

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS**

MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2014

Present: Dr. B. Dale Magee, Chairperson; Mr. Jason Palitsch, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Erin Canzano, Secretary; Ms. Sandra Fryc, Mr. John Samia, Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent, Shrewsbury Public Schools; Mr. Todd Bazydlo, Principal, Shrewsbury High School; Mr. Greg Nevader, Assistant Principal, Shrewsbury High School; Ms. Nga Huynh, Director of School Counseling, Shrewsbury High School; Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent, Shrewsbury Public Schools; Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources, Shrewsbury Public Schools.

The meeting was convened at 7:00 PM by Dr. B. Dale Magee

I. Public Participation

None

II. Chairperson's Report and Members' Reports

None

III. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Sawyer commended the SHS student council and student body for raising \$1,400 for the Susan B. Komen Foundation. He said it is great to see Shrewsbury students actively engaged in community service projects. Dr. Sawyer shared that the Shrewsbury Educational Foundation (SEF) has a Trivia Night fundraising event scheduled for Friday, November 14, 2014. He said the SEF is also requesting nominations for the Joseph B. Collins Awards. Dr. Sawyer encouraged community members to consider participating and said additional information and details can be found on the SEF website.

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. SHS Class Size: Annual Report

Mr. Todd Bazydlo, Principal at SHS and Mr. Greg Nevader, Assistant Principal at SHS, presented an overview of SHS class size by department. Mr. Bazydlo thanked Mr. Nevader for the great work on the annual class size report. Mr. Bazydlo and Mr. Nevader shared highlights from the report including that there are currently 1,685 students enrolled at SHS. They said there is an increase in enrollment of 35 students from the 2013-14 school year and there has been a gain of 183 students at SHS over the past decade. Mr. Bazydlo said that as a result of the override and additional resources provided, there were 17.3 FTE teaching positions added at SHS for the 2014-15 school year. He said that out of the 17.3 FTE teaching positions, 13.6 of these were dedicated to the five main teaching discipline areas. Mr. Bazydlo and Mr. Nevader said the current teacher to student ratio at SHS is now 1: 21.8 and this has had a very positive effect on the interactions between students and educators. Mr. Bazydlo highlighted some

key areas at SHS that have been improved as a result of the override and resources provided including: average class sizes are smaller, greater ability to expand elective offerings; lab sciences class sizes reduced to within national safety standards; school counselor caseloads reduced to within ACA guidelines; greater ability to expand opportunities for under-performing populations. Mr. Bazydlo said it will be important to balance adding more elective offerings and keeping class sizes for current academic offerings at the right level. He said there are still some foreign language classes including Latin where the class sizes are large. Mr. Bazydlo said he is very pleased to see that SHS students are getting lots of hands-on experience while conducting experiments in science labs. He said there is not a student waiting list this year to take AP classes. Ms. Erin Canzano asked if SHS students have the opportunity to double-up on math and science classes. Mr. Bazydlo said students do have the opportunity to double-up with classes and it is more common with math classes. Mr. Nevader said that students are also doubling-up with classes in the social sciences and this has been very positive. Dr. Sawyer asked Mr. Bazydlo and Mr. Nevader to comment on the teaching attitudes and practices observed during this semester. Mr. Bazydlo said the teachers are feeling very positive about their caseloads, the morale is great, and teachers are working hard after school hours. Dr. Sawyer thanked the community again for the investment of resources in the Shrewsbury schools. He said the results have been very positive with the addition of staff resources and being able to bring down class sizes.

B. SHS Test Results: Annual Report

Mr. Bazydlo and Ms. Nga Huynh, Director of School Counseling, SHS, shared a report on Shrewsbury High School's 2013-14 results on various academic tests. Ms. Huynh said that the participation rate for SHS students who take the SATs is 94%. Mr. Bazydlo shared examples of area schools he compares to SHS including Franklin High School and Westford Academy. Ms. Huynh said that the subject tests are only required for admissions to 45-50 of the most selective colleges and universities. Mr. Bazydlo said that 99% of the SHS students enrolled in AP classes are in 11th and 12th grade. Ms. Huynh shared information about how the College Board is redesigning the SAT exam including eight key changes to the exam. Mr. John Samia asked Ms. Huynh about how the SAT ranks in terms of the importance of students' admission criteria when applying to colleges. She said this depends on the various institutions and specific requirements and criteria for the admissions process. Ms. Huynh said some colleges and universities have scholarship programs and qualified students are granted awards based on both GPA and SAT scores. Mr. Jason Palitsch asked about the strategies and mechanisms available to help SHS students cope with stress related to testing. Ms. Huynh and Mr. Bazydlo shared examples of several mechanisms in place that are available to students and families, including stress reduction workshops conducted by a consulting psychiatrist. Mr. Bazydlo said he thinks the SHS school counseling department staff does an excellent job helping both students and parents cope with stress related issues. Dr. Sawyer asked Ms. Huynh about the help students receive with selecting courses and putting together schedules. She said students receive individual counseling when selecting classes and planning to balance other school and extra-curricular activities. Mr. Bazydlo said there are good support mechanisms in place to make sure students are not overloaded and have balanced schedules.

