



**Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents**

*Paul J. Andrews Summer Executive Institute*

July 11, 2019

**Molly Castle, Norwell**

Good morning, my name is Molly Castle and like everyone on the stage, a proud member of Project 351. I'm equally proud to be a student at Norwell High School. Thank you for allowing us to share our ideas with you.

My school would emphasize and celebrate the broadest definition of diversity. A community where students know that differences are welcome and accepted by all. A place where students could be their unique self and feel celebrated and appreciated. A school environment where the loudest, most confident voices don't drown out the quiet ones. Where service leaders, band stars, artists, writers and quiet contributors to the school community are celebrated as much as the athletes and homecoming court. At my school, every voice will matter and every student will feel safe to grow and learn in their own unique way.

**Skyla Rimple, Mashpee**

In a high school of my design, the "must-have" would be a one day a month internship at a place of special importance to each student. Another school, political office, hospital, business, non-profit, art gallery, you-name-the-passion of the student. It will be crucial that every student has the option to do this – and during school hours, not just senior year.

Internships diversify learning models, emphasize hands on experience, and create important networking opportunities with professionals. Our students will gain a better understanding of what it takes to succeed and will make smarter choices about which career to pursue.



**Molly Kent, Sandwich**

My school would have a well-resourced guidance department, trained in mental and emotional health. Today, 1 in 3 students suffer from mental health or a social emotional challenge. It is a dominant issue for my peers and me – and is central to our well being and our ability to learn and succeed. I believe access to a therapist or school counselor should be as regular, as accepted, as comfortable, as stopping in to the school nurse. Physical health and mental health should be recognized at equal importance and, at my school, the guidance/counseling department will take the lead.

At Sandwich High, I started the Beautiful Minds Club, part of a nonprofit founded by a Project 351 alumna. BMC is a peer support group for those challenged by mental and emotional health. I may not be able to build my school quite yet, but I don't wait to wait to promote a climate of wellness.

**Michael Martinez, Roxbury**

Essential in all schools are action-based civic curriculums: fostering compassionate citizens guided by a moral compass which celebrates justice, inclusivity, empathy, and equality. These students will contribute to building a school system and a community-school that is sustainable and accessible to all.

I envision community-schools which serve the whole child, and are supported by the entirety of the community, including local businesses, non-profit organizations, the municipal government, healthcare institutions, and community stakeholders across sectors. I envision a school community network which maximizes a student's full potential by fulfilling all their needs, as students will only be able to learn when their basic social and emotional needs are satisfied.

**Anna Fernandez, Falmouth**

Great schools are led by great teachers and administrators. A mentor you can rely on and trust is an essential resource for every student. At the Lawrence School, my mentor was Ms. Nimitz. She took the time to get to know me, the real me. She knew my strengths, but also knew when I was stressed or anxious. She was an amazing mentor as I led my community service projects, and offered invaluable advice on every topic you can imagine.

Ms. Nimitz' example inspires me to ensure that my school will facilitate and support faculty in making strong connections with their students – to learn about and believe in who they are inside and outside of the classroom. That bond of trust will make my school thrive.



**Surya Adeleye, Norwood**

My school will ensure that my students will see themselves reflected back when they meet their teachers and educators. It's critically important for students to be taught and mentored by education leaders who look like them and can relate to them whether that is racially or socioeconomically.

Representation makes students feel more confident, inspired and comfortable. Having teachers who relate to you encourages confidence and fosters acceptances. Oftentimes I fear censoring myself or grievances in regards to race/diversity at my school because I don't know how my teacher may react to my beliefs. If I had teachers who look like or have a similar background as me, I would have the confidence to speak about my beliefs more.

Every student should be educated in a community that reflects and represents who they are -- their race, culture, life experience. I want my students to be proud of who they are. And, my staff to reflect and celebrate the rich diversity of the community we serve.

**Noah Avila, Dighton**

The culture of my school would encourage students to pursue their dreams by offering classes, extracurriculars, and opportunities that interest and inspire them. During my senior year at D-R, I observed countless students who struggled to grasp real purpose from school. They felt unprepared for the real world, and had no avenue to engage in the skills and opportunities of interest to them.

Three of the cornerstones at my school would be an Entrepreneurial Center, which provides resources and practical training to support student's professional aspirations; a Home Economics Class that offers training on finances and taxes, the basics of home ownership, and training on sustainability and eco friendly lifestyles; and a powerful Student Government, that increases advocacy and encourages students to be civic leaders. One that emphasizes the ethic of service and empowers students to lead change in their community.

**Yvonne Vu, Falmouth**

My school would have a heavy emphasis on wellness – mental, emotional, and physical. This passion is inspired by the mental health challenges my sisters have faced.

My school would feature a comprehensive sex education that focuses on sexuality, relationships, and gender identity -- and the relationship between these and mental health. An important area of emphasis would be healthy relationships – and the training and education to ensure students learn how to identify red flags of a toxic or abusive



individual. In our curriculum, students would learn to be open and accepting to others who identify with a different sexuality or gender. And, to develop the skills and confidence to cope with the challenges of life in a healthy, positive way.

A school community that emphasizes acceptance and respect for the unique identity of every student would create a more secure learning environment and increase student success.

**Siobhan Morris, Falmouth**

Hands-on opportunities in STEM allows you to open your eyes and discover your passions. In fact, my school would replicate what I have been fortunate to experience at Falmouth High School.

My STEM education has expanded my sense of what is possible and what I am capable of. Science fairs at the local, regional and state level. A traveling competitive math team. Research work at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Rigorous academic programming in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics opportunities. Through these I have discovered my love for all forms of science and have pushed the limits of my abilities surrounded by curious, brilliant, and supportive minds.

My STEM experience at Falmouth High has been so inspiring and eye opening that I want every student to be able to access the same opportunities.

**Jack Burgess, Sandwich**

My school will be defined by inclusivity and service. At Project 351, I lead the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Service Hero team, comprised of 11 amazing Ambassadors from every corner of the state. My passion for inclusion, which I have gained from my service with Best Buddies, has grown exponentially because of the lessons of Mrs. Shriver's example.

A culture of inclusivity for kids of every ability is vital for a school community to thrive. Integrated classrooms, sports, and extracurriculars ensure that all kids feel celebrated. And, builds a culture that respects the dignity of all. One that shines a light on the special gifts that make each child amazing and unique.

In Sandwich, we have a Strategic Planning Committee, as well as a Superintendent's council (emphasis on super because all superintendents are super, shoutout to you Dr. Gould!). A strong culture of inclusivity and respect for every child and every voice starts there. And, for that I feel very grateful to be a student in the Sandwich school district.



**Whitney Meritus, Yarmouthport**

My school will foster an environment that encourages children and raises them up through the arts.

Arts are omnipotent. Let me explain.

The arts build self-esteem through the discipline of practice. Whether you're singing, composing, or playing an instrument, a lot of practice goes into the final product. But I have learned, that performance is not just about audience approval. It's about *feeling* good. Through arts, my confidence surged!!

Secondly, the arts encourage creative self-expression. They're abstract and there are no restrictions. There is a place for everyone. The arts help students *think outside the box*. They facilitate a level of thinking that you may not be able to develop or use in other areas of learning.

Many can say that the arts could never possibly be a worthy contender to a field like mathematics. However, that's not true. Did you know that music incorporates formulas? In fact, Pythagoras, the mathematician (known for the Pythagorean theorem) actually created the tuning system that was then developed into the chromatic scale.

Arts are beautiful, necessary, and communal. They help students soar.