

**School Committee  
Meeting Book**

**June 24, 2020  
7:00 pm**

**Town Hall -100 Maple Avenue  
Selectmen's Meeting Room**



## SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

### AGENDA

June 24, 2020 7:00pm  
Remote Meeting

THIS MEETING IS NOT OPEN TO PHYSICAL PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC. TOWN HALL IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC. IF AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION FOR THE PUBLIC BECOMES AVAILABLE WE WILL PUBLISH THAT INFORMATION SEPARATELY.

On March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Executive Order modifying certain requirements of the Open Meeting Law, to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities while adhering to public health recommendations regarding social distancing.

The Executive Order relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations of the public body through adequate, alternative means. "Adequate, alternative means" may include, without limitation, providing public access through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time. A municipal public body that for reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts is unable to provide alternative means of public access in real time may instead post on its municipal website a full and complete transcript, recording, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as practicable afterwards.

In addition, all members of a public body may participate in a meeting remotely; the Open Meeting Law's requirement that a quorum of the body and the chair be physically present at the meeting location is suspended.

All other provisions of the Open Meeting Law, such as the requirements regarding posting notice of meetings and creating and maintaining accurate meeting minutes, as well as the limited, enumerated purposes for holding an executive session, remain in effect.

### Items

### Suggested time allotments

I. Public Participation

II. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports

III. Superintendent's Report

IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| A. Student Recognition: Speech & Debate State Champions                                   | 7:05 – 7:20 |
| B. Student Recognition: SHS Senior Scholars   | 7:20 – 7:45 |
| C. Equity Audit: Report   | 7:45 – 8:15 |
| D. Update Regarding the School District's Response to the COVID-19 School Closure: Report | 8:15 – 8:30 |

V. Curriculum

VI. Policy

VII. Finance & Operations

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| A. Fiscal Year 2020 Budget: Report & Vote on Fund Transfers | 8:30 – 8:45 |
|---|-------------|

7:00-7:05



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

- B. Fiscal Year 2021 Recommended Budget Reductions: Vote 8:45 – 8:55
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- A. Superintendent’s Contract Extension: Vote 8:55 – 9:00
- X. Approval of Minutes 9:00 – 9:05
- XI. Executive Session 9:05 – 9:45
- A. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”), Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes.
- B. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect of the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares” (“Purpose 3”) - the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A; Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B; the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association; and/or the Shrewsbury Cafeteria Workers.
- XII. Adjournment 9:45

**Next regular meeting: TBD**



## SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

### ITEM NO: I Public Participation

MEETING DATE: 6/24/20

#### SPECIFIC STATEMENT OR QUESTION:

Will the School Committee hear thoughts and ideas from the public regarding the operations and the programs of the school system?

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Copies of the policy and procedure for Public Participation are available to the public at each School Committee meeting.

### ITEM NO: II. Chairperson's Report/Members' Reports

#### SPECIFIC STATEMENT OR QUESTION:

Will the School Committee hear a report from the Chairperson of the School Committee and other members of the School Committee who may wish to comment on school affairs?

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This agenda item provides an opportunity for the Chairperson and members of the Shrewsbury School Committee to comment on school affairs that are of interest to the community.

#### STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

School Committee Members  
Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson  
Mr. Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson  
Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary  
Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Committee Member  
Mr. Jason Palitsch, Committee Member

### ITEM NO: III. Superintendent's Report

#### SPECIFIC STATEMENT OR QUESTION:

Will the School Committee hear a report from Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools?

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This agenda item allows the Superintendent of the Shrewsbury Public Schools to comment informally on the programs and activities of the school system.

#### STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools

#### ACTION RECOMMENDED FOR ITEMS I, II, & III:

That the School Committee accept the report and take such action as it deems in the best interest of the school system.



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:** MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**  
**A. Student Recognition: Speech & Debate State Champions**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Shrewsbury High School Speech and Debate Team, under the direction of Advisor Marc Rischitelli, enjoyed another highly successful year, being recognized as a School of Honor at the 2020 National Speech and Debate Tournament (top 50 ranked school out of over 1,400), and they were honored for their 50th year having national qualifiers. Further, the team finished in 2nd Place overall in Speech at the Massachusetts State Championships. Three students were individual State Champions: team president, Sophia Peng in Informative Speaking; Haleema Siddiqui in Poetry Reading; and Pranav Vadlamudi in Play Reading, and they will be addressing the Committee this evening. Steve Asthana, the first SHS Speech and Debate team member to ever receive an invitation to attend the prestigious national event known as the Montgomery Bell Academy Southern Bell Forum Extemporaneous Speaking Round Robin, will also be recognized.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the Committee recognize the Speech & Debate State Champions.

**STAFF & STUDENTS AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Todd Bazydlo, SHS Principal  
Mr. Marc Rischitelli, Advisor  
Students:  
Sophia Peng  
Haleema Siddiqui  
Pranav Vadlamudi  
Astitva (Steve) Asthana



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**ITEM NO: IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:** MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**  
**B. Student Recognition: SHS Senior Scholars**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Each year the School Committee recognizes the ten senior students with the highest grade point averages in their class. A brief biographical sketch of each is provided in the enclosed report. Seniors will be introduced in alphabetical order and will briefly comment on her/his school experience.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the School Committee recognize the SHS 2020 Senior Scholars.

**STAFF & STUDENTS AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Todd Bazydlo, Principal, Shrewsbury High School

*Students (in alphabetical order):*

Stephanie Del Rosario

Hannah Huang

Sunny Huang

Brady McCue

Shawn Noronha

Jessica Peng

Sophia Peng

Lanna Wang

Vivian Weng

Athena Wu

## **Shrewsbury High School Class of 2020 Senior Scholars**

(in alphabetical order)

### **Stephanie Del Rosario**

Stefanie is a very conscientious and well-accomplished student. She is incredibly independent in managing her work and excels in everything she does ranging from academics to music to volunteer service. Stefanie is currently enrolled in an Advanced Foreign Language seminar class at the College of the Holy Cross through their Gifted Program. She truly enjoys the challenge. She has received a number of academic awards including the AP Scholar with Honor Award as well as the Cornell University Book Award. In addition, she has been recognized as a National Merit Commended Student. Her academic success has also been recognized through her induction in the National Honor Society, National Latin Honor Society, and Tri-M Music Society. She has a true passion for learning and is looking forward to the challenge of college-level academics. Stefanie is truly a remarkable young woman who is determined to be successful and willing to learn and take risks as she begins her next adventure at **Brown University**.

### **Hannah Huang**

Academically, Hannah is among the top students in her class. She is always electing to take the most competitive classes that our school offers, and excels. She has had major accomplishments including the Superintendent's Award, which is only awarded to three students in a class of over 500! She has maintained Highest Honors all four years, received the National Merit Scholarship Letter of Commendation and earned a perfect 36 on the ACT exam. She received the Alice Francis Wolf Award for distinction and dedication and excellence in swimming as a member of the SHS Varsity Swim Team for four years. She also received the Central District Festival all four years as a violinist in the Chamber Orchestra. Last summer, Hannah was accepted to the Northeastern University Young Scholars program (one of 22 students in the state) where she was involved in ongoing research on a millimeter-wave scanning application. She is a member of three different National Honor Societies and carries leadership positions. Her achievements are endless. Outside of school, Hannah is in the New England Conservatory Prep School attending weekly practices in Boston. She maintains part-time employment at Kumon Learning Center where she has worked since the ninth grade. Hannah volunteers to help others through tutoring and with her

church youth group in Boston. She is excited to join the Class of 2024 at **Columbia University** next year!

### **Sunny Huang**

Sunny has earned perfect scores on his ACTs as well as perfect 800 scores on his Math II Subject test and Chemistry test. Academically, he received multiple awards and honors for his academic excellence including the Chemistry Award in his junior year. He has been inducted to the National Honor Society, National Math Honor Society and Tri M Honor Society. Sunny not only excels in school but he also participates in countless extracurricular activities. He is committed to music as a violinist and is a long-term member of our Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra. He is also a member of the Worcester Youth Symphony Orchestra. Sunny is also an accomplished pianist who has earned a diploma with distinction from the prestigious ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music). This achievement took five years of testing and countless hours mastering his skills. Math is one of Sunny's greatest strengths and as a member of the Math Team, he successfully competed and earned awards. His favorite class is Chemistry and he has served as a Chemistry Tutor. Sunny is also a member of the Asian Culture Club and the GMAD (Globally Making a Difference). One of his favorite hobbies is tennis and he has been on the SHS Tennis team for the past three years. Sunny has held summer jobs at Kumon teaching young students. He has also worked at Yurogen, a biotech company located in Worcester as a paid summer intern gaining valuable experience in the "real world" working with adults in the laboratory. He will continue his education next year at **Northeastern University!**

### **Brady McCue**

Brady McCue is an exceptional student whose intrinsic motivation for learning has led to numerous academic and extracurricular achievements. Among these highlights are Debate Captain of the Shrewsbury High School Speech & Debate Team and Editor-in-Chief of *Town Crier*, the high school newspaper. Brady also serves as a member of the Mentor Volunteer Program (MVP) Advisory Board and Treasurer of the National Chinese Honor Society. He's most proud of his volunteer work with both the Floral Street Summer Enrichment Camp and the middle school Speech & Debate club. He credits the positive experience he had in 8<sup>th</sup> grade with opening his eyes to the opportunity of Speech & Debate. Now, he shares that same enthusiasm with the students at Oak in his role as the Middle School Speech & Debate Liaison. Over the last

four years, Brady has spent countless hours helping the middle school students prepare for their competitions. It's been his express pleasure to pay it forward in the same way he was encouraged years ago.

Brady applied Early Decision to **Grinnell College** in Iowa, where he will be attending next fall, studying the fields of psychology and economics.

### **Shawn Noronha**

“...and these are the morning announcements.” Shawn’s was the voice heard over the PA many mornings throughout the past school year. Dedicated to Student Council, he serves as Vice President and previously Treasurer, and he relishes the challenges of coordinating and organizing multiple people to execute events, and he is most proud to have written the winning application for the first-ever Gold Council Award! Leading National Chinese Honor Society as President, he serves as Vice President of Math National Honor Society, Secretary of Tri-M, and President of GMAD. A member of the Speech & Debate and Varsity Tennis teams, he was also recognized by the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program as a Semifinalist and as a National Merit Finalist. Completing a total of nine AP classes at SHS, he plans to attend **Carnegie Mellon University** where he will double-major in chemical engineering and biomedical engineering.

### **Jessica Peng**

Most proud of her commitment to Speech & Debate, Jessica served as Speech Captain 2019-2020, won the National Championship in Original Oratory at the George Mason University Tournament, and placed first in Massachusetts Impromptu Speaking. A passionate participant in theater all four years, she was pleased to be part of the 2018 and 2019 shows that earned TAMY Awards for Best Production. A two-time Gold Medalist for her performance on the National Spanish Exam, she was an original member of the Student Wellness Ambassador Group (SWAG) since 2018 when the group formed and a member of the Mentor Volunteer Program (MVP) Advisory Board this year. A National Merit Finalist, she also won the \$2500.00 Scholarship. Choosing seven AP classes that were of greatest interest to her during junior and senior years, she plans to attend **Vanderbilt University** where she will study psychology.

## **Sophia Peng**

President of Speech & Debate, a three-time State Champion, and a five-time finalist at national tournaments, in 2019, Sophia earned a spot among the top ten competitors in the country in Informative Speaking. Chairperson of the Student Advisory Committee, she regularly delivered reports on events and activities at SHS to the School Committee. Currently Vice President of Spanish National Honor Society (now VP) and member of Math National Honor Society and National Honor Society through which she regularly offers tutoring, she also co-leads the SHS Med Club. As an enthusiastic participant in the Capstone initiative at SHS, Sophia created a podcast as her project. A lover of humanities, she eagerly read every book ever assigned to her in English and she survived AP Chemistry, along with six other highly demanding AP courses offered at SHS. Most passionate about health topics, she is eager to study biology and anthropology at **Rice University** in Texas.

## **Lanna Wang**

Lanna's academic achievements extend through all subject areas, including art and virtual high school. She received top scores in her 4 AP courses as a junior, as well as top SAT and ACT scores. She is a National Merit Finalist, won the Harvard Book Award as a junior, and was inducted into several honor societies. As an officer in speech and debate, Lanna contributed to much of the team's success as well as supported her teammates. Her passion is Chinese dance where she has been a central part of the Angel Dance Company competition team. Lanna is also known at SHS for her contributions to the Art department. As a member of the National Art Honor Society, she won first place in painting and best of show at the Anna Maria Art and Design competition. Lanna is a dedicated, hard-working, and kind-spirited individual who will leave big shoes to fill. She plans on majoring in product design and will be attending **Stanford University**.

## **Vivian Weng**

Vivian has been a quiet strength at SHS since her freshman year. Her outstanding academic accomplishments have been coupled with an exciting and intense career in competitive swimming. She has been successful in multiple AP courses and had top scores in her junior year AP exams. Vivian has been able to maintain this rigorous and

intense academic schedule along with her swim training, which has taken 6-7 days a week since she was in elementary school. She qualified for the USA summer junior nationals in 2019, she was on the USA swimming all American scholastic team for 2018 and 2019, and she was named a New England top ten and outstanding swimmer in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Vivian will be continuing her academic and swimming excellence at **Yale University** in the fall.

### **Athena Wu**

Dedication, drive, and passion are just a few words to describe Athena Wu. She is a top student who has challenged herself in AP-level courses in all subject areas, including virtual high school. Her passion for learning extends beyond the school day with her involvement in various activities. She was a co-president and co-founder of the “Girls who code” club, which focuses on helping the over 60 female members gain exposure and experience in several STEM areas. Athena has been captain of the varsity math team for several years, providing support and guidance to her teammates and contributing to their many successes. She is a five-time national qualifier for speech and debate, where she is passionate about bringing awareness to forgotten historical atrocities through her work. Athena is also a captain of the varsity tennis team and is active with community service. Her role in these groups as well as her support and guidance of her peers will contribute to her legacy at SHS. Athena plans to major in computer science along with finance or business at the **Georgia Institute of Technology**.



## SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

**ITEM NO: IV. Time Scheduled Appointments:**  
**C. Equity Audit: Report**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

One of Shrewsbury Public Schools' core values is *equity*. Further, the district's current strategic priorities and goals articulate the district's aspirations to further its commitment to equity through one of the four main priorities and its associated goals:

#### Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters

#### 2022 Strategic Goals:

- Create a common understanding of the benefits of inclusive schools and develop a shared, systematic approach to ensure that everyone has equitable access and opportunity for successful learning
- Ensure that all staff actively participate in professional development focused on inclusive and culturally proficient practices that improve learning and school cultures
- Analyze data related to academic performance and other indicators of success to identify existing gaps among populations; determine and implement action steps for improvement; and demonstrate success at closing these gaps

In order to advance these goals, SPS partnered with Dr. Cathy Cummins and Kiesha Lamb of Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) to conduct a formal equity audit process. The goal for the district was to have professionals from outside the district assess strengths and areas of improvement regarding how students, families, and staff experience the school district with regard to equity. While the report was delayed due to the Coronavirus situation, its presentation comes at a serendipitous time given the ongoing national crisis regarding racism.

Dr. Cummins and Ms. Lamb will provide an overview of the enclosed report, after which Dr. Sawyer will provide some information regarding initial steps the district will be taking to combat and educate about racism in our schools.

