



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

March 10, 2021

To: School Committee
Re: Recommended school year calendar for 2021-2022

Enclosed with this memorandum is a proposed calendar for the 2021-2022 school year. It follows state law regarding not holding school on [legal holidays](#), you will see that the approach used for scheduling vacation periods is the same as in recent years, which is structured according to the [recommendations made in January 2016](#) by a Calendar Committee composed of staff and parents. However, there are some key differences that this calendar represents due to the unique situation we have for next year.

Because of the uncertainty of whether we will still face any public health restrictions upon the opening of the school year, and because we very much hope to be opening a new elementary school, our leadership team is in strong agreement that moving New Teacher Orientation two days later to provide more time in August to prepare, along with having two professional development days in addition to the traditional opening day for staff prior to the students returning, will be very beneficial for a successful launch of the school year. This would result in the first day of school for students being September 7, the day after Labor Day.

For decades, we have begun the school year for students on the Tuesday prior to Labor Day, with either three or four days of school happening prior to the holiday (depending on whether we also have a professional development day during that first week). This results in not going as deep into June to hold the mandated 180 days of school. This draft calendar has the 180th day on Friday, June 17, a few days later than typical. While the number of snow days each year is unpredictable, there is some more risk of going deeper into June than usual to complete the school year. However, it is possible that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may continue to allow remote learning days to be held in lieu of snow days even after the pandemic ends, which would give the district a measure of control regarding when the last day would fall, and which is something we will consider next year when that has been clarified by the state. Regardless, the leadership team believes the benefits of having more time on the front end of the school year clearly outweigh the few extra days added to the end of the year.

Something new in the calendar for 2021-2022 is that there is a new state holiday: Juneteenth Independence Day. This holiday will fall on June 19 each year. For the current school year, this is a Saturday, and therefore will have no impact on the school calendar. June 19 falls on a Sunday in 2022. Because Massachusetts state law

mandates that state holidays that fall on a Sunday must be observed the next day on Monday, we cannot then hold school on Monday, June 20, 2022. This would affect the calendar if we have any need to cancel school for a snow day or other reason, as the first “make up” day beyond the scheduled last day of school on June 17, 2022 would then need to be Tuesday, June 21, 2022.

Finally, a change in language is also included in this draft. The School Committee has in the past received some communication from the parent community regarding adding Indigenous Peoples’ Day to the calendar. It is my recommendation that this title be added to the Columbus Day holiday entry, so that it reads “Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples’ Day.” This approach includes the legal name of the holiday under Massachusetts law that requires schools to be closed on this day, while also recognizing that Indigenous Peoples’ Day has become a more widely accepted and known holiday that honors and commemorates the native peoples of America. Given our school district’s efforts to increase the sense of belonging and inclusivity for our students, families, and staff, I believe this language addition is appropriate.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have regarding the recommended calendar for the 2021-2022 school year.