

Journal

Shrewsbury School



Cardinals sighted near Calvin Coolidge School, see page 4

Serving a community of continuous learners

Winter 2011 • Vol XV No. 2

Superintendent's Corner

Return on Investment

DR. JOSEPH M. SAWYER
SUPERINTENDENT

In any financial endeavor, “return on investment” is the standard by which success is determined. In other words, what is the value received compared to the time, effort, and resources put into an endeavor? Anecdotally, it has been well known for many years that the Shrewsbury community receives a substantial return on its investment, given the robust array of public services and benefits we receive for what we contribute. As superintendent of schools, I’d like to bring to your attention the strong return on investment that our school district provides. The financial resources

Being recognized as one of the top districts in the entire U.S. for making excellent use of its resources is a great honor, and it should give everyone in our community even greater confidence that the investment we make in our schools is providing a substantial return in student performance.

allotted to public education in Shrewsbury are comparatively among the lowest in the state, while student performance is among the highest. Additionally, stakeholder satisfaction is high and the school system’s reputation is strong. Combined, all of these things not only result in positive outcomes for children and community pride, but also contribute substantially to our property values.

Given the many factors involved, it is difficult to quantify just how effective our school district is with regard to providing return on investment. However, I am proud and excited to share the news that a new study has ranked Shrewsbury among the top 3.4% of 176 comparable public school districts in Massachusetts on measures of return on investment, and among the top 2.8% of over

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Volunteering to make things better



Photo by
Kevin Donahue,
teacher 6 Red.

Digging up the past

‘Screeners’ Lauren Temple and Alexi Shea sift through dirt supplied by ‘diggers’ to make sure artifacts are not inadvertently left behind. See related story on page 2.

ANTI - BULLYING

Supporting a bully-free environment

BRYAN MABIE
SPRING STREET SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

What do the books *Don’t Laugh at Me*, *Recess Queen*, *Say Something*, and *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* have in common? They are all part of the Book of the Month program at Spring Street School that is part of a school initiative to prevent bullying and to help students become aware of their roles in supporting a bully-free school.

Developed in cooperation with the Spring Street School Bullying Prevention Committee and SSS teachers, the initiative’s goal is to develop an awareness of what defines the act of bullying, how students can respond to bullying-type behavior, whether directed toward themselves or their peers, and how respectful, kind, and empathetic behavior can be a significant contributor to bullying prevention.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers collaboratively previewed and discussed a number of books that were related to bullying, positive behavior, and bullying prevention practices. The themes of the books were considered as part of the process of selecting the books. Some of the themes include appreciating differences in people, conflict resolution, empathy, empowering bystanders, assertion, confidence, and self esteem. Teachers then chose eight books to feature, one book per month, as our Book of the Month.

Through the generosity of our PTO, multiple copies of books were purchased to allow two classrooms to share complete sets of the books. During the course of each month, teachers read aloud the predetermined Book of the Month. Following the reading, discussions take place in classrooms. Discussions include determining the message

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**ECRWSS

Investment

DR. SAWYER, *from page 1*


9,000 such districts across the nation. This study, conducted by the Center for American Progress, a well-respected Washington D.C. policy organization, examined U.S. school spending data and student achievement in reading and math. They then analyzed this data to calculate the following performance ratings: 1) a “basic return on investment” based on pure achievement vs. spending, 2) an “adjusted return on investment” which considered the higher cost of educating certain student populations, and 3) a “predicted efficiency” rating which measured actual performance against the typical educational performance of different student populations. Shrewsbury was one of only six districts in Massachusetts that received the highest possible rating on all three measures, and one of only 249 among over 9,000 in the entire country to do so.

The report, titled *Return on Educational Investment: a District-by-District Evaluation of U.S. Educational Productivity*, was authored by Ulrich Boser and is available at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/educational_productivity/report.html.

The report included a statistical analysis of over 9,000 kindergarten through twelfth grade districts with at least 250 students across the U.S. and compared them to other districts within their state according to the different measures described above. For our school district to rank this high is exceptional. The study’s findings indicate that those districts that, like ours, were in the highest category on all three rankings tended to have the following characteristics: 1) a focus on outcomes, 2) strong community relations, 3) a willingness to make tough choices, 4) a priority on quality instruction, and 5) smart use of data. There is no question in my mind that these describe our district’s practices. I would also add that the talent and dedication of our educators, support staff, and administrators; our outstanding levels of parental support; the positive, supportive cultures that exist in our schools; and the respectful, hardworking character of our students are also major factors in our success.

Being recognized as one of the top districts in the entire U.S. for making excellent use of its resources is a great honor, and it should give everyone in our community even greater confidence that the investment we make in our schools is providing a substantial return in student performance. Even more importantly, I can assure you that our schools go far beyond the statistics represented by financial inputs and testing outputs as they provide Shrewsbury’s young people with experiences that positively shape their academic, social and emotional development. This, in turn, improves the quality of our community and pays dividends for a lifetime—and that has a value that can’t be measured.

Shrewsbury School

Journal

Committee

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

Dr. Jay Cummings

Assistant Superintendent

Dawna Alphonse

Project Coordinator

Sixth graders dig in

HEATHER GABLASKI
GRADES 5-8 CURRICULUM
COORDINATOR, SOCIAL STUDIES

All students in Grade 6 at Sherwood Middle School kicked off their year of studying ancient civilizations in social studies class by participating in a simulated archaeological dig in the field behind the school. The dig was put on by Professor Kimberley Connors of ArchEducation and sponsored in large part by the PTO. Professor Connors earned her degree at Harvard University and has participated in excavations in the United States and Jordan.