#### ACTION RECOMMENDED:

That the School Committee hear the report and take whatever steps it deems necessary in the interests of the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

#### STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Cathy Cummins, Executive Director, Assabet Valley Collaborative

Ms. Kiesha E. Lamb, Educational Equity Specialist, Assabet Valley Collaborative



**Equity & Inclusion for All Learners  
through Partnership & Collaboration**

**Equity Audit  
for Shrewsbury Public Schools  
2020**

**Submitted to Shrewsbury Public Schools  
June 22nd, 2020**

**Cathy Cummins, Ed. D.  
Executive Director**

**Kiesha E. Lamb  
Educational Equity Specialist**



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## **I. Introduction**

### **Introduction to the equity audit**

This equity audit addresses the current reality within Shrewsbury Public Schools (from here on referred to as SPS) with a focus on the community impact based on comprehensive stakeholder centered data, along with resources on how to create a more equitable and sustainable learning environment.

The following will introduce readers to the auditors, the purpose of the equity audit, and how the equity audit was focused and aligned. It will also highlight the initial and ongoing partnership with the core group of SPS leaders who steered and supported the equity audit.

### **Assabet Valley Collaborative**

Established in 1976, Assabet Valley Collaborative (from here on referred to as AVC) is an education service agency serving 15 member school districts, including Shrewsbury Public Schools, which has been a member for over 40 years. AVC provides an array of consultation services to school districts specializing in educational equity, cultural proficiency, culturally responsive teaching, shared inquiry/action research, professional learning, and strategic improvement planning.

AVC began prioritizing educational equity in 2012 when the Executive Director, Dr. Cathy Cummins, took a transformative graduate course in Cultural Proficiency taught by Boston College instructor, Patti DeRosa. First, Dr. Cummins brought the same course to the organization, then beginning in 2014, AVC began to offer this professional development externally to educators from other organizations. These efforts started by contracting with Ms. DeRosa to teach the classes through open enrollment and over time evolved to include the training of Dr. Cummins and two other team members to begin facilitating these courses independently of Ms. DeRosa. Between 2014 and 2018, AVC delivered cultural proficiency learning events in a range of venues/formats to nearly 1500 educators.

In 2018, AVC was awarded three pivotal opportunities which deeply impacted and strengthened its capacity to support the equity-centered improvement efforts of educational institutions. First, two of AVC's consultants were selected to be trained as facilitators of strategic planning through DESE's Planning for Success program. Second, AVC was awarded a contract with DESE to deliver a year-long course titled "Developing Cultural Proficiency in K12 Settings" to 100 educators; which was delivered in partnership with Patti DeRosa and renowned author, Zaretta Hammond (Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain - 2015). Third, AVC was awarded a capacity building grant from the Sudbury Foundation to be trained in facilitation of Design Thinking. AVC facilitators received 5 days of training from social innovation firm, Design Impact. A vital outcome of this



opportunity was the publishing of AVC's Commitments to Educational Equity and the design of a new position, Educational Equity Specialist.

As a result of these efforts in 2018, Kiesha Lamb filled the new position of Educational Equity Specialist. Her leadership and expertise deepened AVC's will, skill, and capacity within to accelerate and deepen the confidence to support districts in advancing educational equity through a variety of methodologies - facilitating professional learning, coaching, strategic planning, program evaluations and equity audits.

### **Biographies of Auditors**



Kiesha E. Lamb is the Educational Equity Specialist at Assabet Valley Collaborative. She is an expert at facilitating rich and deepened dialogue between community members of all ages. With a focus on Equity she has linked people and communities who, at times, because of personal and/or systemic barriers, feel worlds apart. She uses art as a tool to advocate for the owners of absent narratives.

Kiesha grew up within two different major inner cities and graduated from Chicago Public Schools. She moved to the Twin Cities in Minnesota and earned a B.A. in Educational Equity and the Arts from Metropolitan State University. During this time, she served as a professional development facilitator and consultant for Education Minnesota and the American Federation of Teachers. Kiesha has dedicated her career to seeking equity in the corners of education, from a parent's access to their child's education to a teacher's access to culturally relevant materials. This work's central goal is advancing student achievement and preparing youth and adults alike to better engage with the local and global world. Kiesha has also spent the last decade expanding the definition of educator to include families and community members who impact others through language and practice. She has family spread across the continents; when she's not working within communities, she's seeking opportunities to engage deeper in her writing, healing and traveling.



Dr. Cathy Cummins is the Executive Director at Assabet Valley Collaborative. Her expertise in equity-centered leadership emanates from nearly 25 years in the education field and is fueled by a deep commitment to continuous learning and inquiry. She has experience as a humanities teacher, special education teacher, residential counselor, and educational administrator - roles and experiences that support her in making equity-centered learning experiences relevant to participants from a variety of roles within the educational sector.

Cathy grew up in a rural community in Illinois - with a population of 750 and a graduating class at the local public high school of 24. She attended Northwestern University where she earned a B.S. in Education and Social Policy. She then moved to New York City where she worked in after school centers and residential treatment centers prior to relocating to MA where she earned her M.Ed. in



Special Education and later her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. Throughout her studies and leadership opportunities, Cathy has deepened her learning related to cultural proficiency and educational equity and now helps to co-facilitate the learning of others. She sees educational equity as a prerequisite to school and district improvement and any educational innovation.

### **Scope of Work**

AVC's commitments to educational equity are the north star for our equity-centered consultation. Our model for conducting evaluation and audit data is a collaborative, iterative process that includes identifying areas of strength, setting a charge for our district partners to further seek equity, and provide support for their continued learning and growth to become more equity centric. In partnering with SPS on this equity audit, we developed audit protocols to support the learning needed from each audit activity. We conducted focus groups and empathic interviews using principles of human-centered design. We supported SPS in going beyond a review of "traditionally" available data to bring knowledge and truth to the surface based on historical contexts, individual and collective narratives, and a pulse on the community. We worked with our partners to develop tools to continue their equity-based inquiry beyond the term of this audit. Our facilitators, Dr. Cathy Cummins and Kiesha Lamb took seriously the charge of providing an equity audit for the Shrewsbury community. Our hope is that our equity audit report will show to be thorough, empathetic, rigorous, and actionable.

### **Terminology**

Equity audits can be viewed as complex documents; complex documents are not always comprehended and consumed, much less moved from theory to practice. In an attempt to make this document more accessible, AVC created a list of terms that might better ground readers in this report and in the work to move the community towards a more equitable environment for all.

**Core tensions-** Core tensions occur when two realities exist that seem to be juxtaposed against one another that create friction or discomfort.

**Deficit Ideology-** Deficit ideology is a set of beliefs (at times subconscious), connecting negative outcomes to the inherent nature of a person or group that has been historically disadvantaged.

**Fragility-** A higher demand for comfort met with a lowered tolerance for multiple perspectives, especially those that counter one's own beliefs or values. In this context, fragility is found within those who represent the dominant groups in society.

**Equity Detours-** well-intentioned initiatives that use a great deal of time and resources but that fall short of achieving genuine equity in practice.

**Individualism-** The value based stance that each person is responsible for their own progress and achievement of success. This often leads to unhealthy competition and lack of collectivism within



learning environments, promoting the perpetuation of long standing learning and opportunity gaps between historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

**Leader/Learner-** The individual terms, leader and learner are commonly used within education, however, in this context, the leader and learner dynamic proposes an opportunity for people to exist in both spaces despite the hierarchy and power dynamics; in fact it acknowledges that everyone has a responsibility to be a leader and a learner, just as well positioned leaders have the responsibility to carve out space for everyone to be a leader and a learner.

**Minoritized-** [Minoritized](#) is a concept describing a certain group of people based on their relationship to the dominant group at a certain time and place. Some groups are minorities only in certain settings, not in relation to the groups they originate from or belong to. AVC has adopted the use of the language “minoritized” instead of “minority” to acknowledge the various identities and the power dynamics that exist.

**Stakeholders-** In general, the term stakeholders within education include all those impacted and those who are connected to or providing input to the education community. In this report, the auditors have narrowed down the focus to include SPS families, students, and staff (licensed and unlicensed). The stakeholders referenced participated in the interviews and focus groups and informed the qualitative data matched by the quantitative data provided.

**Tokenism-** The written, or more likely, unwritten practice of seeing, utilizing, narrowing one’s existence and purpose to one part of their identity as a technical solution to an adaptive problem.

### **AVC and SPS partnership is formed**

In response to a Request for Proposal (RFP) published by the district, AVC designed a proposal that would align to SPS’s request and to AVC’s mission and vision. AVC partnered with SPS leadership to shape the equity audit process. AVC intentionally added into the proposal the need for a steering committee.

The purpose of the steering committee was to:

- To know the community and to support the communications (messaging really matters)
- To have a diverse body (not all admin) representing the complexities of needs and experiences from within the community
- To support the deployment of exploration and document gathering
- To identify stakeholders who have gone through cultural proficiency professional development or have accessed other introductory learning around Equity



A steering committee was pre-selected - Noelle Freeman, Director of Nursing; Amy Clouter, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Margaret Belsito, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services; and Barbara Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources.

Assabet Valley Collaborative Proposal Equity Audit for Shrewsbury Public Schools	
Activities	Deliverable
Project scope/planning meeting with steering team;  Implementation meeting with steering team	Timeline/Calendar of events; focus group invitation template  Development of Essential Questions  Development of collaboration tools (google);  Development of initial data/document collection list  Development of stakeholder list
Site visits - tour of buildings, recess, lunch, faculty meetings	Field notes - coded/analyzed to develop themes  Refinement of focus group questions & data/document review
12 Focus Groups (2 hours each) with time between for synthesis	Facilitation of focus groups & synthesis of focus group notes
Interviews with up to 15 stakeholders	1.5 hours interview + time between & synthesis time
Document Review, Synthesis, Analysis, & Writing	
Meeting with steering committee and Dr Sawyer (in time to prep for the school committee meeting)	Initial Report Due (DRAFT findings)-SC Meeting TBD
Steering Committee Review of initial findings - provide input, feedback, additional data	
Revisions and refinement of final report - including recommendations.	
Final Written Report	



After an initial kickoff and planning meeting, the steering committee adopted the following Essential Questions for the auditors to use in framing inquiry with stakeholders. The questions were translated into multiple languages on the district website, added to all communications to students, staff, and families, and were used to guide each conversation within stakeholder meetings:

1. How do SPS students and staff experience being learners in the district?
2. What root causes might explain the data for minoritized groups (amongst students, families and staff) within the district?
3. What do our minoritized groups need to experience success, safety, and a sense of belonging

## **II. Methodology**

### **Human Centered Design and Processes**

AVC's proposal highlighted a human-centered design approach to supporting partners in better knowing the experiences of members of their community as they shape their goals to advance equity. Human-centered design relies on surfacing the stories, experiences, and perspectives of stakeholders (see terminology) throughout an organization. School districts often are missing important data from stakeholders because reform and improvement efforts are often driven, designed, implemented, and evaluated in a rigid, linear, and top down approach by those who have the most positional power. This includes school committees, administrators, prominent community members, faculty with valued professional expertise or status and possibly 'diverse' family and community representatives whose thinking aligns to the aforementioned group of leaders.

This often leads school districts to adopt strategic plans, mission statements and core values that communicate commitments to serving all, but that lack deep knowledge and awareness of how stakeholders experience the practices and beliefs within the system. AVC's approach to equity leadership intentionally strives to surface the experiences and stories of stakeholders whose experiences have not been made visible to those who are making the decisions and whose voices are not included in forming the system's public statements or internal practices. This next section will walk through the phases AVC employed to invite stakeholder engagement including a focus on protocols, process, design and implementation approaches and stories.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

AVC supported the steering committee in developing communications to families, principals, and all SPS staff regarding the purpose, phases, and process of the equity audit. These communications were distributed in multiple formats and languages within the district's limitations. To allow for the



human-centered design and process of the equity audit to be more accessible to stakeholders of all levels of education, power, and privilege, AVC crafted a list of potential frequently asked questions (FAQs) to be attached to all other correspondences.

## **FAQ**

What is an Equity Audit?

An Equity Audit is an assessment of the diversity, equity, and inclusion within an entity.

Why does my school need to complete an Equity Audit?

SPS as a district has sought out the opportunity to better align with its mission

Who will be completing the Equity Audit?

See auditor's bios above

What is my school's/ district's role in completing the Equity Audit?

District: Steering Committee will support the scheduling of focus groups across schools and disciplines

Schools: Individual schools are encouraged to welcome and support AVC's work

How long will the Equity Audit take to be completed?

Milestones and frequent Check-ins throughout

Final report due May 11th 2020 (\*timeline later adjusted to adapt to COVID-19 disruption)

How will I know what the next steps will be or what my role is?

The Steering Committee will be communicating between stakeholders as needed

Quality stakeholder engagement required research, intentional communications, a spirit of trust and partnership and a willingness to meet stakeholders where they were (literally and figuratively). The auditors met with stakeholders in coffee shops, and other times on the carpet during small group time. The outcome of engagement with SPS stakeholders delivered the bulk of data that would be analyzed and interpreted within this report.

## **Document and Data Review**

In addition to gathering qualitative data from stakeholders, the auditors reviewed documents and data sources that were publicly available or provided by members of the steering committee. These elements are summarized below as the context for our engagement with stakeholders.

## **Mission Statement and Strategic Plan:**

Shrewsbury Public Schools' Mission Statement reads: *Shrewsbury Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21st century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.* Core values listed under the mission statement include: Respect and Responsibility, Collaboration and Communication, Commitment to High Standards and Expectations, and Equity - which is described as creating "equal opportunities for all students to achieve success." A five year strategic plan was adopted in 2017 with the following Strategic Priorities: 1) Space and resources to support effective learning; 2) Learning environments where everyone's success matters; 3) Enhanced well-being of all; and 4) Connected learning for a complex world. Within strategic priority #2 - the district plan



articulates action areas related to staff learning inclusive and culturally proficient practices and identifying and closing achievement/performance gaps between student groups..

Shrewsbury's **Portrait of a Graduate** (2017) describes the competencies the school community desires each of their graduates to possess. They include Global Citizenship & Engagement, Collaboration & Communication, Resilience & Focus, Innovation, Critical Thinking & Content Mastery, and Leadership. Within each domain, descriptors include references to multiple perspectives, valuing diversity, self-care, problem-solving, creativity, and relationships with others.

### **Disproportionality finding from MA DESE**

The steering committee members informed the auditors that the district had received a finding from the MA DESE that there was a "significant disproportionality with regard to white students with emotional disabilities."

### **Curriculum Bias Review (required by [DESE's Public School Tiered Focused Monitoring](#))**

In the last several years, DESE has begun to enforce a long-standing requirement that districts ensure "that individual teachers... review all educational materials for simplistic and demeaning generalizations, lacking intellectual merit, on the basis of race, color, sex, gender, identity, religion, national origin and sexual orientation" and that "appropriate activities, discussions and/or supplementary materials are used to provide balance and context for any such stereotypes depicted in such materials." DESE's shift to more directly enforce documentation and compliance on this topic caused many districts, like Shrewsbury, to deliver and document compliance with this newly enforced criterion within a short window of time. Shrewsbury's leadership team added slides to the district's digital mandated training slide deck (see appendix) that described 7 Forms of Bias and the expectation that each team member review their curriculum for bias. The team created a checklist (see appendix) that directed teachers: "Where bias is found, it must be addressed in a timely manner." The team also created a script for department leaders to use when talking with their teams about using the new checklist.

