



# SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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September 26, 2019

To: School Committee

From: Joe Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools  
Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations

Re: Recommended guiding principles for Redistricting Committee

At your meeting on September 18, you voted to establish an ad hoc Redistricting Committee consisting of two members of the School Committee; a parent representative from each of the five elementary schools which will become K-4 schools when the new Beal School opens in 2021 (Beal, Coolidge, Floral Street, Paton, and Spring Street Schools); two elementary principals; and the two of us. Your vote also specified “that this ad hoc committee will be provided with guiding principles by the School Committee and will apply those principles when considering information, reviewing options, and making recommendations to the School Committee for the redistricting of elementary school attendance zone boundaries for grades Kindergarten through Grade 4.”

After researching other school districts’ approaches to redistricting and considering our needs in Shrewsbury, we recommend that the School Committee consider the following guiding principles for adoption and issuance to the Redistricting Committee. We look forward to discussing these recommendations at your October 2 meeting. Once you have determined whether to adopt these recommendations or a revised version thereof, the Committee should vote to establish them so that they may be included in a letter of charge to the Redistricting Committee that would be issued by Ms. Fryc as Committee Chair.

*The Shrewsbury Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.*

## Recommended Guiding Principles for Redistricting School Attendance Zone Boundaries for Grades Kindergarten through Grade 4

The Redistricting Committee will be charged with using the following guiding principles to develop multiple options for redistricting plans that will be brought forward to the School Committee for consideration. These guiding principles are not intended to be utilized in “rank order,” but rather applied holistically by the Redistricting Committee to develop the various options. As part of this process, each option will be evaluated by the Redistricting Committee regarding how strongly it reflects each of these criteria, and this perspective will be included when recommended options are presented to the School Committee.

- **Student educational needs will be met regardless of school assignment.** As all Shrewsbury Public Schools elementary schools follow the same state and district curriculum and assessment standards, employ best instructional practices, and have highly qualified educators who are hired using a rigorous district-coordinated process, students will receive a high-quality educational experience regardless of which elementary school they attend. Therefore, it is assumed that students’ educational needs will be met in any of our schools and this should *not* be a factor considered when making assignments.
- **Student population must be distributed so that each school has sufficient, appropriate, dedicated instructional spaces.** The opening of the new Beal School is intended to provide equity of student access to instructional spaces across all five elementary schools. Redistricting of attendance zones must balance enrollment across the five schools so that each school has sufficient, appropriate, dedicated space for instruction in music and art, special education services, English language instruction, etc.
- **School assignments will be determined by drawing attendance zone boundaries and should emphasize a “neighborhood school” approach by prioritizing geographic proximity of home to school for walkability and efficient transportation, while keeping geographic entities intact.** Attendance zones in order to maximize the ability for students to walk safely to and from school, minimize vehicle travel time to and from school, and avoid splitting clearly segmented or defined neighborhoods, subdivisions, apartment complexes, etc. A “school choice” model where students are enrolled in a

certain school by preference, lottery, so-called “buffer zones,” etc. will not be used.

- **Student demographics should be taken into account when redistricting school attendance zones.** The demographic diversity of a school’s student population should reflect the overall demographic diversity of our town to the greatest extent possible.
- **Future potential population growth should be considered when establishing attendance zones.** It is highly desirable that new school assignment boundaries remain intact for as long as possible.
- **Changes of school assignments for existing students should be minimized to the greatest extent possible within the context of the other priorities.** It is understood that many students will need to change schools when the new Beal School opens in order to achieve the redistribution of students and for balancing school populations, but the redistricting plan should avoid changing school assignments where other priorities can be achieved. However, “grandfathering” some students by allowing them to finish their elementary school experience at their current school when their address is being assigned to a different school zone will not be part of any redistricting plan, due to logistical issues that would make other principles difficult or impossible to achieve.
- **The redistricting process should work in concert with other district initiatives where possible.** Resources and efforts that will support redistricting may help achieve other district goals, such as the consideration of changing school start times, and these efforts should be coordinated wherever possible.