

Superintendent's Corner

What it means to be a hero

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
Superintendent of Schools

This column is adapted from Dr. Sawyer's graduation remarks to the Shrewsbury High School Class of 2022

It feels like a perfect night to recognize the Class of '22 for your hard work and perseverance that enabled you to meet the requirements to earn a Shrewsbury High School diploma. The challenges you have experienced over your high school years were substantial, and we are all very proud of what you have achieved despite them. As many of you know, in addition to being your superintendent, I am also a very proud parent of a graduate, and I think I can speak for all of the parents and caretakers here this evening that when you all were younger, and we as parents were thinking ahead to your high school experience, none of us imagined that you would be coping with the impact of a global pandemic. I think we're all quite familiar with all the ways in which COVID-19 negatively affected your experience, and this is not a topic to dwell upon this evening as you step into the future. However, there are positives that emerged from the ways in which people responded to the pandemic, and there is one that I would like to highlight this evening: the understanding of what it means to be a hero.

I'm not talking about mythical heroes here, but rather, as Merriam Webster defines the term, those who are "admired for achievements or noble qualities" and "who show great courage." Over the course of the past two-plus years, we have witnessed so many making sacrifices for the good of others under incredibly trying circumstances. This es-

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“ Education is not just about going to school and getting a degree. It's about widening your knowledge and absorbing the truth about life. — Shakuntala Devi ”



United Sound Musicians (pictured above, left to right) Harrison Howard, Ryan Love, Jenny Lucier, Kim Phan, Carl Amazan, Ishan Mehta, and Hasan Hadi are shown in concert attire for their performance on April 28, 2022 as part of the Performing Arts Department's Spring Concert series.

Looking ahead: opportunities and challenges

LYNSEY HEFFERNAN
School Committee Chair

As we end the 2021-2022 School Year, there is much we have to be thankful for. I'm personally so thankful for our excellent staff who worked through a pandemic to ensure that every child had the chance to learn in environments of supportive adults, and for the leaders in our school administration - from Superintendent Dr. Sawyer and his team to the building principals and staff - who have worked so hard these past two years to keep schools open and safe. Town Meeting recently approved the school department's \$79.3 million budget for next year, and I'm reminded again of my appreciation for the voters of Shrewsbury who overwhelmingly approved an operational override on the 2021 ballot, the Town Meeting members who dedicate their time to this community, and the members of the Select Board and Town Manager Kevin Mizikar for our unique and critical override agreement and our great working relationship. Lastly, I'm thankful to serve on the School Committee with thoughtful individuals who care deeply about our schools: Vice Chair Jason Palitsch, Secretary Jon Wensky, and members Sandra Fryc and Erin Boucher.

Because of the individuals mentioned above we created a budget plan for the next fiscal year which accomplished three

major goals. First, our budget is financially sound, staying within the override framework which caps growth in the School Department budget at 4.75%. In particular I would like to note that we recently completed a new three-year contract with the Shrewsbury Education Association (SEA), which demonstrates a solid and respectful working relationship between SEA and the School Committee. Two years ago, pre-override, we were at a historical moment for our schools, and our faculty took a nearly \$1 million pay cut by deferring raises for the last half of the year, which saved many jobs at a time when we already needed to make deep cuts. The new contract recognizes this sacrifice while staying within the required parameters of the budget. We continue to be impressed and thankful for their dedication to our children.

Second, our budget begins to build back in areas where we have cut over the years, including staffing in special education at the pre-school, elementary and high school levels, adding support for English Language Learners at the elementary level, and investing in three additional positions in the Allied Arts at the middle school level. We know that as a School Committee and a community we have made some historic cuts to programming over many past budget cycles. With this in mind, we will continue to look to invest funds wisely to support needed services for our stu-

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pecially includes the contributions made by those on the front lines of healthcare and public health. It most certainly includes the ways in which our teachers, education professionals, support staff, and school leaders rose to the myriad challenges of providing education and support for you. And there is no question that it also includes the many ways in which your families supported you during a time of fear and uncertainty, as well as everything you did as friends to support one another. At this time, I ask that our graduates stand and applaud all of those people for what they have done to help you get to this milestone today.

“*I am confident that you all have the ability to honor truth, promote justice, and advance our nation’s values.*”

The acts of heroism you just applauded, large and small, did not require extraordinary powers. The late actor, Christopher Reeve, said that “...a hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.” Those of you who are my age know that Reeve was famous for playing the part of Superman in the movies, but this quote was not about the fictional comic book hero. Rather, it was his reflection upon his real-life circumstances after he became paralyzed in an accident. He was speaking of a special kind of strength of character that so many of you have already shown at a young age – a strength our society needs you to keep demonstrating as you move into adulthood.

