



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

November 7, 2019

Dear Shrewsbury Families, Community Members, & Colleagues,

I continue to be impressed with the outstanding teaching and learning happening across our nine schools. Our excellent educators have built positive learning environments in their classrooms and are using their expertise to provide our students with engaging learning opportunities that move us closer to our collective vision that is found in our [Portrait of a Shrewsbury Graduate](#).

One of our [current strategic goals](#) is to review our current homework practices. Thanks to the many of you who provided your thoughts last spring on this topic; recently, the School Committee heard [a summary of this feedback](#). As we work to determine how we might adjust our homework policies across our schools, we are fortunate that **a national expert on homework, Cathy Vatterott, will present at a community forum one week from tonight (7:00pm on Thursday, November 14 at Shrewsbury High School)**. I encourage you to attend and hear Ms. Vatterott's perspective on current research and practices regarding homework and to provide your feedback. This is the first of a series of speakers sponsored by our [Colonial Fund](#) to provide the opportunity for learning and dialogue about our strategic goals (see the attachment for more information). I hope to see you there!

Please read on for information on:

- An expert presentation on tween/teen brain development and risk-taking/addiction, including vaping
- SHS Crew: state champs!
- *School Talk* on the history of Beal School
- John P. Collins Awards for Excellence
- Survey on school district communication

Vaping nicotine and marijuana/THC is a deeply concerning public health issue for young people.

I ask all parents and students at the middle and high school level to please consider attending the presentation sponsored by the Shrewsbury Coalition for Addiction Prevention and Education (SCAPE) titled *Under Construction! What Every Parent Must Know About Your Tween/Teen's Brain Development*. On **Thursday, November 21st at 6:30 pm to 8 pm, Dr. Ruth Potee, nationally renowned speaker and expert, will discuss brain development and teen risk-taking, including alcohol, vaping and substance use**. The event will be held at Shrewsbury High School and is free and open to all community members, parents, middle and high school students.

The SHS Crew team won the state rowing championship! Congratulations to the SHS Girls' and Boys' Crew teams, who won their respective overall state championships and the overall school championship at the Massachusetts Public School Rowing Association championship regatta on the Merrimack River in Lowell on October 27. These teams persevered despite brutal weather conditions

to earn these victories. See the [SHS Crew website](#) for photos and more details. Congratulations to these dedicated, hard-working, and talented student-athletes!

Watch and learn about the history of Beal School: School Committee members Dr. Dale Magee and Jason Palitsch filmed an episode of *School Talk* that provides information about the history of Beal School and public education in Shrewsbury. Click [here](#) to watch and learn some interesting historical facts about our town!

Honor a deserving individual for their impact on our students!: Each year I am blown away by the quality of the nominations for the Shrewsbury Education Foundation's John P. Collins Awards for Excellence. The awards honor the exemplary efforts of those whose work brings our mission to life, and are named for the late John P. Collins, PhD, former Superintendent of Shrewsbury Public Schools. Multiple awards will be given in the following categories:

- Professional Educator
- Paraprofessional
- Support Staff
- Leadership
- Unsung Hero (volunteers, PTO, boosters, supporters, fans, helpers)

All nominees receive a copy of the nomination letter and an appreciation note from SEF. It is easy to nominate online! <http://sefgrants.org/> Nominations are being accepted until 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 20th.

Your feedback requested: Thanks to the over 500 people who have completed the survey to provide your preferences regarding how we communicate with you. It takes an average of 3.5 minutes to complete, and your participation will provide us with valuable insights into how we can strengthen our communication with you. Please click [here](#) to take the survey. Thank you!

It remains my honor and privilege to serve as your superintendent, and I am very grateful for your continued support of the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer

Superintendent of Schools

[Colonial Fund Speaker Series 2019-2020](#)