



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Why is public education in Ipswich and elsewhere in such financial trouble?**

A: The Town of Ipswich faces a structural deficit that is severely impacting the school budget. The primary reasons for this are as follows:

- The basic cost of education is growing faster than the available revenues, under Prop. 2 1/2, and has been for a number of years.
- This year the Town is experiencing a significant loss of revenue, exacerbating the structural deficit. New revenues from construction and permit fees have dropped significantly from last year. Fewer people are buying new cars, lottery receipts are down and State aid has not grown proportionally with cost increases.
- Fixed costs such as health insurance, fuel and utilities have increased dramatically faster than revenues can support. In addition, mounting State and Federal mandates for items such as No Child Left Behind, MCAS, wellness instruction and required auditing have added to the budget burden without additional revenue support.

### **Q: Ipswich has performed very well by most measurements, despite year-after-year budgetary crises. How?**

A: Ipswich has been in the enviable position of having outside funding to go to, in order to cover essential costs and not have to resort to the extreme staff reductions other districts have faced. In addition, a culture of professionalism and support by staff and the community have allowed us to avoid some of the problems other districts have faced. Consequently, we are a net recipient (on a growing basis) of funding sources such as Choice tuitions. In a sense, success has brought success. Examples are the new HS-MS building, community support to maintain athletic and music programs, professional development courses run by teachers for teachers etc.

### **Q: What is different for FY09?**

A: In a sense, we've "hit the wall." A combination of the loss of Feoffees funding, years of making-do and cutting resources, and the country-wide financial recession have reduced available funding below the point where we can keep the losses away from direct instructional programs. The schools have presented three override questions to the Town in the last six years to save transportation, athletic and instructional programs and all three have been rejected. Each has been larger than the last.

### **Q: Have the Ipswich Schools used existing resources wisely?**

A: State statistics would tell us, "YES." Ipswich's tax dollar goes significantly farther than its neighbors', judging from the Cost per Pupil statistics that show our students cost between \$1400 and \$3100 less than our neighbors'. Additionally, expenditures to reduce energy consumption (from in-budget bonded monies and grants) are beginning to show a significant decrease in fuel and utility consumption.

### **Q: How much are teachers paid?**

A: Teacher compensation is based on a salary schedule developed through the collective bargaining process. Ipswich ranks 17th out of 23 North Shore communities in teacher salaries. Teachers have 60% of their health insurance being paid by the Town (via school budget). This is lower than most communities' insurance share. Teachers have the opportunity to increase their salary by supporting many other aspects of school life such as coaching, advising for student clubs and activities, tutoring, supervising after-school programs and developing or teaching curriculum. We currently have 170 teachers (on a full-time equivalent basis).

**Q: What is the per-pupil spending level in Ipswich, and how does it compare with other neighboring communities?**

A: According to information published by the Massachusetts Department of Education, in FY07 Ipswich spent \$9,734 per student (all funds). The state average for the same year was \$11,819. This means Ipswich spending per pupil is 17.6% below the state average. See below for a summary of per-pupil spending in nearby communities in FY07 (ranked by spending per pupil).

**Per-Pupil Spending in Neighboring Communities, FY07**

Manchester-Essex	\$12,865
Hamilton-Wenham	\$12,864
Rockport	\$12,099
Masconomet	\$11,215
Newburyport	\$11,161
Lynnfield	\$9,840
Triton	\$9,791
Ipswich	\$9,734
Pentucket	\$9,361

**Q: How much revenue has the Choice program brought into Ipswich?**

A: Ipswich has allowed students to “Choice into” the district on a limited basis for many years. Until FY03 between 50 and 60 Choice students were enrolled. Between FY03 and FY07 our Choice-In number grew from 59.9 to 147.4. Our Choice Out number between FY99 and FY07 shrank from 44.1 to 12.2. In the last ten years we have supplemented educational funding with \$2.5 million in Choice tuitions.

**Q: Can we charge more student fees?**

A: Parents would say “NO.” Families already pay fees for students to play sports, be in clubs, attend before- and after-school programs, go on field trips etc. Adding fees for things such as transportation would not bring in sufficient funds to pay the cost of the additional buses needed.

**Q: What is an “override”?**

A: An override, which must be voted first by the Town Meeting, then supported by a majority vote at the ballot box in mid-May, allows the Town to increase tax bills to property owners by a certain (identified) amount of money per thousand dollar of the taxpayer’s property valuation. This becomes a permanent part of the tax base, and can be used only for the purpose specified in the override ballot question. It is not the same as a capital override, which goes off the tax base when the borrowing for the construction project is paid off.

**Q: How much would an operating budget override cost taxpayers?**

A: The median assessment for a single family home in Ipswich is \$447,350. At a \$0.55/\$1000 valuation, the recommended \$1.49 million override would cost the average homeowner about \$247 a year or about \$20 a month. The cost to condominium owners would be \$159 per year on average. The override would present no cost to seniors living in public housing. To find out your home’s assessed value, go to <http://ipswich.patriotproperties.com>.

This information came from “FAQ’s about School Budget and Financing” from Ipswich Public Schools.

For more information please go to [www.turnthetideipswich.org](http://www.turnthetideipswich.org)

Paid for by Turn the Tide Ipswich. Carl Nylen, Treasurer.