Students first learned about how and why archaeologists begin to excavate a site through a classroom discussion. They learned that they would be digging a small area by working together to excavate successive layers of dirt. Each layer would represent time periods from modern times, through the Industrial Period and Colonial/Native American eras. Students also learned that the

position of artifacts was important not only in determining their age, but also in making inferences about how they were used and what they tell about the people who used the artifact.

Students worked in small groups to excavate a square approximately 30 cm. square and 17 cm. in depth. They were either diggers, using trowels, brushes and dustpans to remove dirt; screeners, who sifted the dirt that was removed to make sure no artifacts were inadvertently removed; or scribes, who wrote measurements of where each artifact was found and then bagged each artifact with a specific set of letters and numbers to tell where it was found. Each student had the opportunity to participate in each of the jobs.

Over the course of an hour, students recovered such artifacts as a cell phone, a harmonica, a metal railroad spike, a thimble, a marble, arrowheads, shells, and colonial-era farming tools. Students learned that it was essential to dig “square holes” so artifacts buried in the corners of their grid were not missed and

how to dig meticulously so even very small artifacts could be found.

Students then spent time making inferences about the artifacts they found and discussing what information those artifacts told about the people who left the artifacts behind. Professor Connors shared some photos and stories of her digs in Jordan and students were impressed by how their experience compared to the actual experience of archaeologists in the field.

Students learned first-hand about the difficult job of archaeologists in finding clues to the human story and also that archaeology is not just digging in the dirt and going on adventures as portrayed in movies.

Real archaeologists combine math, science, and historical knowledge to create as complete a story as possible about the culture they are studying. Students certainly developed an appreciation of an archaeologist’s job through this experience and will be able to connect that knowledge to their studies throughout the year.

Training youth for leadership

PETER COLLINS
PRESIDENT OF POISE
& MARC RISCHITELLI
SPEECH & DEBATE COACH

Training Youth for Leadership is the motto of the National Forensic League, the national honor society for Speech & Debate. Ultimately, that is the goal of the competitive speech & debate program in the Shrewsbury School District. The SHS Speech & Debate Team’s rich history dates back to the early 1900’s.

In 1936 the team joined the National Forensic League and soon after became a founding member of the district branch of that organization where it remains a member in good standing. The current coach, Marc Rischitelli, is Chair of the New England District of the NFL. Marc was recently recognized by the NFL with his third diamond key award. Marc is also past President of the Massachusetts Forensic League and in 2008 was inducted into the MFL Hall of Fame (joining three other previous SHS coaches: Dorothy Churchill, Betty Rowe and Kitty Viscardi).

Competitive forensics allows students to develop the communication, research and organizational skills needed to succeed in today’s competitive world. It also teaches teamwork, fosters self-confidence, poise and composure. The benefits are endless. Although students will extol the memories of friendships made across the country and belonging to a program respected on college applications, it is the long term benefits of what each individual member learns while on the team that is the essential goal of the program in Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury Speech & Debate evolved from mandatory “speech” class, to a small club, to the largest non-athletic competitive team in the school district. Members compete in debate, public speaking and oral interpretation competitions within Massachusetts and nationally. The team has a competitive “season” unlike most with a tournament schedule that runs from September to June. Shrewsbury competes in 17 different events, over 20 tournaments within three different competitive organizations.

The program includes the flourishing Middle School Speech Team which rivals the size of the high school team. The Middle School Team is

Photo by Fiona Meru

Speech and Debate’s annual Mardi Gras festival (celebrating its 18th year) raises money to help fund travel and other team expenses.

coached by Vivian Powers, and she is assisted by members of the high school team. This mentor program further fosters leadership and community involvement with the students.

The high school team is respected as one of the league’s top programs and a leader in Massachusetts. Nationally, Shrewsbury boasts several student national finalists including the National Champion in Congressional Debate in 2003. The team has earned several national team awards including the coveted Masterson Award at the NCFL nationals.

The Speech & Debate Team is proudly active in the community. For almost 100 years, the team has provided two students orators to read at the town’s Memorial Day ceremonies. As an original participant in the annual Spirit of Shrewsbury Festival, the team remains enthusiastically involved with a Silent Basket Auction, marching in the parade as clowns, and hosting the Big Basket Golf Ball Drop. Each spring the students produce a Showcase for the Community and also work for Central One Federal Credit Union at their annual Family Day.

The team has its own Alumni organization. Lead by 1986 alumnus, Christina Manos, the group raises funds for the Kathleen “Kitty” Viscardi scholarship in memory of the long-time SHS coach and speech teacher. Alumni often return as judges and coaches. The team is indebted to the assistant coaches that volunteer hundreds of hours of their time to coach and judge at tournaments. Current assistant coaches are: David Berridge (his daughter, Jennifer, graduated in 1999), Karen Chaparian (her son, Dan, graduated in 2003), Donna Hirtle (class of 1981), Brian Freeman (Class of 2003), Pat Calder (Class of 2007), Stevie Wilkes (class of 2003), Jerry Chan (class of 2006), Hayley Tozeski (class of 2001), Vivian Powers and Ed Kachajian. Alumni, Kristin Livingstone (class of 2005) and Scott Caron (class of 2008) also direct an annual speech summer camp for SHS students at both the high school and middle school levels.

The team boosters, POISE (Parents Of Interscholastic Speech Education) provide logistical and financial support, managing fundraising and the concessions at two hosted tournaments, including our annual Mardi Gras festival (celebrating its 18th year). Proceeds are used to help fund travel and other team expenses.

Nurses are not a novelty

SEAN
LAMBERT

SHS SOPHOMORE



All too often the people who make things happen behind the scenes are not given the recognition enjoyed by some of the more visible members of our school administration. School nurses in particular suffer at the hands of this unfortunate oversight. In actuality, our school nurses deal with so much more than students feigning a headache or needing a band-aid. Our school nurses are competent, organized, and accomplished at what they do. The idea that they only exist to send kids home, is about as inaccurate as saying that all a teacher does is hand out homework.

