

Superintendent’s Corner

Exhausted.
Worried.
Proud.
Hopeful.

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
Superintendent of Schools

As I write this in mid-March, just after the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe that our school communities are characterized by a mix of exhaustion, worry, pride, and hope.

Exhaustion, because our students, parents, educators, and support staff have expended tremendous time and energy to adapt to constantly changing circumstances over the past year.

Worry, because of very real concerns regarding the negative effects of this pandemic on too many students’ mental health and well-being, and/or their academic progress.

Pride, because of the innovative ways that educational experiences have been redesigned to meet students’ needs despite many obstacles; the myriad ways in which educators and support staff have gone so far above and beyond the call of duty; and the numerous ways in which families have been flexible and supportive of so much of their children’s learning happening in their homes.

Hope, because of the recent reduction in COVID-19 case counts, the significant increase in vaccinations, and the imminent reopening of our schools to full, five-day per week instruction.

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- 5 Yellow School Talk - remote connections
- Foreign to ALL: a shift in practice and purpose
- A virtual art celebration
- Pooled surveillance testing for health and safety in the district

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- Elementary redistricting project completed
- A telethon to promote and support the Performing Arts
- Keeping the community up to date

“Widespread public access to knowledge, like public education, is one of the pillars of our democracy, a guarantee that we can maintain a well-informed citizenry. - Scott Turow”



Teacher Elizabeth Caforio's grade 2 class at Floral Street School created this mixed media collaborative butterfly art project. Please see “A virtual art celebration” on page 4 .

Planning for today and tomorrow

MS. SANDRA FRYC
School Committee Chair

In 2006 I was in my office and a co-worker, who also lived in Shrewsbury, stopped in and invited me to a meeting he was having at his home with a group of parents who were concerned about the negative effects the town budget was having on the School Department’s ability to provide educational services to students. Fifteen years later our community is having the same conversations as we are facing a significant budget gap in what the town is able to afford and what the School Department needs to provide educational services to students.

Proposition 2 ½ is a Massachusetts statute that limits the amount of money a municipality can raise through property taxes. Local property tax revenue is the major revenue source for our town. After that initial meeting in 2006, a group called Citizens for a Better Shrewsbury was formed and they petitioned the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to place an operational override, a permanent increase to property taxes over the 2 ½ tax levy limit, on

the ballot to provide additional revenue for the School Department. The BOS did place an operational override on the ballot in 2007, but it was not publicly supported by all members and it was narrowly defeated. After a similar override vote did not pass in 2008, the BOS did not place another one before the voters until 2014. The 2014 operational override was actively and publicly supported by the BOS and it was overwhelmingly passed by the voters.

Between 2006 and 2014 the district experienced a steady growth in enrollment, which significantly increased class sizes and operating costs. At the same time our schools were dealing with inadequate resources resulting in high class sizes, and the inability to keep pace with curriculum, technology, and textbooks. The town’s 2007 and 2013 Fiscal Study Committee reports concluded that there was no way to increase revenue from current sources. By 2014 our community had reached a critical tipping point where it needed to decide if it wanted to support raising taxes in order to stop the further erosion of educational services. The additional funding provided by the 2014 operational override

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Superintendent’s Corner

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As your superintendent, as I reflect on this past year, I am humbled by what I have witnessed. From my vantage point, I have the benefit of seeing the ways in which so many have risen to the occasion to make things work, including:

- The incredible efforts staff members have made to support students’ well-being, and the innovative solutions they’ve devised to teach them well.
- The deep dedication of support staff who have efficiently and effectively managed our offices and operations, maintained our technology, fed our students, cleaned our buildings, and transported our students.
- The significant sacrifices made and the support given by parents to help their children adapt to a new educational model that required learning remotely from home.
- The amazing academic, artistic, musical, and athletic achievements of our students, which they have accomplished through alternative, non-traditional approaches made possible by their educators and families.
- The intensive and skillful efforts that our district’s leaders have tirelessly given to manage the enormous volume of complicated work necessary to navigate the unprecedented demands placed upon our schools.
- The supportive contributions of our partners in other town departments that keep our students and staff safe, our buildings clean and well-maintained, and our operations functioning.
- The strong support and advocacy provided by the School Committee on behalf of our students and staff.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has made a difference for our schools during these difficult times. While imperfect, I believe that these efforts have provided our students with an educational experience that has been as safe, stable, and effective as possible.

