



Superintendent's Update

December 21, 2018

Dear Shrewsbury Families, Colleagues, & Community Members,

While it is unseasonably warm and rainy on this last day prior to vacation, the holiday spirit abounds throughout our schools. There is much excitement, especially among our younger students, in anticipation of celebrations with family and friends and, for those who celebrate Christmas, a visit from Santa Claus. Our older students and staff will also be welcoming the break, but with visions of long winter's naps and relaxation also dancing in their heads after an intense stretch of the academic schedule.

Our daughters love this season, and each year they push my limit regarding how soon holiday music can be played at home and in the car – with some radio stations seemingly switching over to Christmas music not long after Halloween, and playlists of holiday tunes streaming on demand. Personally, I appreciate that many of these songs are in classic styles and performed by artists whom I like, and because they are Christmas songs our girls will gladly listen instead of begging me to change the station away from the “oldies!”

Over the past few weeks of listening, there is a verse from a traditional carol that has caught my attention. Although I probably have heard *O Holy Night* hundreds of times in my life, one clause has stood out for me this year:

...and the soul felt its worth.

While in the context of the specific song these words are religious, I think one can take broader meaning from them. Whatever one's beliefs, every person yearns for worthiness – for being accepted and respected. In our schools, this should be the foundation of all that we do with our students. If we are successful at teaching academic skills, but do not connect with the children and adolescents we serve in ways that help them feel their worth as people and see the worth in others, we will not then be truly successful.

I think there are many ways in which we are already helping our young people to become good people as well as good students, but we must continue to strengthen these efforts. As we come to the end of one year and begin another, I look forward to the important work ahead, where we will work together to help our students not only develop keen minds, but also full hearts.

I wish a wonderful Christmas to those celebrating, and a healthy, prosperous new year to all!

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer
Superintendent of Schools