After sitting down with Judy DeFalco, the district's lead nurse and one of two school nurses at Shrewsbury High School, some things about nursing were made clear to me that had me seeing our nursing staff in a completely different light.

First, I learned that our school nurses are more certified to work in the school environment than the average hospital nurse. They possess an Educator's License from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, National School Nurse Certification, and are licensed by the Board of Registration in Nursing in MA. The nurses need to complete 75 hours of continuing education (subject related) to maintain the requirements of the licenses/certifications. They are drawn to school nursing because they love to work with children and are intellectually stimulated by the diversity of jobs that they get to do in a school nurse's office. At the high school especially, school nurses address medication, psychosocial issues, and interface with parents, faculty, community agencies, and school administrative officials. They are bright, well-qualified people who love their job and do it very well.

The preconception that unfortunately undermines the busy workload that the nurses take on, is that all they do is send kids home and apply band-aids. In fact the sheer numbers of students that they help on a regular basis would make even that incorrect assumption seem like a monumental feat. Shrewsbury High with its 1,632 students had over 10,000 visits last year in total to the nurse's office. These visits included serious injuries, as well as psychosocial consultations some of which required a referral to a psychologist.

The nurses fall under the umbrella of the District's Department of Special Education. Unfortunately, the hardest part of their job is when they are called upon to work with terminally ill or students with serious illnesses.

"The real purpose of the nurses here is to remove all barriers to learning," said nurse DeFalco.

Meaning that if there is anything standing in the way of a student getting the most out of their education, the nurses take it upon themselves to help them individually. The jobs our school nurses perform are monumental but they carry them out with class and without once asking to be in the limelight.

"We, as nurses, have a basic need to help people," said DeFalco.

We are lucky to have them.

Nurses not featured in photos: Oak nurse Brenda Filiere, RN, BSN, Sherwood nurse Patty McCaffrey, RN, BS, MS, Beal nurse Jill Wensky, RN, BSN, NCSN, Shrewsbury High School nurse Pam Johnson, RN, BSN, NCSN, Paton nurse Annette Hanson, RN, BSN, MEd., Floral Street nurse Sandy Sorenson, RN, Parker Road Preschool nurse Lisa Smith, RN, BSN and Oak and Sherwood part-time nurse Kristin Stewich, RN, BSN.



Photo by Dawna Alphonse

Above, Judy DeFalco, BS, RN, NCSN, (district nurse leader) examines 9th grader Lotem Nativ's ankle. Below, Oak Street nurse Noelle Freeman, BSN, RN, administers Ibuprophen to Alesi McKenzie, 7th grader.

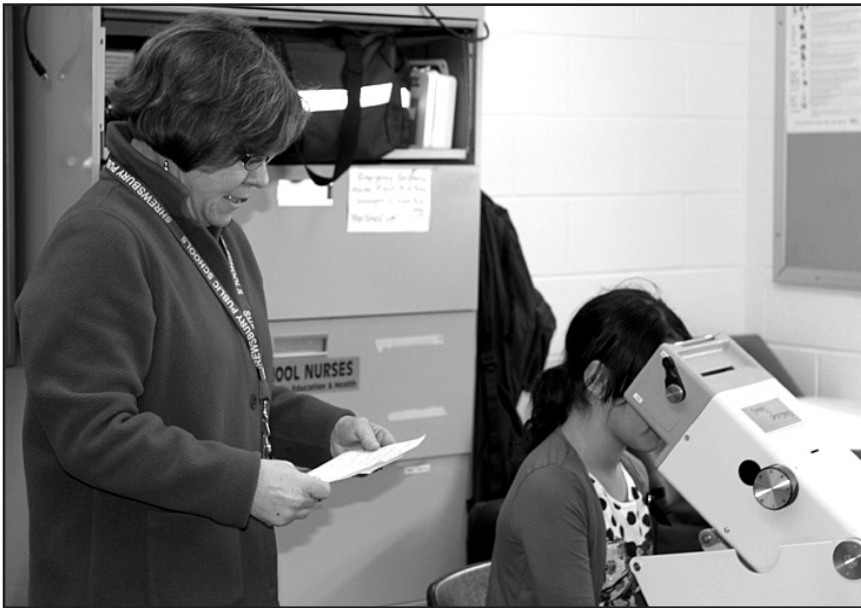


Photo by Laura Stacey

Nurse Katie Zimmermann, RN, BSN, NCSN, administers an eye test to a Coolidge student, Jalycianna Horton.



Photo by Judith Adair

Spring Street nurse Mary Popp, RN, monitors Conor Kinnucane.

A bully-free environment

BULLY-FREE, from page 1

the author is sharing, how the message relates to our work at school on preventing bullying, and how we, as respectful, kind, and empathetic community members, can contribute to a community that is bully free.

Following our classroom read and discussions, the Book of the Month is part of the focus and discussion at our once-a-month All School Meetings. Students of all grade levels share the discussions that have taken place in classrooms, why they think this book was chosen for our entire school to

Some of the themes include appreciating differences in people, conflict resolution, empathy, empowering bystanders, assertion, confidence, and self esteem.

read, strategies they have learned to prevent bullying in our school, and how to respond to behavior, directed toward themselves or peers, that is bullying in nature. This is a great opportunity for all students of our school to share and to also listen to their peers share ideas and strategies that will contribute to bullying prevention and at the same time guide our students to being kind, respectful, and empathetic community members.

