

# J<sup>Apple</sup> Shrewsbury School Journal

Serving a community of continuous learners

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Superintendent's Corner

## An uncomfortable situation

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER  
SUPERINTENDENT

Our town is at a crossroads. As a community, we must decide whether we will commit to providing our children with an education that is comparable to what existed just a few years ago, or whether we will continue to dismantle what has been one of the most cost effective school districts in the nation and jeopardize our children's chances of success in the future.

**It is uncomfortable to recommend such a significant increase in the School Department's appropriated budget...however, it is more uncomfortable to impoverish the education of our town's children when they live in a community that has the means to provide adequate resources to its schools.**

My initial budget recommendation for next year makes the case for a significant restoration of resources to the School Department. The bottom line is that funding this budget recommendation would require an increase of \$7.8 million, or 14.99%, in the School Department's appropriated budget. Clearly, this represents a very large increase in the level of financial support the district would receive; it also illustrates how deep of a hole the district is in due to the fiscal challenges that have resulted in our current level of resources.

It is uncomfortable to recommend such a significant increase in the School Department's appropriated budget, for several reasons. It

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### inside • pages 2 & 3

Budget related articles on effects of modest investment in technology, special education cost mitigation and teacher salaries

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Students exhibit core values and investing in teaching and learning

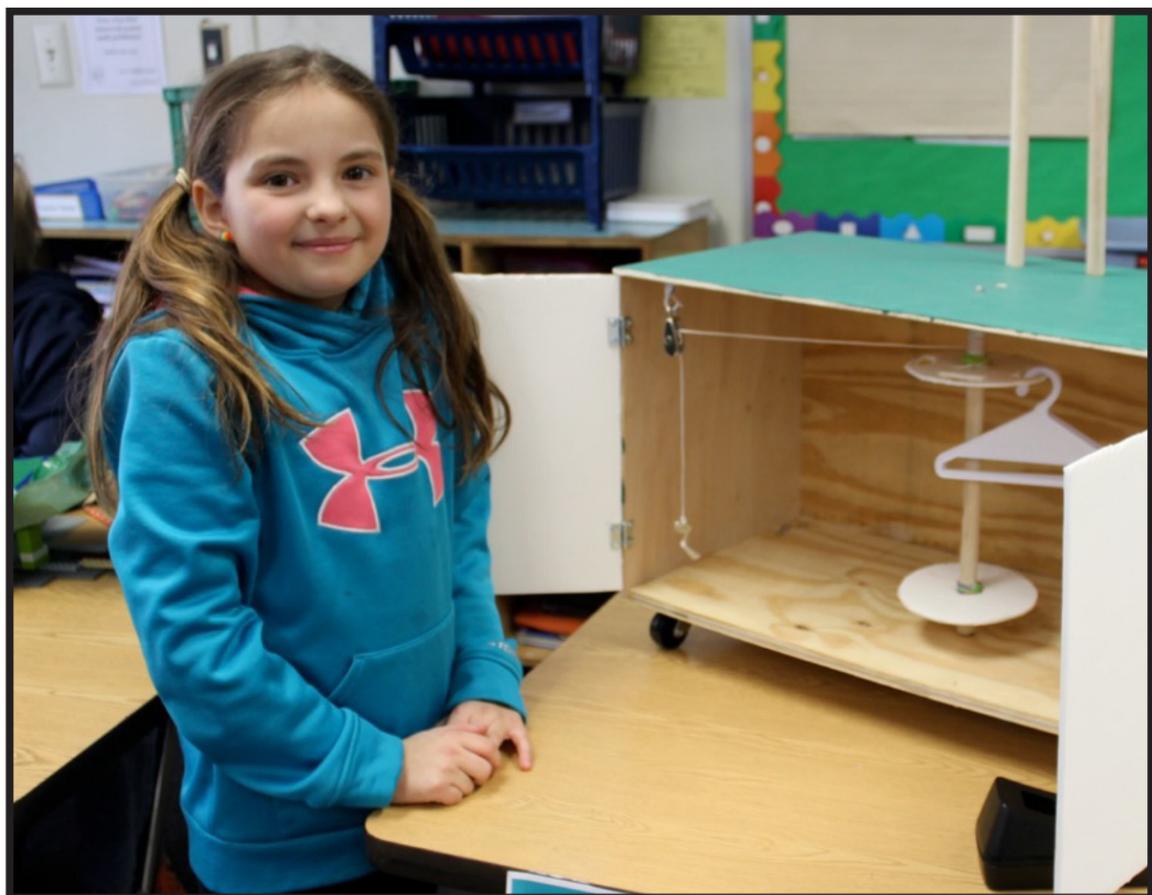


See the budget related article on page 2 regarding the effects of outdated technology.

*“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”*

~ Helen Keller ~

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## Invention Convention - simply wonderful!

*Pictured above is Charlotte Harnois, 4th grade student in Mrs. Wendy Moran's classroom at Walter J. Paton School, standing beside her very clever invention called the "Auto Doll Closet". This device is an invention she created as part of the 4th grade science unit on simple machines. See more photos on page 4.*

## What kind of schools do we want?

SANDRA FRYC  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

As we begin the New Year, the School Committee continues its formal work on the Fiscal Year 2015 school budget. Unfortunately, it is a déjà vu experience as the budget constraints and concerns that have faced our school district for many years remain, and in fact, have reached a point where there is serious concern about meeting the needs of all students. Though we are deeply concerned about budget related issues, it is important to note that our dedicated educators and administrators continue to work extremely hard in order to provide the students of our town with an excellent education. They continue to work at a high level despite increased demands and decreased resources.

