

Superintendent’s Corner

Being real

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
Superintendent of Schools

This column is adapted from Dr. Sawyer’s graduation remarks to the Shrewsbury High School Class of 2023.

As you graduate this evening and move into the next stage of your life, my advice to you is to *be real*. No, I am not talking about the app BeReal. For those of you in the audience who don’t know what that is, it is a smartphone app which at a different time each day prompts everyone using it to take a photo of what you are doing at that moment, which is then shared with your friends. The idea is that instead of a carefully posed and filtered social media post, it is capturing you in a moment where you are simply “being real.”

When I say *be real*, I mean to be authentic, defined as being “true to one’s personality, spirit, or character.” I mean to

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“ The road to freedom – here and everywhere on earth – begins in the classroom. – Hubert Humphrey ”



Students, staff, and even DUCKS, enjoy the pond at Oak Middle School! Oak Middle School (OMS) has a refreshed courtyard thanks to funding from the Middle School PTO and the hard work of OMS custodial staff. The improved courtyard (pictured above) boasts refreshed raised plant beds, seating that can be used for outdoor instruction or lunch, and a working pond for students and staff to enjoy. The pond also drew the attention of a pair of ducks, and in May they could be seen bobbing in the water and waddling around the grass (pictured below, left) with their twelve ducklings! Photos and caption submitted by Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator Mr. Robert Dunn

Meeting student needs while maintaining fiscal stability in FY24

SANDRA FRYC
School Committee Chair

The School Committee voted unanimously this spring to recommend a town-appropriated Fiscal Year 2024 budget of \$83,086,622, which represents a \$3,767,651 or 4.75% increase over the current fiscal year.

The committee’s goals for FY24 are to maintain fiscal stability while addressing student learning gaps, district strategic goals and priorities, and rising costs. The school district enjoys fiscal certainty due to the 2021 override funding, careful assessment, and prudent, thoughtful use of all available funds. The committee and district leadership met multiple times in budget workshops to discuss the district needs and priorities to ensure budget recommendations align with the recently completed Strategic Plan for 2023-2027, and its impact on identified areas of need, as well as accomplishing the district’s educational goals.

A review and update of the district’s literacy program was in the planning stage as the pandemic hit. A program review highlighted the need to examine our practices and consider updates to methods and materials. The district’s adoption of the Star Assessment universal screening tool, along with

MCAS results, indicated that while students are recovering from pandemic learning loss there have also been losses in English Language Arts. The data reinforced that additional work is needed to empower all students to meet grade-level standards in literacy.

The approved FY24 School Department budget includes strategic investments to focus on shifting current practice and programs in literacy instruction to match current research and best practices, to close identified learning gaps, and to meet an identified critical academic need. One Reading Specialist is being added at Sherwood Middle School to provide reading intervention and instruction for students, and to support staff in updating literacy instructional practices. Two Reading Specialists will be added at Kindergarten through Grade 4 to provide reading interventions for students reading below benchmark, coordinate literacy tutor interventions, and provide coaching and job-embedded professional development. In addition, the district will hire a literacy/reading consultant for the 2023-2024 school year to provide coaching and job-embedded professional development to K-Grade 4 leaders and educators to support training and implementation of updated literacy instructional practices and programming.

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be genuine, defined as “free from hypocrisy or pretense: sincere.” I mean to be the opposite of artificial.

By artificial, I’m not referring to artificial intelligence, although managing the significant risks associated with AI will be one of several global-scale challenges that I’m hopeful many of you brilliant graduates may go on to help mitigate in the future. I am speaking of the ways in which it is all too easy in today’s society to substitute artificiality in our relationships with our world, with our family and friends, and even with ourselves. In the age of the smartphone and social media, the constant stream of videos and images and verbiage is designed to influence our thoughts about who we are and how we might “fit in,” and can unconsciously steer us in directions we would not otherwise choose, while at the same time creating pressure to present a curated, artificial online version of ourselves to others. And, when our time and effort is disproportionately spent in an artificial virtual space, our real relationships and our real selves can deteriorate.

The antidote to artificiality is authenticity, both with ourselves and with others. Just as the BeReal app simultaneously snaps a photo from your phone’s back and front cameras, we need to look both inward and outward to determine how to become the truest version of ourselves. For introspection, I am reminded of my own wise mother’s fondness for Shakespeare’s famous advice:

*This above all: to thine
own self be true,
And it must follow, as the
night the day,
Thou canst not then be
false to any man.*

However, remember that being true to yourself doesn’t mean that it’s all about you. I suggest that you also consider the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi, who said that “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” When you humble yourself to serve those who are in need, and sincerely work to improve their lives even in the smallest way, that is where you will find genuine, real connection.

As a class, you have been collectively honored for your community service, and it is my hope that you will continue to seek ways to make a positive difference for your community in the future, wherever that may be.

However, I am not going to tell you that in your future you will be living in the “real world.” When that phrase is used to mean an “adult world,” it seems to me that it discounts the very real experiences that you have had for almost two decades, the good and the not-so-

Recognizing 2023 retirees

BARBARA A. MALONE
*Executive Director of
Human Resources*

Twenty-two staff have ended their education careers with a well-deserved retirement. In combination, they have served the students of Shrewsbury for 533.5 years. This total represents an average of 24.25 years of service in Shrewsbury and does not include prior educational experience in other districts. We wish them a healthy, happy, and fun retirement.

Listed below are the names, positions, schools, and years of service for all retirees, including those who retired earlier in the year:

Administrative Assistant:
Sheila Dallarosa has served 12 years in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as the Nursing Administrative Assistant for the District.

Food Services:
Debra Novotny has served 26 years in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Cafeteria Aide from Shrewsbury High School.

Lisa Phipps has served 25 years in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as the Cafeteria Manager from Shrewsbury High School.

Antoinette Walsh has served 19 years in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Cook from Sherwood Middle School.