Included as part of our All School Meeting discussion throughout the year is an opportunity for each grade level, on a rotating basis, to share a collaborative project connected to our Book of the Month and the related message. Projects presented so far, as well as planned for the year, include student poetry, role-playing and short skits, personal narratives and short stories, and other ways to creatively share the author's message and how it relates to our work at school.

The Spring Street School Book of the Month has been a great tool to help students understand how they can make a positive impact on their community. We're looking forward to reading and sharing the other books that are part of this initiative.



Photo by Dawna Alphonse

Shrewsbury officer Scott Mentzer is the school system's K-8 school resource officer. The position exists to assist schools in matters that are law enforcement situations or those which could become one. He also works with attendance and parent issues, and acts as liaison for the school and community. His office is at Oak Middle School and he can be reached at 508-841-1222.

Shrewsbury Garden Club scholarships

The Shrewsbury Garden Club is offering two scholarships for the Tower Hill Botanical Garden Youth Gardening Program for the summer of 2011. The scholarships will cover one half the cost of registration for each session.

The program will allow the children to plant from seed, care for their growing plants and harvest their own vegetables and flowers. They will also learn to prepare, cook and eat their own crops. The children will be able to explore the gardens and woods of Tower Hill Botanical Garden and participate in a country fair and Tower Hill’s annual fall event, “Shades of Autumn”.

If you are interested in having your child/ children participate in the program, please contact Ann Marie Pilch, Youth Education Coordinator, at 508-869-6111, ext 120 or

The program will allow the children to plant from seed, care for their growing plants and harvest their own vegetables and flowers. They will also learn to prepare, cook and eat their own crops.

email her at apilch@towerhillbg.org. To apply for the scholarship, please contact Marcia Arnold at 508-842-1647 or by email at jimandmarcia@townisp.com or Bonnie O’Brien at 508-842-0658 or by email at bobrien630@townisp.com.

The program classes are as follows:
Spring Session 2011
Saturdays, April 2 - June 25
Class A Kindergarten - Grade 2
at 9:00 - 10:30 A.M.
Tuition \$170 member / \$220 non member
Class B - Grades 3 – 5,
at 11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.
Tuition \$235 member / \$285 non member
Summer Session 2011
Tuesdays and Thursdays,
July 5 - August 18
Class A - Kindergarten - Grade 2
at 9:00 - 10:30 A.M.
Tuition \$185 member / \$235 non member
Class B - Grades 3 - 5 at
11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.
Tuition \$255 member / \$305 non member

Shrewsbury Public Schools notice of non-discrimination

The 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 statue, 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, sexual orientation or disability. The Shrewsbury Public Schools is in compliance with all state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment. The complete Statement of Non-discrimination can be obtained by contacting the Superintendent’s Office of the Shrewsbury School Department at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545 or by calling 508-841-8400 to request a copy.

Coolidge Cardinal is winner

AMY CLOUTER
COOLIDGE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

How do you teach persuasive writing to elementary school students? The answer: start with a cause they care about. Student essays about selecting a school mascot at Coolidge show just how creative kids can be when expressing their opinions.

There were several mascot contenders: lions, cubs, cardinals, and cats. Choosing a favorite was the first step. For most children, describing why their choice represented Coolidge School was the first hurdle. Here is a sampling of student writing about personal choices:

- I like the cardinal because it won’t bite me.
- I think the orange cat will be a good vote for me. Why? Because it’s orange, and I like the color orange.
- Lions are meat eaters, and I like that.

To their credit, students quickly learned that when the goal is to influence someone else’s thinking, simply stating their own opinion wouldn’t suffice. Communicating their thoughts well enough to persuade their classmates to vote their way proved to be the real challenge. In my opinion, I think our young writers rallied very well. For example, one writer stated, “I think the panda bear best represents Coolidge School because it shows our CARES values. They live in the cool mountain forests of western China, where they are among the most endangered bears in the world. Pandas cooperate to keep each other alive.” She went on to make the case that if we selected the panda as a mascot, we could help with conservation efforts.

In the end, each classroom teacher facilitated a respectful debate. Moreover, each student practiced the important skills of listening well, weighing their



Photo by Dawna Alphonse

Calvin Coolidge principal Amy Clouter holds the Coolidge Cardinal in front of students’ writing stating their preference for a mascot.

options, and making a difficult choice.

As for writing skills, the growth our students demonstrated in the process was impressive. It’s evident that students learned to progress from simply expressing an opinion to crafting a persuasive piece. Here are just a few of the arguments students made for the winning mascot, the cardinal:

- Cardinals like to sing, and we do, too.
- I like the cardinal because birds are very nice...they wake you up in the morning and brighten your day and that’s why I picked the cardinal.
- Dear Coolidge Students, I think our mascot should be the red cardinal. With the bright colors on the cardinal we

show bright ideas. Vote for cardinals!

- Cardinals soar high in the sky, and with the Coolidge Cardinal our school will soar. We will soar with our great work.
 - I think a red cardinal will be good for a mascot because I think this school is about sticking together and that’s what cardinals do. Cardinals are fast thinkers or else they wouldn’t survive in the world. At school we have to learn, too.
- It’s clear that these young writers learned a lot! As a school we are excited about continuing our discussion of our core values with a new mascot in mind. As a principal, I am eager to see what Trimester Two brings.

Ready, set...

Save the Date. The Fourth Annual Shrewsbury Road Scholars 5k and 1 Mile Fun Run is coming. This event will be held on Sunday, April 10, 2011 at 12:00 P.M. (noon) starting and finishing at Oak Middle School.

Proceeds will go to the Citizens for Education Fund (CEF) to purchase books and materials and to support innovative programs and activities such as the Global Education Initiative.

You can register online or download a form at: <http://shrewsburyroadscholars.org>.

