



**PRESERVING EXCELLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS**  
Shrewsbury Public Schools

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## **How You Are Directly Impacting Our Schools This Year**



The Colonial Fund exists to support the greatest needs in our district and to fund projects that preserve the excellence we all want for our schools. **Because of your generosity, we have been able to add programs that provide much needed student support and also move some critical, strategic priorities forward.** This is a remarkable achievement given the harsh economic reality of our school budget and the devastating financial impact of the current pandemic.

**Colonial Fund dollars are being spent, with great care and consideration, on important initiatives related to the mental and emotional health of our students and the district's commitment to improving equity and inclusion in our schools.** Read below for more information about the specific investments the district has made in these areas, thanks to the Colonial Fund.

These expenditures represent only a small portion of the money raised by the Colonial Fund this year. District leaders are looking at additional investments for the next half of the school year. As COVID relief funds come to an end, and the reality of the school budget for next year becomes more apparent, Colonial Fund dollars will be needed to fund the greatest needs in our district, including instructional materials, programs for students and professional development for staff.

You should feel incredibly proud of the impact you are having on our schools this year. Like so many of you, we look forward to 2021 with hope and optimism for a safe and healthy world and a return to normalcy in how we live our lives.

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## **Colonial Fund Funded Projects 2020-2021**

### **Curricula & Tool Kits** ***Social & Emotional Learning***

*"Students need, more than ever before, engagement, social connectedness and well-being" ([John Norlin, co-](#)*

Starting this year, Shrewsbury Public Schools are incorporating a mix of curricula (Grades 6-12) and tool kits (PreK - 5) from [CharacterStrong](#) that focus on developing character and social-emotional skills in students, staff, and families. These resources are intentionally designed to bring social and emotional learning and character development into the daily fabric of the classroom as well as the school culture. CharacterStrong enhances and supports, rather than replaces, the work that school districts like Shrewsbury are already doing, to create students who are more kind, forgiving, understanding, selfless and honest.

*CharacterStrong*

Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed to develop good character.

Heraclitus

CharacterStrong serves over 2,500 schools across all 50 states, 9 countries, and over 1 million students. Their readymade tools and lesson plans were especially appealing this year as teachers are faced with already having to develop a year's worth of new and innovative lesson plans for hybrid and remote learners. Investing in CharacterStrong lets Shrewsbury continue the important work of educating the whole child and shaping compassionate human beings, while freeing up the precious planning time teachers and staff would otherwise have to devote to creating a similar program from the ground up.



### **Professional Development Equity & Inclusion**

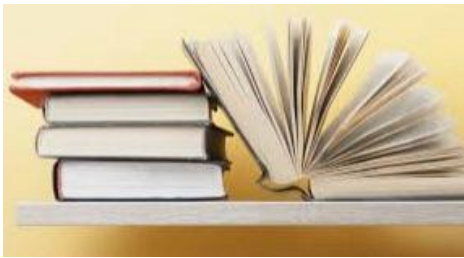
On Friday, October 9, ALL Shrewsbury Public Schools staff, including administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and administrative support staff participated in two webinars, the first hosted by [Dr. Irvin Leon Scott](#) and the second by [Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson](#). Hearing from these noted experts helps set a tone and expectation for the work that Shrewsbury educators started with the [Equity Audit](#) last January. The work of advancing equity and anti-racism in our school district will be ongoing, as we work towards achieving the district's strategic priority to create and maintain "learning environments where everyone's success matters".

Dr. Scott began the day by speaking about **why** the work around equity and inclusion is so critical in schools today. His experience and perspective comes from 20 years working in the "trenches" as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent and ultimately as the Chief Academic Officer for Boston Public Schools. Dr. Scott spent five years as the deputy director for K-12 education at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Today, he is a faculty member of the Harvard Graduate School of Education where he concentrates on educational leadership.

Dr. Amante-Jackson is a racial and equity strategist. She works with organizations and schools to embed organizational cultures that deepen diversity, elevate equity, bolster belonging, and increase inclusion. She helps establish cultures built on a common foundation of respect, accountability, and value. Her webinar focused on helping Shrewsbury educators and staff think about **how** we do this important work in our own schools. The influence of her equity and racial inclusion work is significant, as she has devised strategic

interventions for Boston public schools, the New York City Department of Education, and Harvard University Programs in Professional Education, to name a few.

Both webinars included time for break out sessions where staff could reflect on what they had heard, engage in peer-to-peer discussion and collaborate on next steps.



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### **Curriculum Enhancement** ***New reading for equity & inclusion***

Over the summer, Shrewsbury Public Schools established a district wide Equity & Anti Racism Coalition. Made up of students, parents, community, and staff, the Coalition

has an overall steering committee and various subcommittees that focus on different aspects of school life and organization. Subcommittees include: Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment; School Culture & Climate; Policies & Practices; Adult Learning; Hiring & Employment Practices; and Community Engagement.

While we await a long term strategy that will come from the work of the Coalition, the Colonial Fund is supporting the initial step of adding more cultural diversity and different perspectives to the high school curriculum through literature. All of the English classes will add a new book to their reading list, which are considered outstanding pieces of literature representing a global perspective.

According to Liza Trombley, the English Department Chair at Shrewsbury High School, "the goal is to add marginalized voices to our curriculum at each grade level so that we can expand the canon and honor writers and storytellers of color and varying backgrounds and experiences." It is often easier for students to talk through hard issues as they relate to characters in a book rather than their own personal experiences or beliefs.

While a seemingly small initiative, this is an important early step that recognizes our district's commitment to doing more and doing better to "honor each person's individuality, celebrate our community's diversity and support school culture's of mutual acceptance and respect."

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### **Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI)** ***Resources for students, parents and teachers***



Based on the hugely successful MDI programming of the last school year Shrewsbury Public Schools is continuing our partnership with the Mindfulness Directive Initiative. The Colonial Fund will be funding a portion of the cost of this initiative for the 2020-2021 school year.

Between January and June, MDI offered an 8-week "Introduction to Mindfulness" course for staff and parents, an 8-week "Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement" course for athletes, and a 7-week after school book study group on "Mindfulness and Racial Justice".

More well-being opportunities have been added this year to help students, staff and families deal with the increased isolation and growing anxiety and depression brought on by the pandemic. Since September, MDI has offered the following:

- 1:1 sessions with Jenny Maddox, MDI Director and students and staff
- 5 minute in-class practice in a variety of SHS classrooms
- Creation of the Mindfulness Club at SHS
- Paton Pride and All Elementary Schools' Meetings co-led by Jenny Maddox of MDI
- SHS student workshops & topic-based practice groups for social and mental support
- Staff “master class” focused mindful leadership work group
- At the Elementary level, Jenny Maddox is developing recorded lessons for teachers to play in morning meeting, in addition to other curricular integration
- Weekly drop in for SHS staff
- Monthly drop in mindfulness sessions for families
- 4-week parent and caretaker course (Dec/Jan)
- “Parent Breakfast” SEL talk with SHS Counseling Department
- Self-care workshop for PreK-8th grade staff

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**Thank you for your support of the  
Shrewsbury Public Schools Colonial Fund**

**DONATE NOW**

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