

Superintendent's Corner

Rising to an unprecedented challenge

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
SUPERINTENDENT

This Superintendent's Corner would have been on a much different topic, but the COVID-19 pandemic became an emergency just prior to the time this edition of the School Journal would have gone to print. So, instead, I will share with the larger community some of what I have been communicating with our families and staff now that all of our schools are closed by order of Governor Baker until at least April 7, and all town buildings are closed to the public with business being conducted via phone and electronic communication. Please see our website at schools.shrewsburyma.gov for up-to-date information on our school district's response to the pandemic.

I hope all of you reading this continue to be well. When I write this, there are still no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Shrewsbury, but with expanded testing beginning to happen I assume it is a matter of time until we have the first confirmed case within our community. I ask that you help protect our older family and friends, those with health conditions, first responders, and medical professionals by practicing social distancing.

Closing schools is a major interruption to our educational program that creates difficulties for our students, who rely on our schools not only for education but also for

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“ Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family. - Kofi Annan ”



Elementary students (left to right) Nina and Aishah, and Grade 4 teachers Kelly Finneran, Anna Ross, Christine Zambarnardi, Wendy Bell (Principal), and Julie Murphy engage with the new science curriculum. See "A Positive Reaction..." on page 6.

Budget Planning: a rite of spring and a familiar scenario

MS. SANDRA FRYC
SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR

As winter turns to spring the rite of developing the annual School Department budget becomes the main focus of the School Committee's work. The budget develops over several months and the recommendations made take into consideration the district's mission, values, and strategic goals and priorities. Unfortunately, we are facing an all too familiar scenario of structural funding issues that continue to overshadow the School Department budget process.

On January 22, 2020, Dr. Sawyer provided the school committee with his initial budget recommendation. In order to maintain the district's status quo an increase of \$4,277,873 or a 6.45% increase over the Fiscal Year 2020 school budget will be required. This means the amount of money the district will have to invest in the advancement of its five-year strategic priorities will be zero. Town Manager Kevin Mizikar's initial FY21 budget recommendation is an increase of \$1,366,281 or 2.06% over the FY20 school budget resulting in a budget gap of \$2.9 million. Please note that as of the writing of this article we are very early in the budget process and there may be some improvement in the town's overall budget situation as we get closer to the annual Town Meeting in May. However, the School Committee and School Administration do not believe the budget gap can be resolved without some level of

cost mitigation across the district.

Funding for schools is a combination of state aid, local contributions from taxes, fee revenue and grants. State aid and Federal grants have basically been flat for a decade. The level of funding from the State of Massachusetts is below the rate of inflation. Growth in local property tax revenue combined with relatively flat increases in other revenue areas means that all inflationary pressure shifts to the town appropriated budget and the core of our school budget funding comes from town dollars. Over time the public school budget cuts have translated into higher costs for families. Shrewsbury school fee revenues have nearly doubled in the past ten years, which means this source of revenue has become significant to the annual School Department budget. Proactively the School Department has sought additional funding by seeking alternative revenue sources including competitive grants, partnerships, sponsorships, and philanthropic gifts to the district. As we begin the FY2021 budget planning, the reality is that our town continues to struggle to fund a level service school budget due to the fiscal constraints. The amount of revenue available to our local government is not sufficient to meet the short-term needs of the schools or town departments.

A frequently asked question is, "Didn't the successful Proposition 2 ½ Override in 2014 solve the school funding problem?". In the three years prior to 2014, in order to reach a balanced school budget, the district had to reduce staff positions and educational programming. It was neither

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many aspects of their well-being, including social and emotional support and meals. This decision also places a significant burden on many families with regard to childcare. However, I believe that this has been the right thing to do with regard to the health and safety of our community.

“I have always been proud to be a member of the Shrewsbury community, and I am confident that our collective response to this very challenging situation will be characterized by respect and support for one another.”

I shared three key messages with the school community regarding how we are responding to this unprecedented and rapidly evolving crisis:

- The **health & well-being** of students, families, & staff is priority #1.
- This is an extraordinary time in history, and **everyone in our community has a collective responsibility** to respond to this challenge.
- Even though our schools are closed, **we will continue to support our students, families, and staff** from a distance and **empower our students** with opportunities for learning.

With our schools closed for an extended period of time, we immediately began providing grab-and-go meals to needy families since school breakfasts and lunches are not available, and we are also partnering with St. Anne’s Human Services to ensure our students and their families have access to the food they need. To address students’ educational needs, our curriculum leaders and educators continue to work on determining ways to best provide learning opportunities while students are at home. I am grateful to our parents for helping their children stay engaged with learning activities at home, and I am grateful to our educators for connecting with students and families through technology and providing various learning options. This process will continue to evolve, and I appreciate everyone’s patience as we work to do this effectively during a time when many students’ families and staff’s families are undergoing a significant amount of upheaval.

This crisis is creating health and financial difficulties for so many, and the unpredictability and fear regarding what might happen naturally can create stress, anxiety, and emotion-

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Right-sizing our elementary schools through redistricting

JON WENSKY
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
VICE CHAIR

The new Beal School construction is well underway and the School Committee has formally assembled an Elementary School Redistricting Subcommittee to support the addition of a new school and allow for successfully right-sizing all Shrewsbury elementary schools. We received many applications from local residents that had an interest in contributing to this important town project. This subcommittee is well represented and includes a diversity of perspectives from School Committee & District leadership, Elementary School Principals, and, most importantly, parents representing each of our existing elementary schools. The subcommittee consists of the following 11 members:

- Two School Committee members: Sandra Fryc and Jon Wensky
- Joe Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools
- Patrick Collins, Asst. Superintendent for Finance and Operations
- Tiffany Ostrander, Principal, Calvin Coolidge School
- Bryan Mabie, Principal, Spring Street School
- Nicole Grace, Parent, Spring Street School
- Shannon Creedon, Parent, Walter J. Paton School
- Rajesh Velagapudi, Parent, Floral Street School
- Christine Jasinski, Parent, Calvin Coolidge School
- Terrick Andey, Parent, Beal Early Childhood Center.