In October of 2013 the School Committee developed Fiscal Priorities & Guidelines as a tool for the development of the Fiscal Year 2015 budget. We determined,

in order of priority, that we must focus our budget development around reduction in class size, providing the proper level of resources to update curriculum so that the district is in line with state expectations, and to implement our adopted Strategic

**After years of reductions and eliminations in staff and programming, as well as deferring purchases in materials such as textbooks and technology, we believe we have reached a point where additional revenue is absolutely needed.**

Priorities and Goals to the greatest extent possible. We felt that creating these fiscal priorities would better enable Dr. Sawyer and his staff to concentrate their efforts on crafting a budget that would begin to correct the course our school district has taken and begin to add back resources in areas where

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## Superintendent's Corner

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is uncomfortable because it is clear that other town departments are also in need of additional resources; the town's financial resources are limited; and while the economy has certainly improved, some of our neighbors are still experiencing financial difficulty. It is uncomfortable because there will be some who will claim, contrary to evidence, that our schools already spend too much, and who will express outrage and indignation while insinuating that the schools' needs aren't real, that our motivation is actually something other than doing the right thing for our community's children, and that the School Department's leaders are incompetent, untrustworthy, or both.

However, it is more uncomfortable to impoverish the education of our town's children when they live in a community that has the means to provide adequate resources to its schools.

It is more uncomfortable to know that we are not providing funding for staffing levels and educational opportunities that are standard for communities that are similar to, or less affluent, than ours.

It is more uncomfortable to know that Shrewsbury students' performance has deteriorated, with achievement gaps widening and academic growth weakening.

It is more uncomfortable to know that students who are at-risk and experiencing academic, social, behavioral, or mental health difficulties are not able to get adequate support, wasting their potential and creating real social and economic costs for our society that are ultimately more expensive than investing in these students' education.

It is more uncomfortable to think about the shy girl who is experiencing reading difficulties in her class of 31 second graders at Floral Street School, who is not getting enough of the teacher's attention or frequent enough individualized instruction, and who research says will have a much less likely chance of future educational success if she's not reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

It is more uncomfortable to think about the emotionally fragile boy

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## 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

**Mary Beth Banios**  
Assistant Superintendent

**Kimberlee Cantin**  
Project Coordinator/Designer

# Special education cost mitigation

MELISSA MAGUIRE  
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION  
AND PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

There has been much discussion about the increased costs of out of district special education programs and the impact they have on the overall budget. It is important to understand two critical elements of this discussion: 1) Out of district programs are required to provide a free and appropriate public education to our most intense special education population, or those students whose disabilities are so significant the district is unable to provide specialized instruction required for them to make effective progress; 2) There needs to be an understanding and focus on the substantial savings and cost mitigation provided by developing programs in district for students with severe disabilities who would otherwise be placed in an out of district program.

The District currently serves 80 students in out of district programs with a range of tuitions from \$41,000 for a collaborative program to \$304,000 for a residential program for students with the most severe disabilities (often times multiple disabilities).

For the purposes of demonstrating how the district mitigates costly out of district placements, this analysis will focus on the tuitions for the students requiring day place-

ments with intensive special needs. For the students currently placed in a special education private school requiring intensive services, the lowest tuition is \$ 97,000. It is important to note that this is the lowest tuition used to show the differentiation between the in-district programs and the out of district programs. Tuitions are much higher for most of the students that fall in the intensive special needs category.

The chart below shows the calculation of the cost per student for the Education Learning Center (ELC) programs in the district with the most intensive students. These predominantly support students on the Autism Spectrum as well as students with significant disabilities.

As this chart shows, there is a significant variance between the

costs to educate students with disabilities in the district versus out of the district. After factoring in Circuit Breaker reimbursement there is a cost savings of approximately \$2,000,000 per year to keep these students within the district. Additionally, when students are educated in out of district placements, they must be transported, and this substantial cost is not reimbursable by the state.

The district is committed to continuing their efforts to develop in district programs that support students with disabilities in their community. However, this will require resources, space, and oversight as well as the recognition that this is a greater benefit to the students as well as a substantial cost savings to the overall budget.

**Cost Per Student for the Education Learning Center (ELC) Programs**

School	# of Students in ELC	Average In District Cost Per Student	Total Cost In District	Per Student Cost if Out of District	Total Cost if Out of District
School 1	7	27,000	189,000	97,000	\$679,000
School 2	13	30,000	390,000	97,000	\$1,261,000
School 3	15	26,000	390,000	97,000	\$1,455,000
School 4	9	28,000	252,000	97,000	\$873,000
School 5	8	32,000	256,000	97,000	\$776,000
School 6	4	44,000	176,000	97,000	\$388,000
School 7	19	28,000	532,000	97,000	\$1,843,000
	75		2,185,000		\$7,275,000

Net savings for in district programs after state reimbursements approximately \$2 million

## Effects of a modest investment

JONATHAN GREEN  
DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY

"We need to prepare our students for their future, not our past." Walk through any of our schools and talk to educators and students about the importance of technology, and you'll hear this sentiment. Just 30 years ago, students were taught how to find the right book in their school library for a research project. Today, the challenge

is different because there is an exponentially larger amount of information. The ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information—text, video, and images—when there is so much available requires sophisticated thinking skills. In addition to a written paper, students may be required to create a video, presentation, or online multimedia tutorial to share their thinking, just as professionals create to represent and share their work.

If you have ever seen a child

on a computer, it can be easy to believe that today's students were "born digital" and are far better than adults when it comes to using and understanding technology. However, research shows that teens are not as tech savvy as the stereotypes indicate. Although teens might feel and look confident online, they make mistakes due to insufficient reading skills, less sophisticated research strategies, and impatience. While they may be comfortable clicking and scrolling, they are less successful with web research tasks than adults. One study measuring website task completion found a success rate of only 71% for teenage users compared to 83% for adults (Nielsen 2013).

