

INSIDE SOMERSET & SOMERSET BERKLEY



@Somerset_PS

Family Newsletter

Dear Families,

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate South Elementary for its recent, well-earned recognition by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as a School of Recognition. Only fifty-two schools across the Commonwealth earned this distinction for high achievement, high growth, and exceeding their targets.

All five schools were broadly categorized as schools without required assistance or interventions. South Elementary, North Elementary, and SBRHS met their 2018 targets set by DESE whereas Chace Street School and Somerset Middle School partially met their targets. Due to South Elementary School's exceptional performance, it was further named as a School of Recognition.

In this newsletter, I have included additional information on school accountability data as well as information for families on vaping, which is a growing student concern we have in our middle school and high school.

Sincerely,
Jeff Schoonover

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2019-2020 School Calendar

A result of the recent contract negotiations between the Somerset School Committee, Somerset Berkley Regional School Committee, and the Somerset Teachers' Association is a change in the start of the school year that will begin next year.

While the official school calendar will not be approved until the spring of 2019, teachers will begin their school year on Monday August 26, 2019 and students will begin on Wednesday August 28, 2019. Students and teachers will not have school on Friday August 30, allowing them and their families to enjoy a four-day Labor Day weekend.

With the earlier start when chances for warmer weather are still high, the Somerset schools will begin installing air conditioning units in many classrooms. This work will begin with those classrooms that have historically warmed up more than others.

August 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Wednesday, Aug 28th 2019

College Information Nights for SBRHS Students



<https://jonahperryphotography.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/7/5/16753196/img-0714.jpg>

October marks the time each year when seniors jump into full college awareness mode and engage in all aspects of the college application process.

SBRHS hosted a College Fair this past Thursday, October 4 and will be hosting another event this coming week.

On Thursday October 11, the high school will have a college planning and financial aid night for seniors and their families from 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM in the Performing Arts Center and in the Media Center. While this event is intended for seniors, any student is welcome to attend to learn more about this very important process.

Vaping

Attorney General Maura Healy, in a recent letter to school superintendents, stated, "Over the last few years, e-cigarette use has increased 900% among high school students in the United States. In 2015, almost 50% of Massachusetts high school students reported having used e-cigarettes at least once." These usage rates have only increased since then across the state and within our schools. School administrators in Somerset and Somerset Berkley have experienced an increase in the number of middle school and high school students who are using e-cigarettes in school. In September, Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb declared vaping by high school students an "epidemic."

Electronic cigarettes are battery-powered devices that heat liquid into a vapor for the user to inhale. While electronic cigarettes come in varying shapes and sizes, the popular JUUL devices have a sleek, modern design that resembles a USB flash drive. The liquid ("e-liquid," "juice," or "pod") in vaping devices often contains nicotine, a highly addictive substance that can lead to serious health consequences for young people whose brains and bodies are still developing. The e-liquid contained in JUUL pods has a notably high nicotine concentration of 5%. Vaping one pod is equivalent to 200 puffs or one whole pack of traditional combustible cigarettes. E-liquids may also contain other unhealthy chemicals and compounds, including carcinogens.

Below is a list of resources that Attorney General Healy shared with schools:

Know the Risks: E-Cigarettes and Young People

- Source: U.S. Surgeon General
- https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_ECig_ParentTipSheet_508.pdf
- Description: An informational website for youth and adults that includes a fact sheet, video, frequently asked questions, and parent tip sheet.

Talk with Your Teen About E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents

- Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html
- Description: A four-page brochure with facts on e-cigarettes and questions for parents to ask their children.

JUUL and Youth: Rising E-Cigarette Popularity

- Source: Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
- <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0394.pdf>
- Description: A four-page fact sheet on JUUL, including information about the devices, use among youth, health concerns, and marketing.

What's the Hype?: JUUL Electronic Cigarette's Popularity with Youth & Young Adults

- Source: Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law
- <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/webinar/what's-hype-juul-electronic-cigarette's-popularity-youth-young-adults>
- Description: A webinar and "question and answer" document on JUUL, its popularity among youth, health concerns, and the company's recent outreach to schools.

School and District Accountability Data

The Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) released this year's school and district accountability data and classifications. The accountability system has undergone a major overhaul but retains an emphasis on overall MCAS achievement and growth, high school graduation, and high school school dropout rates. However, the new system is also dependent on data such as chronic absenteeism, access by students to advanced coursework, and closing the achieving gap of the lowest performing 25% of students from the previous year's MCAS tests.