As the mythical hero Superman, Reeve delivered the famous line that his mission was to “fight for truth, justice, and the American way.” We are living in a time when all three of these aspirations are in jeopardy. We need you to seek the truth by thoughtfully and critically examining the messages you receive, while considering the motivation and intent of the sources behind them, and to speak the truth in opposition to lies designed to manipulate your emotions and beliefs. We need you to promote justice so that our society becomes a more equitable one for all of its members – especially those who have the greatest needs – and so that getting a fair shake isn’t based on who you are or where you’re from. We need you to align our na-

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Recognizing 2022 retirees

BARBARA A. MALONE
Executive Director of Human Resources

Seventeen faculty and staff and one principal have ended their education careers with a well-deserved retirement at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. In combination, these eighteen individuals have served the students of Shrewsbury for 464 years. This total represents an average of 25.78 years of service in Shrewsbury and does not include prior educational experience in other districts. All were recognized for their commitment and dedication to the children of Shrewsbury at the Shrewsbury School Committee Meeting on June 8, 2022. We particularly would like to recognize Dr. Ann M. Jones, the retiring principal of Oak Middle School, and her 27 years of service to Shrewsbury Public Schools. We wish all the retirees a healthy, happy, and fun retirement.

Listed below are their names, positions, schools, and years of service:

Administrative Assistant
Debra Maroney has served 30 years in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as an Administrative Assistant from Oak Middle School.

Paraprofessionals
Doreen Kelly has served 22 years as a paraprofessional in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Child Specific Assistant from Sherwood Middle School.

Joan Markham has served 23 years as a paraprofessional, with 20 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring

as an Instructional Assistant from Floral Street School.

Doris Sullivan has served 22 years as a paraprofessional in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as an Instructional Assistant from the Walter J. Paton School.

Joni Theodoss has served 20 years as an educator and paraprofessional, with 12 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Special Education Assistant from Sherwood Middle School.

Susan Todisco has served 24 years as a paraprofessional in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as an ABA Technician from the Calvin Coolidge School.

Teachers/Professional Staff
Susan Bastardo has served 39 years as an educator, with 34 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Speech Language Pathologist from the Major Howard W. Beal School.

Helene Bisceglia has served 19 years as an educator in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Third Grade Teacher from Floral Street School.

Loubaina Buxamusa has served 40 years as an educator, with 30 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as an Occupational Therapist from the Parker Road Preschool and the Major Howard W. Beal School and as the Lead Occupational Therapist for the district.

Anne Egan has served 36 years as an educator, with 32 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as Grade Six Math and Science Teacher from Sherwood Middle

School.

Anne Heinen has served 22 years as an educator, with 21 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Preschool Teacher from Parker Road Preschool.

Marylou Luukko has served 45 years as an educator, with 35 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a World Languages Teacher from Oak Middle School.

Lucy Marcigliano has served 30 years as an educator in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Grade Five English Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher from Sherwood Middle School.

Victoria McCarthy has served 33 years as an educator, with 25 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Grade Five Math and Science Teacher from Sherwood Middle School.

Tina McGrail has served 22 years as an educator in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Grade One Teacher from Floral Street School.

Elizabeth McRae has served 23 years as an educator in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Grade One Teacher from Spring Street School.

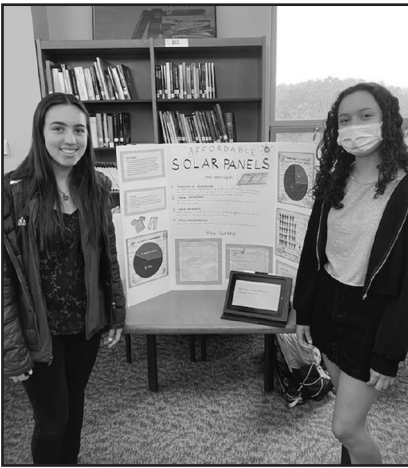
Carmen Tomlinson has served 27 years as an educator in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a World Languages Teacher from Oak Middle School.

Administrator
Dr. Ann M. Jones has served 27 years as an educator in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as the Principal of Oak Middle School.

Differentiating good from bad statistics

RABECA MOISAN & LISA NOEL
Mathematics Teachers, Shrewsbury High School

Advanced Quantitative Reasoning (AQR) students at Shrewsbury High School (SHS) considered the “B.S.” (bad statistics) in mathematics and tried to do better during their Final Projects. Throughout the second semester, SHS Mathematics Teachers Patricia Busso, Becky Joseph, Becky Moisan and Lisa Noel helped the kids understand the difference between good statistics and “B.S.”, thanks in part to an online resource called Skew the Script. During that time, the senior AQR and



Students (left to right) Megan Scarbo and Kya Daniels are pictured with their AQR Final Project on Affordable Solar Panels.