IT Specialist:
Donna Naumiec has served 26.5 years in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as an IT Support Specialist from Floral Street School

Paraprofessionals:
Fazileh Ghazanfari has

served 20 years as a paraprofessional in Shrewsbury. She is retiring from Walter J. Paton School.

Jill Prenier has served 14 years as a paraprofessional in Shrewsbury. She is retiring from Walter J. Paton School.

Pamela Thompson has served 19 years as a paraprofessional in Shrewsbury. She is retiring from Parker Road Preschool.

Teachers/Professional Staff:
Joan Beall has served 26 years as an educator, with 22 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Fourth Grade Teacher from Floral Street School.

Elizabeth Blash has served 20 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Grade Five English Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher from Sherwood Middle School.

Gary Chalmers has served 34 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. He is retiring as a Grade Five Mathematics and Science Teacher from Sherwood Middle School.

Kristine Cobb has served 26 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Visual Arts Teacher from Shrewsbury High School.

William Cobb has served 20 years as an educator, with 19 of those years here in Shrewsbury. He is retiring as a Mathematics Teacher from Shrewsbury High School.

Charlene Costello has served 39 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Kindergarten Teacher from Major Howard W. Beal School.

Madeliene del Toro-Cournoyer has served 23.5 years as an educator, with 16 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Spanish Teacher from Shrewsbury High School.

Adele Hamilton has served 16 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Speech Language Pathologist from Oak Middle School.

D’Arcy McCarthy has served 24 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Special Education Teacher from Oak Middle School.

Cheryl Mongeon has served 39 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a First Grade Teacher from Calvin Coolidge School.

Wendy O’Neill has served 38 years as an educator here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as a Special Education Teacher from Major Howard W. Beal School.

Marc Rischitelli has served 35 years as an educator, with 35 of those years here in Shrewsbury in the Speech and Debate program. He is retiring from his role as the Shrewsbury High School Speech and Debate Coach.

Administrator:
Patrick Collins has served 27 years in education, with 19 of those years here in Shrewsbury. He is retiring as the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.

Anne Koertge has served 27 years as an educator, with 25 of those years here in Shrewsbury. She is retiring as the Assistant Principal of Oak Middle School.

Meeting student needs

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Expanding high school students’ opportunities in career technical education was a major focus of the FY24 Budget. Due to recent regulations adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School, the opportunity for Shrewsbury students to attend vocational schools is extremely limited. Last fall, in a joint letter from the School Committee and Select Board, we contacted the Assabet Valley Regional School Committee to inquire if they would consider allowing the Town of Shrewsbury to join their vocational technical high school district, so that

Shrewsbury students would have better access to Assabet. In late February, they voted to refrain from considering any expansion of their own district’s membership of towns at the current time. This decision and the lack of ability for those students who desire a traditional vocational school experience undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on educational services. During the FY24 budget discussions, the School Committee strongly advocated for additional investment in career and technical education options for students to mitigate the current situation.

The district’s recently completed Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 included the priority of Con-

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good, the happy and the sad, the wonderful and the tragic. I suggest that instead you consider the real world to be anywhere where you are truly present and connected with yourself, with others, and with the world around you, as opposed to the artificiality of the online world.

So, as you go forth as graduates of Shrewsbury High School, I do hope that you will make the effort to be real with yourself; to be a real help to those in need; to be a real friend who can be counted on; and to make a real contribution to your real world. If you do, you will be a real credit to your family, your community, and to yourself.

Meeting student needs

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nected Learning for a Complex World. There has been ongoing work in the district since 2018 to provide opportunities that help students develop independence after graduation, including exposure to career choices and development of skills in financial literacy, and building community partnerships with businesses, institutions, and individuals to increase access to learning and career awareness and to enhance learning in the STEAM fields of science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics.

The district’s newly adopted 2023-2027 Strategic Plan includes the goal of *Advancing Career and Technical Education* to strengthen all students’ postsecondary preparedness by expanding access to career and technical education, evaluating course offerings, and exploring career pathway opportunities. This updated goal builds on the previous work to create a roadmap to provide all students with enhanced career and technical educational opportunities.

Career Technical Education or CTE provides students with the academic and technical skills, knowledge, and training needed to succeed in future careers. Vocational technical education goes beyond CTE and focuses on one particular vocational area. Our district cannot replicate the type of intensive vocational education a student would receive if they were to attend Assabet. Shrewsbury Public Schools has been and will continue to work to increase CTE opportunities to mitigate the educational effects due to the lack of available spots at traditional vocational schools and provide various learning experiences for all students.

During the past school year, the district has done the following to advance CTE options:

- Shrewsbury High School (SHS) leadership and counseling teams have identified Career Pathway course sequence options for rising Grade 10 and Grade 9 students interested in CTE beginning with the 2023-2024 school year. The Pathway sequences were offered first to incoming 9th and 10th grade students who applied to Assabet and were not admitted due to the new admissions policy change. The pathways include full-year course offerings organized into six content-specific pathways including biomedical, business, childcare, computer science, engineering, and TV production and film, and they mimic the structure of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Educations’ (DESE) Innovation Pathways. Over sixty rising Grade 10 and Grade 9 students have enrolled in a Career Pathway that

interests them while having the flexibility to transition from one pathway to another if their interests change. The district is in the process of actively pursuing Innovation Career Pathways designation through DESE.

- The district is seeking \$625,000 in funding by applying for a state Career Pathways Expansion Planning Grant to support expansion and student access to the program and to help address the current community need for CTE.
- District leadership met with the leadership team at Blackstone Valley HUB for Workforce Development to better understand opportunities for in-district and out-of-district internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and employment. The Blackstone Hub aims to actively contribute to a collaborative workforce pipeline by providing a centralized location for students to gain technical and employability skills needed to meet the region’s and workforce needs. We believe this potential partnership holds great promise for providing technical training opportunities for SHS students in fields such as Computer Integrated Manufacturing and Welding.
- District leadership and educators collaborated to create, assess, and strengthen career and life readiness for all students through career exploration. Opportunities included career fairs, job fairs, job shadowing, short and long-term internships, and a classroom speaker series facilitated by Shrewsbury Public Schools alumni, town officials, and others to provide a connection between college, career, and the workforce to illustrate ways in which a student’s strengths, interests, and academic skills can translate into the job market, and what steps they can take to reach their goals.
- Identified individuals, companies and organizations willing to work with students to share their purpose, goals, and mission.
- Provided regular updates and maintenance of the district’s *Jobs for Students* website to share opportunities throughout the year, including contact information for local businesses and alumni that seek student involvement and engagement.

