

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**100 MAPLE AVENUE**  
**SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP**  
**Wednesday, April 5, 2023**  
**Shrewsbury High School - 2002 Conference Room**

**Start Time:** 6:35pm

**Present:** Ms. Lynsey Heffernan, Chairperson; Mr. Jason Palitsch, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Jonathan Wensky, Secretary; Ms. Sandy Fryc; Ms. Erin Boucher; Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations; Ms. Barbara Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources; Ms. Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being; and Chris Girardi, Principal, Maj. Howard W. Beal School.

**Literacy Initiative Update**

Ms. Clouter provided an overview of the current focus around literacy initiatives. She reviewed the pillars of literacy, Star Assessment results, science of reading, language comprehension, word recognition, and skilled reading. They are currently in the middle of a deep dive into each of the existing programs to determine if they are aligned to research. After identifying field programs to utilize, they will determine which programs move forward to pilot in the district. Ms. Clouter provided an overview of next steps for K-6 grade levels and explained the process for reviewing practices across the content areas. She noted implementation of this program may or may not vary within each grade level. Ms. Clouter advised that this program won't be implemented at Oak but added there might be some components that need to continue into grades 7 & 8. The focus is on strengthening literacy instruction through grade 6. Dr. Sawyer said they are looking at Tier 1 programs - common literacy instruction experiences that all students receive. In terms of recommended strategic investments to support literacy programs, Ms. Clouter provided some specific strategic investments that would help expand our efforts around literacy.

**Potential Strategic Investments**

Dr. Sawyer reviewed a few FY 24 budget reduced projected costs of \$203K (adjusted out of district SPED tuition = \$164K of \$203K total) and some increased projected costs that are just under \$63K - which includes a higher than expected tuition rate increase of 9.7% for Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School or \$47K of the \$63K total. Dr. Sawyer then reviewed potential additional strategic investments in literacy, career and technical education programming investments, a safety and security audit, attendance and residency validation services, and strategic plan implementation which, in total, are projected at \$480,500 of additional strategic investments. If these investments are agreed upon by the School Committee it will be leveraging existing Circuit Breaker reserve dollars and impact the overall carry-forward Circuit Breaker, which reduces the reserve by 10% and still maintains a strong balance heading into the next school year.

**FY 24 Budget - Update & Discussion**

Mr. Collins provided an update regarding the FY 24 Budget. He reviewed the FY23 Year End Investment Plan - one-time expenses that can be leveraged with available budget dollars. The committee agreed with

these additions and they will be factored into the budget recommendation vote on Wednesday, April 12th.

### **Homework Policy Update**

Dr. Sawyer reviewed the updated Homework Policy. This update brings grades 9-12 into the policy. The memo provided a summary of the research completed and how the updates were added to the overall draft revision. Updates include more specifics around management systems and electronic updates online. It also documents a “no homework policy” and more specificity around communicating elements of this new policy. The Committee discussed the “no homework” policy and its alignment to specific religious holidays. There was consensus among Committee members that the policy didn’t need to identify specific holidays that would be “no homework” times in the policy itself, but that this instead should be determined on a year-to-year basis. The School Committee discussed more focus around communication of “no homework” dates for each year. Dr. Sawyer also indicated that communication around “no homework” days should focus on the purpose of providing opportunities to all students for more family time, opportunities to attend to other student responsibilities or activities, catch up on assignments if needed, etc. regardless of whether those no homework dates are secular holidays, religious holidays, or school vacation periods, and that including some major religious holidays as “no homework” dates also provides relief for the families who do observe them.

### **Adjournment**

#### **Motion to adjourn the workshop into Executive Session:**

A. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) “[t]o comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements” (“Purpose 7”), Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(f), (g) – for the purpose of reviewing, approving, and/or releasing executive session minutes.

B. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect of the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares” (“Purpose 3”) - the Shrewsbury Education Association Units A and/or B, the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, and/or the Cafeteria Workers Association.

C. For the purpose of addressing G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(2) “to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel” – non-union administrators (“Purpose 2”).

On a motion by Mr. Palitsch, Seconded by Ms. Boucher, the School Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn to Executive Session. Roll call: Ms. Fryc, Yes; Ms. Boucher, Yes; Mr. Wensky, Yes; Mr. Palitsch, Yes; and Ms. Heffernan, Yes.

#### **Workshop adjourned into Executive Session at 8:29pm**

**Motion to adjourn Workshop:** On a motion by Ms. Fryc; Seconded by Ms. Boucher; Roll Call Vote: Mr. Palitsch: Yes; Ms. Boucher: Yes; Ms. Fryc: Yes; Mr. Wensky: Yes; and Ms. Heffernan: Yes.

#### **Workshop adjourned at: 8:31pm**

**Documents referred to:**

- Memo - Proposed Updated SPS Homework Policy
- Draft - Proposed Updated SPS Homework Policy
- SPS Literacy Initiative Memo
- SPS Literacy Project Update
- FY23 Year End Investment Plan - One-Time Expenses
- FY24 Projected Budget Adjustments