The inaugural subcommittee meeting was held on Tuesday, January 14 at Sherwood Middle School’s Media Center. The first meeting served as a “meet & greet” amongst subcommittee members and an introduction to the redistricting process. The subcommittee also reviewed the following guiding principles for the redistricting plan:

- Student educational needs will be met regardless of school assignment; Student population must be distributed so that each school has sufficient, appropriate, dedicated instructional spaces.
- School assignments will be determined by drawing attendance zone boundaries and should emphasize a “neighborhood school” approach by prioritizing geographic proximity of home to school for walkability and efficient transportation,

- while keeping geographic entities intact.
- Student demographics should be taken into account when redistricting school attendance zones.
- Future potential population growth should be considered when establishing attendance zones.
- Changes of school assignments for existing students should be minimized to the greatest extent possible within the context of the other priorities.
- The redistricting process should work in concert with other district initiatives where possible.

The last time Shrewsbury Public Schools experienced redistricting was prior to the 1997 opening of Floral Street Elementary School. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations, participated in the Floral initiative and advised that the process was very manual. Paper maps were used to create neighborhood zones. These maps were color coded with highlighters and school zones were manually weighted & optimized based on the capacity and geographic location of each school.

Fast forward 23 years later to our new Beal School Project and significant advancements in technology allow our school district the opportunity to seek assistance from companies that specialize in geographical tracking and digital mapping. As part of the vetting process, Shrewsbury Public Schools entered into a public request for proposal (or “RFP”). The public RFP is a bidding process that allows Shrewsbury to hire a qualified planning service to re-align the elementary schools across the town. The bidding process was completed by the end of February 2020 and Boston-based AppGeo (Applied Geographics) was awarded the contract for GIS (Geographic Information Systems) consultant services. AppGeo is a firm with 29 years of GIS experience. They have completed more than 1,000 projects for government and private-sector clients in a number of markets and industries. AppGeo has provided school redistrict planning services to several Massachusetts towns including Lexington, Wellesley, and, most recently, Marlboro. AppGeo’s GIS technology will simplify the redistricting process by providing the technological resources necessary to ensure our district satisfies the needs of its elementary students. AppGeo’s service will cost approximately \$60,000, an expense the Beal

School Building Committee voted unanimously to fund with the approved project budget.

Over the next month, the Central Office and the Town of Shrewsbury’s GIS Coordinator will share critical school and town data with AppGeo to begin the process of crafting redistricting recommendations. AppGeo will also incorporate our guiding principles along with conducting a neighborhood review to develop a baseline of options. The technological capabilities of AppGeo will expedite the information and analysis provided to the subcommittee. Geographic boundaries can be tweaked based on the committee’s feedback and revised school zone maps can be generated quickly. The goal is for the subcommittee to review AppGeo’s initial recommendations before the summer. Meetings will reconvene in September with AppGeo providing revised redistricting recommendations and collecting additional feedback. The subcommittee will then prepare to present formal redistricting options for review in public hearings and School Committee meetings beginning in October.

The process to decide new elementary school districts is lengthy & complex. It requires in-depth analysis, the assistance of consultants, input from key stakeholders, and ample communication. While change is difficult, it’s important to remember that all elementary school students will be positively impacted by reducing the enrollment at existing elementary schools so as to provide equitable and dedicated space allocations and providing universal full-day, tuition-free kindergarten to all Shrewsbury families.

Most importantly, at the end of all these changes, one thing will remain the same - Shrewsbury Public Schools will continue meeting the educational needs of all students regardless of school assignment.

Beal Project: the faces behind Construction Management

PATRICK C. COLLINS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
FOR FINANCE & OPERATIONS
BEAL SCHOOL BUILDING
COMMITTEE MEMBER

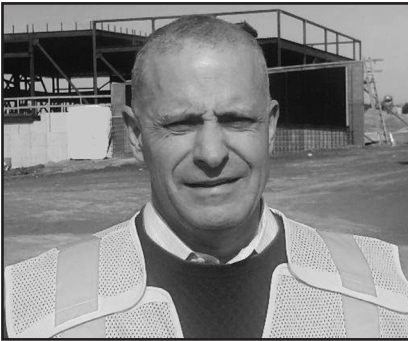
In this update I decided to focus on the key people leading the construction management effort. The Beal School Building Committee is very pleased to have selected a highly qualified and experienced team. These are the key design and construction management firms leading the project:

Architect:
LPA/A [formerly Lamoureux Pagano Associates] of Worcester

Owner's Project Manager:
PMA Consultants of Boston

Construction Manager:
Fontaine Brothers of Springfield

Here are some "faces of the Beal Project"...



Frank Payeur, Construction Project Manager, Fontaine Brothers

What is your role and what are your major responsibilities on the Beal project?

