

# 6. Education

**I**rasburg is committed to school governance, approved by the voters by the democratic process, that provides fair, equitable, cost-effective high-quality education for Irasburg students and meets the needs of the Irasburg community. In accord with the principles of respect for the environment, sound economics and regard for community values, this plan describes policies and actions to support the highest possible quality education for Irasburg students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12; prepare students for successive levels of education and employment; provide special educational opportunities for students with special needs; and support lifelong learning opportunities for Irasburg citizens.

## **The Education Landscape**

Education is a priority for Irasburg residents. Like towns throughout the state, Irasburg confronts the challenge of educating students to reach their highest potential in a statewide context of declining enrollment, high cost per pupil, changing educational expectations, and societal stresses—while preserving the town’s identity and meeting the requirements established by the Vermont legislature.

Educational resources in Irasburg include a pre-school program, the Irasburg Village School, the After-School Enrichment Program, and Lake Region High School. Northern Vermont University, the Community College of Vermont and Craftsbury’s Sterling College provide local postsecondary and adult-education opportunities. The Irasburg Village School is part of the Orleans Central Supervisory Union, which includes six elementary school districts with pre-K

through Grade 8 classes. The Lake Region Union High School in Orleans serves as the high school for the Orleans Central Supervisory Union.

*The Irasburg Village School* serves as a vibrant center of community life. Besides its K-8 educational function, the Village School:

- Serves as Irasburg’s designated emergency facility, the only one with shower facilities.
- Represents a significant fraction of the town’s financial assets.
- Builds trust and cooperation among citizens by bringing together segments of Irasburg’s population who would likely not otherwise have the opportunity to interact.
- Aligns with Irasburg’s principle of regard for community values. In June 2016, Irasburg citizens voted 62-27 NOT to join a unified school district with six other local schools. In November 2018 Irasburg again voted not to join a unified school district. This time, by a vote of 360-90. The Irasburg School Board, Selectboard and Planning Commission have all voted to join a legal appeal to a State forced merger.

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Irasburg Village School



- Instills a regard for Irasburg’s history and tradition through study and exploration of historic village center.
- Aligns with Irasburg principle of respect for the environment through emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation, recycling, energy-related education and minimizing energy use for transportation to and from school.
- Has the potential to serve an important role in supporting increased opportunities for adult education.

**Pre-school** A free public pre-school program offers excellent early education opportunities for Irasburg’s three-to-five-year olds. Held five days a week for full or half days, in two locations (Albany and Barton), the program incorporates Head Start and Early Head Start services and provides an exceptional resource for educational, social and emotional development.

**K-8** The Irasburg Village School serves kindergarten through Grade 8 students. In May 2017, enrollment was 127. The school strives to provide a quality education for the students in a structured, caring educational environment. The school provides three seasons of inter-mural sports for the upper grades, as well as winter activities for all grades. The school encourages a culture of respect for all. Students participate in an active Farm-to-School program. The curriculum has a strong focus on environmental and energy-related education, as well as on the history of Irasburg. Private K-8 educational options include St. Paul’s School in Barton and United Christian Academy in Newport.

*The Irasburg Village School aligns with Irasburg’s principle of regard for community values.*

The Village School was built in 1973 using the “open classroom” concept. Over the past five years, walls and doors have been added to the nine classrooms. Nevertheless, the current layout is not always conducive to learning. The gym and lunchroom are the same room, the one place that all students pass through to reach classrooms. The only shower facility is located in the nurse’s office bathroom. The school uses an all-purpose room for music and art classes; it also serves as a teacher lunchroom and meeting space.

The Resource Room houses Special Education classes but affords no privacy for students and staff, a challenge for this population. The technology support station is at the end of the supply closet, and bathrooms separate the secretary’s and principal’s offices.

A Fall 2017 energy audit determined that the building’s HVAC control system has reached the end of its useful life and needs replacement. Plans are in place to carry out that work, which

will save energy, increase air quality and improve temperature control.

Long-term improvements for the building that will need future financing include:

- Separate gym
- Additional classrooms and meeting rooms
- A new phone system
- An emergency generator for electrical backup
- Paved driveway

As the largest public building in town, and the only one with shower facilities, the Village School is Irasburg’s dedicated emergency facility. The addition of a generator and increased shower facilities would enhance the building’s function as an emergency facility.

**After-School and Summer Enrichment** Sponsored by the Leach Public Library and led and staffed by Irasburg educators, the Enrichment Program is a key contributor to the educational opportunities for Irasburg students. Since 2015, the Enrichment Program has offered after-school classes in subjects

as diverse as pottery, mathematics and disaster response, among others. Summer camps have presented classes in African drumming, storytelling and Irasburg history. Students pay a modest tuition fee for each class. Generous support from the Town of Irasburg's budget and from many local and state granting institutions provides the financial base for the Enrichment Program. Limited scholarships are available for Irasburg students.

**Secondary Education** Students entering high school (9th grade) attend Lake Region Union High School in Orleans, which offers a full academic and extra-curricular schedule as well as hands-on career training. In 2017-18, 54 Irasburg students attended LRUHS. There are a number of private options for high school in communities surrounding Irasburg, such as Burke Mountain Academy, St. Johnsbury Academy and the United Christian Academy in Newport.

**Career and Technical Education Centers** Northeast Kingdom options for hands-on secondary and post-secondary education and career training include the North Country Career Center in Newport, which offers a variety of technical programs, including skills such as agriculture and forestry. The Lyndon Institute offers adult education programs with in-person, online and off-site courses.

**Post-Secondary Education** Nearby colleges and universities include Northern Vermont University with campuses in Johnson and Lyndonville, as well as Sterling College in Craftsbury. They offer a range of bachelor's and master's degree programs and opportunities for continuing adult education. The Community College of Vermont has a Newport campus. The CCV mission is to support and challenge all students in meeting their educational goals through an abiding commitment to access, affordability and student success. The Leach Library Board of Trustees is investigating ways to expand educational opportunities for adults in the community.

## Goals

In accord with Irasburg's planning principles of respect for the environment, sound economics and regard for community values

- Irasburg's school governance, approved by the voters by the democratic process, provides fair, equitable, cost-effective high-quality education for Irasburg students and meets the needs of the Irasburg community.
- All of Irasburg's students receive the highest possible quality education from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 through programs that meet or exceed federal and state standards, that prepare students for successive levels of education and employment, and that provide special educational opportunities for students with special needs.
- Irasburg citizens have lifelong opportunities for learning.

## Actions

- Strongly encourage the widest possible community participation in educational policy- and decision-making at all levels, from state to local school board, to ensure that policies and decisions align with community values.
- Achieve an energy-efficient Village School by following the recommendations of the 2017 energy audit, to the maximum extent that budgets permit. Use the energy-efficiency improvement process as a learning opportunity.
- Pursue workable cost-effective enhancements to adapt the IVS building to support educational goals. Install a generator to enhance the building's usefulness as an emergency facility.
- Apply for Village Center Designation. Such a designation will permit Irasburg to pursue development of a multi-use path from the village center to the Irasburg Village School.