



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

January 22, 2020

To: School Committee
Re: Recommended school year calendar for 2020-2021

Enclosed with this memorandum is a proposed calendar for the 2020-2021 school year. In addition to not holding school on [legal holidays](#), you will see that the approach used for scheduling vacation periods, professional development days, and early release days is the same as in recent years, which is structured according to the [recommendations made in January 2016](#) by a Calendar Committee comprised of staff and parents, with two notable exceptions:

- 1) The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has scheduled a primary election for Tuesday, September 1, 2020. Unlike past years, this is scheduled for the week prior to Labor Day instead of the week of Labor Day. If we followed our traditional calendar, this would also be the first day of school for students, after the first day for staff the prior day. Because Coolidge School and Spring Street School are also polling places, trying to hold the first day of school for students on the same day as an election would create myriad problems. Chief among these would be relative to traffic, parking, and parents accompanying their children to school, as the first day is the only day when parents can park and accompany their students to the classroom at arrival. Additionally, Coolidge and Spring Street follow certain procedures regarding student movement through the school, which restrooms students use, etc. on election days, and obviously if it is the first day of school there would be no opportunity for the school staff to put these procedures and expectations into place for students who are brand new to the school community.

To address this issue, I am recommending that Tuesday, September 1 be scheduled as a professional development day for teachers, with the first day of school for students scheduled for Wednesday, September 2. The accompanying change from recent calendars will be that Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of that week will be school days for students, whereas in recent years the Friday would have been a professional development day.

It is important to note that this issue was discussed with the District Faculty Advisory Council, the District Paraprofessionals Advisory Council, the Shrewsbury Education Association officers, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association officers, and the leadership team of principals and Central Office administrators. Different iterations of how to avoid starting school on Tuesday, September 1 were

considered; based on this feedback and a variety of factors (including how to best schedule paraprofessional work time during the first week and key elements of preparation for the first day of school), I ultimately determined that this recommendation to maintain the traditional first day for staff on the Monday prior to Labor Day and to move the professional development day to the Tuesday prior, while making the Friday prior a regular school day, is the least complicated solution to the election problem

- 2) For many years, preschool and kindergarten students had their last day of school prior to summer vacation two days before the rest of the grades, so that preschool and kindergarten teachers could devote those days to screening new students who would start the following year (the 180-day-minimum student school year requirement does not apply to preschool and kindergarten). However, principals have advocated to move the new student screenings earlier so that the schools can get important data sooner and utilize it in their planning for the following school year. Additionally, principals strongly prefer that kindergarten students be included with other elementary students in special activities that traditionally take place on the last two days of school, as they feel that this will benefit those students.

For these reasons, I support the elementary principals' recommendation to schedule preschool and kindergarten screenings on May 3 & 4, 2021. These days would be "no school" days for preschool and kindergarten students. These dates were recommended by the principals because of the earlier timing for screenings of the next year's students, and because May 4 will also be an early release day for staff professional development (where families requiring day care will already be arranging that for the afternoon of May 4 anyway).

I look forward to answering any questions you may have regarding this recommendation.