The major role of the Project Manager (PM) is to ensure that the project is delivered on time and on budget to the client. The PM also needs to make sure that the client, in this case the Town of Shrewsbury, is delivered a school facility that meets all of the design specifications set forth for the project.

Tell us a bit about your background and experience doing this type of work.

I have been in the construction industry since I was 16 years old, nearly 43 years of experience. I started as a laborer with Fontaine and then went to the Carpenters Union Apprentice School and worked my way into becoming a Journeyman Carpenter. After that I earned my Civil Engineering Degree from Springfield Technical Community College and made my way from the field into the office and started with the management side of things. I have worked with Fontaine for the Town of Shrewsbury overseeing the renovation and expansion of the Fire Station Headquarters,

the renovation and expansion of Shrewsbury Public Library in the center of Town and now the Beal Elementary School. My job superintendent Mr. Jim Morin and I have worked on the Minnechaug Regional High School as well as the West Springfield High School together.

What's going well with the project and what concerns do you have for the remainder of the project?

The project was well-planned from the beginning from design to the OPM's (Owner's Project Manager) oversight. It is well-funded and is on track to be on budget. We also had a very mild winter which allowed us to keep the project moving during the winter months without any delays due to snowfall which is helping us with the schedule. The most difficult part of this project was with the coordination of the new waterline and the realignment of Lake Street. That part of the project is behind us now, so we can focus on the school building and pushing that to the finish line.



Sean Brennan, Project Architect, LPA/A

What is your role and what are your major responsibilities on the Beal project?

Serving as the Project Architect for the project, I have been assigned to the project since the beginning. I helped assist the town throughout the design phase to ensure they were able to make informed decisions, which resulted in a building design that will serve the town's high educational standards for years to come. I am currently overseeing construction to verify the construction documents are followed to ensure the building will function as intended.

Tell us a bit about your background and experience doing this type of work.

I am a registered architect with both a Bachelor and Master of Architecture from Wentworth Institute of Technology. I have been with LPA/A for 10 years and have worked on projects of all scales from small projects like St. John's Food Pantry to large projects like Beal Elementary School [largest elementary school in the firm's history]. Be-

ing a native of Worcester, I take great pride and responsibility in being able to have such a profound effect on our community's built environment.

What's going well with the project and what concerns do you have for the remainder of the project?

Being able to work with the same team assigned to the construction of the Shrewsbury Public Library has been a real pleasure. In addition to that we have experienced a mild winter which has allowed construction to proceed at a pace not usually afforded by New England winters. All of our major concerns for this project have already been addressed; among them were the challenges associated with developing the former Glavin Center site, including demolition and hazardous abatement of the existing structures, mitigation of the naturally occurring arsenic soils, realignment of Lake Street, and sufficient site utilities to support a new elementary school.



Walter Hartley, Owner's Project Manager, PMA Consultants

What is your role and what are your major responsibilities on the Beal project?

As the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) we are responsible for overseeing the entire project from beginning to end, a process that typically takes 5-7 years. OPMs are the first people hired when a Town would like to complete a project. We work with the Town to hire a designer, design the project, maintain the budget, maintain the schedule, bid the project, oversee the construction of the project, move the building occupants into the new building, and finally close-out the project. During the construction phase it is the OPM's job to review change orders, ensure the proper work is being put in place, review the progress against the schedule, and assist in project communication between all parties.

Tell us a bit about your background and experience doing this type of work.

I have been working for PMA

Budget Planning

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implied nor stated that a Proposition 2 ½ Override was the solution to education funding. The funding from the override provided much needed revenue to the school department in order to stem the erosion of educational services but it did not solve the town's structural deficit.

Others might wonder about the recently passed Student Opportunity Act (SOA), which is the major overhaul of the state's Chapter 70 education funding formula and revision of foundation budget rates. "Won't this additional \$1.4 million in new spending, which will be phased in over seven years, provide additional revenue for the schools?" Due to Shrewsbury's level of property and income wealth, the new state education funding law is not expected to change the amount of state aid Shrewsbury will receive in 2021, which is the minimum aid of \$ 30 per pupil. SOA is expected to have a minimal impact on Shrewsbury's school budget in the coming years.

Some may believe the School Committee's budget concerns are an all too familiar yearly complaint. "Why can't they provide educational services without needing additional funding?" In 2017, committee members Dr. Dale Magee and John Samia conducted a fiscal study project that assessed short and long-term trends that will impact the Shrewsbury Public Schools. Their work included a five-year fiscal projection for FY2018-FY2022. This high-level projection assumed sustaining the existing education program, meeting mandates in a cost-effective manner, and incorporating terms of collective bargaining agreements, and projects costs based on actual FY2017 numbers and best guess estimates. The outcome of this exercise was that Shrewsbury Public Schools would be facing a widening structural deficit over the next five years.

Providing educational services is expensive. The cost of education, even in a well-managed district such as Shrewsbury, as well as throughout the state, increases roughly 4% each year due to a variety of cost drivers. In order to maintain our school district's current level of service the main cost drivers for the FY21 budget include not only inflation, but in-district transportation, employee compensation, vocational technical high school tuitions, out of district special education tuitions, out of district special education transportation, and weaning off of the full-day kindergarten tuition in advance of providing tuition-free, full day kindergarten for all when the new Beal School opens in the fall of 2021.

Data, at the state and local levels, continues to support that Shrewsbury is a well-managed school district; however, volatility and inflation are predictable factors that destabilize future budgets. This issue is not new and remains as predictable today as it did in 2014. If the pattern of structural funding persists, the ability to provide even the current level of educational services will become increasingly difficult. The School Committee is cognizant that the

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al and physical exhaustion. These are trying times, so it is important for us all to show empathy, patience, kindness, and goodwill toward one another, and to model these things for our children. If we do, courage, fortitude, and perseverance will follow.

