



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

March 17, 2020

To: School Committee
From: Joe Sawyer
Re: Recommendation for revised 2019-2020 school district calendar

Due to the unprecedented situation we are in due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, I am strongly advising that you vote at your meeting of March 18 to make adjustments to this year's school calendar in order to provide certainty regarding the end date of the school year, maximize students' time in school if and when school closures end, and shift educators to a work-from-home model during the school closure period.

Due to the circumstances of the pandemic, Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley has issued revised guidelines regarding the requirement that every Massachusetts public school district be in session for 180 days. Commissioner Riley has updated the regulation so that school districts are not required to hold school beyond what would have been the 185th student school day in this year's school calendar, nor to extend the school year beyond June 30 in any case. Each district must build in at least five days to accommodate "snow days" or other cancellations prior to June 30; for our district, the 180th day of school was scheduled for Friday, June 12, and the 185th day after accounting for snow days is Friday, June 19. Per the Commissioner's ruling, the Shrewsbury Public Schools need not extend its school year beyond June 19. Because of three snow days in December and the missed days due to the pandemic this past Friday and Monday, we are already at the 185th day.

Some have inquired as to whether we would cancel the April school vacation period currently scheduled for Tuesday, April 21 through Friday, April 24 (Monday of that week is the Patriots Day state holiday). At this time, given the amount of uncertainty regarding when state-mandated school closures will be lifted, I believe it is premature to make any decision on this, but it is a possibility that we may consider in the near future.

While it is a local district choice whether to extend the school year beyond the scheduled 185th day if there are remaining days left in June, **I strongly recommend that the School Committee approve an updated school calendar for the current school year that makes Friday, June 19 the final day of the school year, regardless of how many school days are lost to closure. I also strongly recommend that all remaining early**

release days be converted to regular, full school days. I make these recommendations for the following reasons:

- 1) By not scheduling any school days beyond June 19, we are able to have our faculty & staff working from home now in order to provide learning opportunities and support for students and families during the current school closure, which I believe is critically important during the pandemic crisis.
- 2) Determining an end date to the school year provides an important element of certainty for students, their families, and staff that assists greatly in planning.
- 3) When we return to school, we will want to maximize students' time in school for instruction, which will be aided by converting early release days to full days; staff professional development that would have taken place during those early release days can be partially achieved during the school closure period when staff are working from home.

The motion I recommend the School Committee vote to approve is:

To revise the 2019-2020 school district calendar so that the last day of school for students will be no later than Friday, June 19 and so that all remaining scheduled early release days be converted to full days of school.

I look forward to answering any questions you have at the March 18 meeting.