

Superintendent’s Corner

Leading the Nation

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
SUPERINTENDENT

Did you know that Massachusetts is considered to be the top state in the nation for public education?

Consider the following facts, which are provided by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education as part of its “Leading the Nation” campaign and by the national publication Education Week:

- Statewide, our students are #1 in the U.S. in reading and math on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), “The Nation’s Report Card”; for 2015, the most recent released test results, was the sixth straight administration (2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015) in which Massachusetts’ students scored first or statistically tied for first place on the NAEP math and reading fourth and eighth grade tests.
- #1 in the world in reading on the PISA international assessment (2016): If Massachusetts were a nation, it would share the top spot in reading with eight other nations worldwide. In science, the state’s students and those from 10 nations came in second, trailing only students from Singapore. In math, 11 other nations were ahead of the Commonwealth.

- #1 in Advanced Placement success in
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“ Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do, and succeed at. It matters that you don’t just give up. - Stephen Hawking ”

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Leading the Nation is a statewide celebration that gives Massachusetts’ public schools and local communities an opportunity to highlight students’ academic and extracurricular achievements. *Leading the Nation* invites districts to participate at school, community, and/or statewide levels, and one suggested programming idea was for districts to take a selfie to “showcase what being number one looks like in your school districts.” At SPS, a request went out to all schools to take a photo (or photos) on a typical day (Wednesday, February 28) and to submit one or more that they felt best reflects how they help students achieve success. These photos were consolidated to provide this “snapshot” of a typical day in our high-performing district. Graphic design work by Cristina Luther.

Crisis avoidance

DR. B. DALE MAGEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR

Years of practicing obstetrics have taught me the value of anticipating and avoiding a crisis. While drama makes for good TV, when you are going through it, the feeling is quite different. Always, when the dust settles, the question becomes: Could this have been anticipated and avoided?

In 2014 the community did what it had not done in 32 years: it voted to raise property taxes to support community services. Now that the rush that came with the successful Proposition 2 ½ override has faded, I hope you understand if I fall back on old habits and consider whether there is a less stressful way to approach our budgeting. When we look back at the circumstances of the override, those close to the situation know that we were at the brink and losing was not an option unless an unraveling school system was considered an option. Going forward, can such crises be avoided?

I have spent a few years now looking at the history and trends regarding school and town

finances and I believe that there is something to be learned that can lead to a more orderly- and less dramatic- functioning of our town and its schools. Here are four questions and answers that I would like to share.

- 1. What is meant by “structural deficit”?** This rather formal term, in the case of our school system, means that we are running a system that needs 3-4% more money per year (when running well) to maintain services and the town revenues are not rising that fast. Any less over a period of time will lead to cuts in services. Even though our schools cost much less than average, this does not exempt us from inflationary pressures.
- 2. How did we avoid needing a Proposition 2 ½ override for so long (that law passed in 1980 and was implemented for 1982)?** Four reasons: first, while the population of Shrewsbury has consistently been growing, the school population actually was dropping between 1970 and 1990. It did not return to 1970 levels until 2001. This was due to a drop in births and it helped to blunt normal inflationary pressures on the schools. Second, growth in the student population from 1990-2008 triggered increases in state aid for

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- the country (2017) in terms of the percentage of the class of 2016 that scored a 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement exam. In addition, the Commonwealth had the highest five- and ten-year growth in the percentage of graduates who scored a 3 or higher.
- Massachusetts’ four-year graduation rate has increased each of the last 10 years, and the dropout rate has decreased during the same period of time.
 - Massachusetts again earned the overall #1 ranking in Education Week’s overall national assessment of states’ public education quality, including #1 rankings in the study’s “Chance-for-Success Index” and for “K-12 Achievement”.

Much has been written about why Massachusetts’ public schools have excelled in comparison to peers across the U.S., and this story begins with the 1993 Education Reform Act, now 25 years old. This legislation resulted in significantly more state and local financial investment in public schools, established rigorous learning standards across multiple subjects, required state assessments to measure student performance against those standards, and promoted the professionalization of teaching. Additionally, unlike what often happens with “education reform” initiatives, these efforts were sustained over a long period, with the understanding that significant improvement takes time.

Here in Shrewsbury, our students and educators have made many contributions over the years to

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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

Shrewsbury’s Portrait of a Graduate

AMY CLOUTER
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
FOR CURRICULUM
& INSTRUCTION

Beginning in early 2017, a team of 23 educators and community members met to create Shrewsbury’s *Portrait of a Graduate*. Inspired by the efforts of school systems in other states, this group was charged with defining what we believe is most critical for our students to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from Shrewsbury High School. This project complemented the community discussions that started with the screening of the *Most Likely to Succeed* documentary, the establishment of a district-wide Innovation in Learning Study Group and the formulation of the district’s strategic priorities.

The working group met on four separate days with the goal of considering how Shrewsbury Public Schools can best prepare students for a rapidly changing, interconnected digital world. Through the generous support of the Colonial Fund, each member of the group received a copy of *Linchpin* by Seth Godin and *Thank you for Being Late: An Optimist’s Guide to Thriving*

