



Community Partnerships & Well-Being – Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Overview

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Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being

Key Areas of Budget Responsibility

- I. Building and sustaining partnerships between the school district and families, businesses, non-profits, higher education organizations, and alumni in order to enhance opportunities for student learning experiences and staff development
- II. Developing partner, volunteer, and financial support to advance the district's mission and goals, with a current strategic emphasis on career and technical education and the enhanced well-being of all
- III. Enhancing the social, emotional, behavioral, and physical well-being of students and staff through development and coordination of programming and professional development
- IV. Supervise the Director of Health, Physical Education, and Family Consumer Sciences, the Director of Extended Learning, and the Director of Alumni Development and Community Relationships
- V. Cultivate relationships with institutions of higher education and workforce development in order to create learning and professional development opportunities for students and staff

Key Budget Investments for Fiscal Year 2025

Career Technical Education Coordinator

Shift in funding of \$75,000

- Shift \$75K in funding currently identified for start-up costs for Career Technical Education programming to create a Career Technical Education Coordinator position at Shrewsbury High School that will provide critical support the coordination of career exploration opportunities including internships, job shadowing, mentorship, Capstone projects, and postsecondary degrees and/or certificates, apprenticeships, or employment.
- (See the separate report on Career and Technical Education FY25 Budget for more details)

Contracted Service Funds to Advance Well-Being

Shift in funding of \$85,000

Included in this category is shifting the use of \$85,000 of existing contracted services funds currently supporting the SPS Mindfulness Director contracted position to various investments to advance the district's work related to student and staff well-being. Examples of fund use are illustrated in more detail in the memo below, and may broadly include

- Consultation from experts for proactive skill development and preventive measures that address student

and staff well-being

- Staff professional development opportunities
- Stipends for staff serving on teams developing plans and delivering programming
- Contracting with outside groups or individuals to deliver well-being programming

Efficiencies Through Use of Grant or Alternative Funds in Fiscal Year 2025

The following grants and alternative funds have been awarded through Project Lead the Way, Innovation Career Pathways, Social Emotional Behavioral grant funding through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and a donation for soccer programming at Oak Middle School:

- One8 Foundation Project Lead the Way (PLTW) High School Engineering grant funding utilized to offset the costs associated with the Project Lead the Way Engineering program. This may include equipment, technology, and educator training (\$40,000)
- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sponsored Innovation Career Pathways Planning Grant Funding (\$25,000)
- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sponsored Innovation Career Pathways Designation Grant Funding (\$150,000-anticipated)
- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sponsored MyCAP Grant Funding (\$5,500)
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning Grant (DESE) (\$24,500)
- WIN Waste Innovations donation (\$17,500 earmarked for career exploration programming at SHS and \$17,500 earmarked for RISE/Maple & Main)
- Lexus of Northborough donation to support the addition of Girls Soccer and Boys Soccer to the athletics program at Oak Middle School. (\$5,500)

Total: \$285,500 through grants and alternative funding

Other Examples of Efficiencies in Fiscal Year 2025 (This is not an exhaustive list.)

- Sought and accepted meeting space, along with six meals, for the 2 ½ day Summer Leadership Conference at Clark University-at no cost. Additionally, Clark University President, David Fithian, met with our leadership team. This donation of space and meals resulted in a savings of \$3200.
- Confirmed the participation of over 225 SPS alumni, business representatives, community partners, and others for the SHS Career Fair, OMS Career Day, Lunch and Learn weekly sessions, Guest Speaker Series and networking and learning events
- Secured Lea Christo (Associate Professor of Practice, Human Services & Rehab Studies, School of Graduate Studies, School Counseling Program; and Coordinator of Resiliency in Helping Professions Program at Assumption University) to make a keynote presentation to PreK-8 staff on our first professional development day at no charge. Professor Christo's presentation was titled, ***Revisiting the Topic of Burnout: Your Relationship with Work***
- Obtained the donation of over 200 hundreds pumpkins from Papa's Hardware and Tougas Farms to Sherwood Middle School and Beal School for fall student activities