### **Staff and Student Demographics**

Steering Committee members informed the auditors that the student and community demographics have changed significantly over the last decade, with a particular increase in community members who are categorized as "Asian." It was also noted that because the elementary schools are districted by neighborhood, the demographics of students vary by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. As of this past year, 51% of students in the district are white, compared to almost 94% of SPS staff and 100% of senior administrators (Central Office Leaders, Director of Instructional Technology, Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Principals and Assistant Principals) being white. Figures 1-3 display data regarding SPS student and faculty demographics.



## District Demographic Data

Figure 1

SPS School Profiles from DESE Website										
	Parker	Beal	Coolidge	Spring	Paton	Floral	Sherwood	Oak	SHS	
Grade Span	PK	K-1	K-4	K-4	K-4	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-12	
Enrollment	230	316	410	352	354	726	1,001	994	1885	
African American	3.9%	3.8%	4.1%	2.0%	2.3%	3.9%	2.3%	3.5%	3.0%	
Asian	42.2%	53.2%	33.9%	26.1%	20.6%	48.2%	33.5%	29.9%	26.3%	
Hispanic	4.8%	6.0%	15.4%	4.5%	6.8%	8.0%	9.5%	9.4%	8.5%	
Native American	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	
White	45.2%	32.6%	40.7%	61.1%	66.9%	34.8%	50.0%	53.5%	58.6%	
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	3.0%	3.5%	4.9%	6.0%	3.1%	4.1%	4.4%	3.5%	3.3%	
First Language not English	47.8%	57.0%	47.6%	24.7%	22.6%	52.0%	35.7%	34.1%	27.9%	
English Learner	3.5%	6.6%	6.3%	1.1%	0.6%	4.0%	2.6%	2.6%	2.1%	
Students with Disabilities	29.6%	14.9%	14.9%	12.2%	14.1%	13.1%	16.1%	13.2%	12.0%	
High Needs	41.3%	37.3%	42.7%	20.7%	23.2%	31.5%	31.5%	28.0%	22.8%	
Economically Disadvantaged	15.2%	13.0%	22.0%	5.1%	8.2%	10.2%	10.8%	11.8%	10.7%	
Accountability Classification	N/A	N/A	Substantial Progress toward targets	School of Recognition	Meeting or exceeding targets	Meeting or exceeding targets	Substantial Progress toward targets	Substantial Progress toward targets	Substantial Progress toward targets	

Figure 2

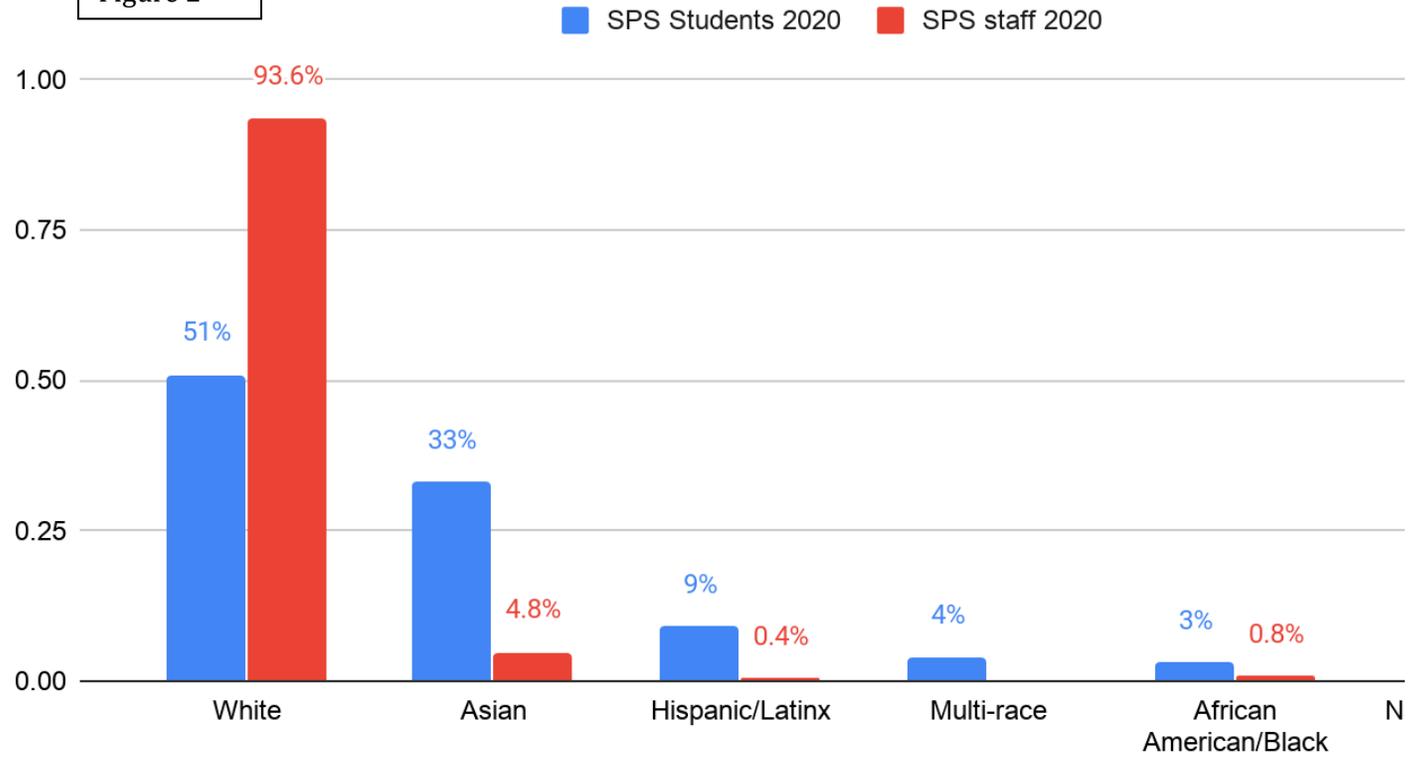
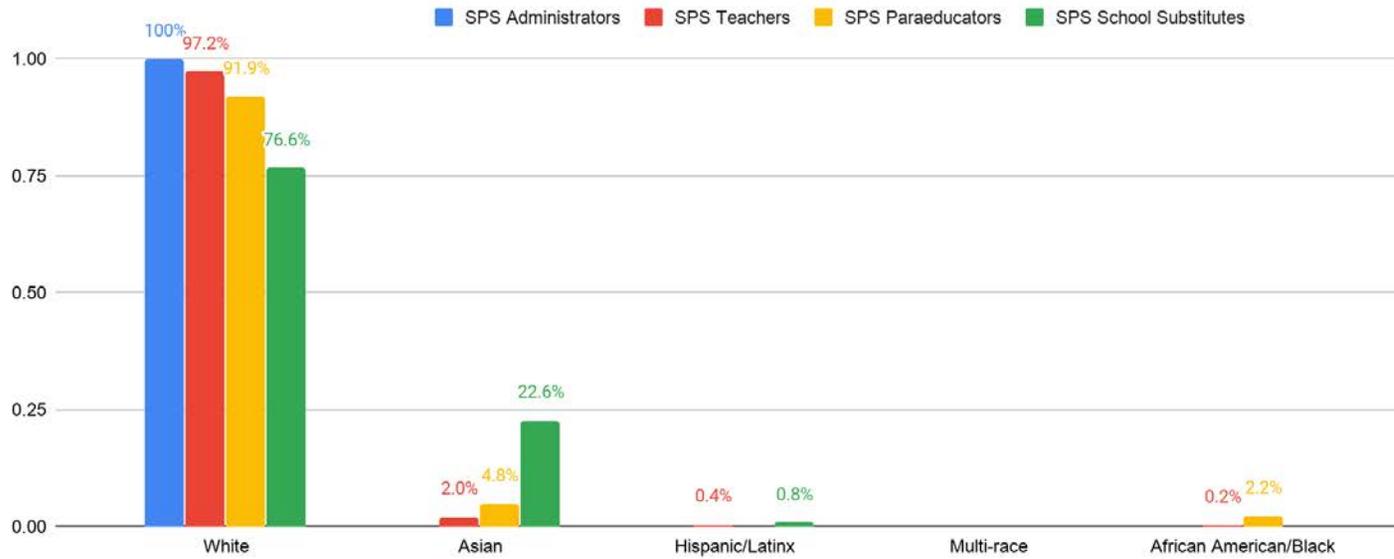


Figure 3





**“Advanced” Courses**

According to Massachusetts DESE “Courses that are considered advanced include Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, and other challenging classes in a variety of subjects.” According to the most recent DESE Advanced Course Completion report (Figure 4) there are discrepancies between the percentage of students from various student groups who complete “advanced coursework” in grades 11 or 12. More than 93% of White, Asian, and female students complete advanced courses, compared to less than 90% of male, and Black students, 80% economically disadvantaged students, 76% Latinx students, 72% high needs, 64% students with disabilities, and 40% of English learners. The 2019 SHS testing Report summarizes aggregate data related to student participation in AP courses and results from standardized tests including AP, SAT, ACT, and PSAT. The data included in the report does not include disaggregated data related to these same categories.

Figure 4

Advanced Course Completion (2018-19) - DESE			
Student Group	# Grade 11 and 12 Students	# Students Completing Advanced	% Students Completing Advanced
All Students	935	864	92.4
Asian	211	203	96.2
Female	490	466	95.1
White	596	556	93.3
Multi-race, non-Hispanic or Latino	21	19	90.5
Male	443	396	89.4
African American/Black	26	23	88.5
Economically Disadvantaged	113	91	80.5
Hispanic or Latino	78	60	76.9
High needs	217	157	72.4
Students with disabilities	103	66	64.1
English learner (EL)	20	8	40



## **Student Discipline**

Like all districts in MA, suspensions and expulsions have decreased over the last decade as districts have implemented mandates aimed to reduce out of district suspensions and eliminate expulsions. Similar to these efforts within other districts, despite the decrease of suspensions, trends continue to show that predictably, certain groups of students are more likely to be disciplined and specifically out-of-school suspended than others. In Shrewsbury students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and black students are suspended at the highest rates (Figure 5), a trend showing relative consistency since 2015 (Figures 6 and 7). Discipline data show improvement in reducing the rate of suspensions for Latinx students in the last two years. While suspensions are one significant element of school discipline, other forms of discipline including office referrals, calls home, and detentions are important to review and disaggregate for better understanding how discipline policies and practices impact students. These types of reports were not provided for the audit, but may exist and be readily used by the district to support their additional inquiry.

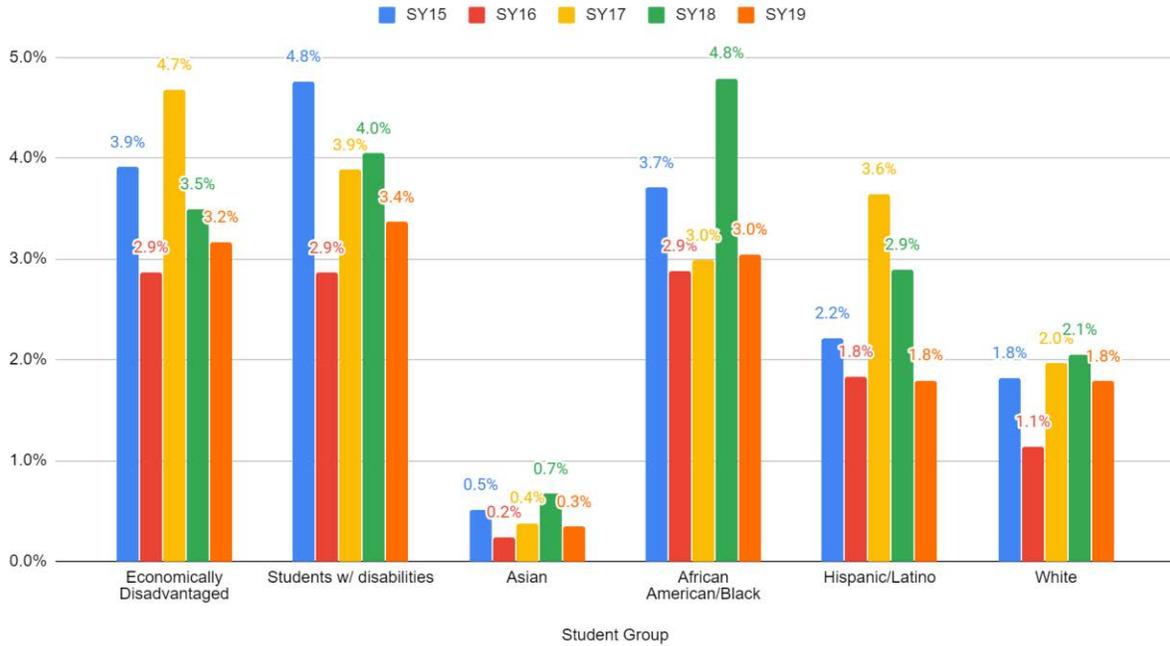


Figure 5

<b>2018-19 Student Discipline Data Report - MA DESE - All Offenses</b>					
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Students Disciplined</b>	<b>% of Student Group Disciplined</b>	<b>% In-School Suspension</b>	<b>% Out-of-School Suspension</b>
Students w/disabilities	981	33	3.4%	0.9	2.5
Economically disadvantaged	853	27	3.2%	0.8	2.5
Afr. Amer./Black	197	6	3.0%	1	2.5
High needs	1,977	47	2.4%	0.7	1.8
Male	3,231	71	2.2%	0.6	1.6
Hispanic/Latino	557	10	1.8%	0.5	1.3
White	3,359	60	1.8%	0.5	1.4
All Students	6,405	84	1.3%	0.4	1
English Learner	240	3	1.3%		
Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.	231	1	0.4%		
Female	3,170	12	0.4%	0.1	0.3
Asian	2,032	7	0.3%	0	0.3
Amer. Indian. or Alaska Nat.	28	0	0.0%		
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.	1		0.0%		

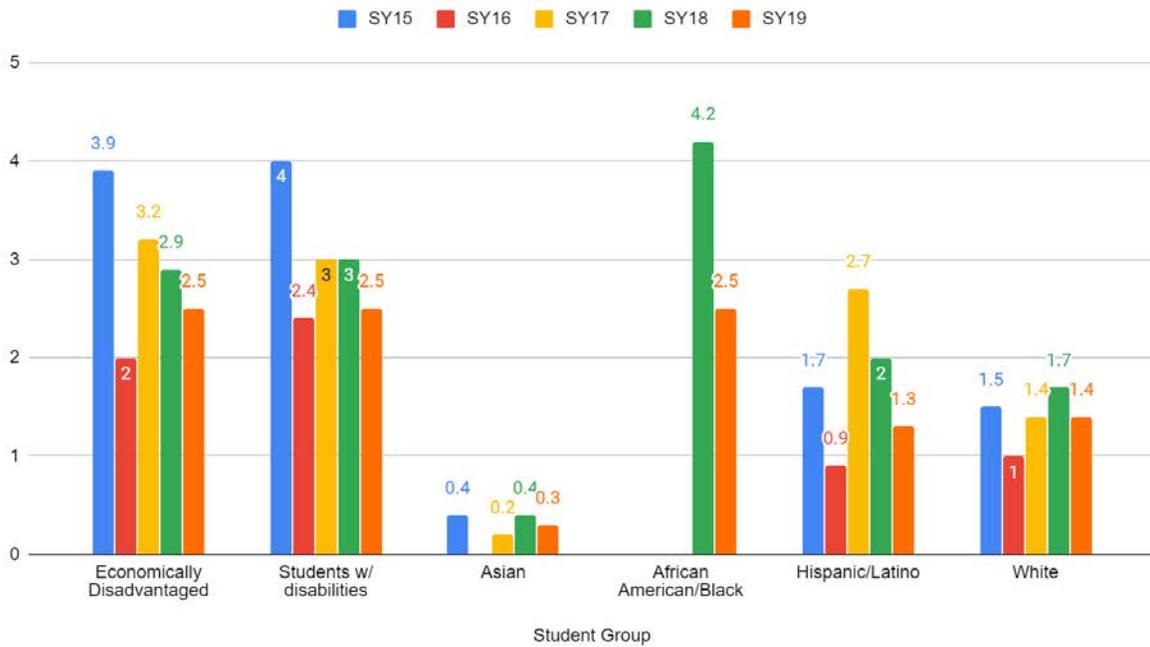
**Figure 6**

% of Student Group Disciplined SY15-SY19



**Figure 7**

% Out of School Suspensions SY15-SY19



### Chronically Absent Rates

During the last two years, MA DESE has begun to report student “chronically absent” (defined as missing at least 10% of days enrolled regardless of whether the absences are excused, unexcused and/or for disciplinary reasons.) According to DESE, “being chronically absent can have a significant impact on a student’s ability to read at grade level, perform academically, and graduate on time.” In general, absence rates increase through middle school and peak in high school – and this is true in Shrewsbury as well. However, the chronically absent rates for students at Shrewsbury High School are comparatively higher than the chronically absent rates at ten comparison schools and compared to the state average. Figure 8 shows the 2018-2019 chronically absent rates at SHS for subgroups and shows comparison data from ten “like” high schools and the state. Figure 9 displays SHS Chronically Absent Rates for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 – demonstrating an increase in the chronically absent rates for subgroups, and particularly Black and Latinx students and students who are economically disadvantaged, who are English learners, and students with disabilities.