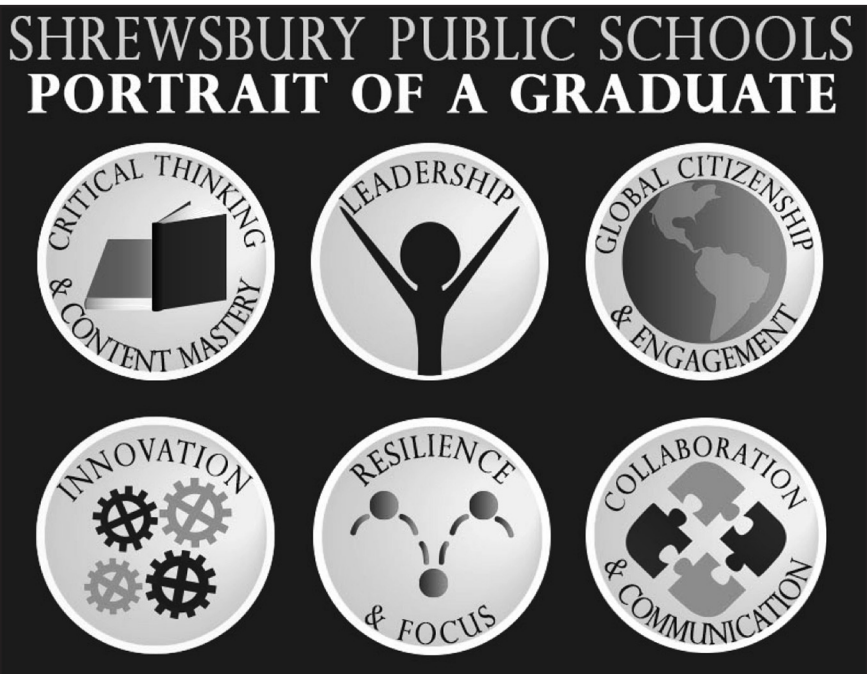
in the *Age of Accelerations* by Thomas L. Friedman. Book discussions deepened understanding and sparked debate within the group.

The group also hosted and interacted with a variety of guest speakers, including a panel of current and past graduates and Dr. Robert Martello, the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Academic Programs at Olin College, and Brenda Fingold, The Community and Corporate Program Developer and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Teacher for the UMass Center for Mindfulness.

In spring 2017, the group reached consensus on a draft of Shrewsbury’s *Portrait of a Graduate*. The draft was widely shared and vetted as part of the district’s strategic planning efforts last fall, and a final version was approved by the School Committee in December.

The process of coming to agreement about our aspirations was energizing for the members of the working group. The draft the group created was inspiring for those of us that witnessed the work. Why? You can learn

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Graphic by Alexandra Lekas, SHS Class of 2018



Beal School project update

PATRICK COLLINS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
FOR FINANCE & OPERATIONS

Projected Enrollment	790 Students	FAST FACTS
Grade Span	K-4	
State Reimbursement Rate	50.16%	
Potential Sites	214 Lake Street [former Glavin Center] 384-386 South Street [former Allen Farm]	
Projected Opening	August 2022	
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide sufficient space for our growing enrollment• Relieve enrollment and space constraints at all elementary schools• Replace a 100 year-old facility with a new, energy-efficient facility that meets all current building and life-safety codes• Provide full-day kindergarten for all Shrewsbury students and eliminate the lottery-based access system	

SPS students collaborate to learn U.S. History

MICHAEL CARPENTIER
SHS SOCIAL SCIENCES TEACHER

In an effort to have students partake in more project-based learning (PBL) that resonates across grade levels, high school students in Mr. Carpentier's Honors US History I class created American Revolutionary themed children's books which they shared with third graders at Calvin Coolidge Elementary School on February 9th. The project was designed to develop the high school students' ability to creatively express mastery of the content they have studied for several months and to give the third graders a creative and engaging introduction to the subject matter of the American Revolution which they were about to begin studying.

In October 2017, high school students chose one of several preselected early American history books, such as David McCullough's famed *1776*, to read over the course of the next two months. Reading these lengthy and difficult non-fiction texts exposed the students to a new level of historical academia they had previously believed too difficult to comprehend. This prepared students for future historical studies as upperclassmen and as college students, all the while teaching students immense detail about one of our country's most pivotal time periods. Students had deadlines to meet in reading the books and when they finished they were grouped together with other students who read the same book. In these groups they synthesized the main events, characters, and themes so they could create an entirely new children's story, with a new fictional main character, that interacts with the same historical content and themes from the history books they just finished reading.



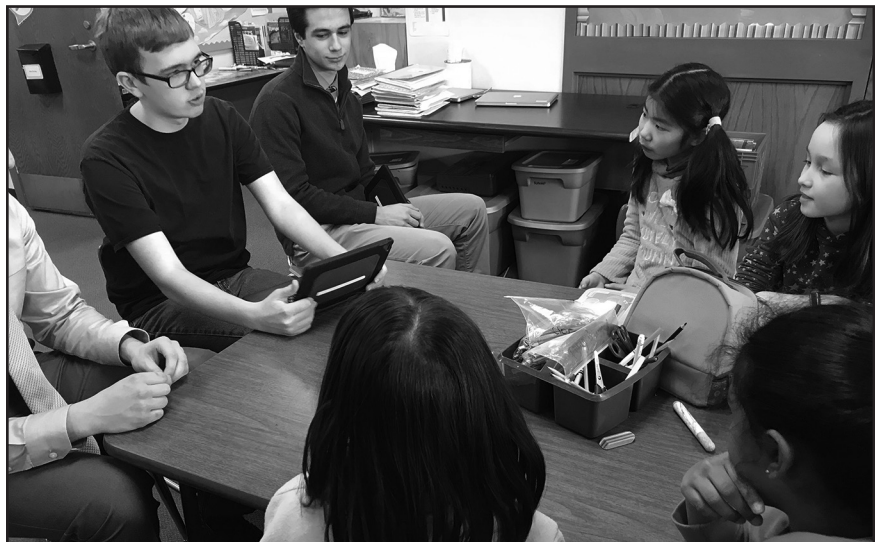
SHS students, Amira Elmansoury (top right) and Isabella Vukmirovits (bottom right). CCS students (left, bottom to top), Cayden Maloney, Matheus Franca Maciel, Elijah Dilone, and Kal-El Campos.

