



Superintendent's Update

June 1, 2016

Dear Shrewsbury Families & Community Members,

Although it was rainy, it was great to see so many families at the Memorial Day parade and ceremony. The remarks given by Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito and Navy Veteran and Westborough Firefighter Christopher Knight, both of whom are Shrewsbury residents and parents of SPS students, were poignant reminders of how fortunate we are to live in this country and this community.

Last night, the SHS Class of 2016 held their Commemoration ceremony at Mechanics Hall, and it was both an entertaining and moving celebration of their years together. **Our seniors will graduate on Thursday evening at 7:00pm**, and the Commencement will be broadcast live on SELCO channels 29/329 and will also be streaming live on the web at the [Shrewsbury Media Connection website](#).

Please note the following information:

- 1) Class of 2016 Senior Scholars
- 2) SHS Musical wins many awards, including top prize
- 3) National championship in Speech & Debate
- 4) Elementary teacher named state's first ever Champion of Environmental Literacy
- 5) Rep. Hannah Kane is the guest on *Superintendent's Update*
- 6) Your help requested for a BRIEF survey on student engagement and challenge

1) **The Class of 2016 Senior Scholars** were honored at this past Wednesday's School Committee meeting. You can view this portion of the meeting [at this link](#) starting at the 8m24s mark and continuing for about 30 minutes. Each student who was recognized made a brief statement that included thanking their families, the community, and the educators who made a significant impact during their time in Shrewsbury (and almost all of them have been in our district since the early childhood level!). I encourage you to check out our scholars' bios at the end of this message; these were written by their SHS school counselors and include selected accomplishments and college plans. We are very proud of these students, who not only have achieved great academic success but who have also made outstanding contributions in co-curricular activities and community service.

2) **Congratulations to everyone involved with the SHS spring musical, *Urinetown*, which was nominated for 23 High School Musical Theatre Awards and won eight, including Best Overall Production!** Other awards included Best Stage Crew, Best Production Number, Best Sound, Best Chorus/Ensemble, Best Choreography (SHS alumna, Jennifer Agbay), Best Director (SHS alumnus,

Nathan Colby), and the Not Your Average Chorus Member (SHS senior, Declan Quinn). Bravo to all!

3) **Speech & Debate national championship:** This past weekend, 30 members of our State Champion SHS Speech & Debate team competed against over 2,500 students from 500 different high schools in the NCFL Grand National Tournament in Sacramento, CA. Congratulations to the 13 students who made it through to the elimination rounds, and especially to **Prisha Singh, a freshman, who was crowned National Champion in the Oratorical Declamation category!**

Congratulations as well to the following students:

- Kylie Donovan, 6th place in Oral Interpretation of Literature
- Linday Mahowald & Seth Mahowald (team), top 16 in Public Forum Debate
- Paulina Hruskoci & Sherraina Song, top 24 in Oratorical Declamation
- Harini Shanmugan, top 24 in Dramatic Performance
- Ben Harris, top 24 in Oral Interpretation of Literature
- Imaad Huda, top 24 in Original Oratory
- Declan Quinn & Taha Saeed (team) and Shazeb Meraj & Jared Sarnie (team), top 24 in Duo Interpretation

We are fortunate to have one of the top Speech & Debate teams in the U.S.! Thanks to Coach Marc Rischitelli and the many assistant coaches, parent supporters, alumni, and student leaders and team members who are responsible for their high level of success. The team and individual state champions will be honored at the June 8 School Committee meeting.

4) **Floral Street School teacher, Kara Frankian, was named our state's Champion of Environmental Literacy** by the Massachusetts Environmental Education Society. Kara is the first ever recipient of this award. Kudos to her and her Floral Street colleagues, who last week held another very successful *Floral Goes Green* celebration of environmental learning!

5) **Rep. Hannah Kane is the guest on the latest episode of *Superintendent's Update*:**

In the current episode of *Superintendent's Update*, State Representative Hannah Kane joins me to discuss important legislative and budget issues pertaining to public education. The show runs at various times on SETV Channels 29/329 and can be seen online [here](#).

6) **Please help us by taking a BRIEF anonymous survey on student engagement and challenge:** As part of reviewing progress towards achieving our district's strategic priorities, I am interested in parents', students', and educators' opinions on the level of student engagement and challenge in our schools. **Please click [here](#) to give your quick impressions regarding this topic -- it should not take more than a couple of minutes**, unless you want to add an optional comment. Thanks in advance for providing your perspective!

Don't forget to scroll down to check out information about our Senior Scholars!