Our students, staff, and families are understandably exhausted by what has been required of them, and they are justifiably worried by the realities we face in recovering from the effects of the pandemic. At the same time, they should rightfully be proud of what they have accomplished under extremely challenging circumstances, and have good reason to be hopeful as we all look with anticipation to better days ahead.

5 Yellow School Talk - remote connections

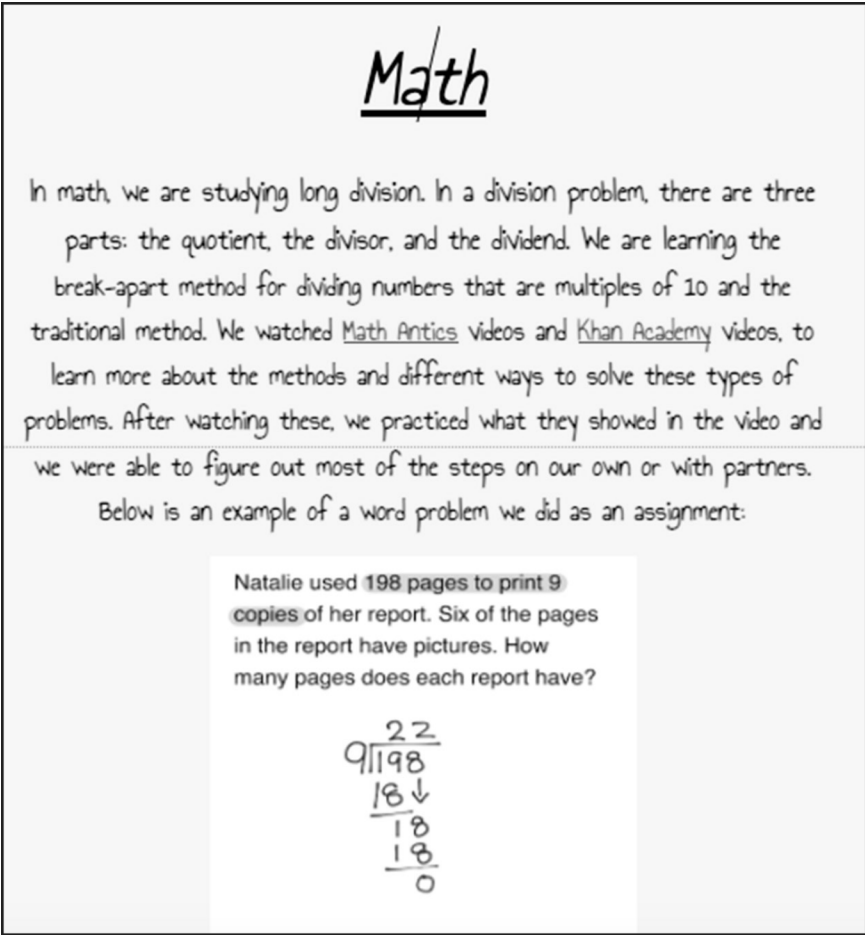
ARTHI KANNAN,
MAHATI JAYENDRAN,
ADITI JAYENDRAN,
KAUSHIK SATHEESH KUMAR,
NAVYAA SHAKTI RAVI
& MAYA HAZARIKA
Students,
Sherwood Middle School
CAROL VIRZI &
PETER NOELLE
Teachers,
Sherwood Middle School

We are a *fully remote team* at Sherwood Middle School. What does that mean? We meet five days per week online for academic lessons, group work, and social connections. We have never met each other *in person* this year, yet we feel like a family.

We feel like we have forged friendships, strong bonds, and a common dedication to working hard. As with any family, we depend on teamwork and cooperation. We depend on communication. We depend on taking care of each other. You are probably wondering, “How can connections such as these possibly happen remotely over the Zoom meeting platform? How can students who have never met each other cooperate?” Our project called *School Talk* is a unique way that we make that happen!

School Talk is our simple, interactive, monthly video newsletter. On December 2nd 2020, the renowned author Hena Khan virtually visited Sherwood Middle School to speak about writing her book *Amina’s Voice*, which features a Pakistani-American girl growing up in Milwaukee. Her presentation was powerful and inspiring. This was a special opportunity for Sherwood’s fifth grade students!

