

— February 27, 2025 —

# Thursday Thoughts

By Superintendent William Burkhead



## Scituate High School Earns Innovation Career Pathway Designation

After a comprehensive review of current and upcoming programs, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has officially designated two pathways at Scituate High School as Innovation Career Pathways (ICP): the Business and Finance Pathway and the Environmental Stewardship Pathway. This recognition underscores the school's commitment to preparing students for high-demand industries through experiential learning and specialized coursework. Additionally, the Biliteracy World Language program, while not part of the ICP designation, remains a robust and valuable offering at the school.

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

### Here's What's Inside!

- Innovation Pathways
- News & Noteworthy
- WE Inspire
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### What Are Innovation Career Pathways?

Innovation Career Pathways are designed to equip students with skills and experiences in specific high-demand industries. These pathways are aligned with "Priority Industries" identified through local data on job openings and regional industry demand. To achieve this distinction, pathways must meet specific criteria, including advanced coursework, technical classes, and hands-on learning experiences.

### Financial Support for Student Success

Scituate Public Schools received \$74,600 through the Executive Office of Education's "Reimagining High School" initiative. This funding aims to promote equitable access, guided academic pathways, enhanced student support, career connections, and effective partnerships.

### Equitable Access to Advanced Coursework

To earn the ICP distinction, students must complete at least two advanced courses, two technical courses, and a 100-hour career immersion experience. To attract more students to advanced coursework, Scituate High School has expanded its Program of Studies to include new options, such as Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and Dual Enrollment courses.

The recently introduced PLTW Environmental Science course aligns with the Environmental Stewardship Pathway, offering hands-on projects that mirror professional practices. Similarly, Dual Enrollment courses in collaboration with Quincy College complement the Business and Finance Pathway, providing students with college-level learning opportunities.

### **Enhanced Student Support**

As the ICP program grows, so does the support system to ensure student success. Available resources include school counseling services, academic support blocks, peer tutoring, and career counseling. The program will continue to develop more individualized and group support systems.

### **Guided Pathways and Faculty Advisors**

To help students navigate these pathways, four faculty advisors have been appointed for the 2024-2025 school year: Ralph Perrotto (Science), Eric Fagerlund (Business), Phillip Blake (Math), and Janna Downing (Special Education). Lisa Kirk, Assistant Principal, serves as the ICP High School Coordinator.

### **Career Connections and Real-World Learning**

A key component of the ICP program is a 100-hour career immersion experience, which can be fulfilled through an internship or capstone class. Students can choose the format that best suits their schedule and interests. For example, those active in DECA competitions might opt for a capstone class, while others may pursue internships with local business partners.

Internships have long been a part of Scituate High School's offerings. In Fall 2023, over twenty-six employers hosted students. Partnerships focusing on Business and Finance or Environmental Stewardship will provide targeted opportunities. One standout partnership is with the Cohasset Center for Student Coastal Research, which offers internships on coastal ecosystem research and water quality studies. Students can earn the "Stream to Sanctuary Certificate," an industry-recognized credential.



### **Effective Partnerships**

Scituate Public Schools' partnership with South Shore MassHire connects students with job opportunities and career exploration events. Through this collaboration, students have attended events such as the Student Health Care Expo, gaining exposure to diverse roles in healthcare and beyond.

## Post-Secondary Planning with MyCAP

MyCAP, a process developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), helps students in grades 6-12 plan for their academic, personal, social, and career success. Although introduced as part of the ICP designation, all students can participate. Students in grades 8 and 9 have already been introduced to MEFA Pathways, an evolving online platform where they can explore career interests and document their educational journey. The rollout of this tool is ongoing.

## Looking Ahead

The designation of Scituate High School's Business and Finance and Environmental Stewardship pathways as Innovation Career Pathways represents a significant step in fostering student engagement and readiness for future careers. With expanded coursework, enhanced support systems, and meaningful partnerships, Scituate Public Schools is well-positioned to help students thrive both academically and professionally.