This research supports our district's approach to integrating technology. We are not teaching our students how to click around

### Age of Student Learning Devices

	Student desktops more than 5 years old	Student laptops more than 5 years old	Student desktops circa 2002	Student laptops circa 2002
<b>Elementary</b>	100.00% (103/103)	91.25% (146/160)	100.00% (103/103)	28.75% (46/160)
<b>Middle</b>	40.49% (100/247)	76.56% (49/64)	25.10% (62/247)	4.69% (3/64)
<b>High</b>	39.27% (97/247)	92.68% (76/82)	0.00% (0/247)	0.00% (0/82)
<b>K-12</b>	50.25% (300/597)	88.56% (271/306)	27.64% (165/597)	16.01% (49/306)

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# Shrewsbury teacher salaries

BARBARA A. MALONE  
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Adequate compensation is crucial for the recruitment and retention of qualified employees in any industry. The ability to recruit and retain quality educators is one of the most important factors in the success of any school system and the main reason for maintaining competitive compensation. Teacher compensation is the largest portion of the School Department budget and therefore, for purposes of transparency, school administration is providing teacher compensation comparative data.

This information is timely because the Shrewsbury School Committee and the Shrewsbury Education Association have recently ratified a new contract, which took effect on August 26, 2013 and will continue through August of 2016. This contract contains cost of living adjustments of 0% for this school year, 1.75% next year, and 1.50% at the start of the third year and 0.5% halfway through that year. The contract also includes the deferment of the maximum step from twelve years to thirteen years, with an increase of \$1000 in school year 2013-

2014 from the previous maximum at Step 12. Also, teachers who are currently on Step 11 will receive an additional \$2000 this year, and next year when they advance to Step 12, the Step 12 salary rate will be reduced by \$3000 from the current level. The net effect of this movement is an even distribution of steps with a deferral of

such as income, ethnicity, and other similar points of comparison.)

Every public school district in Massachusetts has a salary grid that assigns salary levels based on years of experience (steps) and educational attainment (lanes).

For our comparisons we compared Shrewsbury to AVC districts and selected DART districts

A Comparison of Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for Assabet Valley Districts		
School District (AVC)	2013/2014 COLA	2014/2015 COLA
1. Maynard	2.65%	tbd
2. Assabet Valley Technical High School	2.25%	2.25%
3. Marlborough	2.00%	2.00%
4. Algonquin	1.55%	tbd
5. Assabet Valley Collaborative	1.50%	tbd
6. Northborough	1.50%	tbd
7. Southborough	1.50%	tbd
8. Nashoba	1.50%	tbd
9. Westborough	1.50%	tbd
10. Grafton	1.00%/2.00%	tbd
11. Tahanto	1.25%	tbd
12. Boylston	1.00%/1.25%	tbd
13. Hudson	1.00%	2.00%
14. Millbury	1.00%	tbd
15. Berlin	tbd	tbd
16. Shrewsbury	0%	1.75%

maximum step until year 13 of a teacher's career.

Two ways for us to compare teacher salary information in a meaningful way include an analysis of our salaries compared to those salaries of the school departments in our surrounding geographic area ("AVC" or Assabet Valley Collaborative school districts) and to compare our salaries to those of school departments that are designated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as "DART" (District Analysis and Review Tools) districts. (These are districts that the state deems comparable to us in terms of demographics

of similar size at three key salary points: bachelor degree starting salary, master degree starting salary, and the highest maximum salary an experienced educator can attain (In Shrewsbury this is an educator with a Master's degree plus sixty additional credits of graduate level work who also has thirteen years of teaching experience or more.)

We found that Shrewsbury teacher salaries for a Bachelor degree beginner is eighth out of the sixteen AVC districts at \$43,224, just slightly above the average of \$42,969 and the median of \$43,165, and is third out of seven of the selected DART districts, where the average is \$42,389 and the median is \$43,019.

For a Master degree beginner, Shrewsbury teacher salaries are fifth out of sixteen AVC districts at \$47,937, a bit above the average of \$46,692 and the median of

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## Superintendent's Corner

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whose needs cannot be satisfied by his teachers in his 7th grade classes of 31 or by the grade-level counselor responsible for 490 students, and who begins acting out more - and in more serious ways - in order to gain others' attention, compromising both his learning and the learning of his peers.

It is more uncomfortable to think about the high achieving high school student who is eager to challenge herself in math and science, but who cannot take the additional courses she wants due to a lack of teachers, and who does not gain admission to an engineering college despite her desire to pursue a career in this field.

It is more uncomfortable to realize that our students will not perform to their potential on high-stakes state assessments when the district's mathematics curriculum and textbooks are out of alignment, and all mathematics curriculum support for educators in preschool through grade 8 was eliminated in recent years.

It is more uncomfortable to think about how many times teachers don't bother to utilize the technology in their classrooms or computer labs because it is so out of date that it will not function properly, resulting in missed learning opportunities for their students.

The time has come for our town to meet its responsibility to the welfare of our children by providing adequate funding for their education. Doing so would require a much larger investment than is currently being made, but would be a cost-effective level of educational spending that would still be millions of dollars below that of the average Massachusetts school district.

During the past few years, I have communicated that the many successes our district has achieved over time are not sustainable given the resources available. I have warned that a continued lack of resources will inevitably result in lower quality education for our children, and that slippage has already begun to occur. We have begun to experience significant negative changes to measures of educational success. Based on our state test scores, our district's accountability status was downgraded from Level 1, the highest rating, to Level 2, which is troubling as it means that the achievement gap is widening for at-risk students. Further, student academic growth scores weakened considerably across the board and accelerated over the past year. The bottom line is that we are experiencing short-term harm that has created a risk of long-term damage to the quality of public education in Shrewsbury.

As a resident and a parent, I believe that Shrewsbury is a wonderful community in which to live and to raise a family. As your superintendent, it is my duty to sound the alarm by sharing my serious concerns that our schools are presently not meeting the needs of our students -- and to illustrate what is required to solve this difficult problem. I am optimistic that the Shrewsbury community will ultimately find a way to provide today's children with the same high quality of education that recent graduates received, and thus remain true to the deeply-held American value of providing the next generation with the opportunity to build a successful future.

