a mandatory process per the U.S. Constitution, has significant implications for public schools, as the data helps determine how federal education dollars are distributed to communities. Census data affects Title 1 funding, Special Education IDEA Grants, and also impacts programs that improve the health and well-being of children, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children; Medicaid; and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

One important factor that can negatively impact the accuracy of the census is undercounts. More than \$3 billion in federal grants to Massachusetts is vulnerable to an undercount in 2020. In the 2010 Census, children under age 5 were undercounted by an estimated 2 million, with as many as 20,000 uncounted in Massachusetts. Researchers believe that young children are often missed in the census because their living arrangements can be complex, and adults aren't always sure whether to include the children living with them on the census forms.

For more information about the 2020 Census and to see the answers to some Frequently Asked Questions, visit the Massachusetts' Secretary of State's [website](#). Also, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center released a [report](#) in March 2020 on the impact of the upcoming census on a range of Education and Health and Human Services.

School Committee Meeting Highlights

February

- Public Hearing for the Proposed FY21 School Budget
- FY21 School Budget Discussion and Vote

March

- Budget Presentations to the Ipswich Finance Committee
- End of Year Superintendent Evaluation Discussion
- Teacher Assistant Evaluation and Job Description Update

April

- Covid-19 Update
- Vote on Town Meeting Warrant Articles
- 2020-21/2021-22 School Calendars
- Feoffees Policy Update
- MOU For Remote Learning
- Vote to Rescind April Vacation

Upcoming District Events

Note: As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact our daily life in uncertain ways, these dates are subject to change. On March 12, Governor Baker signed an Executive Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law during the State of Emergency and authorizing government boards and committees to meet virtually as long as adequate alternative means of public access are provided through audio and visual technology services. Additionally, the Ipswich Select Board and Town Manager have acquired access to Zoom remote meeting tools and coordinated with ICAM to broadcast these virtual meetings.

- **April 23:** School Committee Open Session Meeting, 7:00 p.m.*
- **May 7:** School Committee Open Session Meeting, 7:00 p.m.*
- **May 9:** Bean Counting, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (*tentative rescheduled date*)
- **May 21:** School Committee Open Session Meeting, 7:00 p.m.*
- **June 4:** School Committee Open Session Meeting, 7:00 p.m.*
- **June 18:** School Committee Open Session Meeting, 7:00 p.m.*
- **TBD:** Annual Town Meeting (*will be a rescheduled date*)
- **TBD:** Town Elections (*will be a rescheduled date*)

*Meeting agendas, minutes, 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.

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