In order to assist the high school students in the creation of their books, they held Skype sessions with local award winning children's book authors Barb Rosenstock and Cynthia Levinson. The authors explained the writing processes they individually undergo, such as keeping the audience in mind, creating authenticity, and most importantly, showing not telling. The authors fielded questions from the students and then the students began writing their books using brainstorming charts and plot templates. In late January students finished their children's books and prepared to read them to the third grade students at Coolidge. On February 9th, the high schoolers traveled to Calvin Coolidge Elementary spending over an hour reading their books in small groups to all of the school's third graders. Both the high schoolers and the elementary students greatly enjoyed the experience. The high schoolers loved spending time with the energetic and inquisitive third graders, commenting that they were surprised by the intelligence and comprehension of their young counterparts. Meanwhile, the third graders were impressed by the quality of the books themselves and viewed the "big kids" from the high school as role models of high achieving students.

The project originated several years ago as part of an effort to more thoroughly engage students in the content of the American Revolution through a PBL approach. The goal was for students to have a final product that they could be proud of, while at the same time expressing mastery of the course content. The creation of children's books allows for students to practice research and synthesis of a topic over time and then determine the essential pieces of information that, in this case, a third grader would need to know. The reading of these books was timed to coincide with the start of the third graders' introduction to the history of the revolutionary time period. The third graders' comprehension and questioning skills allowed the high school students to still use challenging vocabulary and appropriately difficult historical concepts when creating their books. The end result is both grade levels cooperatively learning together.

Experiences like this showcase not only the immense learning potential of PBL instruction, but also that of collaboration across grade levels. The close knit Shrewsbury Public School community is perfect for more collaboration like this in the future.

Lastly, thanks go out to SHS Media Specialist Emily Bredberg and Elementary Instructional Coach Erin Kendrick who have helped organize this project and the multi-school connection for the past several years. The project would not be possible without their help. Additional thanks go to Assistant Superintendent Amy Clouter, who was a strong advocate for the multi-grade component of this project and helped make this opportunity possible.



SHS students (left to right), Donald Aicardi and Tom Murphy. CCS students (clockwise, from top left), Aki Kimpara, Amy Wells, Neha Swami, and Zoe Tompsett

Crisis

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schools. Third, because of growth, we have not been getting along on tax revenue increases of 2 ½% per year as one might think, rather it has been 5-6% up until 2010. Fourth, starting in 2006 services have been cut. Class size went up, courses were cut, students were being taught with out of date books and computers. Even with the Prop 2 ½ override many of the services did not return (for example foreign language in grade school).

“A town that prides itself in a quality school system needs to commit itself to holding services steady from year to year.”

3. Why did we need the override when we did? Several reasons. The school population caught up and continued to rise. New schools including a new high school came online in 2002 that relieved crowding but raised costs. The state changed its formula for aid in 2008 and has essentially frozen the aid since, feeling that the community should contribute more. Aid from other outside sources has been flat to dropping. And, finally, the growth of the town has tapered. Instead of growing property tax revenues by 5-6% per year, it is moving down to below 4%.

4. If the schools need 3-4% more per year, why isn't 4% growth in tax revenues good enough? Because the state and the federal government are shifting costs back to the town, so a 4% increase in the cost of running the schools translates to a higher percentage increase from the town. Also, other expenses, like health insurance, often far exceed 4% and divert money that would otherwise go to the town appropriated school budget.

A town that prides itself in a quality school system needs to commit itself to holding services steady (at a minimum) from year to year. Cutting services should be considered a last option. Growth, which Shrewsbury has been wary of for so many years, has actually kept our taxes low and allowed us to avoid the regular overrides that other towns have become used to (there actually have been over 1,900 successful proposition 2 ½ overrides across the state since 1983). The current rate of growth is not even close to what it was in the past. Now that we are getting the lower growth that we wished for, are we going to step up to maintain the quality of services that brought most of us here in the first place? This question needs to be addressed before, not after, we are in crisis mode. If you will permit me one more obstetric analogy: We cannot imagine expectant parents coming into the doctor's office and saying: "here is our budget, make it work". We should have as strong a commitment to the education of the community's children as we did to the safety of their birth.

Superintendent's Corner

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Massachusetts’ overall success, and given our schools’ relative achievement to others across the state, it is clear that our schools are among the strongest in the nation. However, we have not “rested on our laurels,” and over the past few years we have been working hard to identify how we can continue to shape our students’ educational experiences so that we are not only providing them with the academic, communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills that will enable them to be successful in a rapidly-changing economy, but also the social and emotional competencies that will empower our students to be focused and resilient individuals who contribute positively to the welfare of their community and society.

Thanks to recent initiatives such as the district’s “Innovation in Learning Study Group” and our “Portrait of a Graduate Working Group,” along with a strategic planning initiative this past fall that included significant input from the community, we have created a compelling shared vision and an ambitious but achievable set of strategic priorities and goals for the Shrewsbury Public Schools, which build on our past successes while preparing students for their future. I invite you to explore our website at <http://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/> to learn more about how we are meeting our mission to “provide the skills and knowledge for the 21st century” to our students, and, in so doing, achieving our motto’s aspiration of “empowering learners.” There, you will find an inspirational one-minute video that our own SHS Television Production students created that was selected in a statewide contest to be shown at the “Leading the Nation” kickoff event at the State House! When you watch it, I believe that you will feel a great sense of pride in our schools, which I am confident will continue to help “lead the nation” in providing educational opportunities for our students in the years ahead.

Portrait

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more by watching the video on the district webpage.

Most importantly, in the years ahead the *Portrait of a Shrewsbury Graduate* document will serve as fuel for our future efforts. As we articulate district goals for the next two years, the gap between our aspirations and the actual experiences our students are having will inspire us to do better. If our aim is to ensure students will succeed when they graduate, we must continue to structure school experiences with the goal of empowering learners.