# State aid for education

LIAM T. HURLEY  
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES

## Overview

Chapter 70 Aid is the state funded program that allocates resources for education to school districts in the Commonwealth. The Education Reform Law of 1993 included this extensive program of state aid to cities and towns for the operation of K-12 public schools. The original intent of the program was "to ensure that every public school system had adequate funding, regardless of the wealth of the local community." The financing formula has evolved from its original state to consider a community's ability to pay according to its property values as well as income levels. Thus, the program that began in 1994 continues to provide substantial resources to communities throughout the Common-

wealth under the aggregate wealth model.

## Updates for FY15

Shrewsbury falls into the \$25/student additional aid because Shrewsbury is below its Target Local Share according to the formula and does not qualify for additional aid beyond the minimum

aid. Shrewsbury's preliminary Chapter 70 aid for FY15 is \$19,045,813, which is a \$148,575 increase from FY14.

## Components

The Chapter 70 aid to school districts is determined through

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District	Shortfall from target	Rank out of 72 Cities/Towns with a Shortfall
ROYALSTON	35.96	1
TOLLAND	21.08	2
ATHOL	19.23	3
DUDLEY	11.56	4
HANSON	10.97	5
EAST BROOKFIELD	10.50	6
DUNSTABLE	9.92	7
FALL RIVER	9.51	8
MENDON	9.31	9
NEW BEDFORD	9.27	10
HOLYOKE	8.92	11
UPTON	8.88	12
<b>SHREWSBURY</b>	<b>8.55</b>	<b>13</b>
LAWRENCE	8.45	14

The visual above shows a snapshot comparison of the State's largest shortfalls from target local share.

## What kind of schools?

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we are experiencing serious and detrimental erosion to the education process.

On January 23, 2014 the School Committee discussed an initial budget recommendation of \$59,840,582, which is a \$7.8 million or 14.99% increase over the Fiscal Year 2014 appropriated budget. We realize that this may seem like a very large number for some in the community; however, it reflects the School Committee's fiscal priorities and begins the restoration process. After years of reductions and eliminations in staff and programming, as well as deferring purchases in materials such as textbooks and technology, we believe we have reached a point where additional revenue is absolutely needed in order to continue to provide required and expected educational services to students. The budget recommendation document is available for review on the School Department website. I would urge everyone to take the time to read this document and become familiar with the needs of our school district. This document outlines the budget recommendation and provides detailed information to support each funding request.

There is no question that providing educational services is expensive. There is also no question that our school district has been able to deliver educational services at a financial level that is far below most cities and towns throughout the state. It is also fair to state that our school district provides the taxpayers of our community with

**There is no question that providing educational services is expensive. There is also no question that our school district has been able to deliver educational services at a financial level that is far below most cities and towns throughout the state.**

exceptional value for their investment in education. Also, due to the fiscal constraints faced by the town, students and their families have to provide funding in areas that used to simply be part of the appropriated budget. Families in Shrewsbury pay some of the highest fees for transportation, athletics and extra-curricular activities in the state. Without this additional funding, even deeper reductions or eliminations would have been required. Students and educators in Shrewsbury have higher class sizes than any other school district in the Assabet Collaborative, fewer elective offerings and limited opportunity to take Advanced Placement courses. Is this the type of school district that we want to continue to be?

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# Investing in teaching & learning

MARY BETH BANIOS  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

In recent years, there have been significant reductions to funding for both the personnel positions and the resources that support the curriculum, instruction and assessment needs of the district as is indicated by the tables below.

can no longer afford to put on hold is an update to our K-8 math program. The Massachusetts Department of Education adopted new math standards in 2011 that are aligned to the Common Core standards being used across the country. These standards expect mastery of key concepts at each grade level and require our students

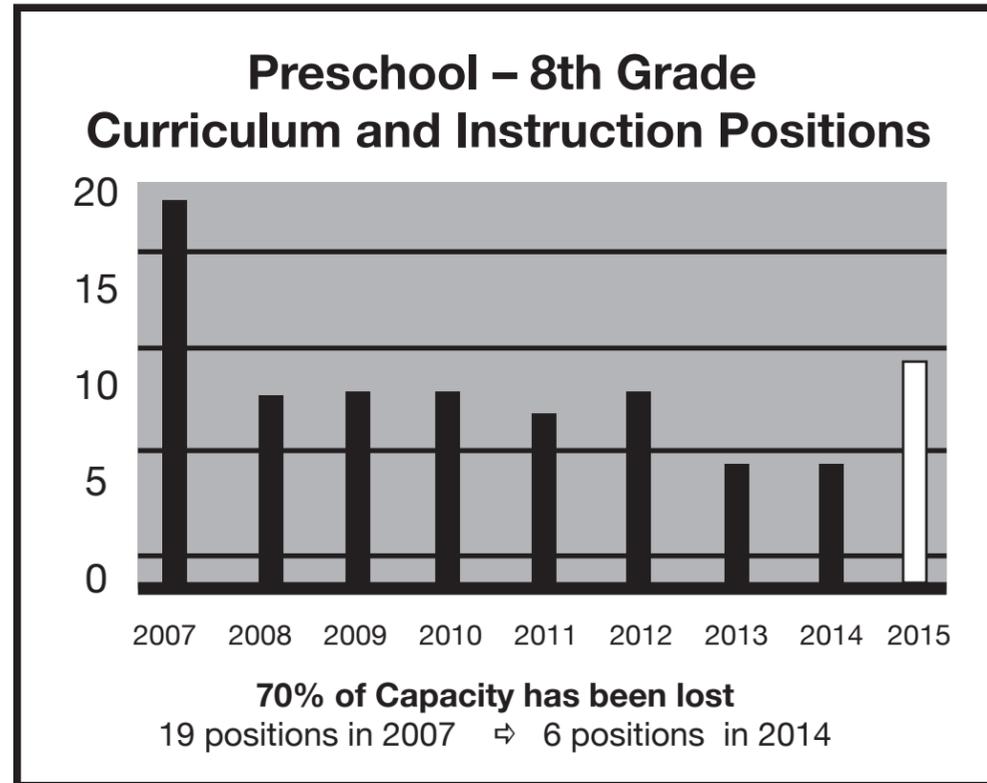
new standards and will need to be replaced. Our K-8 teachers are also in need of professional development and on-going coaching to ensure that this new math curriculum and the supporting resources are implemented at high levels. Shrewsbury students are still being taught under the old standards. State testing

now uses the new standards. Shrewsbury saw a significant drop in its overall math student growth score and was second to last in this category when reviewing comparable districts' data. This year's budget recommendation includes a request for \$722,000 to address the pent up demands in our K-8 math programs.