Honors AQR students focused largely on how statistics are shown, interpreted and found in the world around them. On Thursday, May 19th, the stu-

dents showcased all that they had learned about statistics, including gathering data, validating online data, creating statistical analyses and interpreting data. At the showcase, nearly 100 students presented more than 35 projects to their peers, some of the SHS administration and faculty, and Central Office administration. Each project was chosen based on the students’ individual passions and this was portrayed during the showcase. The Media Center at SHS was buzzing with pride and excitement that Thursday, as math conversations continued for roughly two-and-a-half hours. In a post-showcase email to the four teachers, Dr. Sawyer

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Puzzles, penguins, and progress!

REBECCA DUMPHY,
ASHLEY GALLAGHER,
ERIN KENDRICK,
SARAH MATTHEWS,
LINDSAY MORSE,
LISA PAPAZIAN &
DONNA RICE

Elementary Instructional
Coaches/Curriculum
Coordinators

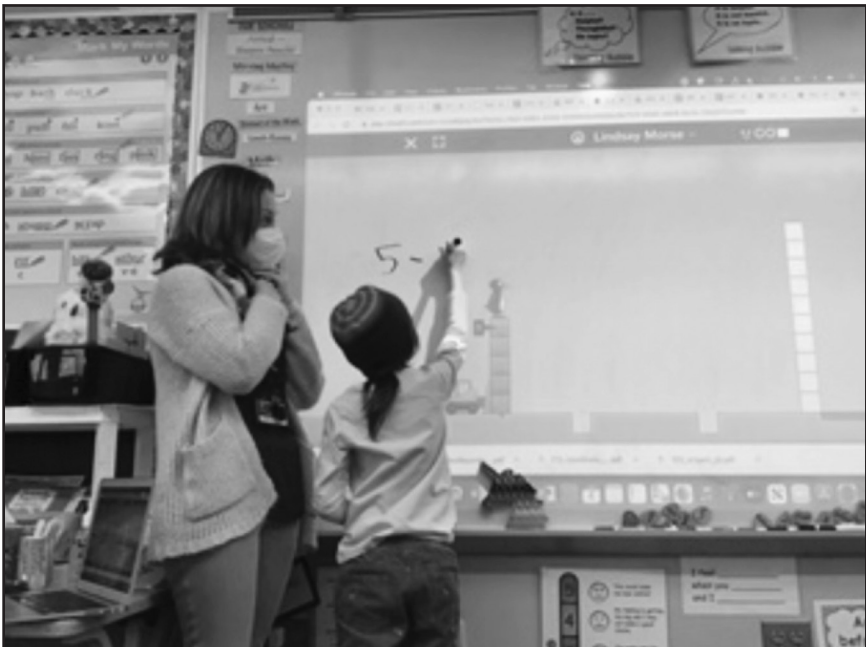
The school year has wrapped up and our students have a lot to be proud of! They have worked hard to grow their skills over the past year, both academically and socially. Summer is a great time to reset and relax. But we also know that without practice, recently learned skills can easily slip away. How can you encourage students' learning to continue in a fun and engaging way? How about trying some puzzles this summer with ST Math and Jiji the Penguin?

ST Math is a computer-based visual instructional program developed by the Mind Research Institute that we have used at the elementary level to reinforce math concepts. Based on neuroscience, students use their spatial-temporal (ST) skills to help Jiji the Penguin through a variety of puzzles - all involving math concepts that they have been learning throughout the year. Students love helping Jiji the Penguin travel along the journey and as they are playing they are actually engaging in learning through challenging puzzles, problem-solving, and getting feedback from the game to improve their math skills.

ST Math levels the playing field for our students in many ways. Since there are no words, students who may struggle with reading word problems or those who are learning English can succeed. While students may encounter struggles as they persevere

through the puzzles, they are actually growing their capacity for "doing hard things" and taking on challenges. Young learners become engaged in a feedback loop where they see a puzzle, think about what to do, try out a solution, learn and reinforce math concepts, and build their knowledge. That's right - just one little penguin and 20 minutes a day of puzzles lead to progress.

During the 2021-2022 school year, students at the elementary level have completed over 2,700,000 puzzles! Shrewsbury Public Schools has received a highly competitive grant from The Mind Insti-



Margaret Ralston, a second grader from Floral Street School, is shown working on a Puzzle Talk with Elementary Instructional Coach Mrs. Morse during math class.

tute for the next three school years to assist with the implementation of ST math into our curriculum. Teachers will participate in professional development and incorporate these puzzles into classroom routines and student learning in order to give our young mathematicians many ways to experience math problem solving and learn new skills.

