

— December 19, 2024 —

Thursday Thoughts

By Superintendent William Burkhead



Superintendent Discusses New Cell Phone Policy with Students in Podcast

Scituate High School has rolled out a new cell phone policy this year, aiming to reduce classroom distractions and foster face-to-face interactions among students. In a recent roundtable discussion, and my first ever podcast, I sat with students to discuss the policy's impact.

The initiative was driven by concerns from teachers about cell phone disruptions during lessons. The policy seeks to strike a balance by encouraging responsibility and accountability.

While the policy has garnered positive feedback for its efforts to improve focus and communication, school leaders are committed to making adjustments based on ongoing input from students and staff. The initiative marks a step forward in fostering a learning environment that balances technology use with meaningful connections.

I'd like to thank SHS teacher Mr. Eric Fagerlund for organizing the podcast and students Wyllys Ames, Jane Ryan, Shea Sullivan, Aidan Sheehan, Nora Finkle and Hayes Byrne for taking the time to share their perspective on this important topic.

William Burkhead
Superintendent

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

Here's What's Inside!

- Podcast discussing the new cell phone policy
- News & Noteworthy
- WE Inspire
- Spotlight
- Start of School Survey Results
- Holiday Message
- December Survey



[Click here to listen to the Podcast](#)

News & Noteworthy:

We are pleased to share that Ms. Jiang has been awarded the First Place Recipient of the Award for Excellence in the Application of International Chinese Language Education (ICLE) Standards in Curriculum Design. Ms. Jiang will be recognized by the New England Chinese Language Teacher Association. Ms. Jiang is an asset to the Scituate High School World Language Department. We are proud of her work and dedication to our students. Please join us in congratulating Ms. Jiang!

First Place Recipient of the Award for Excellence



Ms. Jiang



WE Inspire



“WE Inspire” will be a monthly “Sailor Shoutout” to those SPS staff who inspire us to greatness through their own actions.



Katy Granatino

While Katy is not new to Hatherly, she is new to our PLC classroom this year. Katy has exhibited impressive dedication and has contributed excellent ideas in this new role. She takes special care to form meaningful connections with our students and is beloved by all. She is an asset to the team and is always willing to go above and beyond for the class. I am so impressed by the professionalism and composure displayed by this young member of our staff. I am very proud of Ms. Granatino. Katy is also a product of the Scituate Public Schools and a 2020 graduate of SHS.

Submitted by Mrs. Ross, Hatherly PLC

WE encourage our school community to share your “WE Inspire” stories to be posted in future Thursday Thoughts newsletters. Please send to Sara Thurling, sthurling@scit.org

SPS Adds Several Grants to Expand Educational Growth and Opportunity

Scituate Public Schools is making incredible strides in supporting students' educational, creative, and career growth thanks to several key grants and partnerships aimed at enhancing student learning experiences and preparing them for future academic and career success. It highlights the importance of inclusivity, hands-on learning, and providing equitable access to resources and opportunities, such as specialized courses (e.g., Project Lead the Way), art programs, language assessments, and career exploration. The overarching goal is to support student development through innovative programs, fostering academic achievement and preparing students for their next steps in education and their careers.

Career Development Grants

Project Lead the Way – Environmental Science Course Launch

Scituate High School is introducing a new Environmental Science course, made possible by a \$23,763 grant from the Innovation Career Pathways (ICP) program. This hands-on course, designed to provide students with real-world applications of environmental science, is part of a broader effort to enhance career-focused learning. This course will also contribute to students' post-secondary success, potentially earning college credits at universities like Wentworth and UMASS Lowell. This is the third PLTW course offered at the high school, following the introduction of Principles of Biomedical Science and Intro to Engineering Design, both of which help students build practical skills in growing fields.

MassHire Partnership – Preparing Students for the Workforce

Scituate Public Schools is thrilled to continue its partnership with the South Shore MassHire Board, helping students connect with careers and explore various job sectors. Since September 2023, students have attended events like the Student Health Care Expo, where they have the opportunity to speak directly with professionals in the field. This partnership also includes a \$3,550 grant for college and career activities, ensuring students can access a wide range of career exploration opportunities at no cost.

MyCAP – Guiding Students' Future Success

For the second consecutive year, Scituate Public Schools has received funding to support the My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP), a program that helps students plan for their academic, personal, social, and career success. Through MyCAP, middle and high school students will create a personalized profile on the MEFA Pathways platform, guiding them as they explore their interests and talents. The program, which includes lessons and workshops, will begin with 8th and 9th-grade students in the upcoming year.