FaceTime with France

HEATHER LEGER
SHS FRENCH TEACHER

Heather Leger has been making real world connections for her French students at Shrewsbury High School (SHS). Interacting with French speakers

from the real world engages students in a meaningful way, thus increasing language motivation. Since September, Madame Leger’s French II Honors students have been communicating with students in a private high school in the south of France via video

and email. However, most recently, they have also had the amazing opportunity to make face-to-face connections with these students via FaceTime on the iPad. (The French students volunteered to receive our calls

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Students pictured top row, left to right: Photo #1 Mary Benyamin, Nikhita Sikharam , Frances Crosby. Photo #2 Shreya Sriram, Erin Flynn, Theodora Chacharone. Photo #3 Uma Kanzaria, Jeanette Reeve. Bottom row, left to right: Photo #4 Brooke Podlipec, Hancheng Xu. Photo #5 Priyanshu Deshmukh, Britney Acquah. Photo #6 Kendra Litt, Matt Kiley

Step up, stand up, speak up

CHARLES BRAY,
KEVYN LUU &
AMIRA ELMANSOURY
SHS STUDENTS

As in the past, this year’s Black History Month Assembly at Shrewsbury High School (SHS) was a resounding success! The assembly was lauded by students, teachers, and administrators alike.

Each year the Black History Committee - which is comprised of over 30 active members - chooses a theme, scouts for talent, and tries to involve as many students as possible in the assembly. The assembly highlights past and present events that serve to both educate our student body and celebrate the important contributions that African Americans have made to



Black History Committee Presidents (left to right) Victoria Cardoso and Marlie Atlabachew

the history of our country. The assembly involved over 60 students and was attended by the entire student body.

The theme of this year’s assembly was “Step Up, Stand Up, Speak Up.” The theme was chosen in light of the current

political climate in the country, and in the hope of encouraging students to play an active role in shaping history - by using their own voices and actions to effect change when necessary.

The assembly started with a student rendition of the song “Strange Fruit,” most notably performed by Billie Holiday in the 1950s. Using music as a vehicle for social change was virtually unheard of in her era, prompting Billie Holiday to address the thousands of lynchings that occurred between 1877 and the mid-1900s. This powerful performance was delivered by Michaela Kelly, a senior and a member of women’s choir. The next event was a live rendition of the song “That’s Just



Grand Finale Dance; students pictured (left to right) Keyvn Luu, Helton Pongnon, Aditya Poathanaboyina, Diara Canton, Damiliz Sango and Marley Riviere

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Learning environments where everyone’s success matters

MEG BELSITO
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL
EDUCATION AND PUPIL
PERSONNEL SERVICES

When students with varied learning and support needs learn together, they experience better academic, social, emotional, behavioral outcomes, relationships, high school graduation rates and post-secondary success. Our schools have embraced this ongoing message and have taken the necessary steps to align inclusive practices with our 2018-2022 Strategic Priorities focusing on Learning Environments Where Everyone’s Success Matters. Shrewsbury Public Schools is now entering an exciting time to begin to orchestrate a new era of education that will enhance the outcomes for all students.

As the needs of our students become ever more diverse, the importance of fostering inclu-

sive learning environments continues to grow. In education, the word “inclusion” carries varying definitions which can lead to some confusion for students, families, and staff. To begin to analyze “inclusion” in Shrewsbury, a selection of teachers and students were asked two questions: What do you enjoy most about your classroom? How do you have high expectations while developing inclusive practices? The students made statements about social interactions, small groups in the general education classroom, and

having many teachers. Staff spoke about collaboration, communication, planning time, and most importantly, having children stay in the classroom versus being pulled out and missing content area instruction.

Shrewsbury’s efforts to establish inclusive schools are ongoing. As an example, this year, we have a team of educators at each K-4 building working on establishing co-teaching practices. In these classrooms, co-

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Special Education Teacher, Kelly Boulay (left) and Classroom Teacher Shannon Rice (right)--Coolidge School, co-taught English Language Arts Lessons

Community Kindness Week at Coolidge School

ERIN KENDRICK
CURRICULUM COORDINATOR/
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH
TIFFANY OSTRANDER
PRINCIPAL
CALVIN COOLIDGE SCHOOL

For six days in February, the students and staff at Calvin Coolidge Elementary School celebrated Community Kindness Week. Each day students and staff honored different members of our school community, including our custodian, bus drivers, crossing guard, secretary, nurse, cafeteria staff, and paraprofessionals. Smiles filled the halls of our school



Coolidge Principal, Tiffany Ostrander, sings lunchtime karaoke with two first graders, Julia Falkins and George Lockyer.

throughout Community Kindness Week, and a sense of joy and gratitude was in the air.

In a 2014 lecture titled “Cultivating Kindness and Compassion in Children,” Dr. Kimberly Schonert Reichl explained that, by engaging in acts of kindness, people “...can develop positive habits that promote higher levels of overall happiness.” She went on to say that this is true for adults and children alike. In fact, researchers found that engaging in acts of kindness not only improved children’s personal well-being, but also positively affected their perceptions of those around them. It was our hope that Community Kindness Week would benefit our students, complement our

school-wide focus on social emotional learning, and reaffirm the joyful, safe, and engaging climate that we strive for here at Coolidge School.

We kicked off Community Kindness Week by celebrating some of the most important members of our school community - our students! Coolidge staff hosted a surprise Student Appreciation Day on Friday, February 9th. Students were greeted with colorful welcome banners, and the day included a variety of special activities, including lunchtime karaoke and intercom bingo. This set a positive and enthusiastic tone for the following week, and it helped our students to understand that giving and receiving kindness are both joyful acts.

FaceTime

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from their homes as there is a time zone difference of six hours between France and the US.)

Communicating in the target language is one of the most important goals in the foreign language classroom. Spontaneous conversation with native French students who are learning a second language provides both the American and French students with a real reason to learn and improve their skills... and they are really enjoying the experience.