How do students feel about learning with ST Math? Check out these testimonials from



Shown above: Krithya Krishna, a first grader from Maj. Howard W. Beal School, works on an ST math puzzle with Jiji the ST math mascot!

across the district:

I like ST Math because math is good for my brain.
- Suleyman Carleen,
Grade 1
Calvin Coolidge School

I like it because it's teaching you things in a fun and positive way.
- Anya Shkurikhina,
Grade 4
Spring Street School

ST Math is fun-hard. It's fun to do, but hard. The hard helps you learn.
- Ava & Zoe Amico,
Grade 1
Calvin Coolidge School

ST Math is a fun way to learn and it gives you different levels based on what you know. It challenges you!
- Sophie Mastrogiovanni,
Grade 4
Maj. Howard W. Beal School

Engaging in ST Math puzzle solving will help students to enter the new school year with success as they continue to reinforce their learning. So relax, enjoy the summer, and try out some puzzles with Jiji!

Looking ahead

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dents today.

Third, this budget makes smart strategic investments in areas of mental health, technology and curriculum. Most notably, we are making significant investments to bring in additional capacity to respond to and address the growing mental health crisis in our youth today. Those positions include three Adjustment Counselors at the middle and high school levels, two Clinical Coordinators to support cases with significant behavior challenges that impact learning, and a Director of Clinical Counseling and Mental Health Services to coordinate much of this work across the district along with a social worker. We are also assuming permanent funding for the role of the district-wide Mindfulness Director, which was previously grant funded. The School Committee will be tracking outcomes of this infusion of investment to ensure that we continue to make meaningful impacts in the lives of our young people.

“Our schools continue to graduate students who are critical thinkers and are prepared for the challenges of this complex world.”

We accomplished these three goals, while also removing a family-paid fee for the first time in recent history. Students and parents will no longer be asked to pay a fee for participation in activities at the middle and high school level. At the School Committee level, we know that we are amongst the school districts with the highest fees in the state, accounting for over \$1 million of our revenue. This Activity Fee, which impacted nearly half of all of our students, was another barrier to participation in the rich variety of programs offered to help round out our academic curriculum.

However, while I am thankful for the position we are in today financially - with a strong school system that makes smart, fiscally-prudent decisions and delivers high quality educational value to our students, families, and taxpayers, all while continuing to be well below the state average in per-pupil expenditures - there are some disturbing trends happening in education which I want to highlight.

The School Committee has prepared a budget with additional investments to respond to the mental health needs of our young people. The past 28 months have been like nothing any of us adults have ever experienced and the children, while oftentimes highly resilient, are not "alright." Alarming-ly as a community, 17% of our high school students admit that they have



Maj. Howard W. Beal School kindergarten students Gigi Cocks and Garrett Touchette (pictured left to right) work together on an ST math puzzle during a puzzle talk.

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tion’s actions with the noble values articulated at its founding, so that we can indeed form a more perfect union, one that secures the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness by protecting the integrity of elections and engaging in the democratic process. We need you to have the strength to fight for these things, because I believe that the fate of our country depends on it.

On the first day of this school year, we opened the new Beal School. When entering this beautiful building for the first time, a first grader looked around with wonder and exclaimed, “This looks like a place where we can all be heroes.” I think he was right, because your strong education has provided you with the foundation to act heroically when circumstances require it. I am confident that you all have the ability to honor truth, promote justice, and advance our nation’s values. But this is not easy work. We need you to demonstrate the everyday heroism of persevering when you face the many difficult challenges that lie ahead. And when you do, you will indeed be the best kind of hero, one who makes a significant, positive impact on the lives of others. I believe that you have what it takes to make a difference in our community, our nation, and our world, and so I’ll conclude by paraphrasing that first grader:

“This looks like a class where you can all be heroes.”

Congratulations, Class of 2022!



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

How the Colonial Fund is impacting our schools

KATHLEEN KEOHANE
Coordinator of Development
and Volunteer Activities

The Colonial Fund is primarily supported through donations from parents, residents, local business partners, and Shrewsbury Public Schools alumni. It was established in 2013 to fund school initiatives that could not be afforded through the general operating budget. Our mission is to advance the district’s Strategic Priorities, impact all schools and grade levels, and pilot new, innovative ideas.

In the last edition (Winter 2022) of the Shrewsbury School Journal, we announced the nine projects that the Colonial Fund financed this year, with grants totaling \$120,000. You can find full descriptions of these projects here: (<https://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/future/2021-2022>). These projects span a variety of disciplines and will impact every student in our schools today and in the future.

Here is an update on two of those projects, with personal reflections on the impacts they have had on students and teachers:

Thinking Classrooms

Thinking Classrooms is a new pilot program at Shrewsbury High School (SHS) that reimagines learning space in math classrooms. It has been met with great success in classrooms across the state and the country. The proposal for the program came from Jean Marie Johnson, Director of Mathematics at SHS, and other co-workers, after reading Peter Liljedahl’s book “Building Thinking Classrooms”. They were particularly inspired by Mr. Liljedahl’s statement, “When students are sitting, they feel anonymous. And when students feel anonymous, they are more likely to disengage. ... When students get into their groups and start working on vertical surfaces, the skills they need to be successful are things like communication, perseverance, patience, self-reliance, et cetera. ... In a culture that values thinking - as opposed to answers - there



Students are pictured above utilizing some of the new whiteboards funded by the Colonial Fund.

is no motivation to just get the answer. It is the thinking that matters.”