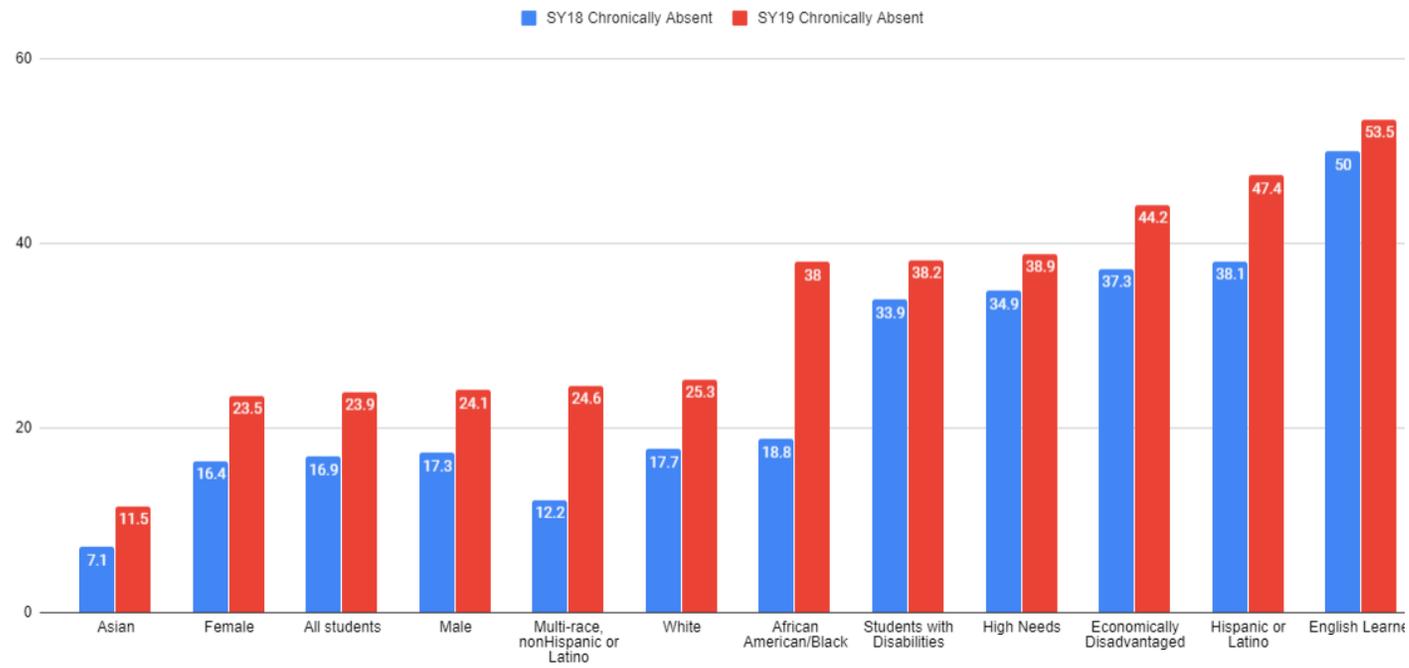
Source: MA DESE - District Analysis and Review Tool (DART) Success After High School Report. (Last updated March 2020) *\*NOTE –in reviewing this report, SPS leaders expressed concern that the chronically absent data may reflect errors in reporting. The SPS leadership team plans to investigate and share its findings.\**

**Figure 8**

DART Success After High School		Economically Disadvantaged	African American/Black	Hispanic/Latino	White	Asian
Schools / Districts		2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Shrewsbury - Shrewsbury Sr High	N	233	50	152	1,129	469
	%	44.2	38	47.4	25.3	11.5
Westborough - Westborough High	N	135	26	79	740	294
	%	24.4	3.8	31.6	9.2	4.1
State		99,790	28,290	59,162	184,001	19,636
		31.8	23.5	32	13.5	8.6
Walpole - Walpole High	N	136	47	62	944	59
	%	34.6	19.1	17.7	10.4	6.8
Wachusett - Wachusett Regional High	N	234	38	104	1,862	65
	%	16.2	5.3	11.5	6.3	4.6
Sharon - Sharon High	N	122	73	59	661	289
	%	22.1	9.6	11.9	12.1	3.5
North Andover - North Andover High	N	214	57	143	1,147	103
	%	28.5	10.5	26.6	9.9	6.8
Milton - Milton High	N	146	198	60	672	68
	%	15.8	15.7	8.3	4.3	1.5
Melrose - Melrose High	N	134	73	43	825	47
	%	27.6	17.8	23.3	10.3	6.4
Chelmsford - Chelmsford High	N	162	52	57	1,113	205
	%	30.9	13.5	22.8	10.8	6.3
Belmont - Belmont High	N	111	49	57	908	238
	%	7.2	2	5.3	4.3	2.5
Arlington - Arlington High	N	133	52	88	1,030	157
	%	23.3	13.5	25	11.7	14

Figure 9

Shrewsbury High School - Chronically Absent Rates by Subgroup (2 year)





## **Limitations**

Even with intentional communications, a thorough and human-centered approach, collaborating with SPS partners, and collectively having decades of expertise, there are limitations worth naming. Many of the findings in our audit reflect phenomena that exist systemically and are not unique to SPS. As such, the recommendations will be focused on efforts SPS might consider to disrupt inequity within the district in spite of external influences. Also not unique to SPS, equity audits, by their very nature, require those who complete them to surface inequities and mirror them back to those who requested the audit. At times, equity audits are requested with good intentions or by mission statements and strategic plans but stakeholders are unprepared for the complexities, core tensions, new or named narratives, and inevitable difficulty that comes from the findings that result.

Sometimes district leaders request an equity audit to address a particular incident or in response to advocacy from minoritized stakeholders; that was not the case for SPS. SPS requested the audit as part of carrying out the goals of the five year strategic plan; this is to be commended as an effort to follow through on public commitments to all students. Consequently, because the community at large was not widely expecting an equity audit and did not have clarity on the administration's rationale for why one was needed, there were many misconceptions about what "problem" AVC's equity audit was meant to address. This lack of clarity or wide community engagement in designing the audit and/or purpose itself led to some delays in outreach to stakeholders and also added barriers to wide-scale participation of minoritized stakeholders including families, paraeducators, and students (particularly if they needed interpreter services to participate).

The findings reflect perceptual/qualitative data collected through focus groups, interviews, site visits, and documents provided by a small district team of administrators or found on public domains. Proportionally, the individuals who participated in interviews, focus groups, and the steering committee were predominantly administrators and/or white professional status faculty. The response rate from SPS families, students, paraeducators, faculty, with special attention on families of color or of self-identified stakeholders of minority status, was minimal. In addition, several participants requested individual conversations and confidentiality for fear of repercussions and/or fear of persistent apathy or inaction to previously named issues.

Families were informed of the site visits to their student's schools and given the opportunity to opt-out of having their students participate individually in interviews, seventy-nine students were opted out of the process by their parent/guardian. While the auditors visited each of the nine schools, the time frame and scope of the audit was not designed to provide a comprehensive review of practices in each location. Thus, the findings and recommendations are limited to themes generated from the aforementioned data elements and are provided as overarching concepts to support additional inquiry and action planning by district personnel.



### III. Findings (Assets and Areas of improvement)

By mid to late January, AVC, with the support of the SPS steering committee began scheduling initial interviews and site visits with all nine of the Shrewsbury principals at their respective schools. During the initial interviews with principals, the auditors shared about their work beyond the introductory emails sent prior to the meeting, the purpose for the upcoming site visit with their staff in their community, solicited the foci principals hoped would be prioritized ('look fors') in the equity audit based on their identified needs, and scheduled the logistics of the site visit. Within the interviews some common 'look fors' were surfaced, these included but were not limited to the following:

#### 'Look fors' as identified by Principals

- Any and everything
- Principal interactions with staff and students (needs assessment)
- Staff behaviors with auditors in the building
- Staff perceived levels of comprehension of equity, why an equity audit, and why now?
- The inclusion (or exclusion) practices by teachers
- Staff stereotyping students
- Connections staff make between the auditors being present and the most recent DESE curriculum review
- Retention of staff
- Representation of student diversity (materials in classrooms, hallways, and within curriculum)
- Socioeconomic related challenges
- Student culture
- Student behaviors (misbehaviors, interactions between races, and engagement)
- Who is invisible?
- Special education practices
- English Language Learner support and engagement

**While this 'Look fors' list is not exhaustive, it guided the auditor's observations and built in the data around the culture and needs within the district. The interviews with principals also surfaced some *core tensions* including:**

- Educators fear saying or doing the wrong thing and being considered racist
- To avoid misrepresentation or lack of representation, staff choose to avoid representation altogether (i.e. replacing diverse human depictions with inanimate objects)
- The recent curriculum bias reports were informative and created defensiveness and helplessness- process surfaced new opportunities for learning but was lacking expertise and sustainable direction
- "The *Blue Ribbon* school" refers to Spring St; not because it has actually received that particular award, but as code to signal its status as "better" or "better performing" or "more desired" as a result of being located in a more affluent neighborhood, having a higher DESE rating, and more PTO fundraising - proverbially known as "*center brats*"



- Coolidge is located in a socioeconomically lower neighborhood and holds a stigma of having the “most challenging students” - proverbially known as the “lake rats”. Sometimes its staff are held up or hold themselves up as “working harder”
- Paton and Floral sit in the middle with hard working staff who often feel undervalued in comparison to staff and students at Spring St and Coolidge.
- Redistricting is a much needed shift and opportunity for more students to experience success based on more equitable classroom sizes and equitable access to education and resources
- Redistricting also raised the possibility of parent and staff discord in relation to the redistribution of resources and staff

**Site Visits**

AVC went into each site visit with a list of ‘look fors’ from the previously completed interviews with principals along with the updated list of students whose families had opted them out of the interview process. Each of the 9 schools had its own culture and climate, assets and areas of improvement. Each site also welcomed the auditors in different ways, some with more trepidation than others, some with a chaperone and others with a map of the building and a thumbs up. Despite the shared messaging around the equity audit visit, not all staff members were privy to or comprehended the purpose or presence of the auditors. During the weeks of site visits AVC covered a wide range of people, spaces, and topics, including but not limited to:

People and places	Topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students</li> <li>● Families</li> <li>● Media centers</li> <li>● Interactive book cases</li> <li>● PK-12 classrooms and hallways</li> <li>● Main offices and front office staff</li> <li>● Recess and lunch</li> <li>● Psychology/counseling dept.</li> <li>● Extended learning/after school</li> <li>● Lounges with staff during lunch</li> <li>● Team level meetings</li> <li>● Specialists</li> <li>● ELL community</li> <li>● Reading nooks</li> <li>● Hallway break out sessions</li> <li>● Admin</li> <li>● OTs/PTs/SLTs</li> <li>● Paraeducators</li> <li>● Licensed staff</li> <li>● Volunteers</li> <li>● Debate team practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Hour of Play”</li> <li>● Leadership and learning models/ Pathways</li> <li>● Deadlines and staff anxiety</li> <li>● ELC/Special Education</li> <li>● Classroom management and support</li> <li>● Academic and Behavioral instruction</li> <li>● Academic tracks</li> <li>● Transportation and Cost of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>● Parenting</li> <li>● Economic disparities</li> <li>● Field trips</li> <li>● Redistricting</li> <li>● Ratios</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Sports vs. the Arts</li> <li>● Diversity</li> <li>● Relationships</li> <li>● Social emotional learning and Mental health</li> <li>● Curriculum bias</li> <li>● Gender, Race, Sexuality, Ability, Language, Culture...</li> </ul>



### **Stakeholder Engagement**

In addition to being welcomed to observe each of the 9 school sites, AVC also engaged directly with 126 stakeholders via 90 formal and informal meetings, focus groups, in-person interviews, phone calls and home and community visits. These engagements included thirty three families, fifty seven school staff, nine principals, and twenty seven students.

#### Stakeholder Data

33 families 6 focus groups(AM/PM), + additional one on ones
57 staff (licensed and unlicensed) 4 focus groups(AM/PM), + additional one on ones
9 interviews with Principals
27 students (1st-11th graders) One on ones and small groups

### **Focus Groups**

AVC facilitated 10 focus groups – 6 with families and 4 with SPS staff. Rooms were reserved across the district, including Town Hall, and the schedule included morning and evening times. The focus group materials included background information on AVC, introductory prompts to get to know the stakeholder(s) present, a confidentiality form to commit to respecting the desire of anonymity of others present, the essential questions to ground the stakeholder(s) in shared purpose, and a feedback form to assess each stakeholder’s experience in the focus group.

### **Informal and Individual Engagements**

The auditors did not have access to students in the form of focus groups, therefore student engagement activities took place informally during site visits or observations – recess, lunch, classrooms, hallways, and after school events. In addition, several families and staff members reported having some trepidation about going through the established channels and chose to offer their responses through more secure avenues with the auditors. In some cases this meant meeting one-on-one at a local café, or home, or scheduling a phone call, or participating in a specialized focus group.

