



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

March 24, 2021

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

Enclosed with this memorandum is an updated draft of the proposed calendar for the 2021-2022 school year. The revisions made from the original draft presented on March 10, 2021 are explained below.

This proposed calendar follows state law regarding not holding school on [legal holidays](#). 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.

The original proposal would have had the first day of school on the day after Labor Day (September 7, 2021). However, due to an oversight on my part, I neglected to note that this year the Jewish High Holy Day of Rosh Hashanah falls on this date. Our district's long standing approach, based on the above-mentioned Calendar Committee's work and the work of the one convened prior to that, has been to hold school on the myriad of religious holidays that our students and their families observe. Students who miss school for religious observances do so without penalty and are provided with ample opportunity to make up missed work, while teachers are expected to avoid major assessments, projects, etc. on these dates. However, given the importance of the first day of school, it would not be appropriate to have our Jewish students and staff members who observe Rosh Hashanah to miss that day.

As a result, this updated proposal returns to the typical start of school the week prior to Labor Day, albeit on Wednesday rather than Tuesday. Instead, we would hold one of the two professional development days on that Tuesday, providing an important opportunity for additional orientation for what we hope and expect will be a newly constituted K-4 staff configuration because of the planned opening of the new Beal School. This draft also places the second professional development day on the Friday of that week, for the same reasons. Students in Grades 1-12 would attend school on September 1 and 2, then return to school on September 7.

This revised draft calendar has the 180th day on Wednesday, June 15, 2022. As a reminder, the new state holiday, Juneteenth Independence Day, must be observed on June 20, 2022, because June 19th, the date of the holiday, falls on a Sunday. This will

only affect the school calendar if snow days require the school year to continue into the following week.

Finally, a reminder that 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 this revised, recommended calendar for the 2021-2022 school year. I recommend that you vote to approve this calendar.