## News & Noteworthy:



[Scituate Education  
Foundation](#)

### Saturday, March 1: Seaside Stories.

We cordially invite the Scituate Public Schools community to attend our annual Seaside Stories event. This is a night of live storytelling featuring seven community members sharing true stories from their lives up on stage. It is a fun, unique event. 100% of ticket proceeds go to grants that benefit the Scituate community. This year's event will be held at the Performing Arts Center on Saturday 3/1 from 7-8:30pm. More information and tickets are available at:

**Click Below for Tickets**





## WE Inspire

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

### SPS School Committee Chair Discusses the State of the Schools with Scituate Community Television

Recently, Scituate School Committee Chair Nicole Brandolini spoke with Scituate TV about the State of the Schools in 2025. She details new educational initiatives, facility improvements and explains how SPS is one of the few South Shore school districts not asking for more money in next year's budget.



Nicole graduated from Boston University in 2004 with a degree in Advertising and studied Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling at Bridgewater State University. Nicole delivered school-based mental health to students in public and private settings in Boston and surrounding towns, working with students individually, in small group environments, and on system-wide mental health curriculums and training for educators. Nicole is also a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) in Massachusetts, working with adolescent and adult populations on family issues, communication, burnout/stress, trauma, and with neuro-diverse adults and children. She specializes in grief and loss and is a Certified Advanced Grief Counseling Specialist (CAGCS).

Nicole was elected to the Scituate School Committee in 2019 and is serving a second term—currently holding the role of Chair. She also serves as Chair of the Cushing/Hatherly School Building Committee. Having the unique understanding of school district functionality from the lenses of an educator, counselor, School Committee Member, and a parent of four school-aged children, Nicole can connect with stakeholders from all facets of a school system to work toward the guiding principles of providing high-standard academics, strong communication, and feedback for healthy school cultures.





# SPS Spotlight

## Cyber Sailors Take on the FIRST 2025 Reefscape Challenge

Four years ago, the Scituate Cyber Sailors embarked on their inaugural journey with the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC), an international high school robotics league that blends the excitement of sports with the rigor of science and technology. Designed to inspire students from grades 9-12 to pursue careers in STEM, the competition challenges teams to design, build, and program industrial-sized robots to compete in a themed game that changes annually. What began as a small group of students has now grown into a dedicated team of approximately 30 members.

### The Build Season

Every January, FIRST releases a detailed game challenge outlining the specific objectives the robots must achieve. Teams then have just six weeks to brainstorm, prototype, and construct their robots from scratch. Throughout this intense build season, Cyber Sailors students meet up to five days a week—plus several weekends—to tackle real-world engineering challenges under tight deadlines. Guided by a team of adult mentors, including SHS Math and Programming teacher Kerri Hallihan and co-advisor Sylvain Dumet, the students learn valuable skills in problem-solving, teamwork, and project management.

### The Competition Experience

FRC competitions are structured like major sporting events, complete with alliances, scoring, and strategic play. Teams participate in qualification matches to earn ranking points, hoping to secure a top spot for the elimination rounds.

The atmosphere is electric, with cheering crowds, high-energy music, and an undeniable spirit of camaraderie among teams. While drive teams compete in high-stakes matches, other students track statistics, analyze opponent performances, and discuss game strategies, contributing to the team's overall success.

### Year-Round Effort

The Cyber Sailors' work extends far beyond the build season. From September to January, students meet up to three times a week to focus on essential skills, including marketing, fundraising, CAD, programming, and engineering. Some even participate in preseason competitions to sharpen their abilities. To support their ambitious goals, the team must raise between \$20,000 and \$30,000 annually. Students take an active role in securing business sponsorships, organizing fundraisers, applying for grants, and increasing brand recognition.



## **The Impact on Students**

Participation in FRC offers students invaluable hands-on experience in engineering and technology while also exposing them to potential career paths and mentorship opportunities. Beyond technical skills, students develop crucial soft skills such as communication, leadership, and collaboration—essential attributes for future success in any field. The experience instills confidence and resilience, teaching students to embrace failure as a stepping stone to growth. Additionally, the team is supporting the launch of a FIRST Lego League at Gates Middle School, aiming to ignite a passion for STEM in younger students.