### **Analysis and Themes**

As the auditors synthesized their field notes and completed document and data review, themes emerged in four core competencies: 1) Instructional Practices, 2) Culture and Climate, 3) Staffing and Professional Learning and Growth, and 4) Representation and Tokenization.



Readers of this analysis should note the interconnectedness of the features within each of the core competencies. It is only divided into these sections to create a “bite sized” approach to learning, not to compartmentalize the collective responsibilities to all aspects of the community’s growth in becoming a more equity-centered community. Along with the interconnected competencies, the resources and recommendations also can be used interchangeably between the competencies.

Recommendations are written in detail with examples and scenarios directly below; these are bolstered with line by line resources at the end of this report. Finally, each of the competencies are written in language that might be more accessible to the masses with the goal of naming the values, behaviors, and practices that currently exist within SPS, but are challenging to see. Without accessible language, the work of dismantling inequities will be less likely to occur. The auditors were intentional in honoring the confidentiality of stakeholders while lifting up themes that were either repetitive or honed in on as an area of strength or hope related to equity.

### **Instructional Practices**

“Instructional Practices” refers to all features of a school environment that relate to learning - both what students are learning and what the staff are learning. To the extent that discipline practices or social/emotional curriculum are intended to “teach” students how to behave, regulate, and thrive - these are also included as “instructional practices.” Instructional Practices are essential to the learning environment and essential to how we measure by imposed standards, the success of all students.

Student outcomes within SPS and within educational communities nationwide are not only predictors for a community’s success but present as a positive or negative tracking status of schools. There are often district wide approaches to equity, differentiated and scaffolded to meet the needs of staff, students, and families. The goal is to operate from equity *embedded* curriculum, classrooms, and an overall equity centered school environment. But what does this mean?

Within SPS, the data would suggest that there are already some established areas of competency that not only need to be highlighted, but lifted up as models for the entire district to build upon and replicate. Access and inclusion is happening, for example, 1:1 technology within SPS has increased the student body’s chance at accessing learning, and with increased tech literacy at the forefront of 21st century learning, SPS is ahead of many others with technological access and inclusion. District wide book studies of culturally relevant texts like *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond showcase a willingness to learn how to better tap into a student’s brilliance while allowing them to continue being responsible for their learning and growth. Hammond’s observation protocol is a great example of how to redefine the ‘look fors’ for educators to maximize the potential success in a classroom setting.

In relation to academic and behavioral instruction, collective learning is needed on the impact of white culture beliefs and behaviors on students through instruction. This will support All students, specifically those who are not able to fit the dominant culture’s standards and practices for a myriad of reasons (i.e. ELC students, ELL students, students experiencing poverty or a part of working class families etc.).



In the article, *“Grit is in our DNA”*, Dr. Bettina Love eloquently explains how “grit” out of context, is not a bad word, however context always matters. As documented, the SPS data around socioeconomic and learning divides are vast; therefore more learning is needed to close the research and instructional gap on meeting the needs of students who are experiencing poverty, the working class, learning disabilities, and other realities that don’t fit the dominant culture’s narrative of academic success within SPS. Work in these core areas will greatly improve the sub culture practice of identifying the success of the “Green apartment” families, the “bad or misbehaving students”, or other proverbial divisive language used within SPS to speak about marginalized students and the reasons behind their level of success.

Instructional practices and academic success cannot be separated from the policies, practices, and/or culture that centers equity or leads to inequities. For example, stakeholders at all levels used language to explain disproportionate access to higher level classes (i.e. honors and AP) including assumptions and stereotypes about which students “belong” in these higher level classes and which students should be provided with “lower level” curriculum (like vocational pathways) instead of comprehensive high school curriculum. Within this report, AVC has provided resources to learn more about the culture of tracking and the beliefs and practices that inform the status of equity reform in learning communities.

### **Culture and Climate**

In several interviews and focus groups AVC learned about how much love and support some staff feel, despite their affiliations, orientations, or status within SPS. A few stakeholders highlighted Shrewsbury’s award-winning unified programming – inclusion of students with disabilities in extracurricular programming. Several stakeholders noted positive experiences with the district’s support for students and faculty in the LGBTQIA community.

Audits intentionally highlight the areas that need to be reproduced and provide the “Why” and the “How” of the work. There’s a proverb that says *“A chain is no stronger than its weakest link”* and for the sake of this equity audit, it’s vital to name how the “weakest links” are experiencing the culture and climate in SPS, not to shame, but to provide opportunities for growth as a district. It is near impossible for an entire district to have the aforementioned culture of love and support across multiple sites without doing the necessary work that each site individually requires. This is where intentionally building in protocols, expectations, accountability measures, and rallying buy- in to attain the desired culture and climate can be a predictor of an equity centered environment.

It wasn’t far into the equity audit process that the auditors were introduced to concepts like the “Blue Ribbon School” and tokenization of the minoritized groups. Out of context, a concept can appear to be harmless, but within the SPS context, both concepts exist as barriers to achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion. It was not surprising to the auditors after visiting Spring St. school how amazing and hard working the students, staff, and leadership were, similar to all the other schools; in fact, this reality should remind the readers of how proverbial sayings like “Blue Ribbon School” hurt everyone involved. The fact is, the “Blue Ribbon School” is a euphemism for the socio economic advantages that haunt and create barriers to equity; it is a passive aggressive attempt at naming how schools, staff, students, and families are labeled superior or inferior based on their relationship to the distribution of resources and the status and prestige given or obtained by one site over the others. The fear of naming these inequities and disrupting this behavior by creatively



and collectively problem solving with stakeholders across the district has led to the acceptance and familiarity of this proverbial phrase and real divide for generations.

SPS stakeholders also spoke to the tokenism experienced by students, staff, and families across the district. It is important to name how tokenism shows up, who it impacts, and how to dismantle it. With a tendency to seek quick fixes due to budgetary restrictions or lack of resources, it is easy to employ strategies that lead to equity detours and the perpetuation of dominant norms. For example, who is consistently called on when there's a need for interpretation for families whose native language is one other than English? Questions to consider: Was there a formal agreement for this person to be the interpreter? How many times would they be expected to speak to a student's thinking, beliefs, and behaviors, as if all (insert minoritized group) were the same and based in culture and not in a singular household practice? Would these interactions have been negotiated in that first agreement with the stakeholder or just assigned to them at the beck and call of the dominant group? Is this position compensated appropriately? What assumptions have been made in this relationship, but not directly named? What are other resources that might be tapped into that don't tokenize but honor?

Another example might be a school's need for more 'diverse' representation at family events or on committees by minoritized groups (reminder that this could be any group that is not dominant in your setting), it is easy to 'cut corners' or participate in equity detours in ways that lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes, and the tokenism of staff, students, and families of minoritized status. This might show up as a well-meaning celebration that lacked research and authentic relationships or only asking 'cultural' related questions to the person being tokenized but no other higher level thinking questions, or better yet, co-designing. The responsibility of all within the community must be to build authentic relationships and rapport with everyone in the community, especially minoritized groups who likely have experienced these same realities outside of the realm of education. Within SPS the work of building rapport and authentic relationships is not only for the few (i.e. ELL staff, therapists, counselors, behavior specialists etc), but for everyone. If the hope is to build a community that's safe and welcoming to all, then creating a safe environment to learn, being vulnerable, and taking risks to close the gap between stakeholders is essential.

As SPS prioritizes the college and career readiness of students it is important to explore the current culture and climate, the impact of individualism over collectivism, and the role of social emotional learning (SEL) to support all students in reaching their full potential. Individualism, as defined above in the terminology section might appear to have only positive and healthy intentions, however the outcomes within a learning environment often lead to a replication of long standing learning and opportunity gaps between historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups. SPS might consider addressing healthy and unhealthy forms of competition when the same groups never 'win'. Competitive culture that promotes individual excellence (individualism) at the expense of a community centered district is counterintuitive to meeting the district's stated mission and vision.

SEL programming often includes a focus on wellness, mindfulness, emotional regulation in ways that often center the need for improvement on the students themselves, rather than on an environment, practice, or climate that promotes stress, pressure, competition, exclusion and compliance. "Kindness" campaigns, or mindfulness exercises, or school-wide posters are often signs that a district has adopted SEL as a priority (as is the case in Shrewsbury). But if the words on



the posters advertise a school that promotes “kindness” without having equal access to transportation for extracurricular activities, or without diverse viewpoints and experiences represented in the curriculum or personnel or leadership of the school, the SEL platform can be superficial. In some cases the SEL platform can run counter to inclusion and equity.

For example, in the SHS “Spring 2018 SEL Surveys” 331 students responded to survey questions designed to assess students' capacity in the following categories: Emotion Regulation, Grit, Growth Mindset, Learning Strategies, Self Efficacy, Self-Management, and Social Awareness. These categories are frequently used in the education field, across the nation, to determine if students have the capacity to withstand stressors, overcome challenges, and achieve wellness – or in other words “to succeed.” At the same time these categories - particularly “Grit” and “Self Efficacy” are in direct conflict with the foundations of racial equity and cultural proficiency. These terms (and many of the ways white institutions implement SEL programs) are examples of what is called “Deficit Thinking” - which means that the challenges students face in their learning are viewed as being solely a direct result of something lacking individually within the student.

Many questions in the SEL survey are framed with deficit thinking language. For example, in the Grit section, students were asked: “If *you have a problem* while working toward an important goal, how well can you keep working?” and “*How often do you stay focused* on the same goal for several months at a time?” In the section titled growth mindset, students were asked “How possible is it for you to change putting forth a lot of effort? or *behaving well* in class? or liking a subject?” In self efficacy - students were asked how confident they are that they can learn all the material? or that they will remember the material next year?

If students expressed lacking confidence in any of these areas, the ratings were not “favorable”. These results indicate that students are lacking the skills needed to learn rather than an indication that the instruction or environment might require intervention in order for the student to maximize their learning capabilities. Readers might benefit from exploring these concepts further and engaging in deepened student and family led inquiry about how they experience learning in Shrewsbury.

### **Staffing and Professional Learning and Growth**

SPS is well known as an innovative district when it comes to instructional technology and creative, nontraditional professional learning opportunities for faculty. SPS’s “pathways” for professional learning were designed to create choice and autonomy for educators when it comes to deciding what and how they’d like to learn. In addition, the district’s “Summer Institute” is well known throughout the region for bringing together high quality PD for the faculty from the district and neighboring districts. Some participants in the stakeholder events named the district’s approach – pathways and/or the Summer Institute as assets that benefit their learning. Other participants noted that for some topics – like cultural proficiency – the pathways approach can water down, or oversimplify complex topics that require expert facilitation and scaffolded coaching.

There are some positive intentions and efforts to advance more learning around cultural proficiency across the district; for example, in the last several years SPS teams participated in Cultural Proficiency coursework and last year hosted a racial justice keynote speaker at the Summer Institute. Even with these efforts, stakeholders have identified that there haven’t yet been sustained, embedded efforts or accountability to the learning. As a result, administrators who have participated in introductory professional development or reading have adopted terminology,



vocabulary, and mission statements that are ahead of the practices built into the system. The curriculum bias review training is an example of how the intentions to seek equity, diversity and inclusion were not matched in practice and instead caused harm. There was evidence of this harm formally and informally. At least one formal complaint was filed by SPS staff regarding the bias review training which further marginalized minoritized groups. Informally, there was evidence of the harm caused throughout interviews, focus groups, document reviews, and site visits. Some stakeholders described the rollout as “compliance” not improvement. There are reports of leaders reading from a script when introducing the bias review requirement; sometimes making light of it or complaining that it was yet one more thing required by DESE. The auditors observed a meeting in which the bias review was referred to as the “equity thing” to get “over with” so we “won’t have to go back to it again.”

While some leaders took steps to address and repair the concerns that had been brought to their attention, most of what we learned about the experience of the bias review were not known to leaders prior to this report. Because a bias review was mandated by DESE, the district administration has not needed to take responsibility for a harmful implementation of something as important and vital to the public mission of the district as reviewing curriculum for bias. While DESE’s mandate without practical and comprehensive implementation support is a vital part of the problem, the district administration implemented this mandate without supplemental scaffolds and supports.

Fragility is listed in the terminology section. It is being written about in the professional learning section because it plays an important part in the will, skill, and capacity of SPS staff to learn culturally proficient practices, beliefs and actions to move the theory behind the recommendations into practice. This is not unique to Shrewsbury; often leaders ask for an equity audit but are unprepared for how it will actually feel to have an equity audit completed. There are entire books on the phenomenon that our readers may possibly be experiencing right now. The “truths” SPS asked the auditors to deliberately go in search of may actually cause SPS stakeholders to feel disbelief, anger, frustration, fear, shame, guilt, or outrage. AVC also offers that many of its internal stakeholders have experienced a range of similar emotions. They are all part of a fragility that keeps white-led organizations from better living out their mission statements of meeting the needs of all.

The auditors experienced this fragility (again, not unique to Shrewsbury) throughout all the auditing activities; observed fear about the activities of the audit in many of the spaces, meetings and conversations AVC facilitated. Like in other places AVC visits, the auditors noticed that the books that showed diverse representation were on top of shelves but not reflective of what was throughout the media centers. While many were at minimum curious to see us, if not appreciative, some stakeholders appeared to be hesitant, choosing their words very carefully, or asking if what they said was acceptable. The great news is that because this is not unique to SPS, there are models, ways, and practices that can be taken up to learn how to counteract this behavior so that it doesn’t continue to get in the way of SPS’s desire and ability to achieve equity.

In some conversations, however, stakeholders were not afraid of the conversation and instead let the auditors know how excited they were to see AVC doing this work with SPS; how hopeful they were that this meant the administration was taking this content seriously. These engagements were often preceded with statements like “It’s about time” or “Will you please make sure this... gets in the report”. There were also questions for the auditors – what will happen after the report? What’s going to change? This experience is raised in the professional learning section because these are



potential “leaders” the district hasn’t tapped into yet and they are assets that can support the learning and doing ahead. There are stakeholders throughout the district that are eager and hungry to support this work – but they will need access to spaces and processes where data is analyzed, conclusions are drawn, and decisions are made.

### **Representation and Tokenization**

From start to finish of the audit process there was a mantra shared, that the “demographics of the staff do not represent the demographics of the student body.” This is a well-known fact that is confessed and acknowledged as a problem. There are volumes of research about the positive impact when educators of color are employed in positions throughout schools, as well as the rationale on why the current state of diverse professionals within education is so low. We’ve included some of this research below. The Steering Committee identified that it is a priority for SPS to more effectively attract families and faculty of color. The auditors also heard and observed some situations in which a desire to have diversity represented on initiatives or task forces led to the tokenism described above. When there are very, very few team members of color, they are individually more likely to be tokenized by others.

One challenge districts face in attracting faculty of color is that organizations often have a “reputation” for being inclusive or not being inclusive. In focus groups, some stakeholders joked about the “Shrewsbury way” as if it’s a known fact. And some of the stakeholders talked about it not in a joking way, but in a way that spoke to what it feels like as a student, or a parent, of a staff member if your way isn’t the “Shrewsbury way.” As long as this continues to be a known and accepted mantra, there’s no amount of HR posters, or recruitment language that will suffice to attract AND retain a more diverse workforce.