Registration forms can also be picked up in person at both the Parks and Recreation Department and School Department in the Town Hall. Please visit the website above for more detailed information.

... go!

Participants in last year’s Fourth Annual Shrewsbury Road Scholars 5k and 1 Mile Fun Run Road Race.

Photos by Dana Canzano and Dotty Flynn



Connecting with the public library

DR. JAY CUMMINGS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Building on the already positive and collaborative relationship between the Shrewsbury Public Schools and the Shrewsbury Public Library will be an area of focus in 2011. Over the coming year, the Public Library and the school media centers will be working together to help ensure that every student has a library card and that every family is aware of the great resources that can be accessed with their card both at the public library and through the internet.

One particularly exciting resource offered through the Public Library is Mango Languages Software. Through use of this internet-based language program, students with a library card are able to access language instruction in over fifty different languages via the internet at no cost. Students can learn conversational French, Spanish, Mandarin, etc. at a self-directed pace. To access this software, students simply enter their library card number on the library website and that allows full access to Mango Languages on any computer (home, school, or library) that has audio and voice capability. Mango Language software is designed to build conversational language abilities and is not designed to be a replacement of in-depth language instruction.

Another great resource offered through the Public Library is online tutoring through Tutor.com. When students need help, they simply choose a subject and grade level from the more than 20 subjects that Tutor.com offers.

Students enter the problem they are working on, and they are anonymously connected to a professional tutor. Every session is one-to-one with a qualified tutor, so students get the focused attention that they need. Students access free Tutor.com services by entering their library card number on the Tutor.com website which can be accessed through the Shrewsbury Public Library homepage.

Maximizing resources between the school media centers and our Public Library is critical in these trying financial times. Over the coming weeks we will be working to integrate



Photo by Dawna Alphonse

Reference and Research librarian Priya Rathnam, coordinator of English Conversation Circle, stands in front of the English Language learning collection.

online resources on the respective websites of the school media centers and to publicize the dozens of different online reference databases that students can have unlimited access to with nothing more than a library card. Just some of the reference databases that can be accessed electronically from the Shrewsbury Public Library web site include:

- World Book Online - World Book Online is an encyclopedic reference database that includes specialized features for children and young adults.
- Science Online - Science Online is a curriculum-oriented database that offers a comprehensive, authoritative overview of the sciences.
- Grolier Encyclopedia Online - Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia is a resource for middle school and beyond. It's an excellent source of quick reference information, incorporating many media formats into the text.

- Grove Art Online - Grove Art Online provides web access to the entire text of The Dictionary of Art, The Oxford Companion to Western Art, and much more.
 - Ebsco Literary Reference Center - Provides access millions of newspaper and magazine articles, as well as thousands of books.
 - Encyclopedia Britannica Online - Contains Britannica Reference Center and Britannica Kids, along with many other services. Includes the Britannica encyclopedia and many additional features.
 - BookFlix - Scholastic BookFlix is a new online literacy resource that pairs classic video storybooks with related nonfiction eBooks to build a love of reading and learning.
- The strengthening of the partnership between the Shrewsbury Public Schools and the Public Library promises to be both exciting and beneficial for all Shrewsbury students.

Human Geography crosses the globe

JENNIFER DIFRANCESCA
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Last year as part of its on going effort to expand and diversify its elective program, the Social Science Department began offering Advanced Placement Human Geography to seniors at Shrewsbury High School. The course asks students to go beyond knowing where things are located on a map and develop an understanding of why things are located in particular places and how those places influence their lives. Over the last two years, Ms. Erica Mulryan has guided her students in an investigation of the five themes of geography, established by the National Geographic Society in 1986 (place, location, region, movement and human-environment interaction). Students have participated in simulations, created research projects, analyzed case studies and utilized technology to gain a better understanding and appreciation of how geography has influenced

human development and how human development has affected geography. To start the year, to help students begin to think like geographers, students made mental maps of Shrewsbury including only the locations and places they visit on a daily basis. In their analysis of the impact of geography on religions around the world, students recently created “zooming” Powerpoints on religion with prezi, a web-based application. In January, students are participating in one of the favorite activities of the year. The project, based on the television show The Amazing Race, is designed to develop students’ research, analytic and presentation skills as well as expand their knowledge of cultures and regions around the world. Students create a 3-D visual presentation, develop challenges and plan a 28-day itinerary for their classmates to “follow.” As a bonus, students make an ethnic dish that highlights one of the cultures “visited” during the “expedition.” In the

spring, students will explore the impact of geography on language and dialect through a series of activities and PBS’s website Do You Speak American? In AP Human Geography students are also encouraged to see the connection between the concepts they are analyzing in class and their local environment. For example, as part of their study of politics and government, Ms. Mulryan arranged to have former State Representative Karyn Polito speak to the class last year and Senator Michael Moore meet with the class this winter. To gain an understanding of farming during the unit on agriculture, students toured Whittier Farms in Sutton to see (and smell) first-hand the process and challenges facing New England dairy farmers in a global market. AP Human Geography at Shrewsbury will continue to evolve and expand but will always encourage students to, as H. J. DeBlij says, “Make sense of others and [them]selves in [their] locality, region and world.”