As a young child, Khan wrote a family newsletter which in-



Pictured above is a screenshot from the February 2021 edition of “School Talk”

spired a new book based on *Little Women* featuring four sisters from a modern American Muslim family called *More To The Story*. Here was our *Aha Moment!* Let’s create our newsletter about our learning, just like Hena wrote for her family.

Our first issue of *School Talk* premiered in December 2020. It started out as a small project, with not that much manpower and very little experience. Our goal was to extend our learning and strengthen the connection between our school and our families. This was especially important to us because 5 Yellow is a fully remote team. Creating *School Talk* paved the way for us to be connected to Sherwood, and to our families.

“With each edition of ‘School Talk’, the project started to expand and bloom like a flower

with more and more petals such as math, science, and language arts, plus detailed reports on topics such as current events and the stock market report by William Goh,” says Arthi Kannan.

Mahati Jayendran describes: “Audio files are informative and entertaining. We wanted to make our newsletter more interactive and easy for our readers to understand.” With a few different narrators, plus our executive producer and music composer, our *School Talk* project was off to a great start!

Arthi Kannan, our executive editor, revises each edition for the best feature stories, headlines, photos, and captions.

Many people work together in *School Talk*, including some

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Pictured above, Teacher Carol Virzi meets remotely with student members of the 5 Yellow Team at Sherwood Middle School

Foreign to ALL: a shift in practice and purpose

KENNETH ALMEIDA
Interim Director, World Languages Department

The World Languages Department of the Shrewsbury Public Schools is proud to use the denomination of “World” in its title, as opposed to the traditional term “Foreign”. Although this simple change in terminology may appear just that: simple, it is a concept that has been in the works for a couple of years - beginning with our *Portrait of a Graduate*. As a district, we strive to offer the community graduates that are global citizens and capable of engaging at the grassroots level and beyond. To make that global concept more real and tangible for our students, the simple word “World” makes us all mindful of our surroundings and how geographic boundaries are not as limiting in the age of technology. There is essentially nothing “foreign” about learning a new language. There are newer and greater opportunities for their use and their acquisition. Technology has made languages less foreign and more global. However, a shift in pedagogy is necessary for students to be communicators and not test-takers.

Jennifer González (2019) articulates the shifts in World Language pedagogy in six areas. These pedagogical shifts aim to solve the age-old question of why students graduate with several years of language study but aren’t capable of expressing their thoughts in said

language. González (2019) articulates these shifts as opportunities where:

1. Students learn to use the language instead of learning about the language
2. Communicative activities are given priority
3. Grammar is taught in the context of meaningful activities
4. Students examine authentic cultural resources
5. Instruction is planned using backward design
6. Teachers regularly provide appropriate feedback

This shift in practice is what will be expected for the implementation of the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in World Language, currently in public comment. Many of our educators already have delved into this work and have even been fearlessly adapting despite the challenges of the pandemic. To make the “World” happen in “World Languages”, our educators have been creating learning opportunities where students apply their skills in real-world situations. These situations will form the basis of the curriculum using the backward design model that González (2019) mentions to successfully implement the new frameworks.

Another shift is making the “World” accessible to more of our students and tailoring their journey through their perspective. Our Heritage Portuguese/Spanish courses

will engage our students from Portuguese/Spanish speaking homes to describe their journey through their perspective and use the language they already know along the way. Educators have been engaging in thoughtful practice of making the “World” more accessible to students with learning disabilities. Some educators have begun implementing grading practices aimed at minimizing the effect of one bad assessment on a student’s general progress.

A shift in practice from assessing what students know about the language to what students do with the language has required discussion of how to change rubrics to focus more on the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Benchmarks and World-Readiness Standards. How do we change the way we assess to align more with our collective vision of providing graduates that are global citizens? The road to redefining our vision is a long one but a simple shift in terminology (i.e. from “Foreign” to “World” Languages) articulates the “why” for our work both clearly and concisely and is one major step in the right direction.

Work Cited: González, Jennifer. “How World Language Teaching Has Evolved.” *Cult of Pedagogy*, Public Consulting Group & ViewSonic, 29 Sept. 2019, www.cultofpedagogy.com/world-language/.

Planning

CONTINUED from page 1

allowed for the hiring of additional staff to decrease class sizes and restore some vital educational services for students. It was not a long-term solution to the town’s ongoing and predictable structural funding deficit.