“Please see our website at schools.shrewsburyma.gov for up-to-date information to our school district’s response to the pandemic.”

This is an unprecedented and extraordinary time for all of us. I have always been proud to be a member of the Shrewsbury community, and I am confident that our collective response to this very challenging situation will be characterized by respect and support for one another. We will rise to this challenge, together.

SHS Alumni - we are looking for you!

MICHELLE BISCOTTI &
KATHLEEN KEOHANE
COORDINATORS OF
DEVELOPMENT AND
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Shrewsbury Public Schools is building an engaging new alumni program and we need the help of our alumni.

Because you are an alum of Shrewsbury High School (SHS), you can offer a unique perspective to current students of all ages. Finding a path forward following high school graduation can be a daunting task. When shared with others, the life experiences of alumni positively influence our students’ college, career or military readiness. As a result, we are actively seeking graduates who are willing to contribute their time, energy, and expertise to better prepare our students

for life after high school.

We invite you to return to our school district so that you can share your college and career strategies with others. It’s easy to sign up for our new alumni network - just go to our new website, <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni>, and let us know how you would like to help.

Here are ways that Shrewsbury Public Schools can immediately use your experience:

- Share your college and career paths
- Be a guest speaker in a classroom
- Become a mentor
- Engage with students in an internship, externship or job shadowing experience

Even if you can’t volunteer right now, that’s ok – just recon-

nect! There will be opportunities for you to engage with us in the future.

This month, we mailed over 8000 postcards to alumni for whom we had mailing addresses. If you are an alum who did not receive a postcard, please email us at alumni@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us. We are especially looking for graduates from 1990-2003 for whom we have very few contacts. Our 1969-1989 graduates’ names and addresses came from old yearbooks and our 2004-2018 graduates’ names and addresses came from Powerschool.

Please spread the word to your classmates. We look forward to connecting our alumni with our current students and fostering relationships that will have an impact for a lifetime.

**Attn:
Shrewsbury
High School
Alumni**

Students, Educators, and Parents
are seeking college and
career advice **from you.**

Alumni pictured, left to right:
Kristian Jackson '12 and
Samantha DiReda '13.

It's **easy**. You have the **power** to help! Sign up at
[**https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni**](https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni)

The non-profit Shrewsbury School Journal is published three times a year and reaches every household in the diverse and growing town of Shrewsbury. It is published by the central office of the Shrewsbury Public Schools with the help and expertise of many individuals. The mission of the Shrewsbury School Journal is to provide an accurate source of information about our school system and the town in which we live. We hope to foster a community of continuous learners.

Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer
Superintendent

Elizabeth McCollum
Project Coordinator

Cristina Luther
Designer

Hey SHS Alum!

We need your help!

Shrewsbury Public Schools is
building an engaging new alumni program.

**Tell us your story...
...and how you would like to help.**

Our students would really benefit from connecting with you!

- share your college and career paths
- be a guest speaker in a classroom
- become a mentor
- engage with a student in an internship, externship, or job shadowing experience

Can't volunteer right now? That's OK. Just reconnect.

**It's fast and easy! Go to this website:
[**https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni**](https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni)**

Respond by April 15 for a chance to win a SHS Colonials blanket.

This is the postcard that went out to alumni recently, which has been updated with a QR code that links to our new SHS alumni site.

Beal Unified Hour of Play - A practice in inclusive practices

CHRIS GIRARDI
PRINCIPAL, BEAL EARLY
CHILDHOOD CENTER

“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” ~Plato

Beal Early Childhood Center has embarked on a new practice this year called *Unified Hour of Play*, which is a series of self-directed opportunities for all students to seek out their passions through play. Inspired by the success of the Unified Sports Teams at Shrewsbury High School along with our district’s commitment to Inclusive Practices, Unified Play has provided all of our students, regardless of ability, a wonderful platform for rich play experiences to develop and practice their social and emotional learning skills.

What does Unified Play look like? Imagine a one-hour chunk of time where the entire school, inside and out to the playground, is open for students to decide how they want to use their time. Teachers open their classrooms for play (much like indoor recess or STEAM activities) and then step back and allow students to seek out their passions. The result is truly remarkable - an hour of pure joy from 280 students playing games, making new friends, meeting new teachers, exploring new parts of the building, and having fun. Amidst the



Beal Early Childhood Center students are shown above enjoying a variety of activities during their “Unified Hour of Play.”

excitement of this freedom to play is an opportunity to develop some valuable skills:

- students building trusting, healthy relationships with old friends and new;
- students developing a positive sense of self and self-efficacy;
- students expressing a healthy range of emotions in socially appropriate ways;
- students understanding the role of social interactions and

developing the skills needed to regulate attention, impulse, and behavior;

-students with disabilities engaged in social equality, where they might otherwise rely on an adult for peer interactions.

During this hour, our staff act as ‘lifeguards’, observing all students but only getting involved when they are sought out or to prevent a student from getting injured. Importantly, Beal

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United Sound at Shrewsbury High School: building relationships that resonate

BRIAN LIPORTO
TEACHER, PERFORMING ARTS,
MUSIC, BAND
SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL
KATE MERCADANTE
TEACHER, PERFORMING ARTS,
MUSIC, ORCHESTRA
SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

This past November a chapter of United Sound, a school-based instrumental music program for students with special needs (New Musicians) and their typical peers (Peer Mentors), was established at Shrewsbury High School (SHS). Established in 2014, United Sound currently has 135 chapters in 29 states. Shrewsbury High School is one of only two high school chapters in Massachusetts and is the seventh chapter established in New England.