While as noted earlier, there are pockets of learning taking place throughout the district that should be noted as an important step. The auditors also observed some misconceptions and superficiality to some of the concepts, terminology being used. For example, in a few cases, stakeholders mentioned having learned about “white fragility” while engaging in concepts the book was intended to disrupt (see fragility section above). In other cases, stakeholders used terms like “culturally responsive” to talk about how they had engaged with a family but the description of the engagement was not at all culturally responsive and was in fact filled with bias, assumptions and stereotyping. These are sometimes the dangers inherent in starting learning activities without a coordinated and comprehensive plan for connecting deep learning to deep practice. We’ve added some resources below to support deepening the learning and practices.

### **Family and Community Engagement**

While the district’s strategic plan does not specifically name family engagement, research from Dr. Karen Mapp and stakeholders at all levels of SPS would suggest that family engagement is one of the central pillars to student and community engagement and success. During interviews and focus groups, families were identified as being a named priority, which aligns to all equity based practices; however, moving this theory to practice seemed to be a more complex task. Several stakeholders named the core tensions directly, stating that the goals of engaging more ‘diverse’ families were often met with barriers related to, but not exclusive to, socio-economic status,



cultural norms, educational buy-in, and linguistic needs.

In other cases, SPS stakeholders noted that parent engagement catered to those parents who were already in position to influence or benefit from the system as is; many stakeholders expressed that the PTO or school councils and teams were disproportionately filled with parents who did not represent the demographic composition of the student body. In response to this finding, the steering committee provided the auditors with a document that tabulates the number of parents engaged at each school in School Council or PTO (or “Parent Forum”) in one column and the number of “parents of color” in the other column. (Appendix).

In addition, many stakeholders described the composition of the PTOs at the elementary school level as examples of “haves and have nots” noting a well-known significant discrepancy between how much more Spring Street’s PTO is able to fundraise than Coolidge’s PTO year after year.

At times, SPS stakeholders used proverbial language to describe the status of family engagement that unintentionally perpetuated stereotypes emanating from deficit ideology, i.e. “Asian families are obviously all smart and educated” or “those uninvolved families never...”. This language was framed both as an expectation or pressure to families, and as concerns about students’ well-being in ways that signal a belief that families lacked cultural assets that could be accessed to support their success in school.

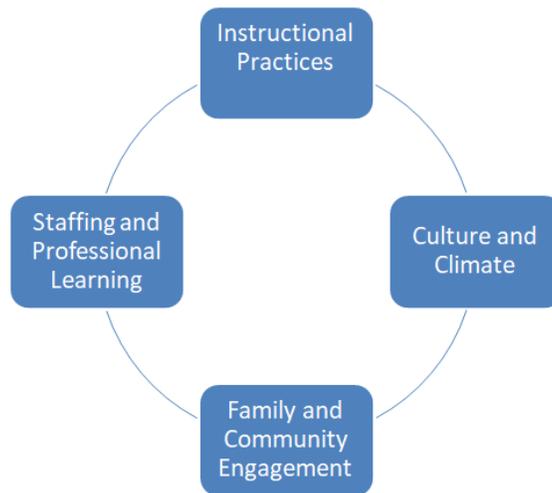
AVC and other stakeholders from focus groups and interviews recommend that SPS increase engagement with agencies, cultural programs and institutions, and community partners to support cross cultural connections and means to educate the community that does not represent the changing demographics of the community, and in ways that won’t tokenize the small number of existing stakeholders who would be interested in supporting this work, if not in isolation and without capacity building and plans for sustainability.

Within SPS, family and community engagement practices do not easily and readily include families who require translation or interpreter services, which continues to perpetuate stereotypes that these families are “less involved” or “less engaged” or “less able” to partner with the school for the success of their students. Clubs, sports, arts activities, and musical performances and classes are amongst the many examples provided by stakeholders that require additional fees and/or individual transportation. The greatest of these costs is the limiting of access to many students and their families from experiencing belonging within SPS. The composition of PTO and school council members was reported to lack diversity (specifically in relation to the proportions of diversity within the student body).

In addition, discrepant fund raising exacerbated inequitable resources in elementary schools, again adding to the existing narratives of inequitable value across the schools. Stakeholders reported that family involvement activities lack systemic, culturally relevant practices of engagement and partnership. To address this reality, SPS might consider district wide approaches to equity centered family engagement across sites with progressive and innovative partnerships to meet the needs of staff, students, and families. Co-designing this process with families would be essential to living into a more equitable learning community that authentically partners with all stakeholders for the success of all students.

## IV Recommendations and Resources

### Equity Audit's Core Competencies



Achieving educational equity requires first steps (short-term) and never-ending (long-term) efforts, both of which can be uplifted by and hindered by contextual circumstances. For example, during the course of AVC's engagement with SPS for the equity audit, the district faced a financial crisis, a global pandemic closed schools, and the killing of George Floyd inspired national protests and introspection.

The district's unexpected financial crisis added complex uncertainties to the impact of our report. Will the district have any financial capacity to try on any of the recommendations we share? Will our recommendations create conflict or tensions at a time that is already stressful for stakeholders? Can AVC pose recommendations that are cost neutral but that would still be meaningful steps in the right direction toward long-term commitments?

Shortly after AVC finished the final focus groups and site visits and began to analyze their field notes, the nation-wide COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools across MA. Like everywhere, SPS staff had to quickly change schooling to be delivered remotely. While this took attention from the audit activities, it also provided a strong example of how quickly a system can change when there is no choice.

In the last month, the killing of George Floyd (among many other acts of racial violence in the national news) has sparked national protest and for some an awakening racial consciousness. Superintendents, CEOs, politicians across white America have published statements that condemn



racism and that commit in various ways to “doing more” to fight racism. SPS’s Dr. Sawyer published one such statement (Appendix). In addition, 150 community members drafted a letter to the SPS School Committee demanding action on advancing anti-racism (Appendix). The auditors have drafted this report to help the district “do more” and “do better” as Dr. Sawyer challenged the community in his statement.

The district committed to learning from the equity audit process, including AVC’s findings and recommendations for short-term and long-term advances toward equity. Crises can exacerbate inequities, pause reforms, and distract from improvements. On the other hand, crisis can serve as a catalyst for bold disruptions, quicker actions, collective solidarity, and transformative steps. AVC crafted the research-based recommendations below with the current local and national context in mind. This recommendation reflects overarching findings and the resources to support short-term, next steps.

### **Short Term:**

It will be important that the short-term recommendations are carried out with input from stakeholders across SPS – not simply via an established leadership team or hierarchy. Students, families, paraeducators, educators have insights to share about past efforts and brilliant ideas to share about future efforts. To engage stakeholders in taking action on these recommendations, SPS should consider developing opportunities to engage stakeholders in making sense of the audit and in synthesizing the recommendations and resources. These opportunities should be provided in variety of formats, forums, and pathways that remove barriers to access and that reflect diversity of the community SPS serves. Renowned author, Zaretta Hammond, tells participants in her classes on culturally responsive teaching to “go slow to go deep.” She also talks about the importance of “assessing current reality” and developing “equity fluency” of school staff as first steps in a slow, deep response. This audit serves as a small part of “assessing current reality;” the limitations section highlights some of the gaps in our assessment. Our recommendations include steps the district could take to both continue to better assess the current reality AND to begin building equity fluency in stakeholders across the district.

The recommendations include research-based observation tools, a deeper dive into the curriculum bias aligned with everyday practices (not just annual reviews), equity related videos, activities, and articles. AVC recommends introspective professional learning models that go beyond workshops and book studies. This learning is often labeled “inside-out work;” an introspective model starts with the “inside.” AVC recommends authentic relationship building across cultures in ways that disrupt tokenization and that go beyond multicultural fairs.

It must be noted, short term equity efforts are meant to be enacted as a prerequisite to long term plans. Listed below are some examples; follow up contact with the auditors is welcomed and encouraged.

Core Competencies	Findings	Resources to Address Findings
<p><b>INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES</b></p> <p>District wide approaches to Equity, differentiated and scaffolded to meet the needs of staff, students, and families.</p> <p>Equity embedded curriculum and classroom environments.</p>	<p>Misconceptions of Cultural Proficiency and Culturally Responsive Teaching were observed in language used by faculty, in discussions of book studies, in the ways our focus was continuously drawn toward inclusion of students with disabilities.</p> <p>Execution of Curriculum Bias Review led to misunderstanding of the purpose of the review (and the purpose of the equity audit), superficial checklists, inadequate coverage, and inaccurate teaching of concepts of curriculum bias. (posters, book covers, animals instead of humans, culture fairs)</p> <p>District SEL focus lacks depth and cultural responsiveness which do not address the needs of all students, faculty and families.</p> <p>Tendency to seek pragmatic, quick-fixes - technical solutions (checklists, district-wide online mandated training, etc) create detours to equity-embedded practice.</p> <p>Review disaggregated discipline data (calls home, detention, time outs, office referrals, etc) to better detect disparities.</p> <p>Review access to “Honors” “AP” classes and college entrance exams based on student group demographics to better detect disparities.</p>	<p>Hammond- <a href="#">Podcast link</a></p> <p>Hammond- <a href="#">Observation Protocol</a></p> <p>ASCD- <a href="#">Contextual SEL</a></p> <p>Gorski- <a href="#">Pragmatic Decisions related to Equity</a></p> <p><a href="#">‘Grit is in Our DNA’: Why Teaching Grit is Inherently Anti-Black</a> (Love, 2019)</p> <p><a href="#">When SEL is Used as Another Form of Policing</a> (2020)</p> <p><a href="#">The Problem with Teaching Grit to Poor Kids? They Already Have it</a> (2016)</p> <p><a href="#">Education Equity and the Trouble with Pragmatic Decision Making</a> (2011): an essay written for the <a href="#">LeadScape</a> blog</p> <p><a href="https://paulgorski.efoliomn.com/Publications">https://paulgorski.efoliomn.com/Publications</a></p> <p><a href="#">Detracking for Excellence and Equity</a></p>
<p><b>CULTURE AND CLIMATE</b></p> <p>District wide approaches to identity affirming environments with healthy levels of competition, belonging and partnerships.</p>	<p>Language used to explain disproportionate access to higher level classes (honors, AP) included assumptions and stereotypes about which students “belong” in these classes and which students should be provided with “lower level” curriculum (like vocational pathways) instead of comprehensive high school curriculum.</p> <p>Competitive culture that promotes individual excellence (individualism) at the expense of a community centered district.</p> <p>Minoritized staff, families, and students feeling ostracized, tokenized, judged, or mistreated in relation to their minoritized identities..</p>	<p>YouTube- <a href="#">Becoming aware of stereotypes and seeking multiple narratives</a></p> <p>YouTube- <a href="#">Historical background to promote fact checking and affirm multiple perspectives</a></p> <p><a href="#">Collectivism Handout</a></p> <p><a href="#">Individualism vs. Collectivism</a> table (Hofstede)</p> <p>Zaretta Hammond’s Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain - Chapters 1 &amp; 2</p> <p><a href="#">Detracking for Excellence and Equity</a></p>



<p>STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING</p> <p>District wide approaches to Equity across sites through formal and informal teaching and learning opportunities.</p> <p>Uplifting stakeholders at all levels to be leaders who create a more successful environment for staff, students, and families.</p> <p>Recognize possible barriers experienced by minoritized staff, students, and families and provide teaching and learning opportunities to support them and others.</p>	<p>There were limited mechanisms to engage administrative assistants, paraeducators, families (especially families needing interpreter services) in the formal decision-making and improvement planning. (This also led to some of the limitations noted above in access to diverse stakeholders for the purpose of the audit).</p> <p>The faculty (and particularly the administration) does not reflect the racial, cultural and religious diversity of the student body or their families.</p> <p>Minoritized individuals are at times tapped to lead equity/inclusion/diversity work in ways that tokenize, minimize, and unduly burden their experience in the district.</p>	<p>Cohort models of 'Pathways' that use <a href="#">Observation Protocol</a> and other accountability measurements.</p> <p><a href="#">Equity Detours</a></p> <p><a href="#">Teachers or Color: High Demand and Short Supply</a></p>
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<p><b>FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Expand data on Community needs and resources from an asset based lens.</p> <p>District wide approaches to Equity across sites with progressive and innovative partnerships to meet the needs of staff, students, and families.</p>	<p>Stakeholders reported that PTOs and School Councils lacked diversity (relative to diversity of student body). In addition, discrepant fund raising exacerbated inequitable resources in elementary schools.</p> <p>Clubs, sports, music/performance arts activities require additional fees and/or individual transportation - which limits access to many students.</p> <p>Family engagement practices do not easily include families who require translation or interpreter services, which continues to perpetuate stereotypes that these families are “less involved” or “less engaged” or “less able” to partner with the school in the success of their students.</p> <p>There are rich community-based cultural institutions that can be leveraged to support authentic cultural awareness, but these are not being fully harnessed.</p> <p>Stakeholders reported that family involvement activities lack systemic, culturally relevant practices of engagement and partnership.</p>	<p>Karen Mapp- <a href="#">Family and Community Engagement Framework</a></p> <p><a href="#">Alliance for Excellent Education</a></p>
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## **Conclusion:**

AVC would like to thank the entire SPS community for engaging in the equity audit and especially for the work many are committed to doing to see this process through for the betterment of all. The SPS steering committee members deserve a huge thank you! They partnered with AVC to adopt the essential questions, show up in full dedication and support for the process.

## **Revisiting the Essential Questions:**

1. How do SPS students and staff experience being learners in the district?
2. What root causes might explain the data for minoritized groups (amongst students, families and staff) within the district?
3. What do our minoritized groups need to experience success, safety, and a sense of belonging?

At AVC, we strive for each part of the human-centered design process to be a learning process for all those involved. To this end, we support teams in designing questions that can be asked over time and that will teach those being asked and those listening for answers. These questions opened dialogue and surfaced important themes as noted in the findings and recommendations sections. These questions are not “answered” by this audit in a linear and finite way – as often hoped for after inequities are lifted up. Instead each question is addressed by the brilliance gathered from SPS stakeholders and represent an ongoing, sustained curiosity – inquiry - needed by SPS in order to “do more” and “do better.” These questions could be a resource for continued inquiry as the district considers the short-term recommendations articulated in this report.



## **VI. Appendix**

### **DESE DART - District at a Glance Report**

**Curriculum Bias Checklist**

**Mandated Training Slides**

**Letter to School Committee**

**Superintendent Statement**

**School Council/PTO by School**



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**ITEM NO: IV. Time Scheduled Appointments: MEETING DATE: 6/24/20**  
**D. Update Regarding the School District's Response to the COVID-19 School  
Closure: Report**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Dr. Sawyer and other district administrators will provide an update on how the school district's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic school closure has evolved during the past week.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the School Committee hear the report and take such action as it deems in the best interest of the school system.

**STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools  
Other district administrators as needed



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **V. Curriculum**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

STAFF & STUDENTS AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **VI. Policy**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS/STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **VII. Finance & Operations**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

**A. Fiscal Year 2020 Budget: Report & Vote on Fund Transfers**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Mr. Collins will provide a final update on the FY 2020 Budget Status. The report is enclosed. Mr. Collins projects that the district will end the year having fully expended the FY20 appropriation with variances noted in each category that ultimately net out to a \$0 balance. Mr. Collins recommends that the Committee vote to authorize budget transfers between accounts to bring each account to \$0.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the Committee vote to authorize the administration to make budget transfers from the original budget plan as necessary to eliminate deficits and surpluses, with the intent of fully expending the total FY20 appropriation by June 30, 2020 and balancing all accounts.

**STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Patrick C. Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations



## Shrewsbury Public Schools

Patrick C. Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations

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24 June 2020

To: School Committee

Subj: FY2020 BUDGET STATUS UPDATE

Attached you will find a FY20 Budget Status Update. It is a recap of our \$66,302,041 district appropriated budget as approved by Town Meeting. You will recall that this plan provided for a modest 3.37% increase over FY19.

For context it is important to note that reported expenditures and encumbrances are as of 06/19/2020 which is 97% of the way through our fiscal year and 100% of the school year completed.

Due to the onset of Covid-19 related school closure, the FY20 budget will end with a larger positive variance than projected in early March [pre Covid closure]. These funds will be needed to fund additional required costs in FY21 due to a projected decrease in Special Education Circuit Breaker funding and a higher than projected grade 9 enrollment at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School.

On a percentage basis, we will be slightly under budget in most salary and wage categories due to vacancies and personnel changes. However, we will end the year significantly under budget for daily substitutes, obviously due to Covid closure. We will also end the year significantly over budget [as expected] in Category A6-Other Wages due to the pay continuity decision for Extended School Care staff through May 1, 2020 that exhausted the revolving fund for Extended School Care and required the use of approximately \$195,000 in appropriated funds. Additionally, expenditures were over budget in Summer Special Education wages [Category A6] due to greater than anticipated programmatic needs of that student population and our requirement to provide services for them in the Summer 2019.

We will end the year slightly over budget in Special Education Transportation [Category B2] due to the cost of additional students receiving out-of-district placements during the school year, as well as the unexpected addition of health-related specialized transportation for an out-of-district student.

Fortunately, we will close FY20 with a positive variance in Special Education Tuitions [Category C1] despite this area of expense being volatile and subject to change as the year progresses. In addition to the \$1.3M budgeted in the town-appropriated operating budget, we budgeted for \$4.9M of expense coming from the Circuit Breaker fund. Thus the \$332K represents a 5% positive variance of actual expense to overall \$6.2M out-of-district tuition budget. This is due in part to some anticipated out-of-district placements not occurring during the last third of the year after the shutdown occurred.

With respect to Vocational and Recovery High School Tuitions [Category C2], we had a net increase of four more students enrolled at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School than budgeted. Additionally, there was a mid-year enrollment at Recovery High School. On a net basis, we will be over budget in this category by 3.7%.

Given our estimated FY21 budget gap back in late February, we enacted an early deadline of March 16<sup>th</sup> for ordering FY20 discretionary supplies and materials along with a request for schools and academic departments to turn back 10% of their budgets, if possible. This process along with Covid-19 closure resulted in positive variances in all supply-related expense categories.

It is projected that we will end the fiscal year with an overall positive variance of 2.5%, which equates to approximately \$1.6M. In developing the FY21 annual budget, we used the original surplus estimate of \$600,000 [projected in November 2019] to lower our special education out-of-district tuition budget. In February, we projected an additional \$300K positive variance and we have also already factored that into our FY21 budget reduction plan.

By carrying forward through the Circuit Breaker account, we will be able to utilize the additional positive variance of \$725K to further close our existing budget gap by covering necessary costs in FY21. These known additional costs that emerged after the initial FY21 budget was filed include: a) greater than expected enrollment of ninth graders at Assabet Valley Technical High School (\$153,387), and b) increased net costs in out-of-district special education due to a combination of the projected loss of revenue for Circuit Breaker Reimbursement from the state (\$465K) and partially covering at least one known and previously unanticipated out-of-district special education placement (remaining \$107,238).

Therefore, the additional (and primarily Covid-19-related) positive variance of \$725K will unfortunately not be directly available to save any jobs our current budget plan will cut for the 2020-2021 school year, although it will serve to assist in closing our overall remaining FY21 budget gap, which was previously estimated to be in the range of \$4.0M to \$4.6M and now can be lowered to \$3.3M to \$3.9M. This is a positive development, but it is important to remember that this updated budget gap is *in addition to* the \$1.95 million in recommended cuts already factored into the FY21 budget, and therefore still represents a daunting magnitude regarding the levels of cuts that will be required to close that gap, absent changes in projected revenues or mitigation of personnel costs.

SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
FY20 BUDGET STATUS REPORT  
as of 19 JUNE 2020

School Committee Recap Sheet	Description	FY20 Budget	YTD Actual	Encumbrance	Remaining Balance	Year End Projection	Dollar Variance	Percent Variance	Notes
A1	Administrative Central Office, Principals & Unit B	\$ 3,272,594	\$ 3,114,894	\$ 135,000	\$ 22,700	\$ 3,249,894	\$ 22,700	0.7%	Running very close to budget
A2	Unit A (Teachers & Nurses)	\$ 41,584,811	\$ 33,226,506	\$ 7,832,691	\$ 525,614	\$ 41,064,197	\$ 520,614	1.3%	Positive variance due to personnel changes
A3	Aides/ABA/Paraprofessionals	\$ 7,330,858	\$ 6,421,058	\$ 364,241	\$ 545,559	\$ 6,787,299	\$ 543,559	7.4%	Positive variance due to vacancies & staff turnover
A4	Secretaries, Technology & Other Non-Represented	\$ 2,371,080	\$ 2,051,274	\$ 281,229	\$ 38,577	\$ 2,346,702	\$ 24,378	1.0%	Backfilled courier position w/ half time position
A5	Substitutes - Daily, Long Term & Sub Nurses	\$ 900,900	\$ 576,926	\$ -	\$ 323,974	\$ 596,555	\$ 304,345	33.8%	Surplus due to Covid closure
A6	Other Wages (See Note 1)	\$ 784,500	\$ 727,714	\$ -	\$ 56,786	\$ 935,814	\$ (151,314)	-19.3%	Incl. add'l costs for Extended Day staff pay continuity
A7	Employee Benefits	\$ 351,750	\$ 164,965	\$ -	\$ 186,785	\$ 386,751	\$ (35,001)	-10.0%	More retiree sick leave sell back than budgeted
B1	Regular Education & Voke Transportation	\$ 2,528,985	\$ 2,503,565	\$ 10,506	\$ 14,914	\$ 2,514,071	\$ 14,914	0.6%	Some rate savings but offset by refunds
B2	Special Education Transportation	\$ 706,300	\$ 728,667	\$ 5,640	\$ (28,007)	\$ 734,307	\$ (28,007)	-4.0%	Add'l unanticipated out of district transport costs
C1	Special Education Tuitions (See Note 2)	\$ 1,356,803	\$ 1,024,342	\$ -	\$ 332,461	\$ 1,024,342	\$ 332,461	24.5%	Assumes planned use of \$4.9M Circuit Breaker funding
C2	Vocational & Recovery H.S. Out of District Tuitions	\$ 1,648,786	\$ 1,702,456	\$ 7,992	\$ (61,662)	\$ 1,710,448	\$ (61,662)	-3.7%	4 more students enrolled at Assabet than budgeted
D1	Administrative Contracted Services	\$ 611,833	\$ 617,286	\$ 46,601	\$ (52,054)	\$ 663,887	\$ (52,054)	-8.5%	Variety of small overages in multiple accounts
D2	Educational Contracted Services	\$ 679,910	\$ 557,678	\$ 136,088	\$ (13,856)	\$ 693,766	\$ (13,856)	-2.0%	Overages in SPED services and translation services
D3	Textbooks/Curriculum Materials	\$ 201,104	\$ 188,674	\$ 2,824	\$ 9,606	\$ 191,498	\$ 9,606	4.8%	Some surplus due to early budget freeze and Covid closure
D4	Professional Development	\$ 255,082	\$ 214,989	\$ 2,056	\$ 38,037	\$ 217,045	\$ 38,037	14.9%	Some surplus due to early budget freeze and Covid closure
D5	Educational Supplies & Materials	\$ 273,689	\$ 163,254	\$ 33,747	\$ 76,688	\$ 197,001	\$ 76,688	28.0%	Some surplus due to early budget freeze and Covid closure
D6	Other Miscellaneous (i.e. Off. Supp., Ref. Mat.)	\$ 786,716	\$ 650,164	\$ 63,522	\$ 73,030	\$ 713,686	\$ 73,030	9.3%	Some surplus due to early budget freeze and Covid closure
D7	Equipment	\$ 571,340	\$ 568,533	\$ -	\$ 2,807	\$ 568,533	\$ 2,807	0.5%	Some surplus due to early budget freeze and Covid closure
D8	Utilities - Telephone Exp.	\$ 85,000	\$ 73,259	\$ 4,500	\$ 7,241	\$ 77,759	\$ 7,241	8.5%	Some surplus due to early budget freeze and Covid closure
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>66,302,041</b>	<b>55,276,204</b>	<b>8,926,637</b>	<b>2,099,200</b>	<b>64,673,555</b>	<b>1,628,486</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	
	<b>Percentages</b>		<b>83.4%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>97.5%</b>			

Note 1 Other Wages includes clubs/activities stipends, custodian & police details, extra duty & mentoring stipends, Summer Special Education salaries, and crossing guards.

Note 2 SPED Tuition is net \$4.9M use of Special Education Circuit Breaker Reimbursement funding.

March 4, 2020 Status Update	\$ (902,861)	This amount already applied to offset FY21 Budget Plan
	\$ 725,625	Projected Additional Funds Available To Offset FY21 Gap
	\$ (465,000)	Projected Decrease in FY21 Circuit Breaker Funding
	\$ (153,387)	Projected Increase in Assabet Valley Vocational/Technical HS Tuition
	\$ (107,238)	Use Remainder for Additional Costs for Special Education Tuitions
	\$ -	<b>Net Available To Save Jobs for 2020-2021</b>

May 2020: Estimated FY21 Budget Gap	\$4.0M-\$4.6M
Add'l Funds from FY20 Positive Results	\$ (725,625)
<b>Updated FY21 Estimated Gap</b>	<b>\$3.3M-\$3.9M</b>



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **VII. Finance & Operations**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

**B. Fiscal Year 2021 Recommended Budget Reductions: Vote**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

At the June 17 meeting, Mr. Collins recapped the prior budget reduction plan (which has not yet been voted on by the Committee), updated it with subsequent known changes, and recommended that the Committee vote to approve these “Phase 1” changes at its June 24 meeting to bring a measure of certainty to the budget process. A memo from the Superintendent detailing the recommended reductions is enclosed.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the Committee vote to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Recommended “Phase 1” Budget Reductions as illustrated in the Superintendent’s memorandum.

**STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Patrick C. Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations



## SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545

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Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Margaret M. Belsito  
Assistant Superintendent  
Student Services

Amy B. Clouter  
Assistant Superintendent  
Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

Patrick C. Collins  
Assistant Superintendent  
Finance & Operations

Jane O. Lizotte, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent  
Community Partnerships & Well-Being

Barbara A. Malone  
Executive Director  
Human Resources

June 23, 2020

To: School Committee

From: Joe Sawyer

Re: Recommendation to authorize "Phase I" budget reductions for Fiscal Year 2021

Dear School Committee:

At your June 17 meeting, you heard a report outlining \$1.95 million in recommended cost reductions for Fiscal Year 2021. These represented cuts that were recommended in early March as well as newer developments, such as the determination to freeze the compensation of all non-union administrators and support staff at current year levels.

Because the Annual Town Meeting has been delayed until later this summer due to the Coronavirus pandemic, a final budget has not yet been established for the School Department's appropriation. In order to bring more certainty to our planning for next year, I am recommending that you vote to authorize the "Phase I" reductions of \$1.95 million that were presented to you in order to bring certainty to this element of next year's budget so that we can continue planning for next year with more confidence.

Unfortunately, due to the projected loss of state and local revenue and additional costs related to COVID-19, a projected budget gap of approximately \$3.3 to \$3.9 million remains to be closed for the FY21 Budget, even *after* this \$1.95 million is accounted for.

These “Phase I” cost reductions will compromise our schools’ ability to provide the expected level of education to our town’s young people by reducing educational programming, cutting teaching and support personnel, decreasing investments in curriculum materials and staff professional development, and reducing operational capacity.

As a reminder, when creating this plan, the school district’s administrative leadership team considered various cost reduction measures, with the following guidelines in mind:

- 1) Focus on efficiencies in operations first
- 2) Maintain class sizes within School Committee guidelines wherever possible
- 3) Avoid reductions that would compromise the district’s strategic priorities and goals
- 4) Minimize layoffs of staff (such as by using attrition where possible)

The recommended Phase I reductions are:

<b>Recommended cost reduction</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Additional information/potential impact</b>
<b>Operations</b>		
Operational efficiencies	\$16,000	Revised copier lease, vendor change for custodial supplies, etc. No negative impact.
Changes in personnel projections for next school year	\$153,145	Replace known maternity leave with long-term substitute; reduce allowance for salary rate for teacher hires to replace vacancies, which means less flexibility in hiring educators with more experience.
Site-based discretionary funding reduced by 3.2%	\$10,000	Less discretionary funding for principals and department directors to utilize for supplies, materials, staff conferences, etc.
Reduce one bus from transportation program	\$72,000	Examine routing for further efficiencies to reduce the need for one bus. May require longer travel times for students on certain routes.
Reduce funding for technology hardware &	\$98,000	Defer purchases of some networking equipment and other infrastructure items; end subscription

software		to ThoughtExchange community survey service.
Reduce funding for textbooks & curriculum materials	\$25,000	Some purchases will be deferred instead of acquiring updated books and materials.
Reduce funding for staff professional development	\$100,000	Reduces ability to provide trainers, attend conferences, or provide substitute coverage to free up educators for training; compromises ability to implement new programming; will seek grants and other alternative funding to offset reduction where possible.
<b>Operations reductions subtotal</b>	<b>\$474,145</b>	
<b>Program &amp; Personnel</b>		
Reduce funding available for compensation increases for non-represented administrators (Central Office administrators & principals) and non-represented support staff	\$134,954	All compensation frozen at the current year's level for all non-union administrators and support staff.
Reduce overtime for Central Office & Information Technology support staff	\$15,000	Some overtime necessary to maintain for school year start up phase; otherwise, timelines for certain reports and services will need to be expanded.
Eliminate position for assistive technology teacher (1.0 FTE)	\$20,000	Teacher resigned prior to start of current year, and district has successfully used a contracted services model to address needs; represents net savings for removing teaching position for FY21 and using contracted services instead.
Reduce summer curriculum per diem work at elementary level	\$11,700	Less availability of curriculum coordinators/instructional coaches to support planning for upcoming school year.
Eliminate remaining elementary level door monitors (1.0 FTE)	\$19,000	Part-time door monitors at Coolidge and Spring Street to be eliminated. Reliance internal coverage for secretaries to monitor doors during school day.
Reduce Transportation,	\$30,000	Change work year from year-round to school