Shrewsbury Public Schools 2011-2012

8/25 - 8/26 New Teachers' Orientation	AUG/SEP 23 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
8/29 Opening Program for Teachers/ No School	22	23	24	25	26
	29	30	31	1	2
	5	6	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
8/30 Students Return /Full Day	19	20	21	22	23
	26	27	28	29	30

10/10 Columbus Day/ No School	OCTOBER 20 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
	3	4	5	6	7
	10	11	12	13	14
	17	18	19	20	21
	24	25	26	27	28
	31				

11/1 Parent Conferences/No School	NOVEMBER 17 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
11/11 Veterans Day/No School		1	2	3	4
	7	8	9	10	11
	14	15	16	17	18
11/23-25 Thanksgiving Vacation	21	22	23	24	25
	28	29	30		

12/26-1/2 December Vacation	DECEMBER 17 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
				1	2
	5	6	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
	19	20	21	22	23
	26	27	28	29	30

1/16 M.L. King Day/No School	JANUARY 20 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
	2	3	4	5	6
	9	10	11	12	13
	16	17	18	19	20
	23	24	25	26	27
	30	31			

2/20 Presidents Day/No School	FEBRUARY 16 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
2/21-24 Winter Vacation			1	2	3
	6	7	8	9	10
	13	14	15	16	17
	20	21	22	23	24

4/16 Patriots Day/No School	MARCH 22 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
				1	2
	5	6	7	8	9
	12	13	14	15	16
	19	20	21	22	23
	26	27	28	29	30

4/17-20 Spring Vacation	APRIL 16 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
	2	3	4	5	6
	9	10	11	12	13
	16	17	18	19	20
	23	24	25	26	27
	30				

5/25 Last Day for Seniors	MAY 22 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
5/28 Memorial Day/No School		1	2	3	4
	7	8	9	10	11
	14	15	16	17	18
5/31 Graduation Day	21	22	23	24	25
	28	29	30	31	

6/7 Last Day for Kindergarten	JUNE 7 Days				
	M	T	W	T	F
6/11 Last Day/Half Day for students					1
	4	5	6	7	8
	11	12	13	14	15
	18	19	20	21	22
	25	26	27	28	29

- 0 snow days = 6/11 last day
- 1 snow day = 6/12 last day
- 2 snow days = 6/13 last day
- 3 snow days = 6/14 last day
- 4 snow days = 6/15 last day
- 5 snow days = 6/18 last day

Tasty culinary creations

JEAN BRUNELL
SHS FAMILY CONSUMER SCIENCE

Something’s cooking in the late afternoon hours at Shrewsbury High School. An afterschool culinary program, targeted to children in grades K-8, provides students with an opportunity to learn myriad skills centered on cooking and food science. The program, called “Culinary Creations,” was launched a year and half ago as a pilot program and has increasingly gained in popularity from its inception. As a result of this popularity, spaces are filled shortly after the courses are announced. Generally, the class size is approximately 12 children. Class sessions vary in duration and each class is scheduled for 1 hour and forty-five minutes. Some specialty classes such as, “Easy as Pie,” offered during the Thanksgiving week, are 1-day classes, whereas most sessions are typically run for 3 to 5 weeks. Transportation to and from the classes is the responsibility of the students’ families.

The attraction of the class has to do with the interactive atmosphere where students can ask questions, get hands-on culinary experience, and learn about what is really involved in baking. In addition, the classes teach the children skills that they will carry with them for a lifetime. Cooking also provides the students with a sense of pride and achievement, knowing that they prepared a tasty treat for their families and that they made it themselves. More importantly, students learn about measurement, proportions, and fractions while having fun! New vocabulary words are continually introduced and students can understand the importance of following directions.

Classes offered are theme-based, seasonal and incorporate literacy connections. The SHS students in the Child Development classes read short stories and then assist the children in preparing many savory delights. For example, students in “A Taste of

The attraction of the class has to do with the interactive atmosphere where students can ask questions, get hands-on culinary experience, and learn about what is really involved in baking.

Fall”, a seasonal-based class, prepared foods using apples, zucchini, carrots, cranberries and pumpkin. Jan Brett’s inspiring books ‘Gingerbread Baby’ and ‘Gingerbread Friends’ were the impetus behind a “Gingerbread Man” class offered before the holidays.

Parents learn about classes through a variety of methods. Families with a child in a previous class receive new offerings via email. Many building principals post new offerings in the “News and Announcement” portion of their newsletters. Lastly, students share their experiences with other students, often producing new inquiries.

The current winter offerings are “Winter Magic” for preschoolers, ages 4 and 5, “Sleepy Friends” for grades 1-5, and “Celebrity Chefs” for grades 5-8. If you have an interest in participating in the culinary programs and wish to be placed on the mailing list, please email: jbrunell@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us



Ensuring that all students learn

DR. JAY CUMMINGS
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Addressing the needs of diverse learners is a critical goal of the Shrewsbury Public Schools. More than any time in history, America’s public school educators are being mandated to ensure that all students achieve at high levels. Given the wide range of learning needs across the district, and our increasingly diverse student body, this challenge has never been greater. To meet this challenge, the district has been developing its use of a Response to Intervention System that is research-based and very comprehensive in nature. Our teachers, administrators, and a wide range of invaluable support staff drive this system of supports for students who aren’t demonstrating proficiency.

How we respond to students who are not learning is a mandated portion of federal legislation and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. This legislation mandates that schools only consider students for special education services after the students have not responded to a series of timely, research-based, systematic interventions. The Shrewsbury Public Schools work to go well above and beyond what is mandated, providing a comprehensive system of supports that ensure that all students get what they

need, when they need it.

Those students who need additional assistance to achieve at high levels are a diverse group of students with different learning needs, ages and backgrounds. Many students may flourish in a number of subjects and struggle to learn and achieve in another area. Other students may struggle in all subject areas. We also

To help address student needs, each school has an Early Intervening Team that reviews individual student needs and develops intervention plans to help support struggling students.

see students needing very little additional assistance for a number of years and then for what could be a variety of reasons, rather suddenly begin to falter and need help.

