



Special Board of Education Discussion - Increasing Daily Student Attendance February 23rd, 2021 at 7:30 pm

February 17, 2021

Dear Irvington School Community,

In a time when there are many conflicting opinions on various topics across the nation, there is one topic where there should be no debate: the need for students to be in school. There is no question that the Board of Education and I want to increase daily student attendance. Our faculty, staff and administrators want this as well. We know that students learn best when they are physically present in school. There is also a growing body of research regarding children's mental health needs during the pandemic. The time has come and we must consider what the Irvington UFSD can do to address both of these critical issues.

At the last Board of Education meeting on February 9, 2021, a good amount of time was spent discussing athletics. While I am very supportive of our athletics program and our student athletes, this conversation should not be taking place without a conversation about increasing our students' time in school, learning. The fact that the last Board of Education meeting featured a lengthy dialogue on athletics is not the result of the District prioritizing student participation in sports over that of all students being physically present in school more frequently. It is the result of Governor Cuomo giving authorization for high risk athletics to resume or begin *before* addressing the issue of increasing in-person learning experiences for all students. In the Governor's decision, he required that local health departments give school districts in their respective counties guidance as to how sports can be facilitated. In doing so, this left many decisions to be made by each school district. The February 9th Board of Education meeting addressed these necessary decision points, but also highlighted our disagreement with New York State's misplaced priorities and foreshadowed the District's upcoming efforts to increase daily student attendance. If you have not done so already, I encourage you to watch that component of the [recent BOE meeting](#).

While New York State has not set the proper order of priorities, we in the Irvington UFSD are going to focus on the most important topic before us at this time: *whether daily student attendance can be safely increased to support our students' academic growth and their social-emotional well-being*. This priority will be the focus of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, February 23rd. All school community members are encouraged to attend the meeting; wherein, I will outline the process the District will undertake to answer this question and set the priorities straight for our school community.

Please make time to join us for this important meeting, which will be [broadcast via Zoom](#).

My best regards,

Kris

Dr. Kristopher Harrison
Superintendent of Schools

6 Dows Lane
40 North Broadway
Irvington, NY 10533
914-591-8500 | 914-591-3064
www.irvingtonschools.org