The Fiscal Year 2024 budget includes additional investment to implement the key strategic priority of *Career Technical Education*. One Science and Engineering teacher will be added at SHS for expansion of access to *Project Lead the Way* course offerings in technical subject matters, includ-

ing Biomedical Science, Intro to Engineering Principles, Robotics/ Electronics, and Exploring Technology. The budget also includes \$100,000 in investment to expand career and technical education opportunities.

It is not possible to flip a switch so students can have the same or similar educational experiences they would have at a traditional vocational technical school. The work the district has done and continues to do to provide learning experiences for all students is multi-faceted and challenging. A careful and deliberate assessment of students’ learning needs and desires, as well as space, equipment, personnel, and transportation, are critical to ensure the right opportunities are being provided to students and the program is sustainable in the long term. As we look to the future, the district will need to carefully assess space, staffing, equipment, and financial needs to further increase student access to career technical learning opportunities.

Over the past year, the issue of school building space is an area the School Department has examined carefully in partnership with municipal leaders. A Pre-K through Grade 12 Space and Enrollment Study was funded as part of the Beal School Feasibility Study. Physical space is necessary for the district to expand academic programming, including electives or new educational offerings. The in-depth study identified Shrewsbury High School as the current highest priority due to its status as significantly overcrowded based on the difference between its design capacity and enrollment.

The School Committee and Select Board voted unanimously to support a Statement of Interest, a non-binding submittal, to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) seeking grant funding to add space at the high school. The partnership between cities and towns and the MSBA is essential for school capital projects and provides significant cost savings to taxpayers.

The second priority the space study brought forward is the need to address, in some combination, the age and condition of Calvin Coolidge School and the amount and quality of space for the district’s preschool program. The third priority is to provide parity among the Kindergarten-through-Grade-4 elementary schools.

At our School Committee meeting on April 26th, Dr. Sawyer suggested the formation of a study committee to review the recommendations in the space study report regarding Pre-K through Grade 4 capital needs. The plan is for the formation of the study committee to be completed by the end of the summer. Meetings will convene at the start of the new school year and continue throughout the fall and winter, and recommendations to address pre-school and elementary capital investments will be

presented to the School Committee in March 2024.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) efforts and work continue to be part of our district’s daily practices. The district has invested in ongoing DEIB work in a variety of ways including professional development for staff, initiation of a teacher diversification project to assist with hiring practices, use of data to inform instructional practices to meet the diverse needs of students, focusing on a culture of belonging, and engaging families with diverse backgrounds. During the development of the district’s new Strategic Priorities for 2023-2027, the consensus was that there should not be a stand-alone priority for DEIB, as it should be embedded in everything we do as a district.

A critical initiative the district will pursue in FY24 is hiring a third party to assist with an updated equity audit. Re-evaluation of our work to date is vital to assess where we are doing well and where tweaks need to be done to ensure the district is doing all it can to incorporate an appreciation of diversity in our schools, curriculum, and daily practices.

The district’s creation of an in-house RISE Program (Reaching Independence Through Supported Employment) will allow us to keep students aged 18-22 in the district in their own community, and provide a high-quality program at the same or lesser cost. The property at 557 Main Street was secured through the legally required competitive procurement process. The district has entered into a five-year lease that will commence upon completion of renovations.

Other key areas for strategic investments in the FY24 budget include hiring contracted services to perform a safety and security audit to perform a comprehensive review and provide a report of all district schools regarding safety and security related to building infrastructure and emergency response practices. The district will be hiring contracted services to manage attendance issues and residency validation for student enrollment. Finally, the district will be hiring contracted consultation services to help ensure development of a robust action plan and data tracking systems for successful implementation of the district’s strategic plan for 2023-2027.

Strong public schools add value to our community and taxpayers. The Fiscal Year 2024 budget reflects targeted investment in key district priorities and needs that will provide the best educational experience possible for all students. It follows the commitment made to the community that the School Department will work within the promised override framework, and it reflects prudent, thoughtful use of financial resources provided by the taxpayers.

A peek into social emotional learning & well-being at SPS

DR. JANE O. LIZOTTE
Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships and Well-Being

Enhanced Well-Being of All is one of three overarching commitments in the district’s new Strategic Plan 2023-2027. I am grateful to district, school, and teacher leaders, including counselors, school psychologists, and service providers, for generously contributing time, energy, and expertise to the planning of social emotional learning (SEL) and well-being experiences for students and staff year-round, as much of the planning is accomplished during the summer months. School districts play a pivotal role in modeling and creating the conditions for all schools to prioritize and advance SEL. The following includes a few highlights of this work and identifies goals moving forward.

Over the past school year, district and school leaders, educators, and staff modeled, communicated and reiterated the importance of making connections with others, while building a sense of belonging and developing trusting relationships in our school communities. These practices were evident in learning spaces throughout the district as our schools endeavored to provide opportunities during the school day to gather together to share learning and celebrate accomplishments. Community gatherings continued long after the school day ended, as school leaders and parent groups collaborated to plan cultural nights, recognitions of learning, family socials, food truck nights, and a myriad of celebrations that were inclusive of all. We know that being present to one another is paramount as we seek to foster relationships and find ways to let others know that we care about them. Additionally, many efforts went on behind the scenes as educators created, measured, and redesigned specific interventions for students.

