

INSIDE SOMERSET / SOMERSET BERKLEY

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A Message from the Superintendent

In an effort to provide families with information pertaining to the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District, I have created this family newsletter that I will share with you each month. We have wonderful schools filled with hardworking, dedicated teachers and students. There are many terrific events happening in our schools that I would like to share with you as well as to keep you informed of other relevant events and information.

Too often, we talk about effective teaching and student learning as critical components for student success. This is certainly true, but another facet that is sometimes not given enough credit is parental and family engagement. Families, obviously, have a critical role in education and research shows that engaged parents and guardians have positive impacts on their children's academic achievements and overall success in school.

I hope you find this information meaningful.

Sincerely,
Jeff Schoonover

Somerset Berkley Regional School District Strategy

The mission and vision of SBRHS is to inspire and guide everyone to inquire, adapt, persevere, and innovate while establishing individual goals; engaging in innovative problem solving, developing effective communication skills; using technology responsibly, and becoming positive contributors to society, thus allowing students to achieve their full potential in a rigorous, relevant, and safe learning environment.

During much of calendar year 2016, much work took place to develop a new strategic plan for SBRHS, beginning in February with our two-day Future Search event, at which over 100 community members participated. The fruit of that work and subsequent follow-up activities is the district strategy that is summarized and available on our district website by clicking [here](#).

Key objectives of this plan include student learning (promoting those skills that are essential for future success in a personalized learning environment), effective teaching, building family and community engagement, and building a sustainable funding model.

I will explore key actions of this plan in future newsletters in order for everyone to understand what we are focusing on at SBRHS and where we are heading.

Demonstrations of Excellence

Spring is the season when students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the year. This ranges from our MCAS testing in grades 3-10, Advanced Placement exams at the high school during the first two weeks of May, and spring benchmark assessments to measure student growth from the fall, to musical productions and spring concerts at the middle school and high school, art shows, and elementary performances for parents. It is always wonderful to see students proudly perform at such high levels and showcase their amazing skills and talents.

Upcoming events to see what our students have accomplished include:

- *Sister Act: The Musical* at SBRHS on May 12-14
- Somerset Middle School Spectrum Art Show in the James F. White Art Gallery at SBRHS from 6:00-7:00 PM on Monday May 8
- SBRHS Art Gallery viewing of student works in digital photography, textiles, and stained glass on May 4 from 6:00-7:00 PM

Redistricting Committee

During the 2013-2014 school year, the Somerset School Committee voted to close the Wilbur Elementary School and, consequently, redistrict the three remaining elementary schools, moving the in-town boundaries that determine which elementary school students attend.

Recently, the School Committee voted to establish a redistricting committee to revisit this decision to determine the effectiveness of redistricting and whether further changes are necessary.

While the committee will not gather immediately to conduct this work, if you are interested in serving on this committee, please notify Robin Vaccaro at vaccaror@sbrregional.org.

Please indicate which school your child attends and why you would like to participate in this work.

Policy Update

At recent school committee meetings, both school committees approved an updated policy on bullying prevention, which can be found [here](#).

Notable changes include:

- Recognizing certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics;
- Providing information to families regarding the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination;
- Providing a more detailed approach for disciplinary action on the determination of bullying; and
- Several ways to anonymously report bullying or retaliation.

New Somerset Public Schools Website

In the coming weeks, SPS will be launching a new website. I am sure all would agree that our current website is not very appealing or user friendly. The new district and individual school websites will have a number of useful family resources addressing social media use, bullying prevention, student registration information, PACE, and our before and after school program, among other things.

The website will also be used to better communicate upcoming events, highlight student and school accomplishments, and serve staff, students, families, and the community as a vehicle for information.

Alphabest

At the beginning of this school year, the Somerset Public Schools welcomed Alphabest, a before and after school program, to each of our elementary schools. Students in Alphabest study different topics each day of the week, including STEM, languages, fitness, and the arts. Recently, students have been learning the basics of Mandarin Chinese, using digital animation tools to create and tell stories, building Lego robots, and preparing an end-of-year musical production, in addition to the homework club each day.

Not only does Alphabest provide a service to families during the before and after school times, but students are engaged in fun learning experiences. To learn more about Alphabest, please visit their website at <https://www.alphabest.org/>.



Envisioning Somerset

In the spring of 2016, a unique project was underway in Somerset and Berkley. Mrs. Ginny Troutman, an art/photography teacher at SBRHS, received a grant for her students to learn more about the history of our community and to depict its natural beauty, culture, and landmarks through photography, with images being displayed on a number of public buildings in Somerset and Berkley. Students worked with documentary photographer Mary Beth Meehan and Somerset town historian Mary Ann McDonald.

The final gallery presentation of our students' work took place last week at the Massachusetts State House, thanks to Representative Patricia Haddad. Many thanks to Mrs. Troutman and to her advanced photography students for sharing their creativity and talent with us through this project. To learn more about Envisioning Somerset and to see the photos, please visit <http://www.envisioningsomerset.com/>.