Since 2007, Shrewsbury has seen a significant decline in

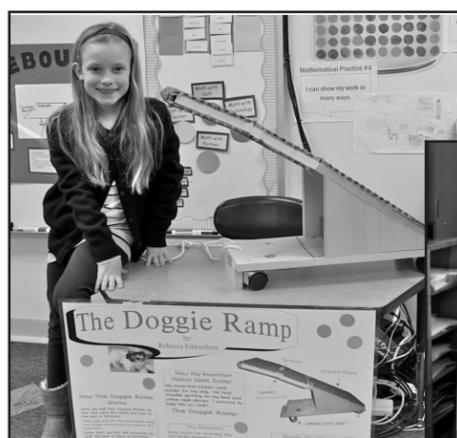
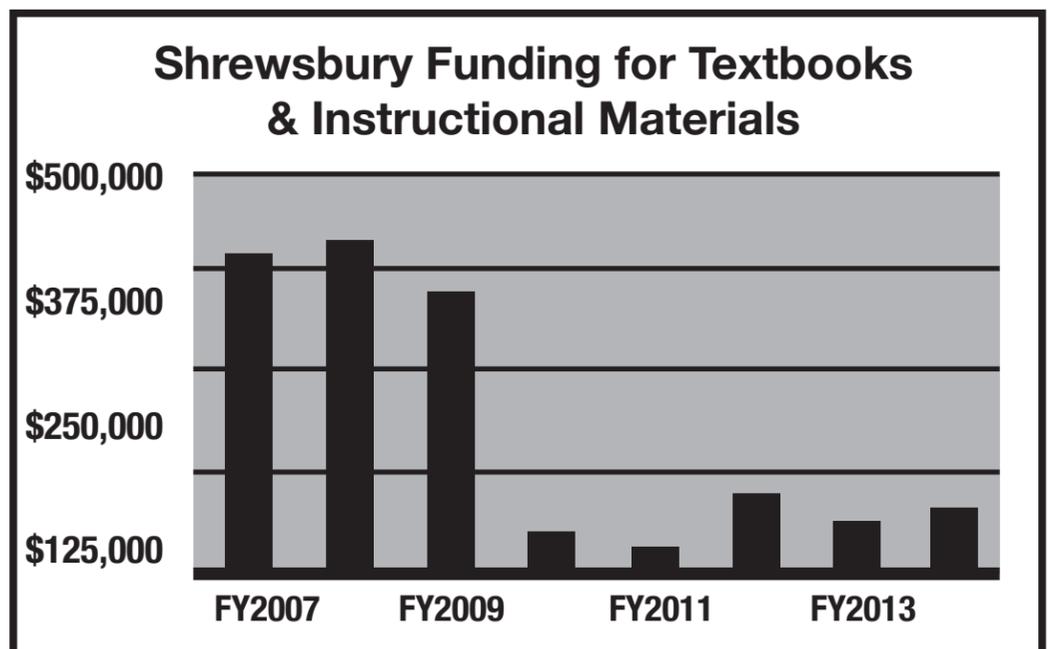
the number of curriculum and instruction positions in the district. These positions were cut as cost savings measures. These cuts

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In better financial times, Shrewsbury had a curriculum review cycle in place which was used as a structure to ensure that the content area curriculum was reviewed on a regular basis and needed instructional materials were updated to reflect changing curriculum demands and normal wear and tear. With no funds to address needs, this review cycle has become dormant and there are many pent up demands. One area that we

to apply mathematics to solve abstract problems at a higher level than they were expected to in the past. Our current curriculum materials are significantly out of alignment with the



**Invention Convention** - As part of the 4th grade science curriculum, students are asked to create a tool that uses one or more of the following simple machines: a pulley, wedge, wheel and axle, inclined plane, lever and/or screw. Ideas ranged from handy household helpers to machines designed to help the family pet. The students inventions were simply wonderful!



Pictured at far left is Rebecca Edwardsen with her "Doggie Ramp" machine and at right is David Rowe with his "Dog Treat Thrower".

# Students exhibit core values

ERIN BEAN  
2013-2014 FRESHMAN CLASS  
PRESIDENT

Imagine you are a Shrewsbury High School student who faces special challenges. You're at the homecoming dance and everyone around you is smiling, dancing, and having the time of their lives. You, however, are standing alone in the back of the room. Then - out of the corner of your eye, you see one of those smiling students walk up to you. They ask you to dance, take your hand, and guide you to the dance floor - where you spend the rest of your magical evening engulfed in the warm company of your fellow classmates.

This actually happened at this year's homecoming dance. One SHS student's choice to make a positive difference in someone's life offers a perfect example of the school's commitment to the six "Core Values" - Life-Long/Reflective Learner, Equity, Advocacy, Dedication, Empathy/Respect, and Responsibility (LEADER).

When the incoming freshmen arrived at SHS, the school counselors were eager to introduce the Core Values. Together, students discussed and created lists of ways they could incorporate these values into their daily lives. When asked the purpose of this added curriculum, Mrs. Nga Huynh, Director of Guidance at SHS, responded "The Core Values provide the foundation that helps to build a community that's unique to SHS. Incorporating the Core Values into the School Counseling Curriculum for all freshman students helps to instill a strong sense of community and values in the school culture

as freshman students make the transition to SHS".

In addition to the SHS student who danced with the student with special challenges at the homecoming dance, there have been numerous selfless actions performed by SHS students that display these Core Values. One student stayed after class - without being asked - to clean the desks of a teacher's classroom. Another student singularly picked up all of the trash left behind at lunch in the SHS Commons, in order to ease the burden of the custodian. Yet another student went out and bought supplies - with their own money - and helped a teacher decorate the classroom bulletin board. These are just a few examples of the many ways that SHS students are giving back in a big way!