Here are some comments from the students who participated.

“I really liked being able to communicate with another student in another language. It was very interesting and helped me understand the importance of developing sufficient skills in impromptu conversation.”

“(I enjoyed) getting to practice not just some but all of the skills I have learned.”

“I spoke in French the entire time with a few exceptions...”

“I was very happy with how I talked around topics which I didn’t know how to say...”, and “(I used)... minimum/no English when communicating with the French student.”

“I am really proud of how I was able to think of questions on the go (without having anything written down)...”

Madame Leger’s French I students also had the chance to interact with native French speakers just before February vacation. In pairs, students tried out their beginning language skills on FaceTime. She was very impressed with their effort to communicate in French and the students were so proud that they could be understood by the French students, even at their novice level of discourse. Students commented, “It was cool to be able to use our French in an actual conversation.” When asked what they felt was their biggest success in the activity, one student replied “I spoke mostly in French and I was surprised at how long I could talk.” Another student said that they were proud that “they actually replied to my answers and understood the questions that I asked.” and “I feel proud that we were able to actually communicate and were able to talk for a bit because it shows that I can understand and am learning French.”

What better way to validate second language learning than seeing your students discover its true purpose through authentic experiences like this! And what better reward than to see and hear the pride in your students’ voices when they successfully face the challenge of spontaneous communication!

Learning

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teaching is a partnering of at least two teachers, with different areas of expertise and experience, to provide more comprehensive, effective instruction to all students. In this model, teachers maximize social, emotional and academic achievement for all by utilizing a myriad of instructional tools and strategies. These teams have been participating in professional development opportunities to strengthen educational practices to deliver differentiated and specialized instruction within the general education setting. In addition, our high school has developed a Transitions Program to allow students who, due to a variety of reasons, have not been able to access their education. This program is a short-term, time-limited program for students returning to school after an extended absence due to things like illness or hospitalization. The Transitions Program allows students to re-enter the high school with the support of an adjustment counselor and education coordinator to begin to access demands and remain in their community school. These examples of our inclusive educational practices highlight how Shrewsbury is maximizing social, emotional and academic student achievement.

It is critically important to highlight that inclusive philosophy in education must go beyond the needs of students with disabilities, in order to have a system of accessible instruction embedded with social, emotional and behavioral supports. We are committed to providing an inclusive setting of dedicated multidisciplinary teams while involving parents and community members to help meet the academic, emotional and social needs of all our students in a respectful and positive environment. Together, we will focus on the positive attributes and recognize the individual strengths and achievements of our students while promoting their future successes.

Keeping this in mind, all leaders should bear as much responsibility for student progress and success as the educators and related service providers. Inclusion is not the job of any one educator or classroom. The successful creation of inclusive schools begins at district and school levels and is made a priority for fidelity of appropriate implementation. The district’s mission, vision and core values should be at the heart of this work.

In an inclusive school system, education means that all students are full and accepted members of their school, with access to all levels of instruction, and to the community. An inclusive school values and celebrates differences and similarities of ALL. As we move forward with our new strategic priorities, as a district, we are energized by the continued notion of making sure we have learning environments where everyone’s success matters.

Sherwood Middle School happenings

DR. JANE LIZOTTE
PRINCIPAL
HEATHER GABLASKI
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
KAREN GUTEKANST
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
LISA DALY
CURRICULUM COORDINATOR,
ELA
ROBERT DUNN
CURRICULUM COORDINATOR,
SOCIAL STUDIES
MELISSA McCANN
CURRICULUM COORDINATOR,
MATH
PAMELA POITRAS
CURRICULUM COORDINATOR,
SCIENCE
PATRICIA WATERHOUSE
DIRECTOR,
SPECIAL EDUCATION
MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Sherwood Middle School students and faculty are engaged in several exciting ventures this year that will strengthen their academic knowledge and increase their social-emotional well-being. After the *Innovation in Learning Study Group* visited King Middle School in Maine in March, 2017, several educators across the district visited the school in November, 2017. King Middle School is known for its project-based learning and the way in which the school assesses students’ work habits. Sherwood faculty were impressed by their focus on *Habits of Work and Learning*, or *H.O.W.L.S.* Both project-based learning and H.O.W.L.S are being further investigated at Sherwood this year. Changes to the science standards and proposed changes to the social studies standards have prompted new initiatives in exploring the new science standards with students, and taking a closer look at teaching ancient civilizations in a thematic way in grade 6. Content knowledge is not the sole focus of our work at the middle level. Our Kindness Challenge in January and February helped focus staff and students on the importance of reaching out with kindness to others as we work and learn together.

Project-based Learning

Recently, the students on 5 Orange, led by Maureen Martin, held the “Sail America Travel Expo” to demonstrate their knowledge of the 13 colonies. Student pairs chose one of the colonies upon which to focus their efforts, conducted research, and created visual aids, including a detailed display and commercial. Each team’s task was to convince travelers to migrate to their colony. The

team hosted family and community members to visit the “Sail America” booths. Ms. Martin received positive feedback from her students and their guests, and she intends to continue this project in future years.

Earlier in the year, several 6th grade teams completed a “Pizza Project,” where students learned about ratios through investigating the cost of making individual and multiple pizzas. Students on 6 Gold designed their own flatbread pizzas and presented their ideas to the owner, chef, and marketing director of Hudson-based Rail Trail Flatbread Company. The students received valuable feedback from these professionals and the winning flatbread, the Breakfast Flatbread, was sold at the restaurant!

Students on 5 Yellow read the book *Wonder*, learned about perspective, and created paper mache masks depicting different perspectives others have of them.

Students in 6th grade Health Class took on the roles of “Nutritionist,” “Physical Therapist,” and other related occupations and investigated how these professions connect with a specific body system. They then worked in groups to create presentations that were viewed by parents and other Sherwood students.