You can check out our 2024 robot reveal here:

[FRC8626 Cyber Sailors - Robot Reveal 2024: Dart](#)



## **Get Involved**

For those eager to witness the excitement firsthand, the Cyber Sailors will compete at Revere High School on March 8th and 9th, and at WPI's Harrington Auditorium on March 22nd and 23rd. Spectators can experience the innovation and teamwork that make these events truly special.

The team is also seeking business sponsors and mentors to assist in fundraising, building, engineering, and software development. Anyone interested in supporting the Cyber Sailors can contact Kerri Hallihan at [khallihan@scit.org](mailto:khallihan@scit.org).

*Don't miss out on the action—come support the Cyber Sailors as they take on the 2025 Reefscape Challenge!*

# Communication Survey Results: Understanding Social Media Usage Among Stakeholders

Our recent communication survey aimed to understand daily social media usage among various stakeholder groups, including Parents/Guardians, Staff Members, Students, and Community Members. A total of 122 individuals participated, providing valuable insights into their preferred platforms and communication habits.

## Key Findings

### Overall Social Media Usage (Frequency Counts):

- Facebook: 74
- Instagram: 70
- None: 22
- TikTok: 13
- X (formerly Twitter): 6
- LinkedIn: 3
- WhatsApp: 1
- Email: 1

Additionally, some respondents shared unique preferences, such as “Please just send emails!!!” and mentioned platforms like YouTube and Discord, offering a glimpse into the diverse communication habits within our community.



### Breakdown by Stakeholder Group

- Parents/Guardians:
  - Primarily active on Facebook and Instagram.
  - This group shows the highest social media engagement, indicating that these platforms could be particularly effective for school-related communication and updates.
- Community Members:
  - Mostly use Facebook, with some engagement on Instagram and LinkedIn.
  - This suggests Facebook is a key channel for maintaining community connections.
- Staff Members:
  - Use a mix of Facebook, Instagram, and occasionally LinkedIn or TikTok.
  - Their social media usage reflects a blend of professional networking and personal engagement.
- Students:
  - Display the most varied social media usage, favoring Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube.
  - Their preference for visually engaging and informal platforms highlights the need for dynamic and interactive communication approaches.

## Overall Social Media Trends

- Facebook (74) and Instagram (70) are the leading platforms for daily engagement, making them essential channels for reaching the majority of stakeholders.
- TikTok (13) and X (6) show relatively lower usage but are still relevant, especially among younger audiences.
- A significant segment (22 respondents) reported using None of the listed platforms daily, suggesting they might be more challenging to reach through social media.
- Qualitative feedback, such as requests for communication via email or mentions of YouTube & Discord, underscores the importance of accommodating varied communication preferences.

