



Issaquah High Teacher Profile

Barbara Irish

Issaquah High Music Teacher
Choirs, piano, guitar, and song writing

What is your education background?

I have a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Heidelberg College in Ohio and a Master's of Educational Technology from City University in Bellevue. I've studied piano since I was 4 years old, learned guitar in high school and studied voice in college. I have also played violin, cello, bass, and now accordion.

Did you grow up around Issaquah? If not, where did you grow up and did that help shape the person you are today?

I was born in Japan, an Air Force baby, and was raised in Parma (Cleveland), Ohio. It was a wonderful place to grow up, like Mayberry only a bit more crowded. I had many opportunities to develop my musical skills and talents. I accompanied choirs, put on shows, organized groups, wrote arrangements, choreographed, sang and danced in choirs, and attended camps and conferences.



What was your job/career before coming to teach at Issaquah? If you had a prior job/career, how did that job/career make you become a better teacher?

I've always been a music teacher. I first taught private piano when I was 14. After college, we moved out to Kent, WA and I taught preschool / Kindergarten music at a private school. Eventually I went into the public school system and taught elementary music, then middle school/high school choir. After 23 years I came to Issaquah High School. I was familiar with the high caliber of the music program since my son was in Evergreen Philharmonic with Mr. Longman and In Harmony with Mrs. Watson. This was my dream job. I must say that for at least the first 6 months I felt guilty each time I drove into the parking because it was so wonderful here. Then I came to realize that someone had to teach here, why not me?

How many years have you been teaching at Issaquah?

This is my 17th year at IHS and my final year of teaching.

What classes at Issaquah do you teach, and why do you love teaching that subject?

I teach choirs, piano, guitar, and song writing. I love them all. I love seeing the lightbulbs go off as kids learn instruments and become proficient. I love seeing leaders develop in choir and I love watching kids become autonomous musicians.



Any favorite teaching memories?

I'll never forget the feeling when our groups are announced as winners at the State Solo & Ensemble Contest. The hard work really paid off and kids and parents were so proud, it always brought tears to my eyes.



What do you like to do outside of school?

When I was in 8th grade I announced that when I grew up I wanted to become a grandmother and a doctor of music. Well I got a Master's Degree, so that's close enough, but being a grandmother is the most important thing to me. I have 2 grandchildren. My granddaughter is in 9th grade and my grandson in 5th grade. My son is a fire captain in South Snohomish and my daughter-in-law is a Pre-Kindergarten teacher.

I took up British Baking because of the Great British Baking Show. I set up my kitchen with different kinds of flours, sugars, and ingredients that they like to use. I also enjoy scrapbooking, learning the accordion, and traveling.

Is there anything else special about you that you would like to share?

I am thankful every morning for my job at Issaquah High School and the wonderful, caring, talented students that I have the privilege of teaching. I look forward to waking up every morning and going to school, even if it's in my kitchen. What a great profession and wonderful life.