At a May 2023 School Committee meeting, Shrewsbury High School’s Senior Scholars shared stories of educators and others who made them feel loved, included, and integral to the school and classroom communities of which they were a part from pre-school through high school. Some of the students shared specific ways in which teachers positively influenced their “sense of self,” while teaching “life lessons” in addition to “academic engagement.” End-of-senior-year celebrations including the Little Colonials “Senior Walk,” Parker Road Preschool’s “Reunion”, and “Clap Outs” at some of our elementary schools signify the important role that relationship building and community play in our schools.

Research, data, and lived experiences in schools indicate that academic

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SHS alumni invaluable to schools

KATHLEEN KEOHANE
Director of Alumni Development and Community Relationships

Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) extend heartfelt gratitude to the many Shrewsbury High School (SHS) alumni who dedicated their time and expertise this year to mentoring current students and making a significant impact on their futures. Through various initiatives and programs, alumni have shared their insights, provided valuable guidance, and even offered employment opportunities to Shrewsbury students.

One such initiative was the Classroom Guest Speaker Program which provided an opportunity for former Shrewsbury High School students to return and inspire current students by sharing their professional journeys. Tim Hally (Class of 2015) shared his experience starting his own business, Munq, with students in Jason Andreola’s business class. David Snowden (Class of 2001), Shrewsbury’s Assistant Town Manager - Finance and Administration, shared his expertise and first-hand knowledge of municipal governance and public administration. Mike Houlihan (Class of

1994) delivered a presentation to juniors and seniors about his remarkable 26-year military career.

Alumni have also participated in, and played a crucial role in the success of, job shadowing experiences, career fairs, and job fairs. Tony Ngo (Class of 2000) from Lofty Homes offered a job shadowing experience to a student and later hired her. Jeff Abbott (Class of 1998) from Creedon and Co., Inc. Catering attended the Career Fair and Job Fairs and spoke to many students about career opportunities in his catering business. He offered employment to several students throughout the year. Ken Mongeon (Class of 1991), an employee from Fidelity Investments, offered career advice to students at both the high school and middle school Career Fairs. Darius Corcoran (Class of 2012) from Millis Public Schools, offered an IT internship to a student interested in computer science. Ron Whittle (Class of 1966) entertained students with stories of his time in Vietnam and shared his love of poetry. These former students illustrate that at any age there is an opportunity to provide career advice, invaluable networking opportunities, and employment prospects



Jeff Abbott (Class of 1998) from Creedon and Co., Inc. Catering is pictured above talking with students at a Shrewsbury High School Career Fair.

for Shrewsbury students. We encourage more SHS alumni to step forward to help!

Recognizing the power of alumni connections, Shrewsbury Public Schools established the SPSCONnects platform, which was officially launched in January of this year. This platform serves as a hub for alumni to connect with one another, find classmates, offer and seek jobs and internships, and provide mentoring for juniors and seniors. SPSCONnects.com has proven instrumental in fostering engagement, leading to enhanced mentoring and career development programs. The school district aims to expand the number of members on SPSCONnects in the coming

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Young Athletes at Parker Road Preschool

BRIDGET NICHOLS
Director of Preschool

For the third year in a row, Parker Road Preschool participated in the Special Olympics Young Athletes program. Thanks to the dedication, leadership and hard work of our district Physical Therapist, Mrs. Brittany Zalesky, with the support of Mrs. Margaret Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, we were introduced to this program back in 2021. Following the completion of this program, we became one of a handful of Unified Champion Preschools. The Young Athletes play program, which was embedded into our curriculum at Parker Road for eight weeks, is designed for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 2-7. The program introduces basic sport skills like running, kicking and throwing, and offers families, teachers, and caregivers the chance to share the joy of sports with all children. It also serves as a great foundation for the wonderful unified sports programs we now have in every school across our district!

Young Athletes provides children of all abilities the same opportunities to advance in

core developmental milestones. Children learn how to play with others and develop important skills for learning. Children also learn to share, take turns and follow directions. Young Athletes is a fun way for children to stay active and establish healthy habits for the future. It is a great program which encompasses motor skills, social emotional learning skills, sport readiness, and acceptance.¹

On May 25th, May 26th and May 27th, we hosted a culminating event at each of our three locations to celebrate all the hard work and fun learning in which our students and staff engaged. It was an hour-long event, beginning with an opening parade (balloon torch and all!) and of course ending with an awards ceremony and freeze pops! Each student had an opportunity to demonstrate what he/she/they learned over the past eight weeks in class. Each piece of the Young Athletes curriculum was incorporated across our celebration and it was a huge success!

At Parker Road Preschool we always strive to promote acceptance and respect for students of all abilities and ensure that students of all skill



Preschool student Karl Jayden Jean Simone is pictured above flying through the Young Athletes obstacle course!

levels are included as much as possible. Thanks to the passion, initiative and inclusion advocacy of Miss Brittany, we were able to celebrate this core value of ours in a fun and healthy way! We are so proud of each and every one of our athletes and encourage all families to motivate their children to stay active over the summer – running, jumping, playing with balls, and climbing at playgrounds are all great ways to continue to build upon these skills!

1. Young Athletes Resources: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/young-athletes>

Making elementary connections

REBECCA DUMPHY
ASHLEY GALLAGHER
ERIN KENDRICK
SARAH MATTHEWS
LINDSAY MORSE
LISA PAPAZIAN
DONNA RICE
Elementary Instructional Coaches

There were a number of special events and projects held throughout the year at our elementary schools that provided students with opportunities to make connections with each other and with the broader community. Here is a sampling:

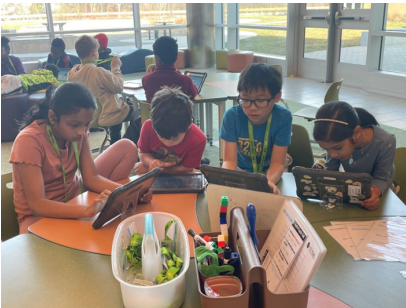
On Wednesday, April 26th, **Walter J. Paton School** celebrated the richness of its community's diversity at its First Annual **Cultural Night**. Families, staff, and community members were able to expand their understanding of various cultures through presentations, food tastings, and other interactive experiences. A special thank you to the organizers, volunteers, presenters, and participating families whose incredible efforts made it an extremely special evening for all involved.



