

 Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Superintendent’s Update

March 16, 2015

Dear Shrewsbury Families,

There is more good news to share regarding student performances:

* Twelve SHS students competed in the Regional Science & Engineering Fair at WPI this past Friday.  Out of 163 students from 24 high schools, eight of our students earned awards and nine students earned the right to move on to the State Fair at MIT at the beginning of May.  Congratulations to the students, whose names and project titles are at the bottom of this message (you’ll be impressed with their research topics).
* The SHS Girls Gymnastics team finished fourth in the New England Championships, completing an incredible season.
* The cast and crew of the SHS Competitive Play, *Heartwired*, competed in the semifinal round this past weekend.  While the show was not selected to move on to the state finals, several students earned individual awards.  It is also noteworthy that the play was written by Richard Peng, a student in the SHS Class of 2016, with an original set design by Stan Pearson, SHS Class of 2016.  You can find the names of the award winners at the bottom of this message.

Please also note the following informational items:

**School Committee Policy Votes**:  Last week, the School Committee was presented with two policy recommendations on which they are scheduled to vote at their March 25 meeting:

* A [draft policy on physical restraint of students](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/14265098396929.pdf), which is being updated to reflect changes in state law and regulation.  A comparison of the draft to the current policy can also be found [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/14265097406300.pdf).
* A recommendation that the district not participate in the state’s School Choice program next year, with the understanding that this could be revisited at a later date depending on the evolution of the district’s budget situation.  My memo to the School Committee can be found [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/14262780363935.pdf), and the slides from my presentation can be seen [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/14262780683483.pdf).

If you would like to provide feedback to the School Committee on either of these topics in advance of their vote, you may contact them at schoolcommittee@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us or me at jsawyer@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

**State Fiscal Aid for Education**: At last week’s School Committee meeting I presented information regarding the preliminary estimate of state fiscal aid for our schools for next year.  Unfortunately, this is estimated to only be a 0.6% increase, or about $120,000.  To see the slides I presented regarding how the state formula affects Shrewsbury, click [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/14262781087790.pdf).  To see the testimony I provided to the state’s Foundation Budget Review Commission, which will make recommendations for changing state funding formula for education, go [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/142651465528.pdf).

**Average Teacher Salaries**: Recently a citizen wrote a letter to the editor insinuating that I provided inaccurate information to the Foundation Budget Commission on the topic of average teacher salaries in Shrewsbury.  This is a topic on which the School Department administration provided a great deal of information last spring, including a report that can be found [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/1400528597_923278.pdf), a blog posting that I wrote (see [here](http://shrewsburysuperintendent.blogspot.com/2014/06/how-do-we-pay-our-teachers-reasonably.html)), and in presentations made at last May’s Town Meeting and at a School Committee meeting (see presentation slides [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/1426538896_298339.pdf) and [here](http://schools.shrewsbury-ma.gov/egov/docs/1401373598_945434.pdf)).  My remarks to the Commission in response to a member’s question were intended to illustrate the fact that Shrewsbury’s average total expenditure on teachers’ salaries has been millions of dollars below the state average, and actual salaries are comparable to the market, yet the state’s outdated budget formula doesn’t come close to approximating the true cost, resulting in a shortfall of state fiscal aid.

While it is unfortunate that the author of the letter did not contact me to clarify the context of the brief excerpt from my remarks that appeared in the newspaper, I hope the information above makes the facts clear to anyone who may have questions about this topic.  Please know that I am available and willing to answer any questions that any citizen may have regarding our school district’s finances, and that a great deal of information is available on this topic on our website as well as on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s website.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer

Superintendent of Schools

**Regional Science & Engineering Fair Participants:**

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| **Regional Performance** | **Student** | **Grade** | **Project** |
| **4th place** | Saachi Gopal | 11 | Project ENCA: In Search of Natural Mechanisms to Reverse Acne |
| **3rd place** | Anagha Arvind | 10 | Improving wireless transmission and generation |
| **3rd place** | Matthew Huang | 10 | A test for detection of ESAT-6 Mycobacterium tuberculosis specific protein |
| **4th place** | Aryan Naik | 10 | Does Social Isolation Increase Glucose Preference In Zebrafish |
| **3rd place** | Rohan Oberoi | 10 | Texting and Talking, How do you React? |
| **3rd place** | Vikram Pathalam | 10 | The Effect of Phyllanthus amarus on Cancer Cell Proliferation |
| **4th place** | Urvi Savant | 10 | Antibiotic Resistance: Antibiotics Just Make More Problems |
| **Honorable Mention** | Matthew McCoy | 9 | Affecting Oxygen Production and Growth Rates of Ocimum basilicum using an LED Computer Screen |
|  | Sreenikitha Emani | 9 | Reducing Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide Using the Ocean's Biological Pump |
|  | Ahana Mukhopadhyay | 9 | Cleaning Up Oil and Reducing Algea Growth Using Sawdust and Manure |
|  | Ian Rudnick | 9 | How Clean is Clean Enough? The effects of disinfectants on yeast and bacteria cells |
|  | Zitong Su | 9 | The Effect of Aqueous Garlic Extract on the Inhibition of Human Colon Cancer Cell Growth |

**Massachusetts High School Drama Festival State Semi-final Award Winners**

Stage Manager's Award: Stan Pearson

Excellence in Technical Design: Projections: Tori Cullen & Doug Fisher

Excellence in Acting: Emily Ehler & Kelsey DeWolfe