The range of assistance required to help ensure that a student is successful may vary widely as well. Some students may respond very positively to a slight differentiation in the practice of the classroom teacher and have no need for additional supports, while others may require more intensive supports to learn

and apply that learning.

Response to Intervention is a systematic approach to meeting needs that starts at the classroom level and extends to the provision of short-term assistance outside of the classroom. When presented with best instructional practices in a classroom setting, most students will perform proficiently. All teachers are trained in the use of Differentiated Instruction and plan lessons around the needs of the students based on academic readiness.

Often students will require re-teaching or individualized assistance within the general education classroom. Even with the extra support of the teacher, there are still students who continue to struggle in the classroom. In order to identify these students, the teachers and administrators review a variety of data to determine the area(s) of need. Teachers also continually analyze student work, assessments, and MCAS data. To help address student needs, each school has an Early Intervening Team that reviews individual student needs and develops intervention plans to help support struggling students.

The Response to Intervention model involves all staff in a process by which any student who needs assistance gets that assistance in a very timely manner. The systematic approach offered through Response to Intervention maximizes the skills of all staff and a collaborative approach to ensure that every student learns.

A shared purpose

SANDY FRYC
SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIR

As a school district we have much to be proud of regarding student achievement. Our MCAS and SAT scores are indicative of a high performing school district. Shrewsbury students achieve high levels of success on the stage, fields, and at academic events. How is our school district able to achieve such high results consistently year after year? Simply put, it is a team effort. From school administration to our parent volunteers, everyone who comes in contact with students is a stakeholder in their education and essential to continued strong student performance.

The recent recession has impacted public education and our schools have had to become more innovative. There is a heightened need to look for ways to continue to provide educational services that meet the district’s educational goals as well as be fiscally responsible to the town. As the School Committee begins the Fiscal Year 2012 budget planning, we foresee continued budget challenges.

This continues to be a sobering reality; however, due to the district’s strong foundation of excellence in education, we are well positioned to continue to achieve outstanding results. The phrase, “it takes a village” may be considered cliché, but this concept could not be more accurate in today’s school environment. It is vitally important that our community continues to work together to support public education.

The collective wisdom of teachers, parents and school administration is vital to ongoing success. The challenge to all stakeholders is to remain invested in our children’s education. Parents’ support at home and in the classroom is vital; a teacher who inspires and provides instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students is vital; and guidance from school administration is vital. Our “village” is strong, but will be challenged



Photo by Rick Marchand

Shrewsbury School Committee members, back row from left, Steve Levine, Dale Magee, Mark Murray, Erin Canzano, and Sandy Fryc.

to provide the support students need to be successful. When we all actively participate, students do better in school and schools become a better place to learn.

The education of nearly 6,000 students each day is an orchestrated effort on the part of many individuals. The Shrewsbury parent community has been instrumental in the success of our district and a key component to students’ academic success. Our parent community brings strengths, skills and knowledge to the education process.

Parents also provide countless hours of volunteer service, as well as additional resources. Our PTOs and community groups such as Shrewsbury Education Foundation, the Road Scholars Race, the Celebration in the Garden Party Fundraiser and anonymous donors provide much needed funds that supplement the school budget. Without this additional funding, additional reductions in the school budget would be a reality. Parents’

assistance in the classroom, serving on various boards and focus groups, and assisting with co-curricular activities is a vital part of our school community and indicative of our community’s shared mission, vision and values.

Can our school district continue to maintain a consistent high level of student achievement? Our school district has enjoyed tremendous success; however, there is concern that it may not be sustainable if we continue to experience rising educational costs coupled with fiscal constraints.

Our challenge as a community is to continue to work together to create opportunities that provide ongoing educational success for all students. As we navigate through this year’s budget process, we all need to remember that our school district and community share the common goal of excellence in education. Student success can continue to grow as long as we all share in the process.

Extra-curricular math excitement

JANE LIZOTTE
SHERWOOD PRINCIPAL

One of this year’s district goals involves meeting the needs of our advanced learners. Middle level math teachers have embedded this goal into their daily practice, and as a department continue to explore avenues to provide challenging opportunities in mathematics.

This year, students at both Oak and Sherwood Middle Schools have several opportunities to participate in math activities that are both fun and competitive outside the scope of the regular classroom. These experiences include Math Counts, the American Mathematics Contest, and the New England Mathematics League Contest. Our students continue to perform at extremely high levels at both the local and national level.

Enrollment in Math Counts is at an all time high with nearly 70 students at Sherwood and 30 students at Oak taking part in the after-school activity. Sessions take place on Mondays after school whereby students practice math problems that are typically challenging for students in grades 6, 7, and 8 (and the majority of attendees are 5th graders).

The culminating events will be a school competition on January 21st and the regional competition (for the top 10 finishers at each school) on February 1st, both held at Oak. Last year, the top four students from Oak earned a score that placed their team in the state competition in Boston. This year’s group of students from both middle schools promises to finish as strong as ever.

Another example of our efforts to challenge and recognize high achievers in math is the middle school math department’s coordination of the AMC-8, the American Math Contest for 8th graders. On November 16th, fifty Shrewsbury students competed in this national competition. Out of the 50 students, 44 8th graders volunteered to participate upon hearing about the opportunity. The other six students are 5th or 6th graders at Sherwood who were chosen to compete based on their performance in other advanced math programming this year.

This contest consists of 25 questions that are challenging for 8th graders across the country and cover all strands of math. In December, Oak Middle School was recently recognized by the AMC as a top performing school, based on overall performance by students.

The following students received additional awards based on their accomplishments:

Honors Recognition / Top 5% of 8th graders nationally / 17 or more questions correct:

David Du
Fuming Qiu
David Ma (5th grader @ Sherwood)
Patrick Chen (6th grader @ Sherwood)



Photos by Dawna Alphonse

Above, Nilou Asdigha, Adrianna Loulourgas and Margaret Easson go over math facts. Below, Albert Xu, (in front) Charles Kang and Conall Persechino take a break from studying.