Innovation Career Pathways – A Step Towards College and Career Readiness

Scituate High School is also one of the recipients of the Innovation Career Pathways grant, securing \$74,600 to implement specialized pathways in Business and Finance, and Environmental and Life Sciences, as well as \$50,000 per year for each of the next four years. These pathways will offer students access to advanced coursework, technical classes, and real-world learning opportunities, giving them a head start on their post-secondary education and career goals. As part of the "Reimagining High School" initiative, Scituate High School aims to provide students with enhanced academic and career support over the next several years.

Grants to Enhance Student Learning

Voices of Teens Grant – A Creative Collaboration

Scituate High School is receiving support from the Mass Cultural Council's Voices of Teens grant, which will allow students to engage in the creation of two impactful murals on campus. Coordinated by art teacher Sheryl Pace, this initiative emphasizes inclusivity and community. Students will work alongside local artist Matt Tanner and Beth Bailey from Creative Pathways to design murals that reflect the school's core values.

The first mural, which will greet visitors in the main lobby, will feature the welcoming message "Welcome to Scituate High School," incorporating student input and ideas. The second mural, located in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) lobby, will celebrate the arts—visual arts, music, and drama—through the lens of Love, Inclusion and Trust. This exciting project is set for completion in Spring 2025.

Proficiency-Based Outcomes Grant for 8th Grade Language Students

Thanks to a new DESE grant, Scituate's 8th-grade students will soon have the opportunity to take the World Language STAMP Test, a key component of the school's Seal of Bi-literacy program. This assessment, which is already part of the high school curriculum, will guide instruction and help track student progress. Kate Ciulla, the Department Chair of World Language and ELL, will also present the results of the Seal of Bi-literacy testing to the Massachusetts World Language Advisory Team in May 2025.

These are just a few of the many exciting grants and initiatives that are enhancing educational experiences at Scituate Public Schools. From new art programs and language assessments to career preparation and safety improvements, Scituate is committed to providing opportunities that support the growth and development of every student at no cost to the town of Scituate as well as not impacting the school department budget.

Stay tuned for more updates on how these initiatives will continue to shape the future of Scituate students and help them thrive academically, creatively, and professionally.

SPS Spotlight

iEXCEL

At the heart of Scituate High School's iExcel Program are three core values: friendships, community, and inclusion. This innovative program supports students through research-based teaching strategies tailored to cognitive, academic, social, and transitional development. By taking a collaborative team approach, iExcel provides each student with an individualized plan to foster adaptability, accountability, and confidence. The ultimate goal? To equip students with the tools they need to succeed and shine in life!



Students in our iExcel Program surprise Superintendent Burkhead with a homemade Scituate Anchor to hang in his office

iEXCEL Program Staff & Support

The iExcel Program is supported by a dedicated, multidisciplinary team, ensuring student success and independence. Key elements include:

- **Two Classrooms:** Each staffed with a Special Education Teacher licensed in Severe Disabilities (K-12):
 - High School Classroom (Ages 14-18)
 - Post-Graduate Classroom (Ages 18-22)
- **Vocational Coordinator:** Oversees community-based internships, job coaching, and career readiness tailored to each student's goals.
- **Specialized Paraprofessionals/Job Coaches:** Provide individualized support, helping students build confidence and skills on campus and in the community.
- **Diverse Student Body:** Welcoming students from Scituate and surrounding towns, fostering a rich and inclusive environment.
- **Access to Specialized Support Services:**
 - **Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA):** Behavioral support and consultation.
 - **Speech & Language Pathologist:** Development of essential communication skills.
 - **Occupational Therapist:** Assistance with fine motor skills, sensory processing, and daily living skills.
 - **Physical Therapist:** Focus on mobility, strength, and coordination for functional independence.
 - **School Psychologist:** Social-emotional and mental health support.

Together, this collaborative team ensures that every iExcel student receives the comprehensive support they need to achieve their goals.

Community Integration and Work Opportunities

iExcel emphasizes real-world learning through internships and work opportunities tailored to each student's interests and goals. Students gain hands-on experience in fields such as:

- Animal care
- Food services
- Office/clerical work
- Retail
- Municipal/government roles
- Agricultural/landscaping
- Library sciences
- Education
- Community/social services
- Hospitality



The Sailor Launch is a coffee, tea, and dessert delivery service available to Scituate High School (SHS) and Gates School staff that provides the students an opportunity to interact with customers and gain valuable skills. For a monthly fee, staff receive a drink, a treat, and the iExcel Fact of the Week delivered to their door. Generous support from local businesses like Cookie Creations by Megan, Kate's Creations, Milk Barn Baking, Slacktide, Starbucks, Board143, Brew143, and Caputo's Kitchen make this initiative possible.