Thank you for your continued support of our community's public schools. If I can be of assistance to you, please contact me at 508-841-8400 or at jsawyer@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

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Shrewsbury High School Class of 2016 Senior Scholars

Each year, the School Committee recognizes the students who have the top ten grade point averages among their peers in the senior class. Below you will find a short bio of each student that illustrates their achievements in academics, co-curricular activities, and community service. These students have brought great distinction to themselves and to the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

- 1. Yutong Liu**
- 2. Allison Ross**
- 3. James He**
- 4. Richard Peng**
- 5. Matt Bowers**
- 6. Hari Kumar**
- 7. Erin Chen**
- 8. Bridget Zhou**
- 9. Jaehyun Lee**
- 10. Saachi Gopal**

1. Yutong Liu

Yutong is the number one student in the senior class. She is a National Merit Scholarship recipient and an Advanced Placement Scholar. Leadership experience abounds for Yutong. She served as the Middle School Liaison for Speech & Debate, coaching middle school students on the debate team, often serving as a judge during their tournaments. Currently, she is Secretary for the Speech & Debate team while still competing and garnering finalist standing at competitions around the country. She is Treasurer of Student Council and additionally serves as Student Council Community Advocacy Leader, responsible for organizing the high school Thanksgiving food drive, as well as managing the annual Blood Drive. Yutong is President of Spanish National Honor Society and member of both National Honor Society and Math National Honor Society. Yutong has spent a great deal of time in our district's schools having volunteered at Floral Street, coaching the Science Olympiad team in middle school and tutoring high school students in Spanish and Math. For this and her many other service endeavors, twice Yutong was awarded the Community Service medal for

volunteering 100 hours or more in one academic year. She plans to attend Brown University and major in International Relations.

2. Allison Ross

Self-motivated, compassionate, and driven, Allison Ross is an integral member of the SHS student body. She is a member of three honor societies; the National Honor Society, the French National Honor Society – where she was elected President for this school year, and the Math National Honor Society. Allison is also a member of the Marine Biology Club, Sign Language Club, and the esteemed Mentor Volunteer Program. A Presidential Scholar nominee, Allison has given back to the community through several service activities. She has been volunteering at the Floral Street Summer Enrichment Program for two summers, as a tutor at Hastings Elementary School in Westborough, and as a childcare provider for families of the Congregational Church of Westborough. Allison has also been a volunteer at Bay Path Humane Society as a cat care volunteer. Lastly, she has been an intern at the Corridor Nine Area Chamber of Commerce, making countless connections in the area. Allison has a current goal of majoring in biology at the postsecondary level, followed by attending a veterinary school, with an ultimate goal of becoming a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Allison has started early on this dream by periodically shadowing a local veterinarian and participating in the Adventures in Veterinary Medicine Program at the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. Allison will be continuing her education at WPI next year!

3. James He

James is self motivated and driven, as is evident in his initiative to self-study for two AP exams, Microeconomics and Macroeconomics. James enjoys a challenge, stretching himself to his furthest limits. He has also obtained the AP Scholar with Distinction after taking 3 AP classes last year Calculus BC, English Language and Composition, and US History. This year he is taking 4 AP classes. James was the recipient of the Holy Cross Book Award and received the Most Outstanding Student in Java Program. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Math Honor Society, and Spanish Honor Society. James is also a student athlete and has earned three-varsity letter for cross-county, indoor track, and baseball. He has won many medals in track, including League Gold Medal, Bronze Medalist and District Bronze Medalist. He is captain of the Cross Country team and Captain of the Indoor Track team. He is secretary of the Spanish National Honor Society and Vice President of the Math Honor Society. His class voted him for the superlative of “Jack of All Trades” because he is so diverse and stands out in all areas. James has an impressive record of academic achievements maintaining a very demanding course load throughout his high school career and ready to pursue his future studies at Northeastern University next year.

4. Richard Peng

Practice, performance, production and pursuit of perfection – these are the steps that Richard Peng takes as he moves through his endeavors. In addition to his academic talents, Richard is the recipient of the National Merit Scholarship. Using his voice as his vehicle, he assumes responsibility to others through activities like Speech and Debate, serving as Class Vice President, participating in National Honor Society and National Spanish Honor Society. Performing with Jazz Band and Wind Ensemble, he also sings with A Cappella Choir, of which he is President. His leadership qualities recognized earlier in his high school career, Richard represented SHS at the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards Leadership Summit. A notable and unique accomplishment is his creation of an

original play, *Heartwired*, which was produced and performed as a Competition Play, winning second place in the Playwriting category at the state level. Richard not only writes, but he has displayed talent in his acting as he is nominated for best supporting actor in his performance in the spring musical, *Urinetown*. Wishing to study psychology and pursue a career in the medical field, Richard plans to attend Princeton University in the fall.

5. Matt Bowers

Matt Bowers is truly a gifted senior at Shrewsbury High School! The first words that come to mind when describing Matt are dedicated, hardworking, ambitious, conscientious, respectful, and passionate. He has made highest honors every quarter since freshman year while taking on a rigorous academic schedule taking various honors and advanced placement level courses. This is not an easy feat and an accomplishment such as this requires dedication and a passion to learn. Matt truly loves learning in the classroom and isn't solely motivated by the letter grade. He credits much of his success to the way he was brought up and the importance his mother has been in his life. He is a leader in every sense of the word! Whether it is participating in a classroom discussion or an after school meeting for a club, Matt is front and center contributing. As a member of various clubs, Matt holds leadership positions in the chemistry and programming clubs and is even the founder of the chemistry club. Outside the classroom Matt is passionate about numismatics, which involves the collection of coins and paper money. Matt has also had the opportunity to gain "real life" experience as a researcher at the UMass biotechnology lab. Balancing his endeavors, Matt's passion for music is evidenced by his performances as a pianist and trombone player. He plans to pursue the science field next year at Columbia University!