- Collaborated with Meg Belsito and the RISE/Maple & Main Capital Campaign committee to secure monetary donations of approximately \$65,000 at this time
- Exploring BV HUB's [YouthWorks](#) funding of student salaries for Maple & Main employment
- Obtained student access to Blackstone Valley (BV) HUB's [Senior Scoop](#) event in April. 30 SHS seniors will attend.
- Participate in BV HUB's [Connecting Activities](#) programming
- Collaborate with Nick Hawes, Benefits Coordinator, Town of Shrewsbury, to offer well-being opportunities for all town employees including Tuesday meditation in the Select Board Room with Mindfulness Director Jordan Grinstein, Spring Wellness Retreat, and Jessica Gifford's 4-week *Well-Being Challenge* workshop.
- Secured \$750 through a Wegmans donation for Holiday Dinner for SPS shelter families
- Co-facilitated gift card donation campaign for SPS's Holiday Giving Drives for SPS families. Over 300 cards were collected.
- Organized a SPS staff social event (at a reduced cost) that included [Cara Brindisi's Winter Solstice Concert](#) at Mechanics Hall



March 26, 2024

To: Shrewsbury School Committee
From: Dr. Jane O. Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being
Re: Community Partnerships & Well-Being Budget Report

In my role as Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being, I have two significant areas of responsibility. This memo will illustrate how my role is connected to the financial resources of the district in my work to advance community partnerships that provide support for district and school initiatives and to advance the strategic commitment to the enhanced well-being of all.

Advancing Community Partnerships

Our school district's mission highlights the importance of partnering with the community as we support all our students to become empowered learners, communicators, problem solvers, creative thinkers, and responsible and courageous individuals: **The Shrewsbury Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21st century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.** In my role as Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships & Well-Being, one of my responsibilities includes creating, building, strengthening, and sustaining partnerships that positively contribute to teaching and learning for all students and all staff. This work begins with establishing trusting relationships with all stakeholders, as leaders within an organization set the tone for the climate and beliefs of the organization. These relationships are formed by initiating communication through phone calls and in-person meetings. They strengthen by taking the time to learn about local businesses and institutions by attending informational sessions and socials, taking tours of facilities, and extending invitations to individuals and teams of people who actively seek to contribute to our district's mission and strategic commitments. The work continues by identifying student, staff, and family needs that can best be met through the involvement of SPS alumni, community and business partners, and non-profit organizations. When these individuals and institutions accept the invitation to get involved in our schools, they commit by providing time, talent and resources (financial contributions, in-kind donations, and human resources).

This year, a significant amount of my work has been to support the district's strategic priority to expand access to Career Technical Education (CTE), particularly the district goals of creating Innovation Career Pathways programming at Shrewsbury High School and expanding career exploration, job shadowing, and internship opportunities for students (goals 3.1 and 3.2 of this year's [District Strategic Goals and Action Steps](#)).

Community partners and organizations including the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the One8 Foundation have contributed funding for these efforts by providing grants and philanthropic donations. Ms. Kathleen Keohane, SPS Director of Alumni Development and Community Relationships, and I collaborate to leverage partnerships and acquire resources to advance Career Technical Education and career exploration at the middle and high school levels. This work is illustrated in the Career Technical Education and Innovation Career Pathways budget report also being presented at your March 27 meeting.