Attendees at Walter J. Paton School's Cultural Night are pictured above.

Each year 119 billion pounds of food is wasted in the United States, which equates to 130 billion meals and more than \$408 Billion in food thrown away each year. **Floral Street School** is bringing awareness to this growing problem. This year marks the 20th year that Floral staff and students have participated in **Floral Goes Green**. This week-long event focuses the community's attention on the importance of the environment. This year the theme was *Investing in the Environment*. Floral students are investing in the environment by learning about how food waste can be

recycled into compost. With the help of teachers, kindergarten students began collecting food waste at lunchtime and dumping it into composting bins outside. The hope is to expand lunchtime composting to an additional grade level each year until the entire school is participating.



Maj. Howard W. Beal School Grade 4 students Aiden and Hira (pictured above wearing lanyards) help Grade 1 students Nate and Sraavya with ST Math puzzles.

Major Howard W. Beal School has started a "**Genius Bar**", where students can work together to help solve ST Math puzzles! Students of all grade levels help each other and ask questions, use tools, share strategies, and encourage one another as they complete challenging math puzzles and improve their progress. Any student can be a helper as they learn facilitation skills and teach their peers how to think through math problems and improve their mathematical skills. It has been a great success at all grade levels as this has evolved throughout the year. Whether it's in the media center or in grade level neighborhoods, these hard workers can be found persevering through puzzles as they solve these challenges.

In April, **Spring Street School** came together to celebrate the beautiful diversity of our community. The hallways were filled with self portraits, paper lanterns and colorful flags from around the world. Fourth grade students researched their personal cultural backgrounds and shared facts and artifacts celebrating their culture. As families walked around the school, they observed pieces of clothing and pottery, heard stories from the past and sampled lots of food! Students danced, listened to stories and created



Students and families are pictured above enjoying Spring Street School's Cultural Night held in April.

art projects using colorful sand, toothpicks, marshmallows and so much more. We are already excited about welcoming families to Spring Street's **Cultural Night** next year!

In May, **Calvin Coolidge School** celebrated our community's rich culture and diversity with a week of festivity called **Cultural Connections Week**! This week was designed to foster cultural awareness, inclusion, and acceptance, and culminated in our inaugural **Celebration of Us** event. During Cultural Connections Week, families were invited to share an aspect of their cultural heritage with Coolidge classrooms, either virtually or in person. In addition, students engaged in daily Morning Meeting activities to expand their understanding about the rich diversity of students and staff at Coolidge, and enjoyed a school-wide presentation from Crocodile River Music, an African music, art, and dance troupe. The Celebration of Us event, which was organized by the Coolidge School Culture Connection Committee, was held on the evening of May 18th and provided families with the opportunity to display and share information about their culture and traditions, and offered free food and cultural presentations for all to enjoy.



Calvin Coolidge School students (left to right above) Naavya Raghavendra, Aanya Mootakoduru, Aadya Raghavendra, Abigail Mathew, Amira Boukantar, and Nour Boukantar beam with cultural pride at the Celebration of Us.

Coolidge School would like to thank the following local businesses for their generous donations: Dean Park Grill & Pizza, Lakeside Bar & Grille, Napoli Italian Deli, Mayuri Restaurant (Westborough), Salgaborn Snacks, Bauhinia Restaurant, Monti's Pizza Plus, and Wegmans.

SHS alumni

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year, further strengthening the alumni network. Any former SPS student is welcome to join. If you are an SHS alumni we would love to connect with you! Visit SPSConnects.com and sign up today.

The active involvement of alumni has been paramount to the success of Shrewsbury Public Schools' career exploration programs. Their mentorship, willingness to share their experiences, and provision of job and internship opportunities have had a profound effect on current students. As Shrewsbury Public Schools continues to expand its career-focused offerings, the district looks forward to the continued engagement and support of its dedicated alumni. If you would like to be contacted to be a guest speaker or a participant in a Career or Job Fair, please contact kkeohane@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

Well-being

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performance improves when students are taught intervention and prevention skills and strategies, as they seek to manage emotions, show concern for others, make responsible decisions, and form positive relationships. Educators in our schools did an exceptional job sharing messages throughout the school day that reinforced character traits and core values while sharing strategies and tips.

Strengthening social and emotional learning in all of our schools, and doing this work with fidelity, continues to be a top priority. This work will continue, thanks to the efforts of SEL leadership teams at each level (elementary, middle, and high). Teams will meet over the summer and next school year. Below is a brief description of the work ahead.

Why:

- Strengthen Social and Emotional Learning Programming and Supports: Proactively deliver social and emotional learning opportunities to all students and maintain sufficient systems and resources to respond to students' social and emotional needs.
- Continue professional development on current leveled social and emotional learning curriculum and Advisory experiences to ensure implementation with fidelity.

What:

- Create a shared vision, mission, and goals, as those relate to SPS' Strategic Plan Commitment to **Enhanced Well-Being of All**. The groups will strengthen the SEL lessons, activities, etc. that currently exist.

Who:

- Representative staff from each of the schools and levels.

We look forward to sharing our work in the coming weeks and months with the entire community, as we need each other to ensure that students and staff have the resources, experiences, and support they need at home and at school.

Kindergarteners at Floral Street School collect food waste at lunch and deposit it in compost bins in the garden at Floral Street School. Pictured below, from left to right are students Mandy Chen, LeRoy Agorbia, Sophie Kilgore and Jayla Hood.