In 2017, School Committee members Dr. Dale Magee and John Samia presented a five-year forecast report that predicted Shrewsbury would continue to face significant structural deficits over the next five-years and that without additional resources, the School Department could not provide the high-quality public education that the Shrewsbury community expects. Since 2014, the School Committee has reached out to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee suggesting the need for long-term planning in order to proactively deal with Shrewsbury’s predictable funding gaps.

Despite the fact that Shrewsbury’s Municipal and School Department operations are cost-effective and their resources are well-managed, town expenses continue to outpace revenue. The School Department has a five-year Strategic Priorities and District Improvement Plan, but we have not asked District Leadership for input into the budget development process or to put forward requests for new resources for the last two budget cycles due our town’s structural deficit. This will eventually lead to our school district gradually declining and falling behind.

The current gap between Town Manager Mr. Kevin Mizikar’s initial Fiscal Year ‘22 budget recommendation and Dr. Sawyer’s School Department Fiscal Year ‘22 initial budget recommendation is \$ 4.9 million dollars. This occurs after the need to reduce the School Department’s Fiscal Year ‘21 budget by \$ 1.9 million dollars to reach a balanced budget. This reduction included cuts to operations, educational services, and almost 30 positions. The magnitude of the budget crisis, while exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, is primarily the product of the structural funding issues of our town government.

The November 2018 debt exclusion vote for the new Beal School, which was overwhelmingly supported by the community, promised the voters a new elementary school that would alleviate overcrowding at our elementary schools and provide full-day kindergarten for all students.

Shrewsbury Public Schools provides students with excellent educational services and our town continues to be a desirable community for families to raise their children in due to the well-deserved reputation of our schools and the quality of life provided by our town’s public safety and municipal services. I believe the School Committee and Board of Selectmen have the same shared values and we want our community to have the best possible services provided in the most cost-effective manner.

Pooled surveillance testing for health and safety in the district

NOELLE FREEMAN
Director of School Nursing
KAREN ISAACSON
Director of Extended Learning and Transportation & COVID Operations Coordinator

As part of our district’s ongoing efforts to keep staff and students safe during the pandemic, we launched a program of weekly COVID-19 testing in early February. After an extensive search of various testing vendors, we partnered with JCM Analytics to provide surveillance pool testing. Pool testing involves the collection of individual specimens which are then grouped at the lab and tested as a “pool” to allow for more economic testing of large numbers of people. If

a pool result is negative, it is safe to presume that all participants in the pool are negative. If a pool result is positive, individual samples are immediately re-tested in the lab to determine who within the group is positive. The lab we are working with is able to conduct these re-tests without the need for additional samples, so individual results are received within a few hours of learning a pool tested positive. This quick turnaround keeps us from having to quarantine an entire pool while we await the results that determine who in the pool is positive. Any individual with a positive test result is contacted by one of our school nurses and district protocols are followed for isolation of the positive individual, contact tracing, and

quarantine of anyone identified as a potential close contact in school.

We began by testing all interested school employees on February 3rd, expanding the program to students at Shrewsbury High School in late February. At the time of writing, testing for middle school students was scheduled to begin in mid-March, and we anticipate elementary students being added by April. The test is a quick, painless, self-administered nasal swab. Staff and students are able to pick up a test kit at school, conduct the test at home, and return the test to school the next day. This approach doesn’t take any time away

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Stuti Ranjan, Grade 2
Calvin Coolidge School



Brandy Medeiros, Grade 12
Shrewsbury High School



Sarah Backstrom, Grade 9
Shrewsbury High School

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL Journal

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

A virtual art celebration

PAMELA LEBLANC
Visual Arts Director,
Grades K-12

The Annual Art Festivals for both grades K-8 and grades 9-12 students have been a long running tradition held in May. With the closing of schools last spring, along with activities and celebrations cancelled, both the students and staff were feeling a sense of loss. During collaboration time, the art teachers discussed a need and desire to celebrate their artists, so they rallied together and created a grades K-12 Virtual Art Festival that highlighted the various art competitions and exhibits. This effort proved to be well received in the school community.

In a year like no other, and despite the pandemic, our

young artists continue to produce beautiful artwork, whether in person or through remote learning. The teachers have heavily relied on the use of technology platforms (Zoom, Seesaw and Schoology) to instruct and assess student work, while finding ways to share and highlight accomplishments. Teachers know how excited and proud students are when they see their work chosen and on display, so rather than waiting until spring for a full year festival, the department agreed to create two festivals this year. A Winter Art Festival for students taking art from September through January, and a Spring Art Festival for students in the second half of the school year coming in June.