6. Hari Kumar

Over these four years, Hari participated as a member of the high school's varsity tennis team, as well as the varsity math team. He has earned the distinction as an Advanced Placement Scholar with Honor, a member of National Honor Society, and as a National Merit Semi-Finalist. Of particular significance in Hari's high school career is his commitment to the Speech & Debate team. In addition to earning several awards over the past 4 years as a participant, junior year found him in the role of Treasurer, and this year he is serving as President of the high school team. Hari's performance this year in Speech and Debate has placed him as state champion in the Impromptu category. Additionally, he is the Co-President of the Massachusetts State Forensic League Advisory Board, now in his second term. Hari was also selected among students in the senior class to sit on the Student Advisory Committee. For two years, Hari has served on the Advisory Board for the Mentor Volunteer Program (MVP). Hari will continue his studies at the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in Energy & Environmental Sciences, with a minor in Comparative Literature.

7. Erin Chen

Erin is an outstanding student and has had an incredible four years at Shrewsbury High School in and out of the classroom! She has taken various honors level and advanced placement courses while obtaining highest honors every quarter she has been in high school. Erin is incredibly knowledgeable but what separates her apart from so many students is her exceptional work ethic and desire to learn. She is constantly challenging herself and knows what she can and can't handle. Erin balances a rigorous academic schedule in addition to many extracurricular activities. She currently holds the positions of student council vice president and French National Honor Society treasurer. Through these positions she has learned about the importance of communication and

organizational skills. Erin understands the importance of an education and tries to help others understand that as well through her volunteer service at the Kumon Learning center working with children who are struggling in math and reading. She is an amazing individual who puts others before herself! As a member of the Shrewsbury High School crew team for three years, she has learned the importance of camaraderie and building relationships. In the future, Erin plans to become a math teacher. Her vibrant personality, communication skills and passion for teaching will make her a great success in the field of education. Her future is bright and full of many promising opportunities as she starts college career at Cornell University!

8. Bridget Zhou

Bridget Zhou has been a familiar face in the halls of Shrewsbury High School before and after school since her freshman year. She has immersed herself in our school culture academically, athletically, and socially through various activities. A few examples of her activities include membership in the National Latin Honor Society and Mu Alpha Theta, the math honor society. She enjoys the performing arts as she participated in the spring musical each year. Bridget has dedicated the past three years to being a member of the fall and spring crew team, a team that has become another family to her. As a leader, Bridget serves on the Mentor Volunteer Program advisory board and is the president of the National Honor Society. Bridget does not take her talents and accomplishments for granted. She genuinely gives back the community and peers as tutor at Kumon for math and a peer tutor in various academic subjects.

The list continues, but Bridget is truly proud of her ability to juggle her activities and academics and also get 8-9 hours of sleep each night, a rarity for student of this caliber! This is truly a testament to her natural talent and abilities. Her humbleness makes her accomplishments all the more meaningful and heartfelt. She leads a balanced life, loves her teammates and friends and is a joy to have as a student. In the fall, Bridget plans on majoring in Pre-Med/ Biology and will be attending Northeastern University.

9. Jaehyun Lee

Jae is a class officer for the Class of 2016 and a member of Tri-M Music Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, and the National Honor Society. Jae has served as President for three years of a group he co-founded called Globally Making a Difference (GMAD) providing much needed resources to the Soroti Vision School in Uganda. Jae is President of the Orchestra and is a three-time District Music Festival inductee, playing violin for years. He also works as a Naturalist at The Ecotarium. Jae is also involved in Project 351, a statewide service group named for the 351 towns in Massachusetts. Jae first joined Project 351 in 8th grade as an ambassador and ever since, has been involved in statewide service projects as an alumnus of the organization. Jae's record academic and leadership record speaks for itself. Jae plans to continue his studies in biology at ---Carnegie Mellon University.

10. Saachi Gopal

Saachi has been an outstanding student taking the most challenging courses available and earning excellent grades. Saachi has such a strong interest in science and math that she continued to participate in the science fair in her junior year completing a yearlong research project in the field of science and math and participated in the regional and state science fairs on her own. She earned 3rd place in the State Fair for her project. "Project ENCA: In Search of Natural Mechanisms to Reverse Acne". She has also completed AP level classes and scored a perfect 5 in all three of her

AP exams - AP Biology, AP US History and AP English Language - last year. Saachi is a member of the National Honor Society and the French National Honor Society. She has also received the Harvard Book Award, the Prentice Book Award, and received a SHS Community Service Award two years in a row for completing more than 100 hours of community service. Committee leader of her Speech and Debate team, Vice President of the French National Honor Society and Mentor Volunteer are ways in which Saachi exemplifies leadership qualities. Saachi will continue her educational journey next year at Cornell University.