Community Service Learning Board hosts award ceremony

CAELEY GALE
Grade 10 Student
Shrewsbury High School

On Monday May 15th, the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Community Service Learning Advisory Board hosted its annual 2022-2023 Community Service Learning Award Ceremony, which honors SHS students who have put in at least 75 hours of community service throughout the school year. It also honors seniors who have done at least 100 hours of community service in their high school career. Although these students had to reach a minimum amount of hours to get the award, the ceremony was truly about recognizing the hard work all of these students put in. They participated in many different forms of service, such as volunteering at food banks, in churches, at schools, and all throughout our town and surrounding communities. They have done an incredible job at positively impacting others and have shown great dedication and commitment towards service.

One special award given out during the ceremony was the *Amy O’Leary Service Award for Excellence*. This award is meant to honor a student who went above and beyond in the pursuit of service and demonstrated outstanding effort. SHS junior, Maanya Chitrapu, was this year’s *Amy O’Leary Award* recipient. Chitrapu has devoted numerous hours in a lab alongside another researcher determining what temperature and duration would best ablate, or remove, a tumor. She hopes that these findings have provided more data that doctors can use to improve the accuracy and efficiency of tumor removal.

The *United Way of Central Massachusetts 2023 Youth Volunteer of the Year Award* was also presented at the award ceremony by SHS Assistant Principal Mr. Jeffrey Lane. This award was given to Mr. Lane and the whole SHS Class of 2023 for their efforts and dedication to service through their monthly community service trips.

The Community Service Learning Advisory Board hopes that students across the district continue to serve our community with passion and dedication.

Everything you get to do

ANDREW MORAN
Mathematics Teacher,
Shrewsbury High School

The following are remarks given by Mr. Andrew Moran, Mathematics Teacher, at the Shrewsbury High School Class of 2023 Commemoration on May 30, 2023, edited for publication.

Hello and welcome to the Commemoration of the senior class of 2023. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here with you today. Looking back over your past four years I am so glad that *I got to* teach some of you, *I got to* coach some of you, and *I got to* know many of you that were never in my classes or on my teams. I see all of these relationships that *I got to* build with you as a privilege that only teachers and coaches *get to have*. And since I’m a teacher and a coach, you should know that there is a lesson coming now.

As you look forward to the next chapter of your life, I want you to know that everything that you have done or will do are things that you *get to do* and not things that you *have to do*. And those of you that have followed my quote of the day over the years or have had me as a coach might know where I am going with this. When I was in high school I had a volleyball coach that taught me a lot about life. He taught his players that each day you *get to* wake up and go to school. You *get to* see your friends and family. You *get to* go to work or whatever it is that you *get to* do that day. At practice we *got to* learn from our mistakes. Often this was by running sprints but *I got to* do those too. Because of him *I got to* compete in the County Championship game and earn an All-County Award. *I got to* lose in the championship game and understand just how much volleyball, my team, and my coaches meant to me when I realized I would never play with them again. He continued to coach players after I gradu-

ated and every year he *got to* take new players to the County Championship. A few years after I graduated he helped lead the movement to move all of New York State boys volleyball to be a fall sport so that there could be a state championship and then he *got to* win that championship multiple times. He did a lot of this while battling cancer, when he had been given an 8% chance to survive even one month. Even when faced with the toughest time in his life, he saw every day as an opportunity to *get to* wake up and be with the people he loved and teach the people he cared for. He *got to* start The Dezy Strong foundation that raises money for families going through cancer that *I get to* support every Thursday in honor of him by wearing my blue polo. His diagnosis came in February of 2019, and although he did not win his battle with cancer, he fought until January 2020 and he enjoyed every minute that he had with his family, friends, students, and players while also making the world a better place by helping others going through cancer.

Now all of you *got to* experience a tough start to high school with the beginning of the pandemic. You *got to* learn a lot about yourself and how you respond to adversity. Even if you did not respond well the first time, you *got to* learn how to respond better the next time you face a tough situation. And you *got to* come back and experience a great junior and senior year of seeing your friends in the halls, having clubs and sports go back to normal and experiencing all of the things that, before the pandemic, some of us took for granted. When I was about your age *I got to* experience some adversity too. At the age of 19, on December 20th during my winter break, *I got to* wake up, with my room full of smoke and my house on fire. Luckily I was the only one home because my sisters and parents had already left for school and work. *I got to*

experience how I would respond during a tough situation where I had to climb out of the second floor window and run back into the first floor to get my dogs out of the house. *I got to* make the phone call to 911 that saved most of my parents pictures and memories. Unfortunately I also *got to* experience trying to help my younger sisters deal with the loss of most of their possessions. Their bedrooms were where the fire started and that entire side of the house was lost. That night *I got to* experience other losses like the loss of my grandmother and three days later the loss of a friend’s brother. None of these events were happy events in my life. But *I got to* grow as a person and develop some maturity to become the person that I am today. Many of you over the years have asked me about my tattoo and I have *gotten* the chance to tell you that it is my family coat of arms and that it means “They Shine in Darkness”. I had the opportunity to *get* that tattoo after all of that loss in my life as a way to remind myself that I can take positives from anything and grow as a person from everything that I experience.

Last week you *got to* experience some happy events like senior picnic and senior prom, and tomorrow you *get to* experience the senior faculty reception and maybe see how good, or bad, your teachers are at dancing. And finally you *get to* experience graduation before starting the next stage of your life. As you move forward through each day that you *get to* experience, remember to enjoy those things that you *get to do* and learn from the tough things that you *get to* go through because every day that you *get*, good or bad, can have a meaningful and positive impact on you as a person, if you let it.

So I would like to congratulate you on getting to successfully complete your senior year, and thank you for letting me be a part of it.

