

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
Bethany Orange Woodbridge
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Superintendent's Report – November 2016

Continuously improve instruction, cultivate creativity, and enhance student engagement and performance.

Enhance the efficient and effective use of resources.

Foster a supportive climate for students and adults.

Instruction

Curriculum. Dr. Kim Bean (Southern Connecticut State University) has been providing instruction and support for Amity special education and reading teachers, and recently presented a community workshop on *Autism and Literacy*, which covered current research and strategies for developing fluency, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

District Meetings. District Curriculum Articulation meetings in World Language, Reading, Mathematics, and Music recently took place. The District Steering Committee met for the second time this year and considered new course proposals and new textbook requests. Subsequently, the Amity Board of Education Curriculum Committee met to review all requests brought forward from the District Steering Committee. The District Wellness Committee met to discuss the newly revised and approved policy rollout, including communication to staff, students, parents, and community members.

Election Day 2016 Activities: All of the schools participated in classroom, extracurricular, and whole school election activities, including debates, mock elections, and integrated lessons.

International Visitors. Amity regularly hosts visitors from international programs to share insights on the American educational system and interact with educators and students from other countries. Most recently, Bethany and Woodbridge hosted groups of teachers from China, which provided a great opportunity for our Mandarin Chinese students to share their language skills as tour guides.

Veterans Day. Some schools choose to not hold school on Veterans Day. Amity believes that structured activities and active recognition of our veterans on Veterans Day is a more valuable approach. At the high school, members of the Orange Veterans Association will be providing a program for freshmen and sophomores throughout the day on Friday, November 11, 2016. In Orange, students have been invited to visit the West Haven Veterans Museum. In Bethany, Mr. Norton (a veteran) and a guest veteran from the community will be sharing with students during

social studies classes. All staff and students are encouraged to wear red, white and blue clothing to honor Veterans Day.

Personalized Learning. In our efforts to move toward a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning, the November faculty meeting at Amity Regional High School included structured opportunities for teachers to share and discuss successes and challenges in implementing student-centered strategies in their classrooms.

Instructional Rounds. All of the schools have begun the building-based instructional rounds process. Teams at each of the schools have visited classrooms, observed student learning, and debriefed the experience in the context of a focus that is established by the school's leadership team. At the high school, the focus of their observations is "How do we, as school/educators, establish student-centered classroom environments to facilitate student independence and personalized learning?" At the middle school in Bethany, the focus of their observations is "How are students independently monitoring and self-assessing, helping themselves and their peers to improve learning?" At the middle school in Orange, the focus of their observations is "How do we assess student learning in the classroom before moving on to the next task? – and - How do we assess what students know during instruction?" I have been participating in the debriefing sessions to support the teams in following the discussion protocol, to contribute to the synthesis of multiple classroom observations, and to set foundational elements that will support the extension of Instructional Rounds to multiple, smaller teacher teams in the next phase of implementation.

Career Fairs. Career fairs are being held this month in Woodbridge and Bethany (Orange traditionally holds their career fair in the spring). The high school hosts speakers for sophomores while the middle schools bring in an array of volunteers to share their unique career experiences.

Athletics. Amity fall athletes repeated as league divisional champions (Girls Volleyball, Boys Cross Country), won the league championship (Girls Volleyball), were runners-up in their league championships (Boys Cross Country, Girls Swimming), qualified for the State tournament (seven of eight varsity squads), and excelled in State tournament competitions (Boys Cross Country qualified for New England Championships, Emily Criscuolo was runner-up in the Class LL State championship).

Professional Development. Tuesday, November 8, 2016, was a full professional development day which focused on social/emotional learning and vertical articulation. Professional development on that day included, in part, classroom instructional interventions, strategies to engage students, sexual abuse training (required for staff), dyslexia education, K-12 music scope and sequence, K-12 world language instructional strategies, K-12 physical education and health instruction, 9-12 college planning for counselors, and specialized training for all paraeducators.

STEAM Day 2017. The BOWA STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Committee has begun planning for the May 24, 2017 STEAM (STEM + Arts) Day, which will be held at Amity Regional High School. We will again be inviting fifth grade students from each of our Member Towns to attend the event.

Calibration. Calibration training was held for department chairs with a focus on walk-through observations. Short clips of teaching videos were shown followed by use of the CT Common Core of Teaching Rubric for Effective Teaching. Dr. McPadden and Lisa Lassen co-facilitated.

Resources

Energy Star. Amity Regional Middle School - Orange has earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) ENERGY STAR certification, which signifies that the building performs in the top 25 percent of similar facilities nationwide for energy efficiency and meets strict energy efficiency performance levels set by the EPA.

Budget. Directors and Heads of Departments/Schools have submitted their budget requests. The Finance Department is finalizing coordination of the requests and developing projected revenues and expenditures in preparation for a district leadership meeting at which all requests will be shared and examined by the leadership team.

Administrators Bargaining Unit Negotiations. The negotiations process has begun with an initial meeting of the Amity Board of Education Personnel Committee to assess the current language of the agreement.

Athletics Registration. Registration for winter season athletics is being completed solely online.

Transportation. Amity increased the number of special education student transportation routes that it shares with Woodbridge and Orange.

PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics. Amity currently employs this powerful PowerSchool module to create, administer, grade, and analyze assessments that include elements that are directly connected to specific standards, Anderson's (Bloom's) Taxonomy, and Webb's Depth of Knowledge. We recently presented this module to our BOWA colleagues to explore opportunities to collaborate, share, and reduce expenses.

Climate

Clergy Breakfast Scheduled. Area clergy have been invited to join the principals and central office administration for breakfast to discuss how we can improve our collaborative efforts to best meet the needs of our students.

Emergency Preparedness. Principals were recently familiarized with our new emergency preparedness software (Navigate) and are planning to incorporate its use into their next emergency drills. The Superintendent and Director of Facilities participated in the state-wide Emergency Planning and Preparedness Initiative, hosted by the Woodbridge Police Department.

Character. Through Spartan Seminar (the high school advisory program) and middle school assemblies, all of the schools have been focusing on character development. At the high school, students discussed the Periodic Table of Character - <http://bit.ly/2fQnAQd>, while Jackie's Nine focused on Team work in Orange, and Bethany is using three days of extended homeroom to

discuss “Be Amity!” student character goals with students. Character education activities and themes are being extended at the schools through work with the Anti-Defamation League (anti-bullying), work with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (decision-making), student recognition (PBIS, STAR), and participation in the Month of Gratitude activities (Day of Gratitude to raise money to fight hunger, “Look for the Good” Project). Middle school teams are also building stronger relationships, fostering self-confidence, and promoting teamwork with structured on-site and off-site activities.

African American Males. Following a discussion on goals and grit with the entire senior class at the high school, Hall of Honor Inductee Darren Haynes met with African American males from our three schools to share his personal experiences with race, discuss the importance of setting personal growth goals, and the power of having the determination to realize dreams.

Amity Youth Survey. Based on the overall feedback from Board Members, district committees, Amity health teachers, administrators, and the Director and Epidemiologist of the Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, we have decided on an Amity Youth Survey that will provide the best information for developing district health curriculum, guide the development of non-curricular interventions, and qualify us for participation in numerous grant opportunities to support student and staff programs at Amity. The Amity Youth Survey will be administered to seventh, ninth, and eleventh grade students, and will include demographics, use of time, family, drugs and alcohol, self-perception, gambling, online behaviors, and sexual activity. The survey will be administered in early December and the results are scheduled to be presented to the Board of Education in February. Amity parents have been notified of the survey.

Partnerships. Amity hosts interns and student teachers from Southern Connecticut State University, Central Connecticut State University, Albertus Magnus College, and Quinnipiac University.

Narrative4. Extending the work done with staff at the opening professional development sessions, ARHS teachers participated in an “object exchange” during their October faculty meeting. Teachers were asked to bring an object of meaning with them to the meeting. They then repeatedly exchanged the object with a colleague and explained the object’s significance in the voice of the owner. The exercise is designed to build empathy through story telling.

Athletics. Our athletes, coaches, programs, and leadership are recognized examples of character, effort, and sportsmanship. The Amity athletic department (as a whole) was awarded the prestigious Michaels Cup for exemplary athletic programs based upon performance, sportsmanship, and other factors, including evaluations by our peers. The Amity Unified Sports program was recognized as a Unified Champion Banner School – a national award that is sponsored by Special Olympics International. The Amity Girls Soccer team was selected by the Greater New Haven Soccer Officials Association as this year’s recipient of the Sportsmanship Award.

All-Hazards Plans. Plans for each building have been updated and completed. Signatures of the required signatories are currently being collected.

Fabulous Friends. The mission of this club is to pair students with needs with their typical peers to help foster meaningful relationships. It is one of the most active and popular clubs at middle schools and high school.

Professional Mental Health Support. Local psychiatrist Dr. David Aversa regularly collaborates with our support staff to provide guidance on best practices and conduct case study reviews that support the development of interventions and supports.

Superintendent

Instructional Leadership. I visit each school on (at least) a weekly basis and make classroom observations a regular part of each trip. To date, I have visited more than fifty classrooms across all of the buildings.

ACES Design Process. Area Cooperative Educational Services recently engaged in the Design Planning process (similar, yet different from, the strategic planning process) with members of their organization and various stakeholders. Three other ACES area Superintendents and I were invited to participate in the process, which resulted in a reimaged Design Plan for the organization.

Policy. Policy Committee members met with Vin Mustaro of CAGE to outline the policy review process and begin the review of the 9000 series. The 0000, 1000, and 2000 *draft* series have been prepared and are ready to be distributed to Policy Committee members.

Commissioner. I will be visiting the Connecticut Commissioner of Education this month to have an individual meeting to discuss the impact of State educational issues on Amity and the broader role of local Superintendents in improving education in Connecticut.

Invited Commentary. I was invited by the Commentary Editor of Education Week to submit a brief opinion on an issue in elementary science education. You can find it here - <http://bit.ly/2foVvMV>.

Community. After working with the Woodbridge Rotary for nearly three years, I was nominated for membership (thank you, Dr. Stella) and am now part of the organization.



This report is a synopsis of many of the undertakings, efforts, and achievements toward our District Goals and Objectives. It does not represent a complete and comprehensive account of all that has happened in the past month. I would encourage you to contact me directly if you have questions about items that you read or that you anticipated reading. I would be glad to discuss them.