We are constantly reaching out for sponsorships. While most of this work over the past two years has been primarily focused on our Career and Technical Education initiatives, including expanding educational opportunities for students and staff that focus on career awareness and career exploration, some of this work has included efforts such as RISE and Maple & Main. We are very grateful to SPS alumni, donors, municipal employees, community partners, and local higher education institutions for their contributions of time and resources, as we work diligently to create opportunities for all learners. The following illustrate some of the ways in which individuals and organizations donate to this work:

- One-time, monthly, and annual donations to the Colonial Fund
- Sponsorships from local businesses including the Shrewsbury Federal Credit Union
- Lunch and Learn weekly sessions including students, alumni, and business partners
- Participation in Career Days (OMS) and Career Fairs (SHS)
- Presentations to students through Guest Speaker Series (all levels)
- SHS Job Fairs (fall and spring)
- Job shadowing, internships, field studies, and employment opportunities
- Free educational opportunities including those provided by DetecTogether to teach students about early screening for cancer symptoms

The following is not an exhaustive list of the endeavors involved in advancing community partnerships to advance various district priorities, including well-beng initiatives, which illustrates some of the ways in which I have been involved in these efforts this year:

- Created a Staff Wellness Survey via Survey Monkey to obtain staff feedback regarding district wellness opportunities and offer an opportunity to offer suggestions, etc. The input is informing the creation of a SPS Staff Well-Being Program.
- Participate in Paton School's *Safe Routes to School* by walking to school with students and staff on a monthly basis
- Partnering with Paton School's PTO to create a Family Fun Run and Celebration in May
- Organized a SPS staff social events (reduced cost) that included [Cara Brindisi's Winter Solstice Concert](#) at Mechanics Hall
- Coordinate special visits to our schools, including a Woo Sox visit on 12/20 to Maple & Main
- Co-create the Annual Report with the support of Ms. Karen Isaacson and others
- Collaborate with SHS Assistant Principal, Jeffrey Lane, and SHS Teacher and Coordinator of Community Service Learning, Denise Satterfield, to obtain SHS student volunteers for school and community events
- Facilitated a partnership with [Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives \(MBI\)](#) through the recommendation of David Easson, former SPS parent and Chief Manufacturing Officer at [Solarea Bio](#) and Board Member at MBI
- Encourage community groups to visit our schools and participate in special events. A recent example includes inviting the Shrewsbury Town Center Association to host its monthly meeting at Maple & Main on April 11th at 9 a.m. The meeting will include a tour of Maple & Main and a visit

with RISE students and staff.

Additionally, I appreciate having the opportunity to serve on town-wide committees including the *Shrewsbury Dementia Friendly Task Force*, *Town of Shrewsbury's Communications Team*, and the *Shelter Families Task Force*.

Advancing Well-Being Initiatives

Our district's vision and strategic commitments and priorities emphasize the well-being of all of our students and staff.

The [Portrait of a Shrewsbury Public Schools Graduate](#) includes **Resilience & Focus** as one of the six highlighted goals and identifies the following behavior:

- Employ strategies to maintain personal wellness, focus, and intention in their lives.

Enhanced Well-Being of All is one of the district's [three strategic commitments for 2023-2027](#):

Shrewsbury Public Schools prioritizes the social, emotional, behavioral, mental, and physical health of all students and staff by creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments. This is accomplished by intentionally providing learning opportunities where all Shrewsbury Public Schools students and staff feel valued, supported, and empowered.

This commitment includes the following 5-year strategic priority for well-being:

Promote Student and Staff Wellness: Expand opportunities for students and staff to strengthen mental health and physical wellness in support of overall well-being.

In addition to student well-being goals to assess the change in school start times and to start a planning process regarding Food Service meal options, the following goal regarding staff wellness was adopted for the 2023-2024 school year:

Convene a Shrewsbury Public Schools Staff Wellness Team to make recommendations for ways to improve staff wellness and to create a staff wellness program; implement recommendations that are feasible during the current school year and plan for those to be implemented next year, and analyze staff participation in wellness offerings.

In the report I presented to you on February 28 included data analysis regarding staff wellness offerings. The Staff Wellness Team has met seven times during the summer months and school year, and is in the process of developing recommendations for what staff wellness offerings to continue and coordinating existing and potential staff wellness initiatives into a staff wellness program.

An area of focus for well-being over the past several years has been mindfulness. Since Fall 2019, Shrewsbury Public Schools has partnered with [WholeSchool Mindfulness](#) in Concord, Massachusetts.

