



IRVINGTON
UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Welcome Back!

Dear Irvington School Community,

Welcome to the 2025-26 School Year!

As an educator, I have always felt privileged to celebrate the start of a new year twice. The celebration marking the beginning of a calendar year is accompanied by hats and noisemakers, while the start of a new school year brings fresh bulletin board paper, brightly colored post it notes, stiff backpacks that will need breaking in, and perhaps a special first day of school outfit. Resolutions are often common as well. For example, this year I will raise my hand more often in class and make new friends. It is indeed a special occasion worthy of celebration for educators, parents, and children. As part of the new year celebration, we have been preparing all summer for our students' arrival including updating facilities, hiring additional faculty and staff, and updating curriculum.

Facilities

The upgrades to the facilities that took place over the summer included the painting of multiple spaces, the addition of new partitions in the IMS bathrooms, stripping and waxing floors, as well as sanding and recoating gymnasium floors. Also, instructional spaces have been given a deep clean. Lastly, a Genius Bar has been added to the Campus Library, where students can work with campus staff to troubleshoot Chromebooks.

I want to thank Rich Pittore, Director of Facilities, and the head custodians of each building Doug O'Dell, Angel Aviles, and Neil Cole, our maintenance team of Mat Dorfman and Joe Mack, as well as the entire custodial staff for their hard work in preparing our facilities for the start of the new year.

Cell Phone Policy

On July 1, 2025, after much discussion and feedback from a variety of constituents, the [Board of Education adopted Policy 5695](#) to comply with Governor Hochul's Distraction Free Schools initiative and New York State law. This mandate eliminates the use of cell phones, smart phones and watches, and tablets that can connect to the internet, for all students from "bell to bell" including free periods and lunch. Internet enabled devices provided by the school are not included in the ban.

Each individual school will communicate with students and families in terms of building-based practices. In general, elementary school students are discouraged from bringing such devices to school while students at IMS and IHS will be required to silence their cell phones, smartphones and watches, and store them in their locker.

We recognize this will be a change for many students. Therefore, we intend to educate them on the benefits of distraction free environments at school and support them through the transition.

Universal Meals

We're pleased to announce that beginning this 2025-26 school year, Irvington UFSD will participate in the New York State Child Nutrition Universal Free Meals Program. Through this initiative, all students will receive one full breakfast which is available only at the Campus, and one full lunch meal daily in all schools at no cost, regardless of household

income. [For more information, please see this document](#) to determine what is considered a “full meal”. If the student does not take all of the items listed as a “full meal” their selections will be charged as ala carte items. Families that were previously eligible for free or reduced lunch are encouraged to continue to complete the Education Benefit form. [For more information click here.](#)

Program Updates

As you are aware, Mr. Scott Wynne, our new Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment started July 1st. Under his direction, this summer, a large portion of our teachers participated in summer curriculum work addressing a wide array of curricular and pedagogical topics. Among the highlights, beginning at the start of the school year we will be launching the Arts & Letters Literacy Curriculum, across grades K-5. This is a vertically aligned, authentic, knowledge rich program, aligned with the Science of Reading, that blends literature, non-fiction and fine arts. We look forward to sharing updates on this new curriculum throughout the year.

In terms of PPS, the District has long provided a broad continuum of services to students which include Special Class, Integrated Co-teaching, Resource Room, and Related Services. This year, we added Resource Room at Main Street School, a service that was not previously offered in that building; and are transitioning from ICT classes to a Consultant Teacher model in select courses for Juniors and Seniors. This model will better accommodate students at that age level by allowing more flexibility to ensure all students receive the necessary support while engaging with rigorous academic content alongside peers in a less restrictive environment.

Throughout the fall, the IHS Scheduling Committee, including students, parents, and teachers will be visiting multiple schools to learn more about various scheduling models and their impact on teaching, learning, and the student experience. We will be communicating frequently regarding what we are learning and gather feedback from various constituency groups. The timeline includes presenting recommendations in December and utilizing the winter and spring to prepare for the transition in the 2026-27 school year.

New Faculty

We are pleased to welcome multiple new faculty to Irvington Schools and we look forward to many years of service among them. These include:

Dows Lane

Anthony Mancino, Third Grade Teacher
Chelly Arango, Art Teacher

Main Street School

Gabrielle Witt, Fourth Grade Teacher
Julia Kim, Fourth Grade Teacher
Peter Halligan, Fifth Grade Teacher
Rebecca Capsuto, Elementary Science Teacher

Katie Shine, Dows Lane/Main Street School, Occupational Therapy Assistant

Irvington Middle School

Chris Siley, Special Education Teacher
Corey Makelainen, ELA Teacher
James DeRonda, Health Teacher

Irvington High School

Adeyemi Murphy-Higgs, Special Education Teacher
Anthony Hastings, Special Education Teacher
Francesca Pulice, Guidance Counselor
Lauren Reisner, Spanish Teacher
Nick Johnson, Social Studies Teacher
William Branson, Special Education Teacher
George Callas, Cleaner

Ferhad Razzak, Irvington Middle School/High School, Dean of Students

Kristen Birchard, Irvington Middle School/High School, Psychologist

It is my great pleasure to welcome our students and their families to the 2025-26 school year, and I promise to support your children to the best of my ability in keeping all of their New Year's Resolutions!

Go Bulldogs!

Dr. Mara Ratesic
Superintendent of Schools



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