The School Counseling Department recently introduced the "Shrewsbury Standout" Award, an initiative designed

to acknowledge SHS students who go "above and beyond", exhibiting one or more of these Core Values. Teachers nominate students who they feel have contributed to the school community in a significant way. The most recent recipients of this award include SHS students - Ryan Beals, Rachel Besaw, Brandon Campbell, Alice Dasilva, Kayla Freeman, Carlos Garcia, and John Knowles. They, along with other nominated students, will be honored at a celebratory breakfast recognizing their contributions to the SHS community.

Every day, throughout the busy halls of Shrewsbury High School, students and teachers alike are hard at work. However, the best are those who have the true pride of Shrewsbury in their hearts, "blue and gold" in their veins, and display the true meaning of "LEADER" through their actions.



Pictured above left -right are Kayla Freeman, Ryan Beals, Carlos Garcia and Brandon Campbell, the most recent recipients of the "Shrewsbury Standout" Award. (Missing from photo are Rachel Besaw, Alice Dasilva and John Knowles.)

## What kind of schools?

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I believe our community has reached a critical point in regards to its ability to appropriately provide educational services to students. Simply put, we need to decide if we want to invest in education at a level that truly allows our district to do the work it is required to do. Some will argue that the school budget is already too big or that it includes too many nice to have items that students do not require. Yes, the school budget is a significant portion of the town's overall budget, but at the current level of funding we are seeing significant erosion in the ability to properly educate students. The current budget recommendation is a need, not a want budget. There is no debate that it would be beneficial for students to have more academic offerings, technology and extra-curricular activities; but this cannot be accomplished without additional funding. We have reached the point

**We have much to be proud of as a school district, but we have passed the point where we can feasibly continue to provide the educational services the community demands and the students deserve.**

where we are starting to see the effects of high class sizes and lack of proper resources. Cost mitigation efforts have been thoroughly exhausted and there is no additional room for reductions or eliminations without adversely affecting students. If a significant budget reduction is ultimately required, the already compromised class sizes and educational services will be further challenged.

I hope that next year at this time we are not having these same types of budget conversations. It is vital to the well being of our school district and the students of Shrewsbury that our community takes a collective look at appropriately funding education. The School Committee is cognizant of the fiscal constraints related to the overall town budget. However, we believe the residents of Shrewsbury need to ask what kind of school district does our town want and how should it be funded. We have much to be proud of as a school district, but we have passed the point where we can feasibly continue to provide the educational services the community demands and the students deserve. Dr. Sawyer used the word "uncomfortable" during his budget recommendation address in January 2014. As we move through this year's budget process, there will be uncomfortable conversations regarding priorities and the needs of the school district. While these discussions may be difficult, I believe it is time for the community to meet this discussion head on and ultimately decide what we desire for the quality of education in Shrewsbury.

## State Aid continued from page 3

four basic steps:

**Step 1:** Calculate Foundation Budget

**Step 2:** Calculate Required Local Contribution

**Step 3:** Fill the gap with Chapter 70 Education Aid

**Step 4:** After Chapter 70 Aid is determined, districts may contribute more.

The required local contribution is only a minimum amount that cities and towns must contribute to their school districts, and many communities opt to contribute significantly more. For this reason, the Chapter 70 formula provides a baseline school budget, but it does not ensure equitable total funding across the state. Net School Spending is defined as the Chapter 70 Aid plus the town's Required Local Contribution. Cities and towns must spend at least their Required Net School Spending. Shrewsbury has exceeded its Net School Spending Requirements and has

spent between 6% and 16% percent above its Required Net School Spending and has recently been around 10%. However, the state average increase above Net School Spending is 15% and our peer districts spend on average almost 30% above their Required Net School Spending.

### Snapshot Comparison of State's largest shortfalls from target local share

Out of the 351 cities and towns, Shrewsbury ranks 13th in the magnitude of shortfall from target local share. This puts Shrewsbury in the bottom 4% of communities in the Commonwealth relative to the difference between the actual share of the foundation budget versus the target share determined by the state's calculation based on property and income wealth of the community. (See chart on page 3.)

### Summary

In conclusion, Chapter 70 is

the state aid formula used to determine adequate funding levels to educate children throughout Massachusetts. Although the formula does have flaws, it is a critical funding source for cities and towns in Massachusetts. Shrewsbury's enrollment growth has slowed down, and the wealth formula requires Shrewsbury to assume a larger proportion of funding of the foundation budget; as a result state levels of funding have only increased by minimum levels in FY14 and preliminary FY15. It is hoped that the legislature will update the formula to address areas where current educational needs are different than what they were when the formula was established almost twenty years ago. However, given that Shrewsbury receives a larger amount of education funding than the wealth formula calls for, it is unlikely to receive substantial increases to aid in the foreseeable future.

## Technology

CONTINUED from page 2

on buttons—they can often figure that out faster than the adults—we are teaching them how to use technology to create, produce, analyze, and share, the same ways professionals do. Our students and their peers across the United States are growing up with a lot of technology at home, yet they still need to be guided to learn how to think and learn with technology.

There is a big difference between consuming technology by watching TV, texting friends, and playing video games—the activities most youth do for fun—and the creation tasks promoted by educators such as regularly writing in a blog, creating educational videos, and analyzing data with spreadsheets. Our students need to know how to use technology effectively, efficiently, and wisely. Just as we teach our youth the skills and judgment required to safely operate a motor vehicle, our students need to learn the skills and ways of thinking needed to productively utilize technology.