Safety, & Security Coordinator position by 50% (0.5 FTE)		year schedule, mostly half days except for opening phase of school year; less administrative capacity to respond to needs in these areas, some responsibility shifted to district administrators or other support staff.
Reduce literacy tutor program in grades K-6 by 40% (4.0 FTE)	\$90,000	Reduce positions and/or hours of part-time literacy tutors to save 40% of cost of these supports; will reduce ability to support students who are reading below benchmarks; program will be revamped to serve students with greatest identified needs, regardless of school site, and shift support over the course of the year as needs change. Reductions may be a combination of attrition, reduced hours, and eliminating part time positions.
Reduce instructional aide support at elementary level by 60 hours (20 hours at Floral Street School, 10 hours each at Beal, Coolidge, Paton, & Spring Street Schools (2.0 FTE)	\$50,000	These same 60 hours were added back to the program in FY16. Will result in less adult academic support for students in grades K-4 and less capacity for day-to-day operational support in those schools. Reductions may be a combination of attrition, reduced hours, and eliminating part time positions.
Eliminate academic tutor position at Oak Middle School (1.0 FTE)	\$25,000	Reduces academic support for students in grades 7 & 8. Another position for staff member will be available through attrition elsewhere.
Do not fill open position due to leave of absence for Grade 3 teacher at Floral Street School (1.0 FTE)	\$61,981	Class size increases but remains within School Committee guidelines (projected average of 23.3 students per class); does not affect a specific staff member due to leave of absence
Do not fill open positions due to retirement of math teacher, physics teacher, and Spanish teacher at SHS (3.0 FTE)	\$194,250	Five fewer class sections, resulting in slightly higher class sizes and/or fewer course offerings (depending on ongoing course selection process). Does not affect specific staff members due to attrition. Note: Savings between veteran educator salary and replacement salary was already reflected in initial budget projection, further reduction

		eliminates replacement cost.
Do not fill open position due to resignation of drama teacher at Oak Middle School (1.0 FTE)	\$91,379	Drama will not be part of allied arts programming at Oak next year; position currently filled by long-term substitute.
Reduce size of preschool program by closing Wesleyan Terrace site & reduce aide allotment per classroom (7.3 FTE)	\$162,735	Reduce number of classrooms for Parker Road Preschool from 8 to 7, which reduces 1.0 FTE teacher and 2.0 FTE aides (requires reconfiguration of 1 space at Parker Road currently used for occupational & physical therapy); reduction of aide/classroom ratio from 1.5 FTE to 1.0 FTE per class, resulting in an additional 4.3 FTE reduction of aide positions. Given level of turnover/attrition in paraprofessional positions, hope is that no aide layoffs will be necessary. Transfer opportunity available for teacher affected.
Eliminate one Grade 5 two-teacher team at Sherwood Middle School (2.0 FTE)	\$115,159	Projection will increase class size to average of 25.5 students (1.5 above guidelines), similar to Grade 6 next year. Transfer opportunities available to teachers affected subject to licensure.
Eliminate advanced math coach positions at Sherwood Middle School & Oak Middle School (2.0 FTE)	\$152,762	Reduces opportunities for students with advanced math performance and for support for classroom math teachers to provide enrichment. Transfer opportunities available to teachers affected subject to licensure.
Eliminate Grade 6 foreign language program at Sherwood Middle School (2.8 FTE)	\$184,658	Delays students' study of Spanish, French, & Mandarin by one year. Requires revamping of schedule at Sherwood that affects educator collaboration periods. Eliminates 2.5 FTE teaching positions and reduces a 1.0 FTE position to 0.7 FTE. Transfer opportunities currently not available.
Leave Paton principal position	\$119,756	Assistant Superintendent for Community

vacant for the 2020-2021 school year (1.0 FTE)		Partnerships & Well-Being will serve as acting principal at Paton for the 2020-2021 school year
<b>Program &amp; Personnel reductions subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,478,334</b>	
<b>Total FTE eliminated from budget plan</b>	<b>29.6 FTE</b>	
<b>Total Recommended Cost Reductions</b>	<b>\$1,952,479</b>	

I look forward to answering any questions you have regarding this recommendation at your meeting this evening.



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **VIII. Old Business**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **IX. New Business**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

**A. Superintendent's Contract Extension: Vote**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

A vote of the School Committee is required to authorize the Chair to approve an updated employment agreement with the Superintendent of Schools. The updated contract will be for five years, from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2025, with all other terms remaining unchanged, including compensation.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the Committee vote to authorize the Chair to execute an updated employment agreement between the School Committee and Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer as Superintendent of Schools for a period commencing July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025, with all other terms remaining unchanged.

**STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chair, School Committee  
Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **X. Approval of Minutes**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on June 17, 2020 are enclosed.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the Committee accept the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on June 17, 2020.

**STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Ms. Sandra Fryc, Chairperson

Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary

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

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday, June 17, 2020**

Present via virtual participation: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Chairperson; Mr. Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson; Dr. B. Dale Magee, Secretary; Ms. Lynsey Heffernan; Mr. Jason Palitsch; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Ms. Amy B. Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Ms. Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; and Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools.

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, this meeting was not open to physical participation by the public, but was broadcast live on SELCO Channels 29 & 329 and streamed live on the Shrewsbury Media Connection website. A complete audio/video recording of this meeting is available on the Shrewsbury Public Schools website.

The meeting was convened by Dr. Sawyer at 7:01 pm in advance of the election of officers. Dr. Sawyer congratulated Ms. Fryc and Mr. Palitsch on their reelection to the Committee.

**I. Election of Officers**

Dr. Sawyer requested and accepted nominations for the Chairperson of the School Committee. Mr. Palitsch nominated Ms. Fryc for Chairperson, and Dr. Magee seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Fryc Chairperson of the Committee. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes. As the elected Chairperson of the School Committee, Ms. Fryc requested nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson; Dr. Magee nominated Mr. Wensky and Ms. Heffernan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Wensky Vice Chairperson. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes. Ms. Fryc requested nominations for the position of Secretary; Ms. Heffernan nominated Dr. Magee and Mr. Wensky seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Dr. Magee Secretary. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

**II. Public Participation**

Ms. Bridgette Hylton read a letter, on behalf of 150 Shrewsbury residents, to the School Committee with an anti-racism action request for the district.

Mr. Palitsch advised he was in support of the recommendations and spirit of the letter and asked that the Superintendent take it under advisement. He also encouraged other community members to reach out to the School Committee to share their views.

### **III. Chairperson's Report & Members' Reports**

Dr. Magee provided his perspective on the cuts that were felt to be necessary prior to the Covid 19 shutdown as well as the added challenges to running the school system under the pandemic guidelines and the reality of higher costs going into the FY21 year. He explained that while the School Committee can ask for the money to run the system, the Selectmen and the Town Meeting members approve the amount allocated. Given the high likelihood of the approved budget not being able to support currently contracted raises for unionized staff, it would fall to the unions to decide if the cuts would be shared among all members or if staff cuts would need to occur to bring the budget into balance. He encouraged the public to share their views on the great challenges presented by the FY21 budget with the Committee and all interested parties, including the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting members, and to express their thoughts on various mechanisms - including operational overrides - to address these challenges. Mr. Wensky and Ms. Heffernan concurred with Dr. Magee on the need for the public to be included on a decision for an override should a budget shortfall occur.

### **IV. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Sawyer thanked students, families, and staff for their hard work on remote learning over the past three months, provided an update on how the issue of race and our schools was addressed during the past week, and previewed upcoming steps for Shrewsbury Public Schools around the issue of racism. He introduced Ms. Malone, who recognized the retirement of Ms. Sue Andrews, Social Studies/World Geography Teacher from Oak Middle School, who served 13 years as an educator in Shrewsbury and 34 years in education in all. Ms. Andrews made the decision to retire after other retirees were recognized by the Committee last week.

### **V. Time Scheduled Appointments:**

#### **A. Update Regarding the School District's Response to the COVID-19 School Closure: Report**

Dr. Sawyer began the report with a summary of key messages, and thanked recent contributors to the ongoing Colonial Fund Appeal; Director Noelle Freeman provided an update from Department of Nursing that noted the potential for additional needs around the pandemic, including some level of additional nurse staffing to meet demands when schools reopen; and Ms. Clouter presented information on summer learning relative to available resources, the importance of structuring regular practice for students, and the ST Math & Freckle software platforms. In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Clouter provided additional information on push notifications from remote learning software platforms, high school summer work expectations, and assessing learning loss/regression during school closure and summer; and Ms. Freeman noted that updated guidelines and policies are anticipated around testing and tracking the COVID-19 virus.

### **VI. Curriculum**

#### **A. Educational Programming to Be Supported by Student Opportunity Act Funds: Vote**

Dr. Sawyer noted information had been provided to the Committee at the previous meeting on new Student Opportunity Act (SOA) state legislation and the Chapter 70 program, and on

Shrewsbury's plan for the use of SOA funds. Ms. Clouter added that approval was being sought to use the funds to support inclusive practices through co-teaching, and to expand access to full-day kindergarten.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Ms. Heffernan, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the district's plan as presented for expending any increases of Chapter 70 funding received from the state in order to meet the requirements of the Student Opportunity Act. Roll call votes were as follows: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

## **VII. Policy**

### **A. School Department's Release of Use of the Beal Early Childhood Center Building & Land Contingent Upon New School Opening: Vote**

Ms. Fryc noted that the Committee held a discussion relative to this agenda item at their meeting on June 10, 2020 and reiterated the required steps in the process that allows the town to sell the current Beal Early Childhood Center property for reuse. Dr. Sawyer recommended that the Committee vote to approve the motion proposed.

Ms. Fryc requested a motion that the School Committee:

Vote to declare the property located at 1-7 Maple Avenue, known as the Beal School, originally acquired by the Town of Shrewsbury for school purposes by deed of William E. Rice, dated April 5, 1920 and recorded at the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Book 2208, Page 524, and by an Order of Taking dated March 27, 1922 and recorded at said Registry of Deeds in Book 2264, Page 135, is no longer necessary for school purposes provided, however, that this declaration shall be effective on the date the new Beal School, currently under construction on Lake Street, is available for occupancy for school purposes and to instruct the Secretary to provide notice of this declaration to the Board of Selectmen.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, on a roll call vote: Ms. Heffernan, yes; Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes, the motion carried unanimously.

## **VIII. Finance & Operations**

### **A. Fiscal Year 2021 Budget: Update on Recommended Reductions**

Dr. Sawyer described a traditional budget timeline and noted the disruption to the current timeline resulting from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. He advised that significant new and unexpected costs associated with the pandemic had an impact on the budget reduction plan previously presented to the Committee, and recommended the Committee vote the following week on an updated set of recommended reductions. Mr. Collins presented an overview of the anticipated new budget process timeline; recapped the prior budget reduction plan (which had not been voted on by the Committee) and updated it with subsequent known changes; illustrated the fiscal impact to the prior plan from operations and personnel/program reductions; recommended that the Committee vote to approve these "Phase 1" changes to bring a measure of

certainty to the process; and noted the estimated budget gap that would remain after accounting for the proposed Phase 1 reductions.

Committee members asked clarifying questions about the impact of across the board wage freezes and the potential for changes to transportation needs; expressed concerns around the erosion, and possible loss, of existing programs, and noted that program losses could potentially lead to more students transferring to charter schools.

### **B. Fiscal Year 2021 Budget: Public Hearing**

Ms. Fryc opened the Public Hearing at 8:23 pm.

Participants addressed a number of topics, including homeschooling and budget; how parents can help mitigate the budget deficit; equity between schools for resources; concerns about cuts and how they are applied; components comprising the deficit; mechanisms for addressing the deficit; and the importance of visual and performing arts, and physical education programs at SPS.

Participants included:

Aaron and Neary Detrick - 29 Browning Road

Michelle Conlin - 64 Topsfield Circle

Shari Fox (parent and SPS Teacher) - 9 Childs Street

Jane and Daniel Moynihan - 35 Wachusett Avenue (Ms. Heffernan read a letter from the Moynihans into the record)

Lisa Bruschi - 90 South Street

Ms. Fryc closed the hearing at 8:49 pm. Committee members noted that while the pandemic has introduced unknown factors and ushered in a time of uncertainty, there is still an ongoing, local funding problem that must be addressed for the long term by the community.

### **IX. Old Business**

None.

### **X. New Business**

#### **A. Evaluation of the Superintendent: Vote**

Ms. Fryc summarized a composite evaluation that consolidated feedback from individual Committee members on Dr. Sawyer's performance from May 2019 through the present. She later noted that members had access to feedback from surveys sent to SPS staff and the parent community regarding Dr. Sawyer's performance as Superintendent to utilize for the evaluation.

Ms. Fryc noted the three goals, and Dr. Sawyer's ratings on those goals, included in the evaluation:

Student Learning Goal - Met

Professional Practice Goal - Significant Progress

Progress toward District Goals - Significant Progress

Ms. Fryc cited the four standards included in the evaluation and provided Dr. Sawyer's ratings on those standards:

Instructional Leadership - Proficient (overall)

Management & Operations - Exemplary (overall)

Family & Community Engagement - Exemplary (overall)

Professional Culture - Exemplary (overall)

Ms Fryc advised that Dr. Sawyer's Overall Summative Performance Rating was Exemplary.

Committee members also offered individual remarks in turn, and expressed appreciation for Dr. Sawyer's warm, competent, and talented leadership at all times, and especially now, while navigating the simultaneous challenges of a local budget crisis, a global pandemic, and a national crisis on racism. Dr. Sawyer thanked parents, staff, and the Committee for feedback on his performance, and expressed appreciation to SPS staff, parents, students, the Committee, the community, and his family for their support.

On a motion by Dr. Magee, seconded by Mr. Palitsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the formal evaluation document created by Ms. Fryc. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

#### **XI. Approval of Minutes**

Without objections from the Committee, the minutes from the School Committee Meeting held on June 10, 2020 were accepted as distributed.

#### **XII. Executive Session**

Ms. Fryc requested a motion that the School Committee enter into executive session:

A) for the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) "[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements" ("Purpose 7"), Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes;

B) for the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) "to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect of the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares" ("Purpose 3") - the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A; Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B; the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association; and/or the Shrewsbury Cafeteria Workers; and

C) for the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(2) "to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel" ("Purpose 2") - Superintendent of Schools, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening.

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Dr. Magee, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session at 9:26 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Dr. Magee, yes; Mr. Wensky, yes; Ms. Heffernan, yes; Mr. Palitsch, yes; and Ms. Fryc, yes.

### **XIII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, seconded by Mr. Wensky, the committee unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 10:32 pm. Roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Palitsch: yes; Mr. Wensky: yes; Ms. Heffernan: yes; Dr. Magee: yes; and Ms. Fryc: yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth McCollum, Clerk

#### Documents referenced:

1. Letter to School Committee - Anti-Racism Action Request
2. Update on COVID-19 Response Report Slides 06-17-20
3. Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Update Memo
4. FY21 Budget Recommended Reductions Update Slide Presentation
5. Letter to School Committee - Budget/Reductions
6. Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools
7. Parent/Community Survey Feedback for the Superintendent
8. Staff Survey Feedback for the Superintendent
9. Set(s) of minutes as referenced above



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **XI. Executive Session**

MEETING DATE: **6/24/20**

- A. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”), Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes.**
- B. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect of the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares” (“Purpose 3”) - the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A; Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B; the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association; and/or the Shrewsbury Cafeteria Workers.**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Executive session is warranted for these purposes.

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:**

That the School Committee enter into executive session:

- A) for the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”), Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes; and
- B) for the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect of the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares” (“Purpose 3”) - the Shrewsbury Education Association Unit A; Shrewsbury Education Association Unit B; the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association; and/or the Shrewsbury Cafeteria Workers, where deliberation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body; and return to Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning for the evening.

**STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PRESENTATION:**

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Barbara A. Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources



**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ITEM NO: **XII. Adjournment**