The Shrewsbury art educators have been continually

impressed by their students' persistence and creativity over the course of this pandemic and all of the changes they have experienced. Despite the obstacles they have been faced with, artists have focused their efforts into the creative process and the results have been inspiring. The show(s) must go on!

Shrewsbury Public Schools K-12 Winter Art Festival, featuring work by students in Cycles 1-3 in grades K-8, and in Semester 1 at Shrewsbury High School, can be viewed online at this link: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1F7hNBnJO5q2mZmz07zM8PV-MscDCb9VWBIBi>

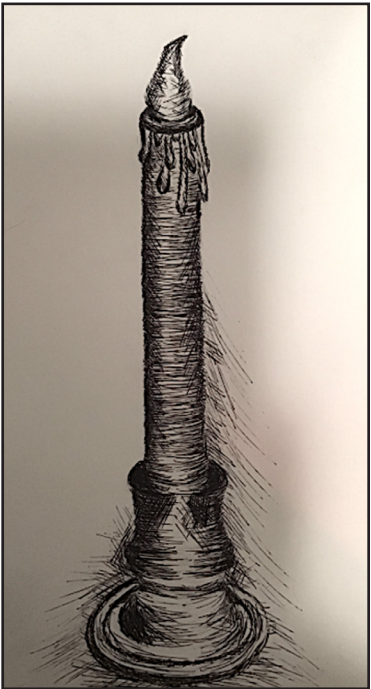
Some works created this year by students are featured below and at left.



Vaishnavi Iyer, Grade 7
Oak Middle School



Jack Dros, Grade 9
Shrewsbury High School



Keeley Kerr, Grade 10
Shrewsbury High School

Elementary redistricting project completed

PATRICK C. COLLINS
*Assistant Superintendent
for Finance and Operations*

Contingent upon the full opening of the new Major Howard W. Beal Elementary School, the district will implement new elementary school zones and officially change our elementary grade configuration to a kindergarten through grade four model.

Dr. Sawyer’s recommended budget for fiscal year 2022 includes funding to fully open the new school, however there is not enough overall town funding to accomplish this objective as of this writing (March 12, 2021). We are hopeful the overall funding situation will change for the better and that the new Beal School will open in September 2021, as planned, and that this will allow the district to implement the voted redistricting plan.

The School Committee voted on the new elementary zones in February after a year-long process that was disrupted by

the pandemic. The final decision was the culmination of work completed by the Redistricting Committee, an ad hoc group of parents, school administrators, and two School Committee members. Technical assistance was provided by an outside consultant firm, AppGeo, with specialization in Geographic Information Systems providing data integration with high resolution digital mapping technology.

The Redistricting Committee reviewed nineteen different iterations of potential solutions and conducted two virtual community forums soliciting feedback and input as they progressed through the process. The Redistricting Committee was also charged with adhering to a series of Guiding Principles established by the School Committee to guide their work.

In January, the Redistricting Committee recommended the two best alternatives they could develop. The School Committee received community feedback and input and

the recommendation of Dr. Sawyer as well before voting the final plan.

The School Committee and district administration are grateful for the time investment and hard work of the Redistricting Committee members who included:

- Terrick Andey, Parent, Beal Early Childhood Center
- Shannon Creedon, Parent, Walter J. Paton School
- Christine Jasinski, Parent, Calvin Coolidge School
- Rajesh Velagapudi, Parent, Floral Street School
- Sanam Zaer, Parent, Spring Street School
- Sandra Fryc, Chairperson, School Committee
- Jon Wensky, Vice Chairperson, School Committee
- Tiffany Ostrander, Principal, Calvin Coolidge School
- Bryan Mabie, Principal, Spring Street School
- Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent
- Patrick Collins, Asst. Superintendent for Finance and Operations

Planning

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The School Committee is committed to working with the Board of Selectmen to maintain and improve school and municipal services. At the time of the writing of this article, the two boards are actively engaged in conversations to seek short and long-term solutions to the current budget issues. Members of the School Committee are committed to strongly advocating for the financial resources our district requires to meet the educational needs of all children.