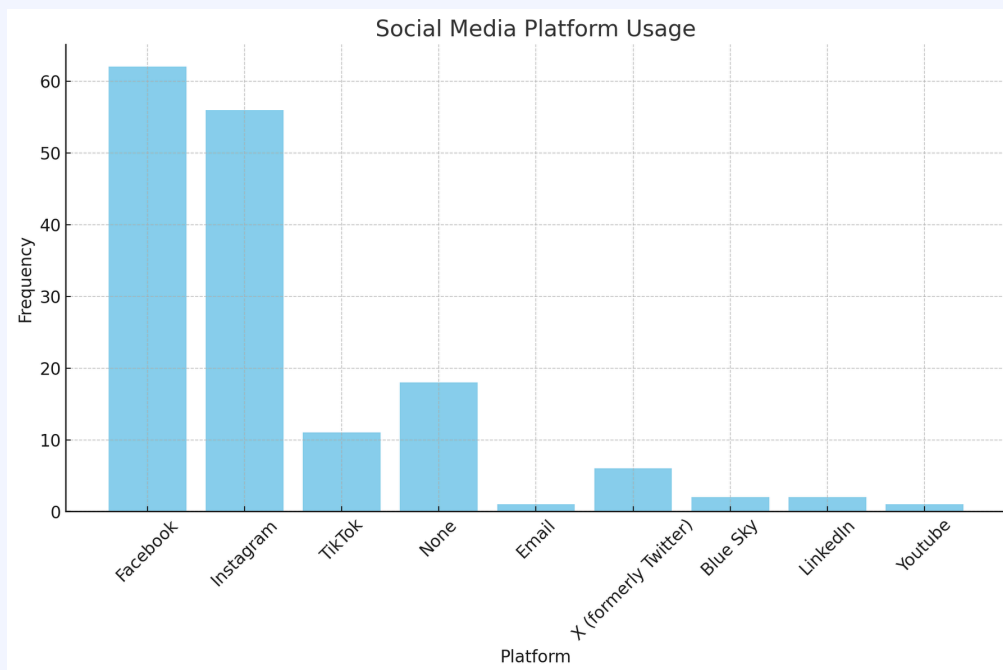
## Conclusion

This survey provides crucial insights into the communication habits of our community, guiding more strategic and effective engagement. By leveraging the popularity of Facebook and Instagram for general updates while exploring platforms like TikTok and YouTube for student engagement, we can enhance communication reach and effectiveness.

Additionally, acknowledging the preferences for non-social media communication methods ensures inclusivity and accessibility for all stakeholders. Moving forward, adopting a multi-channel communication strategy that balances social media with more traditional platforms will be key to successfully connecting with our diverse audience.

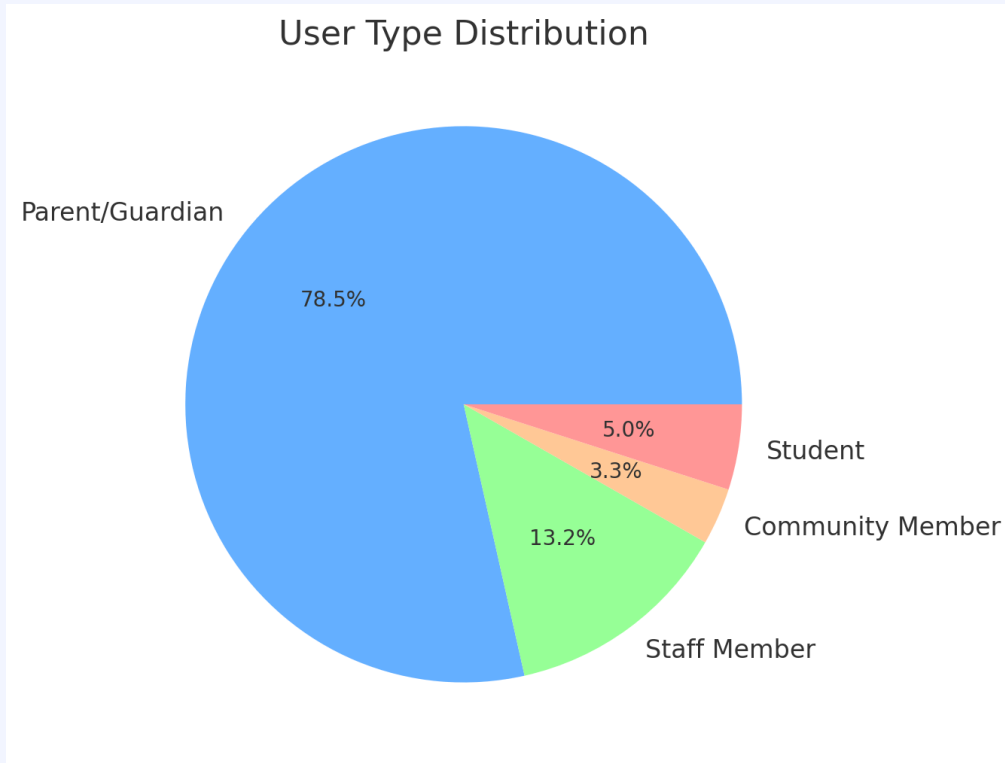
Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey! Your feedback is invaluable in shaping our school start times