According to Ms. Johnson, “The idea is to create vertical, non-permanent surfaces in our classrooms to encourage students to work with their groups, persevere longer when working on problems without teacher assistance, and to try out ideas and experience the thinking process as nonlinear and sometimes messy. ... Designing some of our math classrooms in this way is aligned with our strategic priority of creating spaces and resources to support effective learning, as well as creating learning environments where everyone’s success matters.”

The Colonial Fund has funded a total of 28 white boards mounted across seven classrooms, helping to create those vertical, non-permanent surfaces where students can work through math problems in small groups. Over April vacation, the first math classroom was outfitted with four new white boards. The remaining white boards will be installed in the other six classrooms this summer.

So, how do students like it? Ms. Johnson observed: “...students like having the space to work together and understand how communicating with each other about their work is beneficial for the student who is writing on the board and for the student who may be confused. They are able to be more active in the classroom and move around instead of being confined to their seats ... students are appreciating the need to be a good communicator and the fact that they can learn from, or teach, each other. I would love for students to normalize the practice of helping each other out.”

When asked why they liked working at the white boards, the students were overwhelmingly enthusiastic, with comments such as:

I am able to get help from my peers if I don't understand something and I don't feel uncomfortable pressure to share my ideas in front of the class, since it is a group of three people.

If we are stuck on something, we can use our partners to help us. It helps me see the problem more visually - I like not doing it on the iPad.

...another really helpful thing was being able to look at others' work to figure out where we made our mistakes...



Students Hasan & Kyle are pictured working together to make iced coffee at the Daily Grind coffee cart.

If the pilot proves invaluable to teaching Math, there may be consideration of utilizing **Thinking Classrooms** for other subjects as well.

The Daily Grind

Shrewsbury High School’s Special Education Pre-Vocational program established **The Daily Grind**, a coffee business for students in the Special Education program at SHS, during the 2020-2021 school year as a way of connecting students and staff. It was a centrally located coffee shop set up in the high school media center, where staff could purchase coffee, snacks, and greeting cards. This year, thanks to the Colonial Fund, this business model was further enhanced through the purchase of a mobile coffee cart, which allows students to deliver coffee and tea to teachers and staff throughout the school day.

According to Meghan de Leon, Director of High School Special Education, “The Shrewsbury High School Pre-Vocational program focuses on helping students gain real-life on-the-job training. Developing a coffee cart business encourages students to utilize functional communication to effectively provide customer service. The coffee cart creates a chance for students to develop meaningful connections with faculty, staff, and members of the Shrewsbury community.

The students have been actively involved in the setup of the coffee cart program. When the first supplies arrived, students were busy assembling and taking inventory. Two students and their teacher also met with Mike Goldman, a representative from Good as Gold Coffee to learn more about the distribution process, cost, and

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Shrewsbury alumni make a difference (and you can, too!)

KATHLEEN KEOHANE
Coordinator of Development
and Volunteer Activities

We are so proud of our students that we want you to come back as alumni and share how your life has been going. No matter when you graduated or where life has taken you, we have an opportunity where you can help. Connect with us by starting here: <http://bit.ly/387nZom>. Anyone who attended Shrewsbury Public Schools, even if you did not graduate from Shrewsbury High School, is welcome to be a guest speaker in a classroom, a special guest for our after-school clubs, or an expert in their field giving career advice to current students. Current students want to hear from you and have been inspired by their alumni interactions so far.

Think your “story” is not one that our students want to hear? Students benefit from hearing stories of resilience, mistakes made and learned from, pursuing a career in the military or trades, and attendance at schools other than four-year colleges/universities. Many of today’s students want to hear from other students whose life after high school was not typical. Maybe your story didn’t include college or included only a little college; maybe there were challenges to overcome, yet you went on to be successful and happy with your life – students would love to hear about it! They would also love to hear about how something (a class or experience) or someone (a teacher or friend) helped you get where you are today. There are so many ways that you can help.

Wondering what types of



Alumna Lauren Buckley, Class of 2014, is shown above talking with students at the SHS Career and Trades Fair.

things our alumni have been doing? We have paired alumni with classrooms and students, highlighted alumni in our Annual Report, asked them to be guest speakers at Opening Day for SPS staff, invited them to be ambassadors of their trade at our Career and Trades Fair (see this article in the Community Advocate: www.communityadvocate.com/2022/04/23/shrewsbury-high-school-holds-career-and-trade-fair/), and interviewed them for spots in our Telethon for the Performing Arts. Visit our Alumni News and Connections website to see what your classmates have been up to: <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni/alumni-news>.