Gone are the level 1-5 designations that we have grown accustomed to over the years. Instead, schools and districts are placed into two broad classifications: (1) Schools without required assistance or interventions or (2) Schools requiring assistance or intervention. Schools falling into the first classification (not requiring assistance or intervention) either met their targets or partially met their targets for the year. Of the schools that met their targets, the Commissioner identifies a relatively small number of schools that did exceptionally well and names them Schools of Recognition. For schools requiring assistance or intervention, their further categorization is either Focused/Targeted Supports or Broad/Comprehensive Supports.

In Somerset and Somerset Berkley, all five schools fell into the overall classification of not requiring assistance or intervention. South Elementary, North Elementary, and Somerset Berkley Regional High School met their targets while Chace Street School and Somerset Middle School partially met their targets. Additionally, South Elementary was identified as only one of fifty-two schools across the state as a School of Recognition. This is a great accomplishment for the teachers, students, and entire South community!

We will be digging deep into this data to identify areas for growth and improvement for the individual schools and both school districts. At first glance, chronic absenteeism is one area that requires investigating and improvement. Of the five schools in Somerset and Somerset Berkley, four did not earn a single point due to not meeting their annual targets with the exception being Somerset Middle. Chronic absenteeism is defined as the percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership. In a typical 180-day school year, this is the percentage of students who miss 18 or more days. The chronic absenteeism rate includes both excused and unexcused absences, and is calculated for students in grades 1 through 12.

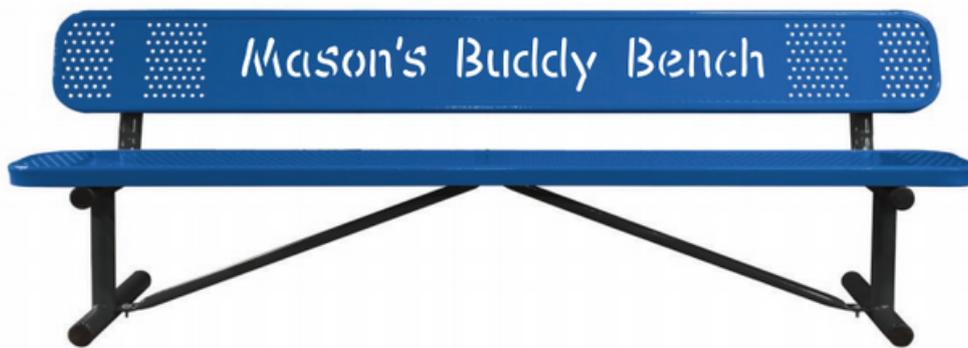
For those wanting to learn more about your child's school accountability information, you can access that information on DESE's school profile pages by clicking [here](#).

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has placed much emphasis on MCAS assessments -- high school students are required to achieve certain scores in order to graduate and schools / districts are measured and compared mainly by MCAS results. However, MCAS is only one measure of student's readiness for the next grade or level and it is fairly one-dimensional. We know that students are much more than a single test. The school districts have created their own assessments and utilize nationally normed assessments to help inform us on student readiness, areas of strength, and areas needing improvement and academic interventions. Many of our students are extremely well-rounded, engaged in athletics, the arts, music, and extracurricular activities. None of these activities are measured by MCAS.

Upcoming 3 v 3 Basketball Tournament

Fundraiser for Mason Sterne Buddy Bench at Chace Street School

The Somerset Berkley Regional High School DECA club and the SBRHS Athletic Department will be hosting a 3 v 3 basketball tournament for SBRHS students on November 1st at 6:00 PM. All proceeds from this event will go to the purchase of a buddy bench in Mason Sterne's memory to be installed at the Chace Street School playground in the spring. Mason had recently completed kindergarten at Chace Street School before his life tragically ended in a bicycle accident over the summer. Admission to this event will be \$3.00 per person and Mason buddy bracelets will be sold for \$2 each. Please come out and support this worthy community event. For further information please contact SBRHS senior and event coordinator Lauren Fitzpatrick at 19fitzpatrickl@student.sbregional.org or DECA advisor Christine Ayer at ayerc@sbregional.org



SAT and PSAT

The SAT results for the Class of 2018 were recently released. I am pleased to announce that the results for this past year's graduating class in both Evidenced-Based Reading and Writing (ERW) and Mathematics were higher than for the previous class. The mean total score increased from 1128 to 1154, with math increasing from 567 to 582 and ERW increasing from 561 to 571 (results are rounded to nearest whole number).

For the third consecutive year, SBRHS will be administering the PSAT to all sophomores and juniors at no cost to the students. This year's PSAT assessment will be given on Wednesday October 10.

Additionally, all eighth graders at Somerset Middle School will participate in the PSAT 8/9 assessment on October 10.

Data from the PSAT provides a wealth of information to the schools and teachers about student readiness as well as helping to identify gaps in our curriculum.