Dedicated to promoting social involvement through shared ensemble performance expe-

rience, United Sound joins students with and without disabilities to learn and perform in the band and orchestra together and provides authentic learn-

ing, music-making, and performance opportunities. It also allows New Musicians to find

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United Sound musicians pictured are: upper photo, bottom row (left to right) - Jeanette Reeve, Kendra Litt, Daniela Guzman, Ann Titus, Hannah Mok, Michelle Kim, Nishita Roy, Njeri Mayanja, Zaid Syed; top row (left to right) - Goutham Subramanian, Samuel Walsh, Jackie Li, Aaron Janecek, Sarah Meuse, Megan Welch, Ryan Love, Ally Mello, Bethany Fornal, Mahathi Gopinathan, Kenneth Lee. Bottom photos (left to right): Ryan Love, Daniela Guzman, Zaid Syed, Njeri Mayanja, Goutham Subramanian. Not pictured: Lylah Current and William Yankee.

Budget Planning

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funding dilemma affects not only the schools, but all town departments. By looking at trends we see that ongoing budget issues are highly predictable. It is time for a broader discussion of how our community will prioritize funding education. The current budgeting process is reactionary and tends to focus on short-term needs and current fiscal constraints. I suggest that the budget process evolve to one where we not only address short-term needs, but proactively assess long-term needs and the revenue required to appropriately fund education and town services.

Education is one of the most important possessions a person has in their life. It is the key to knowledge, success and financial stability. Public school education is the great equalizer that opens windows of opportunities for all students. I believe our community has once again reached a critical crossroad where available school funding is not sufficient to fund even a level service budget. Shrewsbury Public Schools has achieved excellent results despite spending far less than most school districts in Massachusetts due to our educators’ dedication to student learning and the efficient fiscal management of the district. The school funding issues faced today will not be solved without a serious and meaningful assessment of town priorities and resources for educational services.

Beal Project

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for roughly 10 years as an Owner’s Project Manager. I worked as a laborer for a small residential construction company during high school and in the summers during college. I attended Merrimack College and received my Civil Engineering Degree but decided to enter the construction industry as opposed to the design industry. Prior to joining PMA, I worked for a year in Saudi Arabia on a multi-billion dollar construction project. I also worked on the Shrewsbury Library project as well.

What’s going well with the project and what concerns do you have for the remainder of the project?

The quality of the Project Designer and Construction Manager have made the OPM’s job an enjoyable experience. When the Designer and CM function this way there are many ways a project can benefit. The cost is kept on or under budget, the project is completed within the allotted schedule, and there are minimal change orders. At this point in time, we do not have many concerns regarding the remainder of the project. The largest task that is yet to be started will be moving the new building occupants in and getting them trained on how to maintain the various building systems [HVAC, lighting, life-safety, etc...] to ensure they operate efficiently and serve the students and staff as planned.

With the leadership and management of these business partners and individual leaders, the Beal Project is currently on schedule and running under budget. The school is scheduled to open in August 2021.

United Sound
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their “niche,” new friend-set opportunities, and social connectedness.

The Peer Mentors benefit as much, or more, from United Sound programs as the New Musicians. For the Peer Mentors, service opportunities develop an increased sense of social responsibility, offer exposure to diversity, provide an opportunity to apply academic learning to real human needs, and build relationships. Most of all, though, it creates a community of people who understand one another.

The club advisors are Brian Liporto (band), Kate Mercadante (orchestra), and Special Education Teacher Meghan Wallace (special education). While the adults serve as the advisors for the club, the planning and teaching is left to the Peer Mentors, led by their club presidents Megan Welch (‘20) and Kenneth Lee (‘22). This year’s SHS chapter of United Sound is comprised of five New Musicians, assisted by 17 Peer Mentors. Each New Musician is assigned three Peer Mentors who work with him/her to learn how to play the instrument of their choice.

Rehearsals began this past January and run every Wednesday afternoon from 2:00-2:45. Each rehearsal, planned by the club presidents, begins with a team-building activity followed by a review of previously learned skills. Using a modified system of note and rhythm-reading, Peer Mentors assist their New Musician peers through modeling, tracking, and sound production. Students are applying these skills to the band and orchestra repertoire to prepare them for a concert in April. Members of the Chamber Orchestra and Wind Ensemble will support the United Sound New Musicians in performing an arrangement of “Pirates of the Caribbean” in their first concert.

The United Sound New Musicians are scheduled to perform at the April 29 Spring Concert at 7:30pm in the Shrewsbury High School Auditorium. Please contact myssma.com for ticket information, or purchase them at the door.