Pooled testing

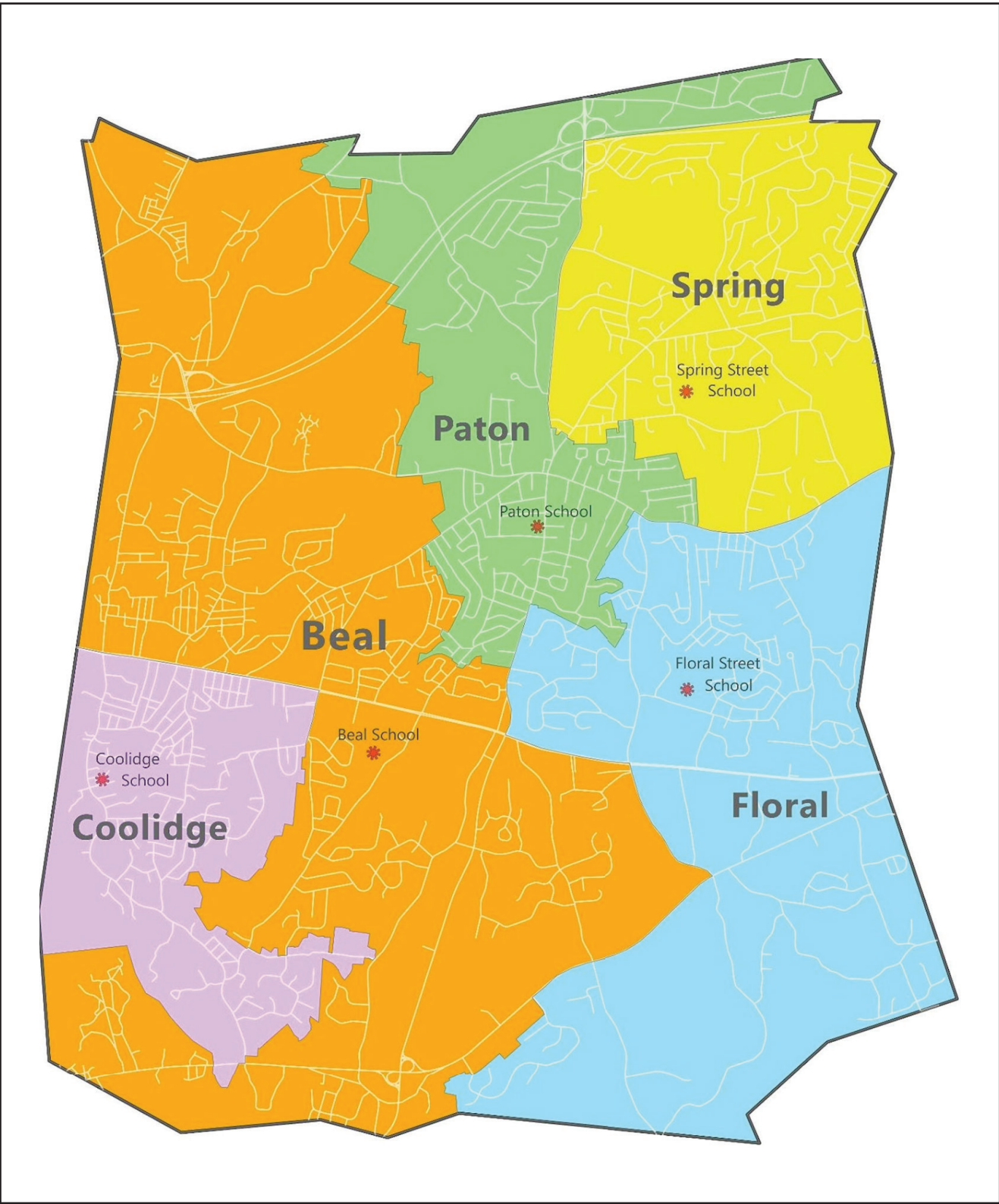
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from classroom learning time, and minimizes the impact on our busy nurses. Dropping off the completed test is a simple matter of scanning a barcode on the test tube, and scanning a unique QR code that associates each individual with their sample. It takes less than 10 seconds for each person to drop off their test on their way into school.

The weekly surveillance testing is intended for people who do not have symptoms and are not known to be close contacts to a positive case. It is a way to identify individuals who may be pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic because early identification and isolation of positive individuals can dramatically reduce the spread of the virus. The program is giving us valuable information about the prevalence of COVID-19 in our school community. At the time of writing, March 8, 2021, approximately 60% of employees and 40% of students in grades 9-12 are participating, and the number of tests continues to grow each week. In the first four weeks of the program, we conducted 3,000 tests and only had 4 positive cases. This outcome is reassuring, giving us further evidence that there is a very low occurrence rate in our school community.