8-White Team

Gold Medal – Xiayue Wang
Silver Medal – Fuming Qiu
Bronze Medal – Grant Xu

8-Blue Team

Gold Medal – Zack Fink and Hillary Wong
Silver Medal – Grace Rocco
Bronze Medal – Swetha Amaresan

8-Red Team

Gold Medal – Siteng Zhang
Silver Medal – David Du
Bronze Medal – Haocheng Huang and Cole Jeznach

Perfect Score and Top 1% of 8th graders nationally:

Siteng Zhang
Xiayue Wang
In addition, any students in 6th grade or below who answer 15 or more questions

correctly received additional awards. These students from Sherwood Middle School are:
David Ma (5-navy team)
Patrick Chen (6-yellow team)
Michael O’Connell (6-yellow team)

Other students who participated and scored on a par with other 8th graders nationally were:
Varun Swamy (6-blue team)
Srinu Lade (6-yellow team)
Charan Sankaran (5-navy team)

In February (6th grade) and April (5th grade), Sherwood will be administering the New England Math League Contest to 90 students at each grade level. Also in February, ten students from Oak will be selected to participate in the AMC-10 contest, an exam typically given to 10th graders.

We are proud of the accomplishments of all students in mathematics and look forward to future success in these math competitions.

Setting the stage for the new Sherwood

ANN M. JONES
SHERWOOD ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Each day I walk into the main office, the site plans on the wall remind me of the exciting time ahead for all of us here at Sherwood Middle School. Within a month or so of this publication, the fencing will be in place and the shovels will be busy, beginning what is expected to be approximately 24 months of construction of our new middle school.

The 130,000 square foot building project, researched and administered by the Sherwood Building Committee, received approval by a majority vote of the town residents in March 2010. The project is overseen by the Massachusetts School Building Authority, an agency of the State Treasurer’s office charged with the task of overseeing all school building projects that receive state funding in the state of Massachusetts. The cost of the project is estimated at \$47,266,777 with the Commonwealth paying approximately 53.16% of the cost.

The new Sherwood Middle School will greet the town’s fifth and sixth grade children in 2013 with state of the art technology and eco-friendly features, both of which expand the educational opportunities for our community. Classroom technology features will include interactive whiteboards, which combine the traditional whiteboard/chalkboard with the capabilities of computer. This technology allows teachers and students to write lesson notes on the board, save them for use in future instruction, download them to laptops, iPads, and mobile devices, and allow real time instructional collaboration in a multiuser platform. Interactive whiteboard technology and more consistent student access to laptop computers and iPads, combined with state-of-the-art LED projectors in every classroom, will enable students and teachers to transform

Classroom technology features include interactive whiteboards which combine the traditional whiteboard/chalkboard with the capabilities of computer.

classrooms into the kind of learning centers that will more effectively prepare our children for a successful future in the 21st Century.

In addition to state-of-the-art educational technology, the new Sherwood Middle School offers the promise of environmentally sustainable design and operational features. In addition to extensive recycling and advanced waste management capabilities, the building itself features eco-friendly radiant heating system that uses the power of the sun to warm incoming air as well as strategically placed windows that provide more efficient reflection of outdoor light, reducing energy consumption from fuel generated power sources. Although the new building is approximately 30,000 square feet larger than the current Sherwood building, fuel consumption is estimated to be approximately identical to the current building due to improved efficiency in the building operating systems.

With the new school slated for completion in mid-2013, anticipation is running high here at Sherwood. We continue to prepare for the changes and the temporary inconveniences that accompany construction projects with the knowledge that our new school will provide much improved educational opportunities for Shrewsbury’s children.

SEF sponsors the John P. Collins Awards for Excellence

SEF Sponsors The John P. Collins Awards For Excellence
The great successes of Shrewsbury’s students—in personal development, academic achievement, athletics and the arts—are the result of hard work by nearly 800 innovative, dedicated individuals and teams at all levels. Our new John P. Collins Awards For Excellence will honor the exemplary efforts of those whose work brings to life the mission of the Shrewsbury Public Schools: to provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21st century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition and the desire to continue to learn throughout life. The awards are named for former Superintendent of the Shrewsbury Public Schools John P. Collins, PhD, who served as Superintendent of Schools in Shrewsbury for 16 years (1978-1994) and continues to exemplify the highest standards of professionalism and a commitment to lifelong learning. Selected to receive this years awards are:
Professional Educators Category - Colleen Kalagher: Classroom teacher at Paton Elementary School
Gerald (P.J.) O’Connell: Guidance Counselor at Shrewsbury

High School
Sandra Travers: Classroom teacher at Spring Street Elementary School
Paraprofessional Educators Category - James Capuzziello: Instructional Aide at Oak Middle School
Kathy Ryan: Instructional Aide at Coolidge Elementary School
Support Staff Category - Annamaria DaSilva: #19 Bus Driver from AA Transportation.
Team Category - 8 Gold Team Members: Janet Allen, Robert Dunn, Kara Hadavi, Carol Hester, Melissa McDonald, Jeremy Mularella, Derek Pizzuto at Oak Middle School
Leadership - Kenneth Largess: Assistant Principal at Shrewsbury High School
On Saturday January 29th the individuals that were selected to receive this award, along with the 2010 grant recipients which is another program that the SEF sponsors to support and enrich our schools, were honored at a celebration at Cyprian Keyes Golf Club. All in attendance enjoyed dinner and a performance by Shrewsbury High School Jazz Band Ensemble.