Proceeds from the Sailor Launch support the iExcel post-graduates' annual trip to Walt Disney World—a cherished tradition!

Fun Facts About iExcel

- Established in 1969, iExcel is one of the oldest programs in Massachusetts.
- Originally called the Vocational Life Skills Program.
- Skills are taught through a multi-sensory, hands-on approach.
- An iExcel student received the MIAA Massachusetts Women in Athletics Distinguished Service Award at Gillette Stadium last spring!
- Experimental Foods Courses: Students ages 14-22 learn food preparation, safety, and independent living skills, including internships at restaurants like Wahlburgers and the Mill Wharf.
- Adaptive Art Program: Combines music, literature, and art for multi-sensory creative lessons.
- Adaptive Physical Education (A.P.E.): Promotes physical, social, and emotional growth with a focus on health and daily living skills.
- Intro to Spanish: An adapted, fun class introducing students to a new language.
- Students hail from towns including Scituate, Cohasset, Marshfield, Weymouth, Hull, and Hingham, with past participants from Holbrook, Norwell, Kingston, Pembroke, Duxbury, and Milton.
- The iExcel organic garden has been thriving for over 20 years, growing flowers, herbs, and vegetables.
- Partnerships with Unified Sports, Special Olympics, and Best Buddies promote inclusion and teamwork.

Your ongoing support makes the iExcel Program a success. Together, we're building a brighter future for our students.

For more information or to make a donation, please contact us at jmeredith@scit.org or mtimcoe@scit.org

School Year Start Survey Results

The results are in! In our last Thursday Thoughts edition, our survey asked stakeholders whether the school year should start before or after Labor Day. The survey garnered responses from 261 individuals across various groups, including Parents/Guardians, Staff Members, Students, Community Members, and Others.

Key Findings

Preference Trends:

- After Labor Day emerged as the top choice, with 129 votes across all groups.
- Before Labor Day followed closely with 119 votes.
- Only 12 respondents indicated No Preference, showing a strong inclination among stakeholders.

Stakeholder Insights:

- Parents/Guardians: The largest group of respondents (117) predominantly favored starting After Labor Day (65 votes) over Before Labor Day (46 votes).
- Staff Members: Slightly leaned towards Before Labor Day (59 votes) compared to After Labor Day (45 votes).
- Students: Preferred After Labor Day (13 votes) but also supported Before Labor Day (8 votes).
- Community Members: Evenly split, with 5 votes each for both options.

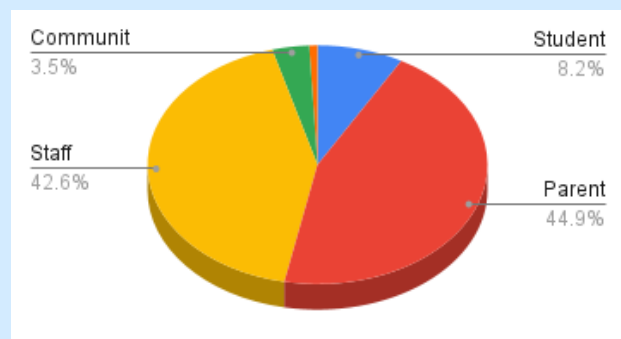
Takeaways:

Parents/Guardians and Students are driving the preference for starting after Labor Day, while Staff Members lean towards Before Labor Day. With clear opinions from most stakeholders and only 4.6% indicating No Preference, this topic may require further discussion to align priorities.

Conclusion:

While After Labor Day holds a slight edge overall, the differing opinions across stakeholder groups highlight the need for continued collaboration to find a solution that works for everyone.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey! Your feedback is invaluable in shaping our school calendar.



Season's Greetings to Our School Community!

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the year that's passed and express my deep appreciation for each member of our school community.

Together, we've faced challenges, celebrated successes, and worked hard to make this year meaningful and memorable for our students.

To our students: Your curiosity, resilience, and dedication inspire me every day. I am so proud of you and am honored to be your superintendent.

To our teachers and staff: Your unwavering commitment to supporting and guiding our students is truly extraordinary. Thank you for creating a safe, nurturing, and dynamic environment where learning and growth happen every day.

To our families and caregivers: Your support and partnership are invaluable. Thank you for working alongside us to ensure our students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

As we take this time to rest and recharge, I hope you find moments of joy, relaxation, and connection with loved ones. I look forward to the new year and continuing to work together to make our school an even better place for our students to learn and grow.

Wishing you all a joyful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year!

Warm regards,
William Burkhead, Superintendent



What do you think?

We would like to know what you think about school start times.

To participate please visit the link below:

[School Start Time](#)