Participation is completely voluntary, and is strongly encouraged. There is no cost to staff or families for participating in the testing. The total cost of the program is funded by federal and state grants for COVID-19 operations. We hope additional students and staff will opt in to participate in the coming weeks. All participants must have a signed consent form on file in order to participate. Individuals can opt to join at any time by signing the consent in the PowerSchool parent or teacher portal. The more participation we have, the safer our school environment will be.

More information about the program can be found on our website (<https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/district/covid-testing-information>), and questions about the program can be addressed to covidtesting@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.



New elementary school zones - contingent upon full opening of Beal school.

School Talk

CONTINUED from page 2

that work behind the scenes, and that takes a lot of collaboration, trust us. We have to be patient with others, and we need to accept ideas with multiple revisions. All of this happens online because we are remote students.

We need to solve problems online so that all our collaborators can create an amazing article. Arthi Kannan explains: "I enjoy 'School Talk'! I have never started a newsletter, and I did not think that it would take off so fast. But, what counts is that we all get a fresh experience."

Navyaa Shakti Ravi notes: "This pandemic has been very stressful for all of us. *School Talk* allows us to collaborate and provides an outlet to express our ideas. This project has made us connect and make new friends. We are a fully remote team, and through projects like *School Talk* we feel close to each other as classmates. When we look back on this pandemic many years from now, we will remember all of the great work that we did with this project."

Aditi Jayendran shares: "In *School Talk* we talk about our work in class so we learn to be descriptive and straight to the point. It helps us with grammar and self-confidence. This project helps with writing our ideas on our devices so they won't have to be stuck in our minds. Even though we are separated because of Covid-19, this project helps with teamwork and collaboration that will help us out in future careers."

Kaushik Satheesh Kumar notes that "*School Talk* is like a hub where many people with different responsibilities get to share their creativity, effort, and ideas with one another, and every edition that is published is just the result of all this. It also helps to inform the parents (and staff!) about what is going on in school, so that they can keep on top of what their student(s) are learning in school and help them if they need it. It also helps with writing skills. Oh, and it also lets us reach out to the community. And on top of all this, it lets us have fun together, even if we are not physically together, throughout these challenging times."

A telethon to support and celebrate the Performing Arts

MICHELLE BISCOTTI & KATHLEEN KEOHANE
Coordinators of Volunteer Activities & Development

As Coordinators of Development & Volunteer Activities, the best part of our jobs is the front row seat we have to the incredible talents of our students, the dedication of our staff (you really have NO idea) and the valuable life lessons we hear alumni share with current students. All of these things came together on March 5 & 6, during the "For the Love of the Performing Arts" telethon, sponsored by the Shrewsbury Public Schools Colonial Fund. From 7-9 pm both evenings, our students once again had a stage (albeit virtual) on which to perform, despite the COVID-19 restrictions which had cancelled their traditional concerts, plays, musicals and dance recitals. From beginning to end, the four hours was a celebration of the talents of our students of all ages, who sang, danced and played their instruments. It was also an occasion to catch up with alumni, teachers and current students who all praised what a gift the performing arts are in their lives.

The telethon featured over 50 different performances and interviews, including the debut of seven virtual perfor-

mances from the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) choirs, orchestras and concert band. These never-before-seen performances were months in the making and represented countless hours of work by our diligent teachers, who took individual student performances and turned them into amazing ensembles. It was almost as good as a live performance!

Generous SHS performing arts alumni gave their time to talk about the long-lasting impact the SPS Performing Arts Program, and its dedicated teachers, had on their lives. Catherine Brunell, Nick Silverio, Sophie Silverio, Sam Quinn, Louisa Ramirez Flynn and Jared and Kira Troilo all came back to Shrewsbury, virtually, to speak with student interviewer Preston Karp. They shared sweet memories, engaging stories and the advice they would now give their teenage selves.

Current music teachers Tahnee Fallis-Baril, Michael Lapomardo, Brian Liporto and Kate Mercadante, along with SPS Director of Performing Arts, Tom O'Toole, shared their perspectives on the value of music and theater programs across the grades and the positive impact these programs have on students' development and emotional well-being. Troy Siebels, the

President & CEO of the Hanover Theater for the Performing Arts, shared similar sentiments, talking to Preston about the self-confidence and self-assurance that students gain through the performing arts and the communication skills and creativity that students develop, which are so important not just on a stage, but in life today.