Funding and materials for the establishment of this chapter were provided by the Shrewsbury Cultural Council, the Shrewsbury Schools Music/Theater Association (SSMA), The Musary, JRP Inc., the Shrewsbury Education Foundation, David French Music, and alumna Ruby Lee. If you are interested in supporting our program, please consider a donation to the Shrewsbury Public Schools Colonial Fund, in honor of United Sound. Donations can be made here: <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni/donate>

“Music is a language that transcends disability and the relationships formed in this way will truly resonate for all children involved.” - Dorean White, Program Director, United Sound

A Positive Reaction: new Science Curriculum engages elementary students, teachers

*ELEMENTARY
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES:*
BECKY DUMPHY
BEAL EARLY CHILDHOOD
CENTER/PARKER ROAD
PRESCHOOL
ERIN KENDRICK
CALVIN COOLIDGE SCHOOL
**SHELLEY HOEY &
LINDSAY MORSE**
FLORAL STREET SCHOOL
LISA PAPAZIAN
WALTER J. PATON SCHOOL
DONNA RICE
SPRING STREET SCHOOL

“The new [elementary] science curriculum is a giant step forward...It is fun and engaging for students and teachers alike.” - Annemarie Hurley, Grade 2 Pilot Teacher, Calvin Coolidge School

In the fall of 2019, all elementary teachers in Shrewsbury began teaching a new science curriculum. The new curriculum, developed over several years by a team of dedicated pilot teachers* and the elementary instructional coaches, aligns with the 2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework. As the Framework states, “...all students must have an appreciation for the wonder of science, possess sufficient knowledge of science and engineering to engage in public discussions on related issues, and be careful consumers of scientific and technological information and products in their everyday lives.” The new elementary science curriculum in Shrewsbury aims to provide our youngest learners with the engaging, relevant, rigorous, and coherent experiences they need to develop a strong foundation in, and enthusiasm for, this subject area.

For students, the new science curriculum has given them the opportunity to behave as scientists and engineers in their own classrooms. Students routinely engage with science and engineering practices, such as asking questions, carrying out investigations, and designing solutions. “The new science is

amazing,” says Coolidge second-grader Ayla Matos-Cabral. “I get to see and touch experiments. This helps me learn.” Fellow Coolidge second-grader, Donny Chen, adds, “We learn a lot and we make stuff!” When you walk into an elementary classroom during science time, you can expect to see a very lively environment with lots of discussion, collaboration, engagement, and hands-on exploration. According to Wendy Moran, a grade 4 teacher at Paton, “The new science curriculum gives an opportunity for all different kinds of learners to shine and be engaged in the curriculum.”

For teachers, the new science curriculum has required a lot of new learning and some shifts in instructional practice. Fortunately, the pilot teachers have served as instructional leaders, helping their colleagues to better understand and facilitate the new curriculum. On the afternoon of March 3rd, 2020, science pilot teachers modeled upcoming science lessons for their grade-level colleagues. This professional development opportunity allowed teachers to experience the new science lessons prior to teaching them. According to Coolidge first-grade teacher, Cheryl Mongeon, “Doing the lessons in advance was helpful. We watched videos, talked through activities, and we played! That’s exactly what we want the kids to do.” Mongeon’s first-grade colleague, Leah Terrasi, adds, “It’s nice to have teachers who have already experienced the curriculum help us preview what is expected. This way, we can work to avoid any [mistakes].”

The new elementary science curriculum has brought a great deal of excitement and energy into classrooms, from preschool to grade 4. Teachers and students have been collaborating, solving problems, analyzing data, and, most importantly, enjoying the wonder that comes with new discoveries, all year long. “This will change science



At top, Spring Street School Grade 4 students Lucas and Joseph (left to right) and Walter J. Paton Grade 1 students (middle photo, left to right) Amisha, Aleena, and Sam, engage in scientific investigations and design solutions.

for the next generation,” said Coolidge paraprofessional Amber Khan. “It will be ingrained in their minds forever.”

*Many thanks to our science pilot teachers:

Parker Road Preschool: Cindy Mietkiewicz, Jenna Roxo, Kara Vincelette, Hayley Smith

Beal Early Childhood Center: Lynn Pinto, Charlene Costello, Lisa McKiernan

Calvin Coolidge School: Katherine Mills, Linda McQuade, Annemarie Hurley, Lesley Burnap, and Kelly Finneran

Floral Street School: Kara Frankian, Meaghan McCarthy, Angela Poppalardo, Sarah Miller and Laura Spangenberg

Walter J. Paton: Heidi Marchand, Abby Cosenza, Jenna Violette, Jill Symonds, Dan Campbell, Nicole Cormier

Spring Street School: Kathryn Lewis, Susan Brand, Lindsey Halloran, Elizabeth McRae, Lynne Doherty



Elementary teachers (all left to right) Christina Baumann, Linda McQuade, and Tina McGrail (Grade 1); Melissa Allen and Ani Marold (Grade 3); and Lesley Burnap and Ken Avery (Grade 2) collaborate during science Professional Development on March 3, 2020.

Add some “Spark” to your summer

MICHELLE BISCOTTI &
KATHLEEN KEOHANE
COORDINATORS OF
DEVELOPMENT AND
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Summer Experiences for High School students

Looking for something for your high schooler to do this summer? After the success of last year’s inaugural Summer Spark program, the Shrewsbury Public Schools Colonial Fund is once again offering opportunities for rising and current high school students to experience something fun and different this summer.

Summer Spark is an exciting week-long experience that will take students beyond the walls of a traditional classroom to awaken new interests, inspire existing passions and excite eager minds. Each class is rich with hands-on activities, field trips, and engaging instruction, all designed to ignite the spark to learn, discover, and most of all, have FUN. At the end of the week, students will be inspired to continue pursuing the interests fueled by the depth of their experiences and teachers will feel energized by the opportunity to explore a new topic or a different style of teaching.

All proceeds will benefit the SPS Colonial Fund, which funds innovative projects that make Shrewsbury an extraordinary place to learn and teach. See our website, <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future>.

