

INSIDE SOMERSET / SOMERSET BERKLEY

Superintendent

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A Message from the Superintendent

I am very fortunate to be part of the school communities of Somerset and Somerset Berkley. The many acts of kindness displayed by our students and staff occur throughout our schools and throughout the year, but are most prevalent during this season. Through organized food drives, community service, and organized events that raise thousands of dollars for worthy causes, I am reminded daily of just how great our school communities are.

In this newsletter, I share several ways in which our students are demonstrating their academic successes as well as explaining how we are preparing our students for their futures. However, I feel the greatest pride when I see our students exhibit their strong character through kind, thoughtful, and generous deeds, demonstrating their civic and social responsibilities as they become positive contributors to society.

In this season of giving, sharing, reflecting, and celebrating I extend to all of our families best wishes for a most memorable holiday season!



Somerset Berkley Regional School District is one of 447 school districts in the U.S. and Canada being honored by the College Board with placement on the 8th Annual AP District Honor Roll. To be included on the Advanced Placement Honor Roll, Somerset Berkley had to, since 2015, increase the number of students participating in AP while also increasing or maintaining the percentage of students earning AP Exam scores of 3 or higher. Reaching these goals shows that this district is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are ready for AP.

Between 2015 and 2017, SBRHS experienced a 33% increase in the number of students (165 students in 2015 compared to 220 students in 2017) taking an Advanced Placement exam and a 33% increase in the number of total exams taken (262 exams in 2015 compared to 348 exams in 2017). Despite the large increase in students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and completing AP exams, Somerset Berkley has maintained a high level of performance with 73% of its students earning a 3 or higher.

I am immensely proud of the work that our students have accomplished at Somerset Berkley. Advanced Placement courses are equivalent to introductory college courses. To experience this increase in the number of students who are ready for and accept the challenge of advanced coursework and who are achieving at high levels is outstanding. Our teachers and administrators are fostering a culture of college and career readiness in which our students learn to adapt, persevere, inquire, and innovate. This acknowledgment by the College Board is one measure of the great work that is taking place at Somerset Berkley.

High School Art Awards

SBRHS Art students continue to excel, earning awards and having their work featured in national and international publications. Senior Samantha Angelini had a photograph featured on the blog of international publication *The Week* magazine! Samantha entered one of her photos into a high school exhibit called *America 2017* sponsored by the School of Visual Arts Photography Department in New York City. There were approximately 2,000 entries from high school students across the U.S. and Sam's photo is one of only 14 that are featured in the article.

Similarly, Ben Matos had a photo featured in W Magazine's site in an article about *America 2017*. Out of over 2000 entrants, Ben's photo was 1 of 27 selected for the article. Earlier this year, Ben was recognized for his amazing artistic abilities, along with Eric Rogers, and received Art All State honors. Congratulations to Ben and Samantha for their work and to Mrs. Troutman for her guidance and teaching.

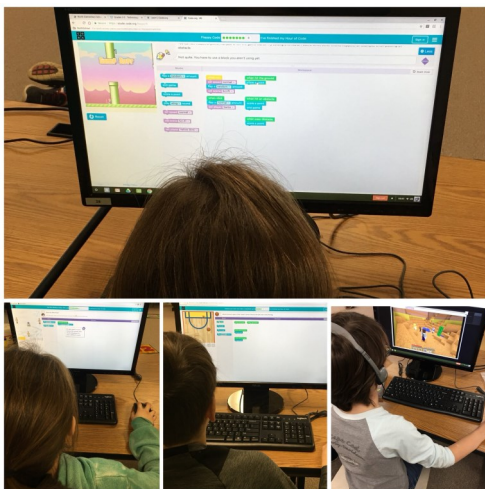
<http://theweek.com/captured/739691/2017-through-eyes-american-teens>

<https://www.wmagazine.com/gallery/best-photographs-by-teenagers-in-america-2017-sva-exhibit>



All Down the Drain, by Benjamin Matos and 'America, 2017 by Samantha Angelini

Elementary Hour of Code



Elementary students across the district have been participating in the Hour of Code as part of Computer Science Education Week. The Hour of Code is a one-hour, annual coding challenge to give students a fun introduction to computer science and has become a global learning and awareness event. Computer science is changing every industry on the planet. In Somerset, we want to give our students multiple opportunities to learn how to create technology that will help change and shape our future world. Computer science concepts help nurture creativity and problem-solving skills to prepare students for any future career. I encourage families to ask their children to explain what they did or to visit the Hour of Code website by clicking [here](#) so that students can demonstrate what they have learned.