In early March, the students and teachers on 5 Red invited families and the school community into their classrooms for a mindfulness retreat. Students worked extremely hard to prepare interactive stations of various mindfulness practices and shared their research regarding the positive health benefits. The event was a great success!

Habits of Work and Learning

Two sixth grade teams are piloting the ideas of using H.O.W.L.s instead of Habits of Mind on the current report cards. 6 Navy and 6 Silver teachers spent time at the beginning of the year developing students’ understanding of respect, responsibility, and perseverance. These concepts are embedded throughout the students’ day and each teacher gives grades on each of the H.O.W.L.s on the report card. Teams are sharing their work with colleagues as well as reflecting on the impact of

using H.O.W.L.s on students’ work and behavior.

Science and Social Studies Curriculum Changes

In the spring of 2016, Massachusetts adopted new Science frameworks that align to the Next Generation Science Standards that are being used across much of the country. These new standards focus on “*preparing students to have an appreciation for the wonder of science, possess sufficient knowledge of science and engineering to engage in public discussions on related issues, and be careful consumers of scientific and technological information and products in their everyday lives*” (*A Vision of Science and Technology/Engineering Education*).

Sherwood Middle School is in the process of aligning its science curriculum to these new standards. Four 5th grade pilot teams and all 6th grade science classes are using the new standards. On a daily basis, students are constructing ideas about the natural world by conducting investigations, making models, and developing evidence-based arguments. Assessments now focus on the ability to demonstrate understanding by engaging in these important scientific practices.

Three 6th grade social studies teachers decided at the end of last year to revisit the ancient civilization curriculum through a new lens. Rather than teaching each civilization separately, they spent time over the summer and on weekends planning to teach thematically. Students are learning about the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome through the themes of geography, culture, government, and innovation. Teachers are sharing observations and lessons with their colleagues and have noted more areas in which they can connect what students are learning to current events and issues as well as more retention of content.

Kindness Challenge

Students at Sherwood spent the twenty days between January 22 and February Vacation engaged in a variety of activities related to kindness. Each team created a challenge for the whole school and announced it

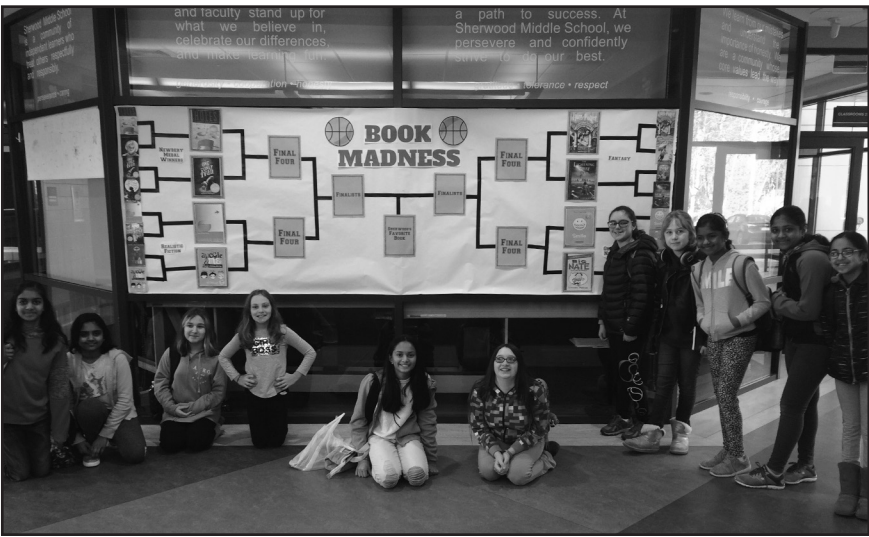
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March Madness at Sherwood Middle School: Battle of the Books

DR. JANE LIZOTTE
PRINCIPAL
SHERWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Fifth grade teachers Ms. Hannah Hopkins (5 Green) and Ms. Alicia Esposito (5 Yellow) engaged the Sherwood Middle School (SMS) community in a March Madness Book Challenge during the month of March. The teachers created a March Madness-style book bracket that was open to the entire school. The large bracket was prominently displayed in the main foyer of the school for all to enjoy!

Ms. Hopkins and Ms. Esposito created a bracket consisting of a variety of literary categories using timely information from Media Specialist, Ms. Janet Pope, regarding student likes and dislikes. Ms. Pope provided the teachers with a list consisting of the most circulated books at SMS, along with



Students pose in front of the March Madness bracket, displayed in the Sherwood Middle School Foyer.

anecdotal data from several conversations with students. Each week during the month of March, students cast their votes using a Google form. In order to vote for their favorite books out of each “head to head match-up,” the students were required to have read both books!