*Social Media Platform Usage – Shows the frequency of each platform mentioned.*

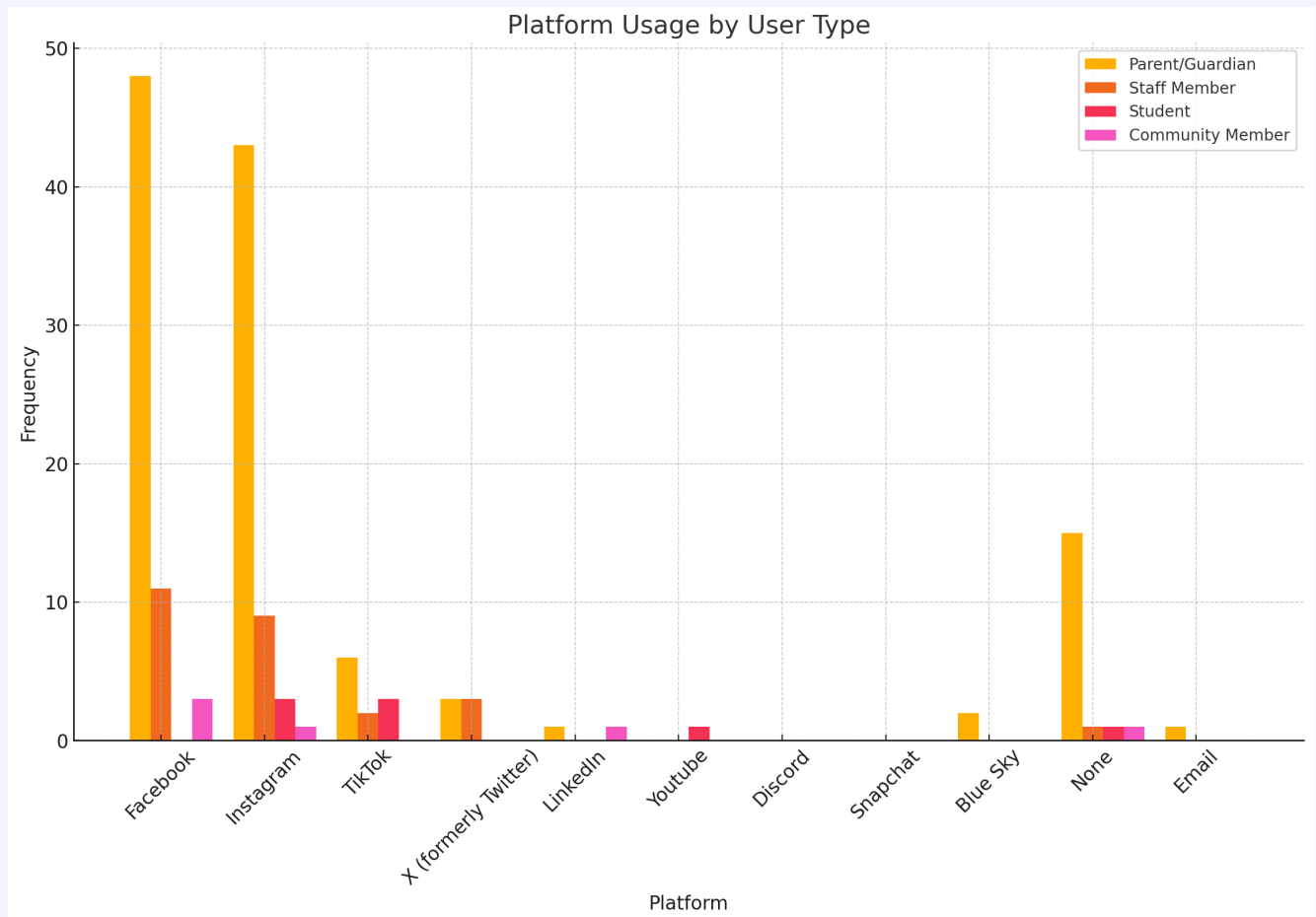




User Type Distribution – Displays the breakdown of Parent/Guardian, Staff Member, Student, and Community Member.



Platform Usage by User Type – Illustrates which user groups use which platforms most.



# WAIT 8th until

**SAY YES TO DELAYING  
SMARTPHONE USE FOR KIDS.**

The Wait Until 8th pledge empowers parents to rally together to delay giving children a smartphone until at least the 8th grade. By banding together, we can take the pressure off both parents and children to get a smartphone.

**Links to Scituate WU8 Chapter  
Resources and pledge updates!**



**Facebook**



**Instagram**

**Browse the movement's website below for  
additional guides on smart phone alternatives  
and various family resources.**

**<https://www.waituntil8th.org>**