Technology at SMS / Robotics

All eighth grade students this year will be learning the basics of programming and then applying those programming skills to design and construct Lego robots. Students are applying engineering design process skills as they imagine, design, create, test, and improve their robots to complete various tasks.



Having students learn to code and build and test robots are new features in our 8th grade

Technology and Engineering curriculum. The Somerset Public Schools' strategic plan addresses the need to prepare students for success in and beyond high school by promoting STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) and 21st Century Skills.

Superintendent's Excellence Award

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents created an award for excellence to recognize students who select the most rigorous courses of study in their local high schools and succeed because of hard work. The awards are given to high school seniors who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence during their high school careers. This year's recipient is Jillian Levesque.

On December 7, SBRHS Assistant Principal Dr. Susan Brelsford and I had the pleasure to present Jillian with the Superintendent's Award for Academic Excellence. Jillian received her award at a ceremony including the honorees from Case, Apponequet, Seekonk, Taunton, and Dighton-Rehoboth. Jillian is an extremely dedicated and gifted student who excels in the classroom and who participates in many extracurricular activities including National Honor Society, Big Buddies, the Anti-Bullying Coalition, Show Choir, DECA, Math Team, Science Club, and Peer Leadership. Jillian is well-deserving of this award and epitomizes what we strive for as a school district when envisioning our high school graduates. Jillian was also presented with a South Coast Educational Collaborative Scholarship at the ceremony.



Parent Academy Series

The first of this year's Parent Academy presentations will take place on Tuesday January 9, 2018 at 6:30 PM at SBRHS. This first event is titled *Be the Parent you want to be: An overview of the Think:Kids Collaborative Problem Solving Approach*. The Collaborative Problem Solving approach is based out of Massachusetts General Hospital and provides parents with practical, concrete tools to relate better to their children, reduce challenging behavior, and build child's skills in self-regulation, communication, and problem-solving.

Karen Kraut, MPH, is a parenting coach and certified trainer in the Collaborative Problem Solving approach based in Massachusetts General Hospital's Think:Kids program. To learn more about Think:Kids, visit their website at www.thinkkids.org.



PSAT Information

On Wednesday, December 13, sophomore and junior students at SBRHS will be receiving their PSAT scores from the October administration. 2017 was the second year that we administered the PSAT to all students in grades 10 and 11. Research shows that students who take the PSAT once perform better on the SAT than those who do not. For those students who experience the PSAT twice, achievement on the SAT is even higher. The majority of higher education institutions use the SAT or ACT exams as a factor in determining a student's acceptance into their colleges or universities. We need to give our students the best chances to be accepted into the schools of their choice and helping them to achieve higher SAT scores is one such way we are doing this.

Our current juniors experienced a growth of 66 points from their sophomore year, with a 2016 mean score of 958 compared to 1024 this year. Additionally, our current sophomores scored 23 points higher than the previous sophomores, earning a mean score of 981.

The PSAT is scored in two parts: Mathematics and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing. In addition to the data that individual students receive, the school also receives individual and aggregate data, helping us to identify areas we need to focus on as well as collecting more information to identify struggling students and topics or skills with which they need support.

I encourage families to review the student reports with their students to learn more about their child's readiness for college.

For an interesting perspective on preparing for and taking the SAT exam, [here](#) is a link to a NY Times opinion piece, written by a college freshman from Flint, Michigan after spending a summer at Phillips Exeter Academy.

Wreaths Across America

On Saturday December 16th at 12:00 PM, a special ceremony will take place at the WWII Memorial, located in front of the Somerset Public Library. Students from the Somerset elementary schools, Somerset Middle School, and Somerset Berkley Regional High School will participate in the ceremony through music and song. Following the ceremony, many volunteer students and their families along with other community volunteers will disperse to various cemeteries around Somerset to lay nearly 3,000 wreaths at graves of our town veterans. Wreaths Across America's mission is to

remember those who have fallen, **honor** those who are serving, and **teach** the youth the value of freedom through their involvement in the ceremony. To learn more, visit <https://wreaths.fastport.com/donateLocation.html?page=42530>.