Honor an educator, staff member, or student and support career exploration

KATHLEEN KEOHANE
Director of Alumni Development and Community Relationships

The Colonial Fund, Shrewsbury Public Schools’ Annual Fund, is supporting multi-faceted career exploration opportunities for our students, including hands-on experiences outside the classroom. This year, roughly 100 students explored their interests in at least 15 different careers, across ten different locations. Hundreds of other middle and high school students attended Career Fairs and Job Fairs, all sponsored by the Colonial Fund. Details of the opportunities and photos of the students in action, can be found on the

Colonial Fund website, <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future/career-pathways>. **We invite you to make an honorary gift to honor an educator, staff member and/or student**, through a donation to the Colonial Fund. A simple end-of-year gift is appreciated as well.

With your donation, you are helping us provide the resources necessary for our students to actively engage in career exploration experiences, while pursuing their interests and gaining the confidence to realize their dreams. **As a special gift, choose one of our six personalized thank you cards, and we will customize it with your name, and send it to the recipient of your choice.** All honorees will be recognized on our website and announced in a future edition of the School Journal. Start the honorary application and select your card here: <https://www.schoolpay.com/link/thank-a-teacher>. To make a simple end of year gift please start here: www.schoolpay.com/link/Donate-To-SPS. Thank you for supporting Career Exploration!

Exceptional inaugural year for DECA

SWATHI KANNAN
Class of 2024
NUHA SALAM
Class of 2025
JASON ANDREOLA
Instructional Technology & Business Teacher
Shrewsbury High School

The Shrewsbury DECA (business) team had an exceptional inaugural year, characterized by remarkable achievements and significant milestones. As a first-year chapter, they have surpassed expectations and showcased their dedication and business acumen. From attending their very first District conference to excelling at the State Career Development Conference (SCDC) and the International Career Development Conference (ICDC), the team enjoyed success in the competitive world of DECA and experienced incredible opportunities this year.

DECA (Distributive Educa-

tion Clubs of America) prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe. The Shrewsbury DECA chapter was initiated when juniors (2022-2023) Nayan Kaul, Swathi Kannan, and Fawwaz Naeem met with Mr. Jason Andreola, Instructional Technology & Business Teacher at Shrewsbury High School (SHS), to discuss their interest in business competitions. Delighted to hear about the students' interest in business and their desire to bring competitive business opportunities to the entire student body, Mr. Andreola agreed to be their advisor, and it's safe to say that the Shrewsbury DECA Chapter would not be the same without him. The students and Mr. Andreola dedicated numerous hours to frequent meetings, diligently working toward the establishment of Shrewsbury's inaugu-

ral DECA chapter. The group was determined to establish a chapter for the SHS student body to participate in for the 2022-2023 school year, which also meant meetings and organizational planning time was needed during the summer. The student officers are grateful for Mr. Andreola's support and dedication to the team. Mr. Andreola coaches students, meets frequently with the DECA state board, organizes conference logistics and communicates with families, all which led to great success for SHS members this year.

To gain greater knowledge about DECA, students attended their first State Leadership Conference hosted at Bentley University in the fall of 2022. Students heard from keynote speakers and had the opportunity to partake in multiple workshops, such as Fundrais-

CONTINUED, see page 8

Career exploration at SPS

DR. JANE LIZOTTE
Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being
KATHLEEN KEOHANE
Director of Alumni Development and Community Relationships

Throughout the 2022-23 school year, Shrewsbury Public Schools (SPS) organized a range of events and programs to empower students to make informed decisions about their professional paths as part of SPS' newly adopted 2023-2027 Strategic Plan that includes the following Strategic Priority and Action Steps:

- Advance Career and Technical Education: Strengthen all students' postsecondary preparedness by expanding access to career and technical education, evaluating course offerings, and exploring pathway opportunities.*
- *Expand opportunities for career exploration, job shadowing, and internships.*
 - *Create multiple career and technical pathways for high school students, including coursework sequences followed by authentic field training experiences.*

These events aimed to introduce students to different industries, trades, and post-secondary options. The district's efforts have yielded remarkable results which is evident in the

growing number of relationships established with local businesses and organizations.

In April 2022, the first-ever Career/Trades Fair took place at Shrewsbury High School (SHS), and featured 12 businesses, trades, and post-secondary options, as well as six SHS alumni. The fair showcased the diverse range of career possibilities available to students. Building on this success, a second Career/Trades Fair was held in February 2023, boasting an impressive turnout of businesses, trades, post-secondary options, and 11 alumni. After hearing about the SHS Career Fair, Oak Middle School decided to host their own Career Day for Grade 7 students in March 2023. It featured over 60 volunteers and six SHS alumni, representing the vast variety of careers that students indicated they were interested in. In addition to the Career/Trades Fairs, SHS also organized Job Fairs after school which created opportunities for students to engage directly with local businesses. The Job Fairs were held in November in advance of the holiday season, and in April in advance of the summer season. Both offered positions for students as young as 15 years old and were very well attended.

Beyond the employment opportunities provided at the career fairs and job fairs, SPS facilitated job shadowing experiences for students during the February and April vacation weeks. Roughly 100 students registered

for these opportunities, enabling them to gain firsthand knowledge and sometimes hands-on training in a wide array of fields ranging from sports management and childcare to research, lab work, animal care, marketing, finance, customer service, construction, home inspection, interior and architectural design, manufacturing, and medical technology. Several prominent local businesses participated in these job shadowing experiences, including the Woo Sox, Stepping Stones Learning Center, Nyla Labs, Charles River Labs, Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union, Shrewsbury Building Commissioner, Component Sources International, Olympus, Clinton Savings Bank, SELCO, and Lofty Homes. In the students' own voices, these Job Shadowing experiences were especially impactful:

- *The environment was exactly what I wanted to experience as a potential job. The people there were all very welcoming and I really hope to work there over the summer.*
- *I enjoyed getting to work hands on with the various equipment available.*
- *I'm a big computer science fan so I really enjoyed the software testing portion. I'd like to further explore any IT-related fields at Olympus.*

In addition to these events, SPS facilitated learning experiences outside of the classroom for interested students. These in-

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Career exploration

CONTINUED, from left

cluded attending the **Worcester Sports Summit** on February 10th for those interested in Sports Management, and the **Massachusetts Firefighting Academy** in May where eager students learned what it was like to be a firefighter for a day. The district is also planning summer programming at **Olympus** for students interested in Medical Technology, at **Marvell Semiconductor** for students interested in Engineering, and at the **Worcester Bravehearts** where sports-minded students will have a pre-game tour of baseball operations. In the fall, students will have the chance to attend the **Youth in Motion Conference at Springfield College**, which highlights career options in adventure education, physical education, coaching, nutrition, health promotion, sport management, and recreation management.