If you live far away from Shrewsbury, consider being a remote guest speaker or mentor, or join alumni who have already connected with us and each other, through LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12385425/> and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/shs_alumni01545/). Don’t miss this opportunity to build your network, find lost friends, or just see what’s going on back in your old schools.

We continue to reach out to our community, looking for alumni and community members who work in or own local businesses, who would like to host high school juniors. If you are interested in offering a summer job, internship, or job shadowing opportunity, please complete this form: <https://forms.gle/nfMcgsA6xYrJRh8N8> or contact us at alumni@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

Alumni are consistently answering the call for support of our students, programs and mission in Shrewsbury Public Schools. It is an honor to have so many former students who are inspiring role models and captivating speakers, and who



Alumni Nate Batchelder, Class of 2018 (left) and Matt Hull, Class of 2018 (right) are shown above talking with students at the SHS Career and Trades Fair.

are willing to share their time with current students. To help us continue offering enriching Alumni programs, consider a gift of a monthly donation here: <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/alumni/donate> or scan this QR code:



No donation is too small and every dollar matters. Even \$5 per month will help. Whether you liked theater, music, science, math, speech and debate, or gym, your donation will go where it truly matters. THANK YOU for joining the hundreds of other SPS alumni who are already making a significant difference in our community.



Students wrote cards expressing their thanks to alumni for visiting, and two of these cards are pictured above.

Looking ahead

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seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months, and that number is 14.6% for our 7th and 8th graders. Our educators and administrators tell stories of children who at times are highly dysregulated, suffering from extreme depression and anxiety, and often, frankly, are in complete mental health crises. This is not an environment ripe for learning. Clearly mental and emotional health needs come first before we can begin the work of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Our dedicated staff, which compose 84% of the School Department’s budget, are spending an incredible amount of time and attention on the needs of these youth. To help address this growing time commitment as a community we are making thoughtful investments in new staffing to help address these challenges. These resources will help ensure that our kids have the trained support that they need.

Another area of challenge for our district is the limited availability of vocational high school seats in the state. Technical and vocational high school seats are in high demand, yet due to a change in admission policies at the state level our graduating 8th graders who ordinarily would have been admitted to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School will not be able to enroll. A technical high school experience is a unique and wonderful program for the children who attend. However, that model cannot be replicated within the walls of the Shrewsbury High School. As a community we will continue to advocate at the state level to address this admissions policy which has locked many communities like ours out of seats in technical programs, while simultaneously trying to be creative about building and providing exposure to real-world work scenarios for our high school students within the traditional high school program.

Notwithstanding these challenges, I’m incredibly confident in our school system, ably led by Dr. Sawyer and his team of professionals. Our schools continue to graduate students who are critical thinkers and are prepared for the challenges of this complex world. This upcoming year we will proactively be going through a strategic planning process to thoughtfully assess where we are today and where we want to be in the future. This needs and gap assessment will help us at the School Committee ensure that we are investing in the right areas moving forward. I welcome the participation of parents, community members, and all the district’s stakeholders to join us in that process this upcoming fall. Until then, I hope you all have a wonderful, restful, and well-deserved summer.



Above: Alumnus Kevin Chen, Class of 2011, talked about environmental issues with students. Below: Alumnus Nick Silverio, Class of 2013 talked with students about his theater and dance experiences.



Colonial Fund

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options available for wholesale purchase. Mr. Goldman was able to provide sample coffee, look at the cart setup, and offer suggestions on how to efficiently prepare iced tea/coffee, save costs with their sugar-free flavor syrups, and offer monthly memberships to consumers.



Students Kim & Hasan (left to right) are shown advertising “To beat the daily grind, enjoy a cup and unwind!”

In addition to bringing students and staff together, the program offers many opportunities for collaboration amongst students. SHS computer science students are working together to develop the “CafeApp” using XCode. At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, staff can download the app to place their order. The app will also be utilized to track inventory of coffee and materials. SHS art students helped design the logo. Oak Middle School Design Lab students, under the guidance of Teacher Jeremy Mularella, created and installed a vinyl sticker of the logo to put on the side of the cart (they made it using the laser cutter which was purchased with Colonial Fund money three years ago!). Special Education Teacher Kelli McSweeney and the SHS Colonial Store donated hats and shirts with the **Daily Grind** logo for the student workers to wear. The Colonial Store will also sell special **Daily Grind** re-usable steel mugs for staff to purchase. It’s been a phenomenal group effort!

The **Daily Grind** invites all faculty and staff to “beat the daily grind, enjoy a cup and unwind” and help students gain hands-on experience with running their own business.

Become a Colonial Fund Supporter!

