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Thursday Thoughts

By Superintendent William Burkhead



Thursday Thoughts is a monthly newsletter intended to keep community stakeholders connected to SPS.

Here's What's Inside!

- The Joy of Reading
- News & Noteworthy
- WE Inspire

The Joy of Reading: Growing Curious Minds, One Story at a Time

At the heart of every great education is a simple, powerful truth: children who love reading grow into children who love learning. Reading opens doors to imagination, discovery, and understanding — and for young learners, it's where the magic of education truly begins.

A Small Moment, A Big Change

Take Malik, for example — a quiet second-grader who used to shy away from books. Reading felt hard, and Malik often sat at the edges of story time, listening but never participating. One rainy afternoon, everything changed. Malik stumbled upon a book about space — full of bright pictures of planets and stories about astronauts flying through the stars. He was hooked.

With a little encouragement from his teacher, Malik started reading aloud, word by word, fueled by his excitement. That spark grew into a love for books that traveled with him through every subject, from science to history. All it took was the right book to unlock a world of possibilities.

Why Reading Matters

Reading is about more than just words on a page. It builds confidence, sharpens thinking, and teaches children how to explore the world around them. Studies show that early reading habits are linked to stronger academic success, better communication skills, and greater creativity.

But perhaps even more importantly, reading helps kids dream bigger dreams. A child who reads about far-off lands or daring adventures learns that their own life can be filled with adventure, discovery, and hope.



Superintendent Burkhead reads to Ms. Cleggett's class at the Hatherly Elementary School during Read Across America Week

How Families and Schools Can Help

The best way to grow a love for reading?
Keep it joyful!

- Let kids choose their own books — even if it's comics, sports magazines, or stories about dragons.
- Make reading a cozy, shared experience: snuggle up for bedtime stories or have "family reading time."
- Celebrate every little success — finishing a book, learning a new word, or even just spending time flipping through pages.

When adults show excitement about books, children catch it like a good kind of "reading fever."

The Adventure Begins

Reading isn't just a subject we teach — it's a lifelong adventure we start together. Every story is a ticket to somewhere new, and every child deserves the chance to take that journey.

So whether it's Malik discovering space travel, or your own child finding a story that makes their heart race, remember: when we nurture the joy of reading, we give children the greatest gift of all — the power to imagine, learn, and create a future full of possibility.

Happy reading!



News & Noteworthy:

A Champion On and Off the Track: Celebrating Coach Kathleen McCarthy

In a world where young female athletes are constantly searching for strong role models, Scituate High School is lucky to have one in its very own halls: Kathleen McCarthy.

For over three decades, Coach McCarthy has been a guiding force for the Sailors' cross country and track programs. A Scituate alumna and standout runner in her own right, McCarthy has dedicated her life to coaching, teaching physical education, and inspiring the next generation of student-athletes to strive for greatness—not just in sports, but in life.

Next month, McCarthy will be honored with the MIAA Distinguished Women in Sports Award during the Girls and Women in Sports Day celebration at Gillette Stadium. It's a recognition that feels as fitting as it is well-deserved.

"I love coaching," said McCarthy. "As much as I loved being the AD, I love being out there with the kids every day even more. This is still fun for me. I can't think of anything else I'd want to do that would give me as much satisfaction."

McCarthy's coaching philosophy is rooted in connection. She emphasizes personal growth, resilience, and support—qualities she learned from her own mentors at Scituate High, Boston University, and the University of Georgia. "I try to give my athletes the same opportunities I had. If they decide to pay it forward one day, that's even better."



Her impact extends far beyond the track. Assistant Coach Charlie O'Driscoll, who's worked alongside her since 2017, puts it best: "Kathleen knows exactly what each kid needs—whether it's encouragement or a push. She works with them as people first, not just athletes. Her ability to connect is extraordinary."

Coach Kathleen McCarthy's legacy is one of compassion, strength, and unwavering dedication—the kind that transforms lives and creates lasting change. As she continues to inspire future generations of female athletes, it's clear that her influence will be felt for years to come.

Gates Middle School Principal Ryan Beattie Named MSAA 2025 Middle School Principal of the Year

Congratulations to Mr. Ryan M. Beattie, Principal of Gates Middle School, who has been named the 2025 MSAA Middle School Principal of the Year! Ryan's leadership has been instrumental in shaping a culture of academic excellence, social-emotional growth, and student well-being at Gates, where he oversees 660 students and 90 staff members.



A dedicated educator, Ryan has served Scituate Public Schools in multiple roles, including Assistant Principal, English Language Arts Department Chair, and English teacher. He holds degrees from Boston University, Endicott College, and Fitchburg State University, and is certified as a Superintendent, Principal, and English Teacher in Massachusetts.

Beyond his work at Gates, Ryan actively contributes to district initiatives like the Curriculum Acceleration Committee and the Emergency Operations Planning Team. His commitment to education, leadership, and community has made a lasting impact on Scituate and beyond.

Outside of school, Ryan lives in Plymouth with his dog Miss Mabel and enjoys running marathons, reading, cooking, and spending time with family. We are proud to celebrate his well-deserved recognition!





WE Inspire

"WE Inspire" is a monthly "Sailor Shoutout" to those SPS community who inspire us to greatness through their own actions.

Scituate Public Schools Celebrates Dedication and Compassion During Nurses' Month: Honoring Marnie Sham

May is National Nurses' Month, with May 7th being the special day that we honor school nurses. Our SPS school nurses and nurse substitutes exemplify the highest standards of skill, empathy, and dedication, ensuring every student and staff member receives exceptional care delivered with warmth and compassion.

This month, we take a moment to spotlight the extraordinary efforts of one of our own—Marnie Sham, our full-time float nurse serving both the High School and Middle School. Marnie's unwavering dedication, adaptability, and selflessness have been a true beacon of what school nursing is all about.

Over the past month, our district faced multiple challenges as family emergencies left two buildings without their regular nurses on four separate days.

With a limited pool of substitute nurses and an ever-present need to care for students with life-threatening allergies, diabetes, seizure disorders, and other significant health conditions, the need for coverage was not just logistical—it was critical for the health and safety of our students.

In these moments of need, Marnie stepped up without hesitation. She graciously filled in outside of her normal schedule and beyond her assigned buildings, often coordinating with others to ensure no school was left without adequate nursing support. Her prior experience substituting in our elementary schools proved invaluable, enabling her to provide seamless care across different campuses.

What makes Marnie's contributions even more commendable is her willingness to adjust her own life, including her schedule and childcare arrangements, to prioritize the well-being of our school community. Her actions consistently reflect a deep sense of professionalism, empathy, and responsibility. And while she may quietly go about her work, the impact she makes resounds loudly across the district.



Celebrate Your School Nurse!



This Nurses' Month, we extend our deepest gratitude to Marnie Sham—not only for her exceptional contributions, but also as a representation of the incredible strength, dedication, and compassion that define our entire nursing team. We also want to recognize our valued substitute nurses, many of whom are parents with deep ties to the district, for their ongoing support and flexibility.

To all of our nurses—thank you. Your care is the heartbeat of our schools, and we are better because of you.



Dear Readers,

As the school year draws to a close, we want to share that this will be the last issue of our publication until the next academic year begins. We have enjoyed bringing you the latest stories, updates, and features each issue, and we are grateful for your continued engagement and support. We hope you have a wonderful summer filled with rest, adventure, and inspiration. We look forward to reuniting with you in the fall, where we will continue to deliver insightful and engaging content. Until then, take care and have a fantastic break!