Many outstanding success stories emerged from the connections made between SHS students and local businesses. Over 30 students have been hired by local businesses as a result of Job Shadowing, Job Fairs or Career Fairs. These businesses and business owners, some of whom are SHS alumni, are grateful for the opportunity to hire current SHS students because they understand and appreciate the extraordinary education SPS students receive in and out of the classroom. As one business owner said, "I'm 100% sure we'll be utilizing the job board and SHS-channel for future hiring needs!".

Recognizing the need to connect students with ongoing employment opportunities, SPS created the "Jobs for Students" site <https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/high/schoolcounseling/jobs-for-students> which provides students with easy access to job listings and enables businesses to share employment opportunities when they cannot attend Job Fairs or when employment options arise outside of the Job Fairs. At the time of writing (June 2023) approximately 29 jobs were listed with comprehensive job descriptions and instructions on how to apply. The site has had strong engagement, resulting in local businesses gaining highly desired, new employees. The site is regularly updated to keep job listings current and accurate.

Over the course of the previous year the **SPS Colonial Fund** was instrumental in covering the costs associated with sending students to diverse locations. These expenses encompass registration fees, transportation, resources for coordinating students, and other necessary arrangements. While our school-to-career partnerships with local businesses have offered valuable in-kind support, sustaining and expanding these opportunities relies heavily on donations to the Colonial Fund. If you believe in the importance of these experiences and wish to support their continuation and growth, we kindly request you to consider making a small monthly donation to the Colonial Fund. Your contribution will directly impact the lives of Shrewsbury students and help provide them with enriching opportunities. To make a donation, please visit [\[https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future/colonial-fund\]](https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/future/colonial-fund). We sincerely appreciate your support.



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DECA

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ing 101, and to network with fellow DECA Chapters from across Massachusetts. This conference marked the beginning of what would be a highly successful and joyful competitive season that would forever be the foundation of SHS DECA history. The members met weekly, and meetings consisted of guest speakers, practicing business roleplays, and time for team members to gain tips and techniques from their fellow peers for upcoming conferences.

The competitive journey began with the members' first participation in the District conference. At conferences, members can compete as individuals or as a team of two in their chosen business category. Judges are industry professionals and may ask questions of the student to evaluate them based on a list of performance indicators for content and 21st century skills. It was an exciting time for the Shrewsbury DECA team as they eagerly prepared to compete against approximately 25 other schools in their region. The conference was a bustling event filled with passionate students, ready to put their business acumen to the test. The Shrewsbury team showcased their talents and impressed the judges, leading to

outstanding results - twelve SHS students advanced to the prestigious SCDC.

The SCDC was a momentous occasion, with over 3,000 students attending from schools across the state. Shrewsbury DECA students faced tough competition as they went head-to-head with some of the brightest and more experienced young business minds. The challenges they encountered tested their abilities to think critically, solve problems, and demonstrate their expertise in various business areas. The SCDC provided much more than just a platform for competition. Students had the opportunity to attend insightful workshops led by distinguished speakers and entrepreneurs. The conference also offered invaluable networking opportunities. Shrewsbury DECA students seized the chance to connect with their peers and established professionals in the business world. Through these interactions, they expanded their network, fostered relationships, and gained insights into different industries and career paths.

In a testament to their exceptional performance, three students from Shrewsbury DECA, Nayan Kaul, Nuha Salam & Mariyah Khokhar, were awarded State Champion trophies. Nayan Kaul earned a medal for scoring the highest on the written exam

for Financial Literacy in Massachusetts. Their outstanding achievements earned them the opportunity to advance to compete at the ICDC held in Orlando, Florida. Additionally, two other students, Swathi Kannan and Shamika Kanitkar, were awarded medals as State Finalists, further certifying the team's success. The Shrewsbury High School DECA Team was awarded the State Champion Excel Award for exemplifying tremendous teamwork skills, organization and leadership. The Shrewsbury chapter also received a Membership Campaign Certificate of Achievement for demonstrating 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration to set and achieve a membership goal and strategy for the chapter.

The ICDC was the culmination and highlight of the DECA experience for these students with over 20,000 high school students, teacher-advisors, business professionals and alumni in attendance for several days of DECA excitement. Representing Shrewsbury DECA, SHS students competed against over 14,000 finalists from 52 chartered associations vying for international honors in DECA's Competitive Events Program. With notable speakers from Cornell University, the U.S. Army and many more, students were inspired and expanded their network. This con-

ference stood as an experience of a lifetime as the DECA organization reserved the entirety of Universal Studios Orlando for DECA students. The competition was fierce, and Nayan Kaul from Shrewsbury DECA emerged as an international finalist (top 20), an incredible achievement that showcased the team's exceptional abilities and dedication. According to DECA state advisor Donna McFadden, having a first year chapter bring a finalist to ICDC is "extremely rare" and having first year chapters advance beyond States is an achievement in and of itself." She also noted "I often don't have new chapters join us competitively for ICDC until they have had a chapter for a few years."

The Shrewsbury DECA team's journey from their first District conference to the ICDC has been nothing short of extraordinary. Their accomplishments at the SCDC and the ICDC are a testament to their hard work, passion, and unwavering determination. As a first-year chapter, their achievements speak volumes about their potential to become one of the leading DECA chapters in the state. The Shrewsbury DECA team has undoubtedly set a high bar for future teams and is poised to make an even bigger mark in future competitive seasons.