



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

August 22, 2017

To: School Committee
From: Joe Sawyer
Re: Strategic planning process – Fall 2017

At our workshop on August 23, we will discuss how the district can best determine a new, compelling set of strategic priorities and goals between now and December, in order to focus our energy and resources over the next five or so years.

I believe that the approach we used in the Fall of 2011 ultimately served us well, and I suggest that we follow a similar path now. In their book Strategy in Action: How School Systems Can Support Powerful Teaching and Learning, Rachel Curtis and Elizabeth City define strategy as “The set of actions an organization chooses to pursue in order to achieve its objectives. These deliberate actions are puzzle pieces that fit together to create a clear picture of how the people, activities, and resources of an organization can work effectively to accomplish a collective purpose.” They suggest that the strategy adopted by the district be defined by a small number of “strategic priorities” (no more than five; I suggest three or four) that serve as areas of focus to further the district’s mission. Each strategic priority should be:

- 1) Broad enough to apply across the entire district, PreK-12
- 2) High leverage, so that if executed well it will ultimately have a significant impact on student learning
- 3) Motivating, so that it promotes innovation and problem solving that move the district closer to fulfilling its aspirations
- 4) Aligned with the other strategic priorities so that together they are coherent and mutually reinforcing

I suggest that the process of creating strategic priorities occur in two overlapping phases this fall, with the first phase focused on finalizing the *Profile of a Graduate*. This work will define the skills, knowledge, and dispositions we want our SHS graduates to possess when they leave us, and will serve, in conjunction with our mission statement, as the “end in mind” for our aspirations. After refining and finalizing the *Profile of a Graduate* early in the fall, we will then develop the next set of strategic priorities to serve as a road map to

move us closer to the ideals embedded in the *Profile* and our mission, which I believe will help us make good decisions regarding what to include and prioritize.

It will be important to ensure that the various stakeholders in our schools have a voice to advise us regarding both the *Profile of a Graduate* and the strategic priorities and goals prior to a final recommendation by the administration and your formal adoption of each. Key stakeholders include students (as appropriate), parents, community members, other town elected and appointed officials, and staff.

As we move through the process, I think it will be important to achieve a balance of continuity of important work in which the district is already engaged, while being judicious about introducing new priorities. Topics that could be considered for inclusion in our strategic priorities and goals may include:

- Further development of project-based learning approaches and “real world” application of learning, potentially including
 - Financial literacy
 - Vocational and/or internship opportunities for high school students, with additional community and business partnerships
- Determining what to emphasize in curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment, with an eye to where we can find the greatest leverage to improve learning for all students in inclusive settings, as our student population continues to become more diverse in terms of learning profiles and demographics (as well as how to best build capacity among our staff to achieve this)
- Continued emphasis on health and wellness, including
 - Social emotional learning
 - Adequate sleep (potential adjustment of school start times)
 - Combating the opioid epidemic
- Ensuring appropriate space and resources to support learning, including
 - A solution for elementary space (i.e., the Beal project)
 - Potential changes to the budget development process

Accompanying this memo is a draft of what I believe is an inclusive, comprehensive process by which the School Committee will be able to adopt, with confidence, the *Profile of a Graduate* and a new set of strategic priorities and goals. I look forward to discussing this information with you at our workshop tomorrow.