Over the past five years, SPS students and staff have participated in offerings and opportunities facilitated by a full-time Mindfulness Director contracted through WholeSchool Mindfulness, the most recent of which included a three-hour Staff Wellness Retreat on Sunday afternoon, March 24th. Participants (21) included both school and municipal employees. The experience was very well received. Over the course of the partnership, students and staff at all levels have shared their mindfulness experiences at multiple School Committee meetings.

Per the guidance of the School Committee for the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget, the \$85,000 in funding for the contracted service with WholeSchool Mindfulness for a full-time Mindfulness Director position will no longer be provided for that purpose. As a result, the partnership with WholeSchool Mindfulness will end at the conclusion of the 2023-24 school year, and so there will no longer be a Mindfulness Director role in the school district next school year. Based on the School Committee's guidance, it is understood that the administration was to consider how to utilize this \$85,000 in funding in a different manner. When Dr. Sawyer presented his initial budget recommendation in February, he recommended that these funds be utilized to hire a Well-Being Coordinator for the school district, with the intent that this role would "advance the district's strategic plan's *commitment to the enhanced well-being of all*, with the position being designed to coordinate well-being supports for both students and staff to address needs related to stress management, emotional regulation, etc."

However, as the district's work to identify specific ways in which to support both student and staff well-being (including work being done through the Social and Emotional Learning Leadership Team, the Social Emotional Behavioral Academy team working with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Staff Wellness Team mentioned above), there are too many elements that are in development at this time to sufficiently define the job responsibilities and requirements for a district Well-Being Coordinator role for the coming year. As a result, this position is no longer being recommended for how the \$85,000 in funding might be utilized in FY25.

Instead, it is recommended that this \$85,000 remain in the contracted service budget for FY25, with the use of these funds for purposes to support student and staff well-being in ways that will be determined over the course of the fiscal year. As the work of the teams involved in this effort evolves, there will be needs for investments such as:

- Consultation from experts in the field for proactive skill development and preventive measures that address student and staff well-being
- Staff professional development opportunities (courses/webinars/presentations); this might involve continuation of professional development opportunities that have begun in the district, such as partnerships with Jessica Gifford from [Project Connect](#) and Professor Lea Christo from [Assumption University's Resilience in the Helping Professions Program](#); or expanding training regarding best practices in supporting students such as the Collaborative Problem Solving training through the [Think:Kids Program at Massachusetts General Hospital](#), currently being provided to several staff through a DESE grant written in collaboration with Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Jamie Millett, Director of Counseling and Mental Health Services, Meghan Bartlett, Assistant Director of Special Education and PPS, and Felicitie Boisvert, District Social Worker
- Staff stipends for summer work or additional time during the school year to develop well-being resources and programming, just as the district does for academic curriculum work

- Contracting with outside organizations or individuals from outside or within the district to directly provide well-being programming to students or staff; this could involve continuation of some mindfulness offerings for students and staff (while the full-time Mindfulness Director role will no longer be in place, some targeted opportunities for learning to utilize mindfulness could still be provided for students and staff); to date these have also included initiatives targeted at specific student groups (leadership groups, athletic teams, at-risk students, etc.) for proactive stress and anxiety reduction, as well as staff wellness retreats and book studies aimed at work-related stress reduction

It is important to note that there is currently no specific budget funding set aside for the well-being responsibilities of my role, beyond the funds for my position and the current contracted service funds for the Mindfulness Director role. Initiatives in this area have relied upon using funds from other budget sources or the work done by my office to secure gifts, grant funds, and community sponsorships. Having this \$85,000 as a source of funding is key to advancing the district's strategic work on student and staff well-being. I will continue to seek outside resources and opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of all students and staff in our schools as well.

A growing awareness of the importance of proactively teaching, reinforcing, and assessing well-being skills and strategies creates an urgency for this important work to continue. All members of our school communities need to feel safe, supported, challenged, engaged, and healthy to fully participate in teaching and learning. Financial resources for well-being initiatives are important to advance this strategic commitment.