There are active communities of motivated and talented educators in Shrewsbury and around the world who are doing the exciting work of developing innovative ways to use technology to enhance learning, and this collaborative knowl-

**Our students and their peers across the United States are growing up with a lot of technology at home, yet they still need to be guided to learn how to think and learn with technology.**

edge creation is exactly what we want our teachers and students to be practicing. Join our conversations on Twitter at: #Shrewspschat, #edtechchat, #ettipad

To do this work we need up-to-date technology for them to learn with, especially in the elementary and high schools that are not benefiting from the fee-funded 1:1 program at the middle schools. We need WiFi and the wired infrastructure it is built on, and modern mobile devices such as tablets, netbooks, and notebooks. We need media centers with up-to-date collections of print books, electronic books, and research databases, and enough support people to build and maintain a robust environment that is helpful, proactive, and responsive. In short, the technology needs to be available and it needs to work. Technology in Shrewsbury has been suffering from chronic underfunding but with the investment of just over one million additional dollars to the technology budget this year we'll be in a great position to realize these valuable opportunities. For complete details of the Superintendent's FY 2015 budget recommendation visit <http://tinyurl.com/sps2015budget>

## Teachers achieve professional status

BARBARA A. MALONE  
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

On Wednesday, October 16, 2013 the district recognized fourteen educators for their excellent contributions to the Shrewsbury Public Schools. Professional Status is awarded to teachers who have demonstrated excellence in their work and commitment to students. According to Massachusetts state law an educator receives professional status after having completed three successful years of

employment. This status is a particularly significant accomplishment in Shrewsbury, where the district employs rigorous hiring and supervision/evaluation practices during the probationary period. Most years principals, directors and central office administrators make difficult, but necessary, decisions not to renew the contract of a small number of educators, and these decisions contribute to Shrewsbury Public Schools' stature as a high performing school district. While professional status can be attained throughout all public schools in Massachusetts,

Shrewsbury Public Schools is among a small group of districts in the state that recognize this important accomplishment through a formal reception. We would like to thank the district's PTO groups and the Shrewsbury Education Association for co-sponsoring the event with the district. Each person receiving professional status was individually recognized and received a small gift as a memento of the occasion. The educators recognized this year, along with their teaching area, are:

### SHREWSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

**Science:**  
*Norma Chico*

**Foreign Language:**  
*Deborah Vigneaux*

### OAK MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Foreign Language:**  
*Curtis Bellemer*

**Mathematics Teacher:**  
*Jennifer Dufault*

**Special Education:**  
*Anne Murphy*

### SHERWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Special Education:**  
*Elizabeth Camire*

**Advanced Math Coach:**  
*Melissa McCann*

### WALTER J. PATON SCHOOL

**Special Education:**  
*Michelle Kasanov*

### SPRING STREET SCHOOL

**School Psychologist:**  
*Michelle LeMay*

### CALVIN COOLIDGE SCHOOL

**Gade 3:**  
*Erin Kendrick*

Although administrators are not legally eligible for professional status, the district does recognize those individuals who have completed three years of high quality work in their leadership position:

### DISTRICT

**Director of Technology:**  
*Jonathan Green*

**IT Systems Manager:**  
*Brian L'Heureux*

**Director of High School Science:**  
*David Hruskoci*

**Director of Preschool:**  
*Lisa Robinson*

## Investing continued from page 4

have come at a time when there have been increased demands on curriculum and instruction staff due to new state wide standards and assessments and the ever increasing need to integrate technology into instruction. Shrewsbury is a fairly large district with over 180 Pre-K to 8 classrooms projected to be in our district next year. All math curriculum coordination has been lost at the Pre-K to 8 levels. There is also no English language arts, science or social studies coordination for the approximately 100 elementary classrooms in the district and no coordination for social studies or math in grades 5-8. These types of curriculum support positions are standard in most districts of comparable size to Shrewsbury. The budget request is to restore the most basic

needed positions to our curriculum and instruction staff, not to return to the levels the district had in place in the past. Specifically the recommendations is to return

**In better financial times, Shrewsbury had a curriculum review cycle in place which was used as a structure to ensure that the content area curriculum was reviewed on a regular basis and needed instructional materials were updated to reflect changing curriculum demands and normal wear and tear.**

three of the 10.5 elementary coaching/curriculum coordination positions that have been lost since 2007 and

restore the two curriculum coordination positions that were cut from the middle level in 2013.

Dr. Robert Marzano, a highly regarded education researcher, completed a 35 year meta-analysis of the most important school level factors impacting student achievement. His findings were published in a book entitled *What Works in Schools* (2003). This often quoted resource identifies a "Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum" as the top school factor impacting student achievement (Marzano, 2003). Without a return to investment in a guaranteed and viable curriculum in the Shrewsbury Public Schools, our capacity to continue to graduate students who are well prepared for their future is significantly diminished.

# Award winning ideas & effort



The annual Shrewsbury Education Foundation (SEF) awards dinner took place this past January 25, 2014. The packed event honored recipients of 10 grants and the John P. Collins Award for Excellence. Fundraising efforts from events throughout the year and donations from sponsors (Central One Federal Credit Union, Staples, Danielson Flowers, Austin Liquors and Arukor Communications) provide the funds used to grant these opportunities and enhance the awards dinner.

Prior to selection, the committee evaluates and ranks grant applications using the following metrics:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Clarity of Goals and Objectives
- Quality and Longevity of Impact
- Evaluation Plan
- Realistic Budget
- Collaborative Effort (is encouraged and recognized but not required)
- Quality of Presentation

In addition, projects should meet as many of the following criteria as appropriate:

- Involve as many students as possible
- Stimulate creativity in or out of the classroom
- Meet students' needs and increase motivation to learn
- Encourage unique ideas
- Enhance or enrich the curriculum

Purposes of the program are to:

- Develop new resources for schools
- Encourage extraordinary curricula



Pictured above (left-right) are grant recipients Rebecca Connole, Gillian Litchfield, Kelly O'Connell, and Sharon Wade. Their idea was to establish a resource library for teachers and specialists to further their knowledge on social skills training at the middle school level.

The SEF Grant Winners for 2013-2014 school year are:

## TOWN CRIER

Reegan Altomare, 12th Grade Student  
Dayna Brown-Dolan, Faculty Advisor  
Shrewsbury High School

Grant will assist in the printing costs of The Town Crier which is the SHS newspaper which will help put a copy of this publication in the hands of every SHS student, faculty and staff member.