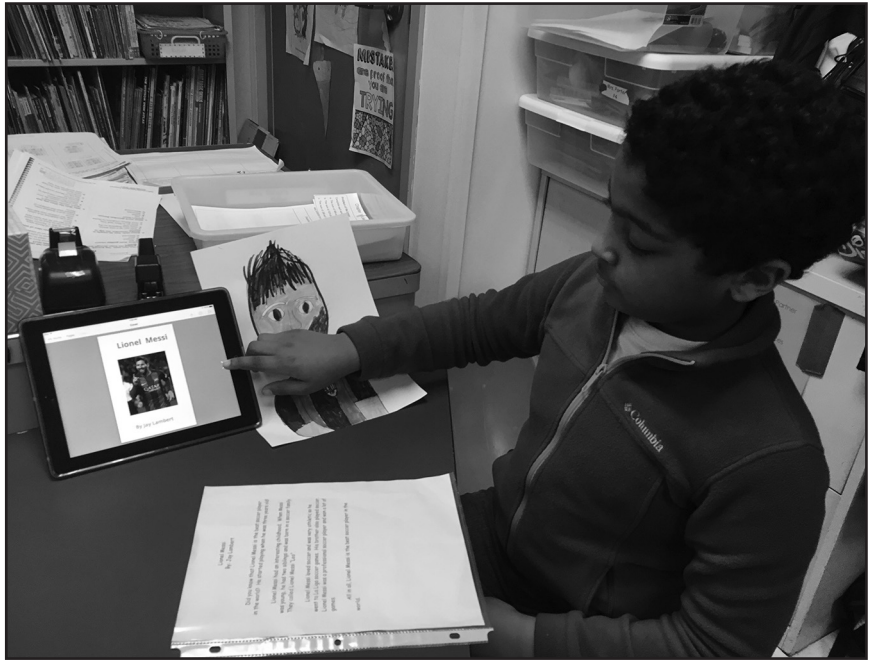
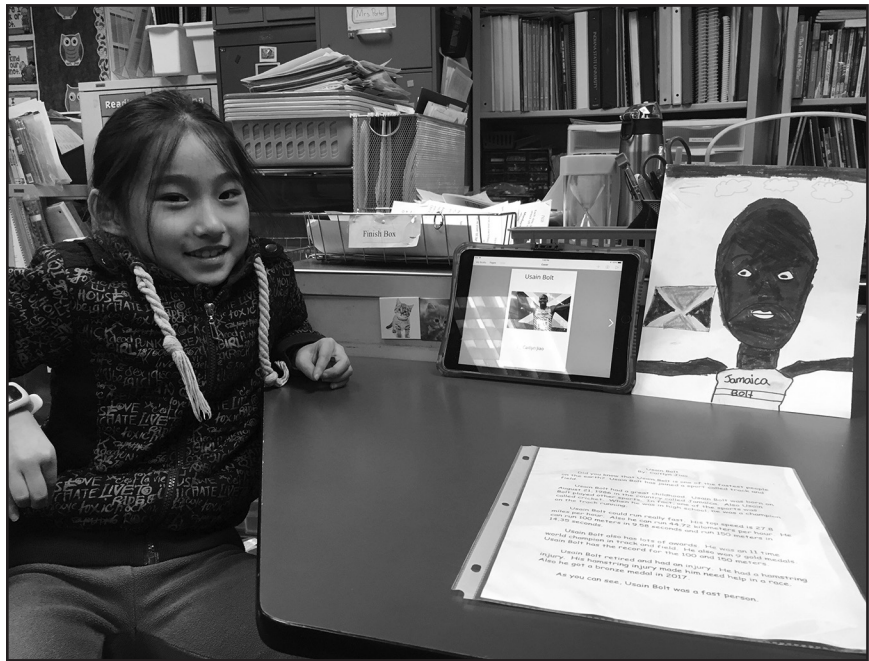
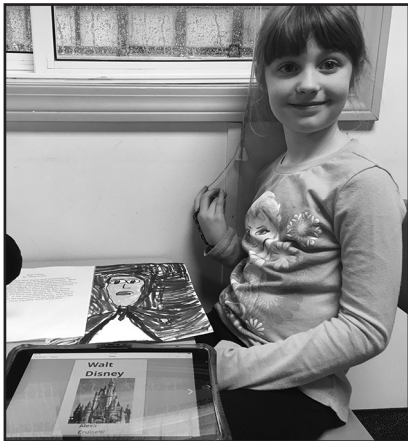
The book selections and high levels of participation sparked considerable interest in reading

new books, while also providing an opportunity to re-read perennial favorites. At the time of this publication, the following books were in the running in the quarter finals: *Smile* by Raina Telgemeier, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* by JK Rowling, *Auggie and Me* by RJ Palacio and Katherine Applegate. The challenge served as an enticing incentive to read high quality literature during National Reading Month!

Spring Street School’s biography project

SHAWNA POWERS
DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTIONAL
TECHNOLOGY &
MEDIA SERVICES

Students in the second grade classes of teachers Amy Porter, Lindsey Halloran, Colleen Reilly, and Allison Sullivan at Spring Street School (SSS) recently completed a biography project. Each student chose a famous person to research, then chose how to share what they had learned. Some created posters while others used the Book Creator app to create an iBook on their person of study. In addition, they created portraits of their person in Art class. Finally, participants shared their projects with teachers and fellow SSS students, and their families.



Spring Street school, second grade students, Alexa Cruise (left), Caitlyn Jiao (top right), and Jay Lambert (bottom right)

Stand

CONTINUED from page 4

the Way It Is” by Bruce Hornsby and the Range. The performance was led by juniors Keith Chan, Chris Wright, and the Jazz Band. The Film Club followed, with a mini-documentary titled “If I Ruled the World.” The film expressed the thoughts, voices, and feelings of our student body, as well as how they would address society’s problems if they had the power to do so. A moment was also taken to show the disastrous weather related issues affecting Texas, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Multiple members of the student body made the decision to help the families affected by Hurricane Maria and Hurricane Harvey through fund-raising efforts, including a \$5000 dollar donation to the victims of Hurricane Harvey, exemplifying the theme of “Step up, Stand up, Speak up.”

Diara Canton, a senior, then graced the stage with a Caribbean dance performance. Diara joined SHS this year, as a result of the devastation in her home island - St. Croix. The Black History Committee also sponsored a writing contest; this year’s theme was inspired by Desmond Tutu’s words, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” The winning entry was a poem written by Saanvi Sood, a freshman, aptly titled “Call for Strength.” The grand finale was a dance performance, choreographed by Ms. Samantha McShane, owner of Shooting Stars Dance Studio in Holden.

The Black History Committee recognizes and appreciates the continued financial support of the Shrewsbury Alumni Association, as well as the support of the student body, teachers, and administrators at SHS. As the assembly enters its nineteenth year, we anticipate continuing to empower students by giving them a voice and a platform as we continue to celebrate Black History.