This year, we are offering classes during the weeks of July 6-10 and July 13-17. Full descriptions can be found on the Colonial Fund website at <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future/summer-spark>. Brief descriptions of this year’s offerings are below.

Adulting 101: Life Skills for Teens, July 6-10 & July 13-17

Do you know what it means to budget your money? Can you imagine finding a place to live on your own? Have you ever planned a week’s worth of meals? In this class we will cover skills in budgeting, grocery shopping & food preparation, workplace readiness and interview training, finding suitable housing & home maintenance. Students will leave this course with the confidence that they can navigate life after high school and maybe even the skills to help more at home beforehand.

Create Your Own Public Health Campaign, July 6-10 & July 13-17

Public Health is now one of the

fastest growing undergraduate majors in the United States. Think you might be interested in a career in medicine or health? Start your exploration here and learn about the importance of public health, self-health, and the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. This course will allow you to explore a health-related topic of your interest and teach you how to communicate your knowledge through a public health awareness and prevention project.

Creating with Micro:Bits, July 6-10

This class explores coding, physical computing, and electronics using micro:bits, which are small microcontrollers with built-in sensors, buttons, and LEDs. Students will use block coding to learn programming principles in Microsoft Make-Code and create programs that control the micro:bit. They will also explore different Grove modules (inputs, sensors, and actuators) that extend the capability of the micro:bit and learn how to control them with code.

Creative Acrylic Painting, July 6-10 & July 13-17

Students will access their creativity and learn how to become expressive in a new medium – Acrylic paint. In our class, students will learn basic vocabulary and color theory, as well as paint mixing and texture techniques. They will have the opportunity to put these learned applications into action as we travel outside of the classroom to paint from observation in the beautiful outdoors! This class is suitable for beginner Art students, as well as experienced Art students who wish to explore this medium further.

Devising: Exploring the Elements of Theater, July 6-10 & July 13-17

By signing up for this class, you will get the opportunity to work with your fellow artists to create and perform an original piece. We will explore a topic (chosen by the class) and work to not only write it, but to bring it to life in whatever manner helps tell the story best. You will enjoy learning how to craft scripts, build props and set pieces, and create costumes. You will also learn stage management and design your own lighting and sound. All of this work will culminate in a performance at the end of the week.

Empowering Young Women, July 6-10

This Empowering Young Women workshop will provide young adults with dreams of all kinds to explore their strengths, identify their goals, and learn the tools to overcome various ob-

stacles. Throughout the week, participants will explore strong women throughout history and today in a variety of fields, identify personal goals and create fun, eye-catching vision boards, learn basic self-defense skills, and learn to be a critical consumer of the way women are portrayed in the media. This workshop will provide students with skills to improve self-esteem and body image through mindfulness and yoga, as well as the ways to nourish growing bodies while fostering a healthy relationship with food.

Introduction to Sustainability, July 6-10

Topics range from waste and renewables to agriculture and environmental justice (and what they all mean!). Each day we will cover a different topic; we will start the mornings with a discussion and spend the afternoons exploring the local environment or visiting a local organization doing real work related to that topic. Students will expand their knowledge of local systems and walk away with a better understanding of how groups here in central Massachusetts are working to solve environmental issues. Participants will also spend quality time outside and gain skills in naturalist ID and citizen science technology (eBird, iNaturalist) to grow their ability to engage with the natural world. At the end of the week we will discuss careers in environmental science with guest speakers from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Once Upon a Time: Faerie & Fantasy, July 6-10 & July 13-17

Do you love exploring the magical world of Hogwarts, traveling to Narnia, or watching Shrek and Donkey embark upon their quest to save the swamp? Or maybe you’re nostalgic for the classics of “Hansel and Gretel” and “The Three Little Pigs.” This course will explore the traditional genre of the fairy tale and a variety of different reinventions of those tales. The course will introduce students to traditional fairy tales, such as “Cinderella” and “Little Red Riding Hood,” as well as modern retellings (with the help of film) including, but not limited to, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Harry Potter*, and *Into the Woods*. Throughout the week, we will read, watch, discuss, and debate the realm of faerie and fantasy.

Physics of Sports, July 6-10

Ever wonder how professional baseball players can throw so fast and hit so hard? Are you amazed at how soccer players

CONTINUED, see right

Spark

CONTINUED from left

can curve soccer balls at will and cyclists can ride with no hands? Want to learn how to run faster, and hit a golf ball farther? Look no further than physics! Understanding how to use physics to your advantage can improve your abilities in whatever sport you play.

Ultimate Frisbee, July 13-17

Looking for a sport to play this summer? Love playing outside and competing with friends? Come learn one of the fastest growing team sports in the country! Ultimate Frisbee combines concepts of football, basketball and soccer to produce an exciting non-contact sport. Students will learn how to execute various types of throws, along with the rules of the game, some basic strategy, and the “spirit of the game.”

Website Development, Customization & Publication, July 6-10

Have you ever had a great idea that you wanted to share with the world? Maybe a cause you would like to promote or perhaps a product you want to sell? Maybe you would like to let the world know more about who you are and promote your skills for future employers to see. Whatever your reason, understanding how to build and publish a web presence is your window to the online world! In this course we will cover the basics of building your first site from the ground up. You will learn how to read and create HTML, JavaScript, and CSS files and understand how they form the foundation of any web site. Students will also be exposed to the free tools available to automate the creation of web content and then how to customize that content to make it eye-catching and exciting. In the class, students will learn about and use the free hosting sites to publish their content to the web for everyone to admire. We will also learn how to associate a name with your site and to your content by discovering and understanding Domain Name Servers (DNS), what role they play in the Internet, and the process for grabbing your own.