The telethon would not have been possible without the generous support of all of our sponsors, in particular, our Presenting Sponsors, Jack Collins and Nancy Hughes-Collins; our Platinum Sponsors, Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union and Rockland Trust Bank; and our Silver Sponsor, Mid State Kitchens. Jack and Nancy spoke with Preston about being inspired to give because of the work of Dr. John Collins, Jack's father and former Shrewsbury Superintendent of Schools, the valuable education so many of their family members have received in Shrewsbury, and the pure joy they get from attending student performances.

If you missed the telethon when it first aired, you can still catch the show! The "For the Love of the Performing Arts" telethon will continue to be

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Three of the Shrewsbury High School ensembles that participated virtually in the "For the love of the Performing Arts Telethon" were the Wind Ensemble/Concert Band, shown above performing "Flourish for Wind Band" by Ralph Vaughan Williams; the Mixed Choir, shown above, left performing "Kawouno Wan Gi Pi (Water Song)" by Vivian Aluoch and Vivian Anyango, arranged by Brian Tate; and the Chamber Orchestra - Honors shown above, right performing "Eine Kleine Nachtmusic" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, arranged by Bob Phillips.

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SHREWSBURY SCHOOL
Journal

Keeping the community up to date

KAREN ISAACSON
Director of Extended Learning and Transportation & COVID Operations Coordinator
DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
Superintendent of Schools

In January 2021 Shrewsbury Public Schools made changes to the way information is communicated about new cases of COVID-19 among members of our school community. Historically emails were sent to a school community if there

was a positive case that day. Based on feedback, a decision was made to change the process from an email communication to an update of the district's COVID-19 Data Dashboard on our website each afternoon in order to streamline communication processes and to build greater transparency as to which schools across the entire district have cases each day. Most weekdays at approximately 4:00pm the data dashboard updates with cases reported that day, and each week an updated chart is posted that shows

cases by week for the previous four weeks. Please note that the data includes both student and staff cases, but no differentiation is made in order to maintain confidentiality. The dashboard is publicly available for viewing on our website at this link: <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/district/sps-weekly-covid-19-data-dashboard>

Below is a snapshot of some of the Dashboard information that was posted on our website showing **data as of March 15, 2021.**



To view more great art like the piece above by Brynn Melhuish, Grade 4 - Walter J. Paton School, please see "A virtual art celebration" on page 4.

SPS COVID-19 DATA DASHBOARD as of 4pm March 15, 2021			SPS Positive Cases Past 4 Weeks (Hybrid Model)			
Positive Cases Reported Today in Hybrid Model = 7 Positive Cases Cumulative in Hybrid Model = 370 Cases Reported Today Traced to Potential Exposure in School = 0 Cumulative Cases Traced to Potential Exposure in School = 7			POSITIVE CASES			
SCHOOL	POSITIVE CASES REPORTED TODAY	CUMULATIVE POSTIVE CASES		10	20	30
Parker Road Preschool	0	13	WEEK OF 2/14	8		
Beal Early Childhood Center	0	8	WEEK OF 2/21	9		
Calvin Coolidge School	1	37	WEEK OF 2/28	11		
Floral Street School	0	23	WEEK OF 3/7	7		
Walter J. Paton School	0	26				
Spring Street School	0	17				
Sherwood Middle School	2	49				
Oak Middle School	1	52				
Shrewsbury High School	3	139				
District Level	0	6				
TOTALS	7	370				
Positive Cases Reported Today in Remote Model = 1 Positive Cases Cumulative in Remote Model = 32						

Telethon

CONTINUED from page 6

aired on SELCO channels 29 and 329 and will be available online at Shrewsbury Media Connection's website.

Through the celebration of our talented students, our mission was to raise \$50,000 for the needs of the Performing Arts Program and the extraordinary people involved in it. As of March 6 we had raised \$32,000 towards our goal, but you can still help! Donations will be accepted through the end of the school year. Go to www.bit.ly/SPSTelethon to make your gift and applaud this amazing program. Thank you for anything you can do to help.

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, Executive Director of Human Resources @ 508 841-8443. 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.



Susan Isabelle
Branch Manager
Home Equity Consultant
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