If you are inspired and excited by these projects, **consider becoming a monthly donor** to the Colonial Fund. Make your monthly donation here: <https://bit.ly/3NsbLMn> or scan the QR code:



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United Sound at Shrewsbury High School:
Enhancing inclusivity and belonging in the Music Classroom

KATE MERCADANTE
Orchestra and General
Music Teacher
Shrewsbury High School

The Shrewsbury High School Chapter of United Sound had its premiere performance on April 28, 2022 as part of the Performing Arts Department’s Spring Concert series. 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 in November of 2019 but never had a performance due to the pandemic. Established in 2014, United Sound is a national organization that has over 135 chapters in 29 states. Shrewsbury High School has the only high school chapter of United Sound in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Dedicated to promoting inclusivity and belonging, United Sound joined students with and without disabilities to learn and perform in the band and orchestra together. It has also provided authentic learning, music-making, and performance opportunities for all 23 students in the group.

The seven New Musicians that were members of United Sound this year were:

- Carl Amazan (‘23)
Saxophone
- Hasan Hadi (‘22)
Violin
- Harrison Howard (‘25)
Trumpet
- Ryan Love (‘22)
Saxophone
- Jenny Lucier (‘23)
Violin
- Ishan Mehta (‘23)
Euphonium
- Kim Phan (‘23)
Violin

The New Musicians applied their new skills on their instruments to their concert repertoire of “Pirates of the Caribbean” and “You’ve Got a Friend in Me”, which was the



Students shown participating in a United Sound rehearsal (above) are: (pictured top row, left to right) Andrew Miao, Ishan Mehta, Arjun Kataria, Carl Amazan, Jenny Lucier, Jasmyn Dua, and Zaineb Irfan; (pictured bottom row, left to right) Kim Phan, Sarah Meuse, Hasan Hadi, Jamie Li, and Ryan Love.

final performance in the third SHS Spring Concert. Members of the audience, as well as the musicians on stage, were thrilled with the performance. The SHS Chamber Orchestra and Wind Ensemble supported the United Sound New Musicians in their premiere performance, making it a meaningful departmental effort. The performance also included recognitions for graduating seniors Hasan Hadi and Ryan Love as part of the Performing Arts Department’s tradition of celebrating graduating seniors during their final concert in the Shrewsbury Public School system.

Rehearsals began this year in November 2021 and ran up until the April 28 concert. Each rehearsal was planned by this year’s club presidents, Ann Titus (‘22) and Alexander Zhang (‘22). The club advisors are Music Teacher/Band Director Justin Bleier (Band), Kate Mercadante (Orchestra), and Special Education Teacher Michele Simler (Special Education) and while the adults have served as the advisors for the club, the planning and teaching were left to the Peer Mentors, Ann and Alex.

This performance would not have been possible without the help of the club’s founding advisors Brian Liporto, former SHS Band Director, and Special Education Teacher Meghan Wallace. 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.shrewsbury-ma.gov/alumni/donate>

United Sound will be continuing next year and both New Musicians and Peer Mentors alike are looking forward to making music and memories together once again. If you are interested in seeing a performance of United Sound, please contact kmercadante@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us in the fall for more information.

Colonial Fund

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By giving **just \$10 per month**, you would become an active part of the **Daily Grind**, by supplying a pound of coffee for the coffee cart each month. For a yearly donation of **just \$20 per month**, you could

inspire students to become better collaborators and communicators, by purchasing one white board for another **Thinking Classroom**.

Every donation makes a difference and we have future projects which could use your support. Your sustaining gift helps our teachers to be more

creative and provides that extra special experience for your students. Please visit the Colonial Fund website (<https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future/funded-projects>) to see more of the incredible programs we have provided to students this year. Thank you for your support!

Finding your lane

PETER COLLINS
*Mathematics Teacher,
Shrewsbury High School*

The following are remarks given by Mr. Peter Collins, Mathematics Teacher, at the Shrewsbury High School Class of 2022 Commemoration on May 31, 2022, edited for publication.

Thank you for that very kind introduction Hanna. Welcome all. Teachers, Administrators, School Committee Members. Welcome especially to students, parents, and guests. Thank you for indulging me for the next handful of minutes.

Hanna told you a little about me as a teacher...and I feel like she did a good, though overly flattering, job capturing the essence of Peter Collins the teacher. But often the labels don't say a lot about who a person is. So beyond some of the labels I have carried at various times...Teacher, Actuary, UConn Husky, St. John's Pioneer...more recently Shrewsbury High Colonial...who am I?

I'll say just a small number of things about who I am. First, I was raised in chaos. I am the tenth child in my family...the tenth of 11 children. It might be more appropriate to say that I was the tail end of a family of 10 - until my younger brother was born...then I became whatever comes right before the tail.

As big as the family was, we were all very close...So the hallmarks of my upbringing were chaos, community, and unconditional love.

I wasn't very good at being a teenager - and would prefer not to relive any of those moments with you...with the exception of one...When I was in high school I was invited to a senior prom - even though I barely knew the girl who asked me. About six years later we got married.