Sherwood

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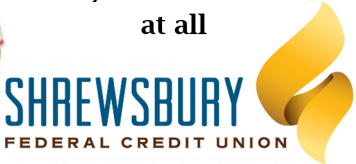
in the morning. These included sitting or playing with someone new, passing along a bracelet when a kindness was done, acknowledging people we pass in the hall, creating posters, and other experiences to keep kindness at the forefront of our actions and words. During this same time, 6 Yellow students took on the challenge of making 3,000 origami cranes to support “Thon” at Penn State where millions of dollars are raised to support families affected by pediatric cancer. Students spent time during lunch and recess teaching others how to make the cranes and were able to accomplish their goal!

Sherwood Middle School is a community where teachers and students feel empowered to try new ideas, take risks, and make learning an interactive, engaging process.

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Statement of Non-discrimination

Shrewsbury Public Schools is required by the Massachusetts Department of Education to publish an annual statement of non-discrimination. This notice serves to meet that requirement. The Massachusetts Equal Educational Opportunity statute, General Laws Chapter 76, § 5, ensures that all students have the right to equal educational opportunities in the public schools. The Shrewsbury Public School District is committed to ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation or disability. The Shrewsbury Public Schools are in compliance with state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment. The following laws apply: Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, § 5, which states, "No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in the admission to a public school or in obtaining the advantages, privileges, and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation." Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 is a federal statute which states, in part, "No person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program receiving federal assistance." This requirement not to discriminate in educational programs and activities also extends to employment. Ms. Barb Malone, is the Title IX Coordinator, Director of Human Resources at (508) 841-8400. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Title VI provided for equal access and prohibits discrimination in the assignment of students to classes. It also prohibits discrimination in ability grouping or tracking students. The Shrewsbury School Committee's Policies #316 and #645 deal directly with the issues of harassment. Copies of these policies are available in the Principal's Office at each school or through the Superintendent's Office, located at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545. Further information may be obtained by contacting Ms. Barb Malone, Director of Human Resources @ 508 841-8400. The following grievance procedure, which was approved by the Shrewsbury School Committee, is to be used for all issues relating to harassment or discrimination involving student and/or staff: 1. The Shrewsbury Public Schools does not and will not knowingly discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. All reports of harassment or discrimination will be taken seriously and investigated in a timely fashion. Reports will be held in the utmost confidence. Any individual who believes he/she has been the subject of harassment or discrimination should immediately report the incident, either verbally or in writing to an administrator, adjustment counselor, guidance counselor, or teacher. The principal must be notified in all cases of harassment or discrimination. All cases of harassment involving a staff member will be reported to the Director of Human Resources. An administrator will first meet with the parties involved in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is unable to meet with the alleged harasser, the administrator, teacher, or counselor may assist the complainant in drafting a letter clearly describing the incident (behavior, where and when it occurred), how the complainant felt, and a request that the behavior stop immediately. Any letter should be signed by the complainant, sent to the alleged harasser and is kept on file by the school administrator. The alleged harasser may be encouraged to apologize, personally or by letter or to write a letter refuting the allegations. In cases of alleged harassment requiring formal investigations, the following shall be implemented. The

complainant shall have the support of a staff member of his/her choice and the alleged harasser will also have the opportunity to select representation (union representative, attorney, teacher, etc.). An administrator from the appropriate level will complete an investigation promptly and make a decision regarding the allegations. In serious cases, where alleged harassment does not stop following a warning, appropriate disciplinary sanction may be imposed, up to and including suspension or dismissal. If the conduct violates the law, the incident will be reported to the appropriate authorities by the school administration. Retaliation or threats of retaliation are unlawful and will not be tolerated. In all cases of harassment or discrimination, the investigating administrator will make a final disposition and issue a written report, which will be maintained in the school files. If the complainant cannot utilize the procedure detailed above because the alleged harasser is involved in the procedure, the complainant should contact the Superintendent of Schools. Complaints about the Superintendent of Schools should be made to the Chairperson of the School Committee. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal statute which states, in part, "No otherwise qualified individual, shall solely on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." This requirement not to discriminate in educational programs and activities also extends to employment. Each school has a designated Section 504 Coordinator. Initial inquiries relating to Section 504 should be directed to the building-based Section 504 Coordinator who can be contacted through the principal's office. Further information may be requested by contacting Ms. Margaret Belsito, Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel, the district's Section 504 Coordinator at (508) 841-8400. The following grievance procedure should be used to report discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Acts of 1973: To fulfill its obligation under Section 504, the Shrewsbury Public Schools recognizes a responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding personnel and students. No discrimination against a person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs or activities of the Shrewsbury Public Schools. The school district has a specific requirement under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which includes the responsibility to identify, evaluate and if the child is determined to be eligible under Section 504, to afford access to free and appropriate educational services. Questions about eligibility or services should be first directed to the building-based coordinator. If a parent or guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the school, he/she has a right to a hearing, first with the district's Section 504 Coordinator, and secondly with an impartial hearing officer. The district's Section 504 Coordinator can be reached at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545 or by phone at (508) 841-8400. The Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel, the district's Section 504 Coordinator, who will provide a written report of the district's findings, will hear all grievances in a timely manner. If a parent or guardian is unsatisfied with the results of the review, they may contact one of the agencies listed below. For grievances not resolved at the Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel level, a review by an impartial hearing officer may be scheduled. Individuals with grievances are not required to use the Shrewsbury Public School's grievance procedure. Written complaints may be filed with the following agencies: Massachusetts Department of Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, (781) 338-3000; United States Department of Education Region 1 - Office of Civil Rights, 8th Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Boston, MA 02203 (800) 368-1019; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203 (800) 669-4000; Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, One Ashburton Place, Room 601, Boston, MA 02108 (617) 994-6000.