C. MCAS Test Results: Annual Report

Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent, shared key findings for the 2014 MCAS performance, growth, and progress performance index results. She shared information on the key findings including: the district continues to have a high percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced on the MCAS;

there is a decline in the number of students scoring advanced across the board and a continued drop in the student growth scores; there has been a significant drop in middle level math scores. Ms. Banios said that we are continuing to see high outcomes for students but there has been a large drop in the median student growth percentile. She said the district has seen a big decline in the 7th and 8th grade level math scores. Ms. Banios said that one of the things to keep in mind moving forward is the growth scores and the PARCC testing implications. She said that as a result of the override there have been more teachers hired in the district, math curriculum coordinator positions have been added and curriculum resources for mathematics have been aligned with the state standards. Ms. Sandra Fryc asked if there is work being done to help students in grade 9 catch up on math skills. Ms. Banios said there is attention paid to the students who are struggling and teachers are working to help them and provide educational resources. Mr. Palitsch asked if there is a mechanism in place with the PARCC testing for the district to improve and advance to Level 1 if students' scores increase to meet the criteria. Ms. Banios said that the district does have the opportunity to achieve the Level 1 criteria, but the district will not be downgraded to a Level 3 district this year if students' PARCC test scores decrease. Ms. Canzano asked about how the curriculum coordinators in the district are going to help solve the situation with math. Ms. Banios said the coordinators, coaches and teachers are working collaboratively to help kids catch up. She said she thinks that growth is a really strong indicator of how the district is doing with our students. Dr. Sawyer said he will be sharing the annual district report card that is sent to the state. He said this report on the district is a mix of proficiency, achievement and growth information.

D. District Staffing Levels: Annual Report

Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources, shared a summary of the report for district staffing levels for the 2014-15 school year. As of October 1st, there are 788.23 FTE in the Shrewsbury district and the headcount is 827 employees. Ms. Malone explained the difference in the FTE and headcount figures and shared that some FTE positions are staffed by more than one employee. She said the yes override vote has been very beneficial in providing the opportunities to hire the needed staff for the school district. Ms. Malone said the actual cost for hiring new professional hires was \$163,672 less than the projected cost. She said she feels very positive about the 2014-15 annual staffing report. Mr. Samia said that he thinks the \$163,672 savings is a good example of how the district continues to operate in a fiscally responsible way even with the addition of financial resources. Mr. Samia asked Ms. Malone to comment on the number of new staff members choosing benefits elections such as health insurance. Ms. Malone said that there have been fewer employees than expected who have chosen benefit elections at the present time. Dr. Sawyer thanked Ms. Malone and her staff for doing a great job. He said the school principals have been reporting that the quality of the teachers and new staff members hired has been great.

V. Curriculum

None

VI. Policy

None

VII. Budget

None

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

A. Potential State Amendments for Physical Restraint of Students: Discussion and Vote

Dr. Sawyer shared with School Committee members that there are some serious concerns being raised about the proposed state amendments regarding the physical restraint of students. He said the Massachusetts State Board of Education is taking comments through November 10, 2014. Dr. Sawyer is concerned that the proposed state mandates may have a negative impact on the ability of the Shrewsbury district to educate students with learning disabilities. He said the proposed amendments seem to include arbitrary constraints and may not allow the district to do things that are believed to be good and effective practices to educate students. Dr. Sawyer asked the School Committee Members to approve a vote for him to send commentary to the Massachusetts State Board of Education sharing the concerns of the Shrewsbury school district. Dr. Magee requested a motion to authorize the Superintendent of the Shrewsbury Public Schools to write a letter of concern to the Massachusetts State Board of Education about the proposed amendments for the physical restraint of students. On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Fryc, the School Committee members voted unanimously to authorize the Superintendent of the Shrewsbury Public Schools to write a letter of concern to the Massachusetts State Board of Education about the proposed amendments for the physical restraint of students.

B. Assabet Valley Collaborative: Quarterly Update

Dr. Sawyer shared a quarterly update on the status of the Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC). He said the AVC exists so that member organizations can help one another as a strong collective group of school districts. Dr. Sawyer shared that the AVC is engaging in good professional work. He told School Committee members that he is happy to provide any additional information about the AVC.

X. Approval of Minutes: Vote

No meeting minutes

XI. Executive Session

None

XII. Information Enclosures

None

XIII. Adjournment

Dr. Magee requested a motion to adjourn the School Committee meeting for October 29, 2014. On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Fryc, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM. On a roll call vote: Mr. Samia, yes; Ms. Fryc, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Canzano, yes; Dr. Magee, yes

Respectfully submitted
Christine Taylor, Clerk

Documents referenced:

- 1) SHS Class Size: Annual Report
- 2) SHS Class of 2014 Test Results: Report
- 3) MCAS Test Results: Report
- 4) District Staffing Levels: Annual Report
- 5) Assabet Valley Quarterly Update: Report