So we choose our path in life, we make our plans, but then serendipitous moments occur, like being asked to a prom, moments that can change the trajectory of your life. Or maybe you feel like you are in the right job, doing the right thing, and then your company gets sold, and suddenly you feel like you're not in the right

place anymore, and life forces you to re-evaluate, to change lanes.

That's when I became a teacher. In many ways I am not particularly suited for it. I am old. I am crusty. Masks or no masks, I have been told I have a ... resting-unsmiling face. When I compare myself to my colleagues I often feel a little inadequate. As an aside... try not to compare yourself to others. It tends to lead to jealousy and unhealthy competition. Be good at what you are good at and celebrate what others are good at. Full stop.

Back to my shortcomings, so to speak. One of my most glaring deficiencies as a teacher is that I get very frustrated with teenagers...in that respect, teaching is a lot like parenting.

As a teacher, I do have some things going for me. I'm a math teacher and I'm pretty good at math. I love to learn. I'm reasonably compassionate. I work hard...and I love my job. And about the fact that teenagers can drive me crazy, they do, virtually every day. They are also the reason I get up in the morning, they give me energy, they make me laugh. Most importantly, their intelligence, kindness, and compassion give me hope for the future...They...You... are the reason I love my job.

100+ years ago, Teddy Roosevelt made a speech about the "man in the arena." In the most famous part of the speech he says..."It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena." I always thought the speech was about the people who dared to do great things. I thought that the people in the arena were the people willing to take center stage in spite of the critics. When he talked of the people in the arena, I was certain that he was not talking about me.

More recently I looked at the speech more closely - and was surprised by what I read. He says that the success or failure of our country will be determined by the way in which the average man, the average woman, does his or her duty. The average citizen must be a good citizen if the republic is to succeed. So the arena, as Teddy Roosevelt goes on

to say, is where the average citizen, with great devotion, spends energy on a worthy cause.

So the arena is not where the critics sit, posting their grievances and pointing out flaws on Social Media. The arena is where we apply ourselves to try to make a positive difference. Though my arena is far from center stage, I've chosen this lane, my arena, to try to have an influence for the better.

Tonight is Commemoration. You heard about a few of the steps along my path. But really this night is about you taking account of where you have been, and making preparations for where you will be going. How will you use what you have learned to become a better version of yourself?

My job comes with the label Teacher. You and I share the label Shrewsbury High Colonials. These labels place me in an incredible community where I feel valued and productive...I hope that you feel a similar connection to the Shrewsbury High community. But communities are made of individuals - individuals with different experiences. Your unique experiences are the foundation of your journey.

You will be called many things in your life...I know I've been called many things...but it is not those labels that define us. It is not others who define us. We take our own journey... hopefully in close community with others. If you're not entirely pleased with where you are on your journey, that's likely a good thing. It means you're being thoughtful about where you are headed and what you want to do with yourself. Probably the most important part of your journey is the part that you take between your ears...deciding who you want to be is more important than deciding what you want to be. Be patient. There's plenty of time.

Plenty of time to find your arena - to find your lane... but knowing how way leads on to way, feel free to change lanes if that becomes the right thing to do.

Ultimately, don't let anyone tell you to stay in your lane... But once you find your lane... SLAY in your lane.

Statistics

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commented, "I was impressed with their overall quality and the students' understanding of correlation ≠ causation, statistical biases, testing for statistical significance, etc." From advocating for the preservation of honey bees and disproving connections between video games and violence, to expressing concerns about local issues like the development of the former Beal School and national ones such as looming college debt, the students were able to thoughtfully explain their data processes, their analyses and how they were careful in making sure they were as impartial as possible in interpreting their data.

For the teachers, some of the best take-aways from the project actually came a week later, during the AQR students' final exam. On the test, students were asked to comment on the most impactful lesson learned from class. April Robinson stated, "[The B.S.] showed me how much data out in the world is just biased. I think it was impactful because I usually use those biased statistics to back up my knowledge and now I can't do it so easily." Mario (Nick) Flores learned that "a lot of people try to twist the truth to fit their side or help their cause instead of showing the real raw data." The feedback was clear; every student truly enjoyed spending the time completing this project.

Beyond the math, another purpose of this project was to help students investigate a problem and come up with a feasible action plan to implement in their communities. After the showcase, SHS Math Director Jean Marie Johnson said "I was amazed with the presentations and especially the students' enthusiasm for their Data Analysis projects and AQR courses." Doing this for the first time seemed exciting for all involved. While teachers were generally pleased with the outcome of the statistics projects and the showcase, they do hope to make some modifications in the future. The end of the year time crunch provided a challenge for students carrying out their action plans and this is something the teachers hope to improve upon in the future. Mrs. Busso, Mrs. Joseph, Mrs. Moisan, and Mrs. Noel look forward to implementing this type of project again in an effort to help students learn and grow, not only in their mathematical understanding, but also as contributing members of their communities.



SHREWSBURY SCHOOL
Journal

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