



Superintendent's Update

December 14, 2017

Dear Shrewsbury Families & Community Members,

Despite many of our students doing their best “snow dance,” Tuesday’s winter weather was a dud, so a potential first snow day is somewhere in the future. Please be reminded that **the first place I post any [cancellation or delay information](#) is on my Twitter feed (@SPS Supt) and [Facebook page](#) and then I send automated phone calls, emails, and texts.** Please be sure your information in the “demographics” section of your [PowerSchool Parent Portal](#) account is up to date for the “automated snow day call number” and “text message number(s).” I will make and communicate closing or delay decisions as early in the morning as possible, no earlier than 5:00am, with the message typically being sent between 5:15 am and 5:45am after I evaluate evolving weather and road conditions (and the automated message may take 10-15 minutes to go through). Occasionally, conditions may allow for a closing or delay decision to be made the prior evening, but that’s only when it seems like a “sure thing,” and as you all know New England weather forecasts can change significantly overnight!

The holiday season is upon us full blast, a busy time of year both in and out of school. **Please take care of yourselves during what can be a stressful time of year and do your best to try to balance your child’s school and family commitments.** On that topic, I want to wish a happy Hanukkah to everyone who is celebrating. We’ll also see if this past weekend’s snow will stick around for a couple of weeks and make it a true white Christmas!

Please read on to see important information about our proposed *Portrait of a Graduate* and Five-Year Strategic Priorities & Goals, the Beal School building project, a new TV show on our Special Education program, and other information.

***Portrait of a Graduate* and Five-Year Strategic Priorities & Goals:**

Updated drafts were presented to the School Committee for their consideration last week, and the Committee will vote on a final version at their December 20 meeting. **The *Portrait* articulates the vision we have for the characteristics and skills we want our students to develop from preschool through high school, while the strategic priorities and goals articulate where we will focus our time, resources, and efforts over the next five years to bring that vision closer to reality.** I believe that both of these updated documents represent the collective wisdom of the students, staff, parents, and community members who provided feedback over the last several months. Please click [here](#) to view the draft of the *Portrait of a Graduate* and [here](#) to see the slides describing how it was developed; click [here](#) to view the draft of the Strategic Priorities & Goals and [here](#) to view the slides that describe the process used to create them. If you have additional feedback or questions regarding these documents, please communicate with the School Committee at schoolcommittee@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us or with me at jsawyer@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us in advance of the December 20 School Committee meeting.

Beal Building Project:

The Beal Building Committee met again on Tuesday evening, and **the choice of recommended sites for a new Kindergarten through Grade 4 school have been narrowed to two:** the Glavin Center on Lake Street near Route 9 (a former state home for developmentally disabled adults owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) and the former Allen Farm on South Street between Route 9 and Route 20 (previously purchased by the Town of Shrewsbury for commercial development). Our architect also presented initial information about the design program, based on many meetings with SPS personnel over the past couple of months. Over the next month or so, the design program will be advanced for an initial submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Stay tuned for more details this winter and spring regarding this exciting project!

Special Education TV Program:

Recently, Meg Belsito, our Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services, worked with the Shrewsbury Media Connection to film various elements of our special education program, and then took part in a discussion with members of the School Committee as part of their most recent episode of *School Talk*. **Click [here](#) to view the program, which includes classroom scenes and interviews with students and educators at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels.** I think you'll find that this video underscores our commitment to all of the different learners we serve.

Shrewsbury School Journal:

Recently we published the Fall 2017 Shrewsbury School Journal, which is mailed to all homes in town. In case you missed it, click [here](#) to take a look at this edition, which

includes articles on the *Portrait of a Graduate*, our strategic planning, and the Beal project, as well as pieces written by SHS students regarding fundraising for those affected by Hurricane Harvey, our new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment, and the Colonial Way Experience at SHS. My Superintendent's Corner piece, which is also posted on my blog [here](#), is focused on helping our students become effective citizens.

Sandy Hook Anniversary:

Today is the fifth anniversary of the devastating tragedy that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT. This is a somber reminder of the evil and dysfunction that can lead to the loss of innocent lives and of the importance we must place on our continued, proactive work to keep our students and staff as safe as possible in our schools. Please never hesitate to connect with your child's teacher or school principal if you have any concerns that make you uneasy or where you feel we can improve safety in our schools.

As we close out the 2017 calendar year, **I remain humbled by the incredible teaching and learning that happens every day in our schools, and the strong support that parents, caretakers, and community members provide for education in Shrewsbury.** I am grateful for your partnership in our work to improve the lives of the children we serve.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer
Superintendent of Schools