## BUILDING SOCIAL SKILL SUCCESS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

Gillian Litchfield, Sharon Wade, Kelly O'Connell and Rebecca Connole  
Sherwood Middle School

Establish a library of resources and materials for teachers and specialists to use for furthering their knowledge of social skills and to better provide social skills training at the middle school level.

## SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGH THE WONDERS OF TECHNOLOGY: THE HOLLISTIC USE OF IPADS

Deirde D. Lincoln, COTA/L and Sharon Dowd, COTA/L

This grant will help purchase two iPads for therapeutic instruction benefitting students with global developmental delays, autism, visual motor and fine motor difficulties.

## GRAPH YOUR STORY-HOW CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MOTION USING A GRAPH?

Jessica Crosby and Stacey Militello  
Oak Middle School

The acquisition of PASSPORT Airlink 2 Device (6), which will allow for students to use their sensors that schools already have with the iPads using Bluetooth technology.

## "CHOKING CHARLIE"

Alison McDonald and Shirley Lemay

This Grant will help teach all district 2nd and 4th grade students the Abdominal Thrust Maneuver (formerly known as the Heimlich maneuver).

## SUCCEEDING WITH GRIT, GROWTH MINDSET, STRATEGIES AND SOCIAL THINKING

Ellen O'Leary, Speech and Language Pathologist; Suzanne Margiano, School Psychologist; Cara Demoga, School Psychologist  
Floral Street School

This Grant is to support continuing efforts to provide effective instruction in social thinking and self-regulation by expanding its "Social thinking Library."

## AWARD WINNING BROADWAY PRODUCTIONS

Camille Viscomi & Stephanie Halacy  
Paton School

Using Reader's Theatre as a tool to align with Common Core standards, Reader's Theatre will

CONTINUED, at right

- Carol Virzi - Grade 5 Language Arts/Social Studies teacher, Sherwood Middle School

### Paraprofessional

- Kim Golosh - ABA Technician, Spring Street School

### Mentor

- Susana Pierce - Spanish teacher, Oak Middle School

### Support

- Katie Fox - Secretary, Paton School
- David Poe - Custodian, Floral Street School

Culminating the evening's celebrations was the Community Service Award. SEF chose to award Mr. Thomas Kennedy, former Director of Human Resources for the Shrewsbury Public Schools with this award which recognizes a town leader who, goes above and beyond in delivering outstanding services to the community and to the Shrewsbury Public Schools. See more details on the SEF site:

<http://www.shrewsbury-edfoundation.org>

## Teacher salaries

CONTINUED from page 3

\$46,651, but still well within a typical salary for our peer group, and is third out of seven DART districts, where the average is \$46,856 and the median is \$46,672.

At the highest maximum salary level a Shrewsbury educator's salary is \$87,190, which is lower than Southborough at \$92,765 and Northborough at \$92,454, and similar to Westborough at \$87,081, and is fourth of the sixteen AVC districts and fourth of the seven DART districts.

It's also important to note how this cost of living increase (which include the step adjustments noted above) compares to the AVC districts for this year and next year (for those who have a settled contract):

In conclusion, our teacher salaries are comparable to those in other similar school districts. While our salaries are competitive, which is crucial to attracting and retaining quality educators, they are neither the highest nor the lowest compared to AVC or DART districts - we are somewhere in the middle in all comparisons. Additionally, our teachers, who routinely cope with large class sizes and resource constraints, have agreed to very modest compensation adjustments over this new three-year contract.

## Award winners

CONTINUED, from same page

assist Paton's first and second graders with comprehension skills as they discuss and act out plays as well as demonstrate strong listening skills as an audience which will translate into other learning disciplines.

## USING THE IPAD MINI AS AN INTERVENTION TOOL IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

Ann Early and Kristine Gustafson  
Paton School

The purpose of this grant is to explore the use of the iPad Mini to support Literacy and Math skills for two classes of second grade students. It will incorporate the most effective strategies to extend and optimize student learning. This grant is an innovative initiative. The iPad Mini, a smaller and less costly device than the iPad, is the perfect size for the hands of young students. It is approximately 5 by 7 inches wide, weighing about half a pound, and featuring a multi touch display.

## SOCIAL THINKING CURRICULUM

Noreen Camerato & Michelle Lemay  
Spring Street School

The purpose of this project is to gain access to the Social Thinking Curriculum written by Michelle Garcia Winner for regular education teachers spanning grades K-4. This project focuses on enhancing student's social and emotional development over the life span, but rapidly develops from infancy through grades 3 and 4.

## CHOOSING KIND

Lorry D'Ascanio & Carol Virzi  
Sherwood Middle School

Grade 5 & 6 Literature Study and Character; Wonder by RJ Palacio, a novel that will invite students to choose kindness over bullying. The novel has been developed into a multi-media program that is aligned with Common Core Standards.



### Leadership

- Jane Lizotte - Principal, Sherwood Middle School
- Bryan Mabie - Principal, Spring Street School

### Professional

- Sara Biadasz - Kindergarten teacher, Beal Early Childhood Center
- Peter Collins - Math teacher, Shrewsbury High School
- Amy O'Leary - Social Sciences teacher, Shrewsbury High School

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## SAVE THE DATE

The 7th Annual Shrewsbury Road Scholars 5K Road Race and 1 Mile Fun Run is scheduled for April 6, 2014 at noon starting and finishing at Oak Middle School. Thanks again to our returning sponsors: Presenting Sponsors level - Avidia Bank, Dunkin Donuts of Shrewsbury and Fallon Health and our Supporting Sponsors - Darryl Henry Arborist, NFS, Inc. and The Law Offices of Joseph J. Cariglia, P.C. For information

on sponsorship, please contact Kim Cantin at 508-841-8400. See the website: [www.shrewsburyroadscholars.org](http://www.shrewsburyroadscholars.org) for all race related information including pre-registration special price.



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