



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

January 24, 2020

Dear Shrewsbury Families & Community Members,

As we hit the halfway mark of the school year, I continue to be impressed by the high quality of teaching and learning happening every day in our schools, and by the ways in which our students continue to thrive in co-curricular activities in the visual arts, performing arts, academic competitions, and athletics. Thanks to all of you for your ongoing support of our schools so that we can provide these excellent opportunities to our students.

Please read on for important information regarding next year's proposed school calendar and next year's budget projection.

Proposed calendar for the 2020-2021 school year: The draft calendar for next school year (found [here](#)) has been proposed and is under review by the School Committee, who will vote on a final calendar at their February 5 meeting. The calendar will follow the approach we have used in the recent past, in concert with the [recommendations made in January 2016](#) by a Calendar Committee consisting of parents and staff, with two notable exceptions:

1. Due to the Massachusetts state primary election being held on September 1, which would have traditionally been the first day of school for students in grades 1-12, it is not feasible to hold school that day due to Coolidge School and Spring Street School being polling locations. The recommendation is to a) move the traditional Friday professional development day of that first week of school to Tuesday, September 1, b) have the first day of school for students in grades 1-12 on Wednesday, September 2, c) have the first day of school for preschool and kindergarten on Thursday, September 3, and d) have a regular day of school for all students on Friday, September 4.
2. Based on the strong recommendation of our principals, the mandatory screening days for the following year's preschool and kindergarten students is proposed to be moved from the last two days in the school year calendar to early May. This would mean that Monday, May 3 and Tuesday, May 4 would be "no school" days for preschool and kindergarten students (with that Tuesday being an early release day for all students as well). The last day of school for all students in preschool through high school is scheduled for June 17.

If you wish to provide any feedback to the School Committee in advance of their vote, you can email the Committee at schoolcommittee@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

Fiscal Year 2021 budget projection: This past Wednesday evening, my initial recommendation for next school year's budget was presented to the School Committee (click [here](#) to watch the video of the presentation). The presentation slides can be found [here](#), and the full budget document (including the executive summary) can be found [here](#). Unfortunately, due to significant cost pressures and the likely amount of funding available next year given town and state revenue sources, next year will be a very difficult budget cycle for our school district. Our leadership team has already begun planning mitigation

measures to address what promises to be a substantial gap between the resources necessary to carry our program forward and the funding available, including seeking ways to reduce costs during the current year without disrupting our program, seeking alternative funding sources through grants and partnerships, and considering potential reductions in next year's investments in materials and equipment, staff professional development, and/or programming and staff. While we won't know the extent of our budget gap until the Town Manager files his budget in early February, the amount of funds we are projecting that will be necessary to maintain our status quo will be significantly more than the funding that will be available to us, even under a best case scenario. We will be providing more detailed information about various parts of the budget at the regularly scheduled School Committee Wednesday evening meetings on February 5, February 12, and March 4, with a School Committee public budget hearing on March 4 and a presentation and public hearing with the Finance Committee on Saturday morning, March 7. I will also provide updates through email throughout the process. I wish the circumstances were better, but the structural funding dilemma that continues to exist in Shrewsbury makes the school district's budget highly sensitive to year-to-year inflationary factors, many of which are mandates and beyond our control.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of the very high quality education we provide in the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer

Superintendent of Schools