Unified Hour of Play

CONTINUED from page 5

staff are observing play through the lens of our social and emotional learning frameworks, where we are working on developing our understanding of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. This gives us valuable information to take back to our classrooms and gain a better understanding of the skills and needs of our students.

Beal is excited to continue this Unified Play practice into the spring as we prepare our students for the next stage in their education. Even though Beal is the start of their journey, we have a great responsibility to build the foundation of what our community deems important for our students to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from school as defined by the *Portrait of a Shrewsbury Graduate*.

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Statement of Non-discrimination

Shrewsbury Public Schools is required by the Massachusetts Department of Education to publish an annual statement of non-discrimination. This notice serves to meet that requirement. The Massachusetts Equal Educational Opportunity statute, General Laws Chapter 76, § 5, ensures that all students have the right to equal educational opportunities in the public schools. The Shrewsbury Public School District is committed to ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation or disability. The Shrewsbury Public Schools are in compliance with state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment. The following laws apply: Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, § 5, which states, "No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in the admission to a public school or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation." Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 is a Federal statute which states, in part, "No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program receiving federal assistance." This requirement not to discriminate in educational programs and activities also extends to employment. Ms. Barbara Malone, is the Title IX Coordinator, Director of Human Resources at (508) 841-8400. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Title VI provided for equal access and prohibits discrimination in the assignment of students to classes. It also prohibits discrimination in ability grouping or tracking students. The Shrewsbury School Committee's Policies #316 and #645 deal directly with the issues of harassment. Copies of these policies are available in the Principal's Office at each school or through the Superintendent's Office, located at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545. Further information may be obtained by contacting Ms. Barbara Malone, Director of Human Resources @ 508 841-8400. The following grievance procedure, which was approved by the Shrewsbury School Committee, is to be used for all issues relating to harassment or discrimination involving student and/or staff: 1. The Shrewsbury Public Schools does not and will not knowingly discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. All reports of harassment or discrimination will be taken seriously and investigated in a timely fashion. Reports will be held in the utmost confidence. Any student who believes he/she has been the subject of harassment or discrimination should immediately report the incident, either verbally or in writing to an administrator, adjustment counselor, guidance counselor, or teacher. The principal must be notified in all cases of harassment or discrimination. If any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment, the employee has the right to file a complaint with Shrewsbury Public Schools. This may be done in writing or verbally. It is the goal of Shrewsbury Public Schools to promote a workplace that is free of sexual and other forms of harassment, and even if an employee believes that they may have a concern, he or she is encouraged to report it. If you would like to file a complaint you may do so by contacting the Director of Human Resources: Barbara Malone, Shrewsbury Public Schools, 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545; bmalone@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us; Ph 508-841-8443. Complaints may also be filed with any School Principal, any Assistant Principal, or any Assistant Superintendent for Shrewsbury Schools, or with the Superintendent of Schools. These individuals are also available to discuss any concerns you may have and to provide information to

you about this policy and our complaint process. Harassment Investigation When a complaint of harassment (sexual or other forms) is received, an administrator will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The investigation will include an interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. The person alleged to have committed harassment will also be interviewed. The investigation will include review of the alleged harasser's employment file and applicable policies. When the investigation is complete, the investigator will, to the extent appropriate, inform the person filing the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the conduct of the results of that investigation. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the school district will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, and where it is appropriate the school district will also impose disciplinary action, as described above. Complaints about the Superintendent of Schools should be made to the Chairperson of the School Committee. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal statute which states, in part, "No otherwise qualified individual, shall solely on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." This requirement not to discriminate in educational programs and activities also extends to employment. Each school has a designated Section 504 Coordinator. Initial inquiries relating to Section 504 should be directed to the building-based Section 504 Coordinator who can be contacted through the principal's office. Further information may be requested by contacting Ms. Margaret Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, the district's Section 504 Coordinator at (508) 841-8400. The following grievance procedure should be used to report discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Acts of 1973: To fulfill its obligation under Section 504, the Shrewsbury Public Schools recognizes a responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding personnel and students. No discrimination against a person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs or activities of the Shrewsbury Public Schools. The school district has a specific requirement under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which includes the responsibility to identify, evaluate and if the child is determined to be eligible under Section 504, to afford access to free and appropriate educational services. Questions about eligibility or services should be first directed to the building-based coordinator. If a parent or guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the school, he/she has a right to a hearing, first with the district's Section 504 Coordinator, and secondly with an impartial hearing officer. The district's Section 504 Coordinator can be reached at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545 or by phone at (508) 841-8400. The Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, the district's Section 504 Coordinator, who will provide a written report of the district's findings, will hear all grievances in a timely manner. If a parent or guardian is unsatisfied with the results of the review, they may contact one of the agencies listed below. For grievances not resolved at the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services level, a review by an impartial hearing officer may be scheduled. Individuals with grievances are not required to use the Shrewsbury Public Schools' grievance procedure. Written complaints may be filed with the following agencies: Massachusetts Department of Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, (781) 338-3000; United States Department of Education Region 1 - Office of Civil Rights, 8th Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02203 (800) 368-1019; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203 (800) 669-4000; Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, One Ashburton Place, Room 601, Boston, MA 02108 (617) 994-6000.