



January 31, 2020

To: School Committee

From: Amy Clouter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

**The Sherwood Maker Space: *Making Room for Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration & Communication***

## INTRODUCTION

As you know, Shrewsbury's [Portrait of a Graduate](#) process resulted in the creation of a shared vision statement of the community's aspirations for our graduates. Our [strategic plan](#) and the resulting district goals outlined our commitment to that vision, namely that we will improve our schools by focusing on:

- Space and resources to support effective learning
- Learning environments where everyone's success matters
- Enhanced wellbeing of all
- Connected learning for a complex world



In the time since, our educators and district leaders have grappled with how we will shift instructional practice to encourage student voice and choice. Most importantly, we aspired to identify meaningful learning projects that align with state standards and engage students in solving problems in ways that mirror real-world challenges. In order for students to apply their skills, we must first teach them. To that end, Shrewsbury's educators followed our *Portrait of a Graduate* work by focusing on developing a shared understanding of the "4Cs", namely creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

Teachers aren't alone in thinking about how to grow 4C competencies, and interest in "maker" opportunities goes well beyond the classroom. Since 2006, the creation of [MakerMedia](#), an online resource hub, and live [Maker Faire](#) events have encouraged people of all ages to share their learning and showcase their products. American enthusiasm for "do it yourself" opportunities, combined with the availability of 3D printers at low cost led to the creation of informal learning spaces in public libraries. In 2009, when President Obama launched his [Educate to Innovate](#) campaign, school libraries began to plan with maker spaces in mind, too.



At Sherwood, the Media Center Maker Space was strengthened last year by the allocation of district funds to support a staff proposal put forward by Sarah Matthews, a Grade 5 teacher at Sherwood, and Sherwood Media Specialist Hilary Clegg. Shortly thereafter, materials were ordered and organized. Together, librarians and educators across the district consulted with Shawna Powers, Director of Instructional Technology and Pam Poitras, Curriculum Coordinator for Science, to capitalize on these resources and to engage the school community in using them. Given the widespread interest in the Maker Movement, educators have lots of program models to consider, and many ready-made materials at hand to work with. In this way, the addition of the Maker Space at Sherwood resulted in meaningful learning opportunities for educators, too.

## IF WE BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME



Engineers and mathematicians have long understood the importance of making models to successful problem solving. In schools, the renewed interest in “hands on” learning means structuring the space to make thinking visible. To that end, space is allocated for exploration, storage and projects-in progress. A flexible approach allows teachers to engage students in creative problem solving without crowding their own classrooms. At Sherwood, students access the space at different times and for a variety of purposes:

- Free exploration
- Enrichment activities
- Class challenges
- Media-based challenges

Teachers and students alike are empowered to structure their learning experiences. As a result, educators in different roles model for their colleagues the various ways they integrate the materials into the curriculum. Further, student exploration of the materials has led to more purposeful use of time and tools.

Together with five students, Ms. Clegg and Mrs. Matthews will describe the Sherwood Maker Space and its role in the life of the school. In their presentation, they'll speak to how students and teachers use the space and materials with the

goal of showing how this important resource is helping to infuse career and college ready skills into our school cultures.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to describe this important initiative, and for allowing our students to meaningfully participate in such an important community forum.

