

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

Teacher Evaluation & Instructional Rounds. As part of the Amity Teacher Evaluation and Development Plan, teachers and administrators across the district have been working collaboratively to develop Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) based on student data and reflection on instructional practices. Themes from the conversations, including an analysis of district/school performance on elements of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Effective Teaching, and instructional practices directly observed by administrators, are being used to develop Areas of Focus for Instructional Rounds. Instructional Rounds have been scheduled in each of the buildings, and the first instance of them will take place before the end of October.

Complementary Observers. Complementary Observers are teachers who provide supplemental information used by evaluators in the teacher evaluation process. The positions are highly valued in the Amity Teacher Evaluation process. Twenty-two Amity teachers participated in Complementary Observer training and calibration exercises in September.

Curriculum. Curriculum evaluation, development, and articulation occurs at many levels throughout and beyond the Amity Regional School District. In the opening months of the school year, district curriculum articulation meetings addressed Wellness, Staff Development, World Language, and English Language Arts. The District Steering Committee, which reviews course proposals and makes recommendations to the Amity Board of Education Curriculum Committee, met in September to evaluate new course and textbook proposals (the ABOE Curriculum Committee will meet on October 27, 2016 to review their recommendations). Across Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge, and Amity (BOWA), district curriculum leaders and content area teachers from science and social studies met to articulate curriculum alignment and address instructional changes outlined in the new science standards.

Personalized Learning. To further our efforts to provide a more personalized (i.e., highly engaged) learning experience for high school students, the Independent Study process has been updated to include work with a mentor to reflect on both the focus of the study and the academic

and learning standards that will be addressed through the work. Similarly, the Capstone Committee will be meeting soon to evaluate a proposal for a student capstone project.

PSAT Day. The annual Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) for sophomores and juniors will be administered on October 19, 2016, during the first few hours of the school day. Programming for freshmen will revolve around the Link Crew program and programming for seniors will have a focus on post-secondary planning, a presentation that will inform students on the issues that are being discussed in the current presidential campaign, and a continuation of the “Spartan Stories” series with Hall of Honor Inductee Darren Haynes.

Canada. Amity Regional High School French students will be heading to Quebec and Montreal in February 2017 to participate in an immersion experience in francophone culture. The international experience will require practical and authentic use of the French language and expose students to traditional French-Canadian activities.

National Presentation. Amity Regional Middle School Bethany science teacher Dr. Keith Smolinski presented *Utilizing Music in the Middle School Classroom* at the 2016 Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) national conference in Austin, TX. AMSB teachers Ms. Kathy Habersang and Mr. Kevin Berean accompanied sixteen female middle school students to the University of Connecticut *Multiplying Your Options STEM Conference for Girls*.

Professional Development. On September 23, 2016, the entire certified staff participated in professional development on the shortened day morning to review student data in preparation for developing personal Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Teachers took advantage of the opportunity to collaborate with department, team, and content colleagues to review student data and develop goals.

Resources

Energy Star. Amity Regional High School 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.

Visitors. The visitor kiosks have been presented to the administrative team, and the initial training for security personnel at the high school has taken place. The units are configured, working properly, and functionally ready to deploy. The units have recently been outfitted in Amity colors with Amity logos. They will soon be transported to the schools where a suitable location for them will be established. Deployment will be preceded by communication with families as to how their function and operation will help to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff.

Budget. The budgeting process has formally begun. Teams and departments are collaborating with their principals to develop a financial plan that best supports the current programs and needs of students in Amity.

Fixed Assets. The process of cataloguing the district's fixed assets, which began over the summer, is nearing completion. As was expected, many items that were originally logged and subsequently decommissioned are being cleared from the catalog, while many other items that have been in use but not logged are being added to the catalog. We anticipate that the fixed asset inventory will be complete and accurate by December, and a process for ensuring the completeness of the list for future purchases will be in place simultaneously.

Instructional Time. With support from the PTO, Amity Middle School Bethany has chosen to not participate in the eighth grade field trip to Holiday Hill next June in order to recapture a day's worth of instructional/learning time.

Climate

Student Voice. To expand direct communication with students, Amity Regional High School principal Anna Mahon has established a regular meeting with students from the student council (it is called the Principal's Council). The group has established goals for the year that include enhancing opportunities for students to voice their concerns and suggestions directly with the high school administration. A tangible outcome of the council is a weekly student newsletter which pulls information from the principal's weekly community newsletter that is pertinent to students.

Staff Voice. In a parallel effort to enhance communication, the staff at the high school has created the Amity Regional High School Staff Council. The Staff Council has representatives from teachers, secretaries, paraeducators, and custodians. They will meet monthly to discuss areas of concern and to develop suggested approaches to current issues with the high school administration.

Celebration. In an Amity first, the Amity Academic Hall of Honor and the Amity Athletic Hall of Fame dinners were held together this year. The event, which had more than two hundred attendees, was a spectacular recognition of the contributions that Amity graduates and staff have made to the school, the community, and the world.

Character. The middle schools kicked off their character education efforts with school-wide pep rallies last month. The events emphasized the positive behaviors that we are eager to see in all of our students. Supporting *STAR* (AMSO) and *Be Amity!* (AMSB), the schools welcomed famed storyteller Len Cabral to inspire and motivate students to live up to the Amity Middle School behavioral expectations.

Student Athletes. Whether through pre-season training or professional development opportunities (even for students – through the SCC), our coaches and athletic captains are learning about the importance of being an effective leader and effective strategies for getting there. The athletic department is developing a student idea to establish an *Amity Super Fan* program that would increase student and family attendance at Amity athletic events.

Transition. ARHS Link Crew, a program led by upperclassmen to smooth the transition to high school for incoming freshmen, hosted a tailgate party immediately preceding a Friday night

football game. Food, rally towels, and music highlighted the event attended by more than two hundred freshmen, which fostered a sense of community and belonging among students and staff.

Efficiency Award. A “white tablecloth” luncheon was held for the recipients of the Jack Levine Efficiency Award, their parents, school principals, and Ms. Tracey Russo, to recognize and honor those students for their contributions to our efforts to operate more efficiently and effectively.

Emergency Preparedness. Part of ensuring a positive school climate is establishing a sense of safety and preparedness. Drills are planned and conducted regularly, but real emergencies also allow us an opportunity to evaluate our current practices. On Friday, October 7, 2016, Amity Regional Middle School Orange (AMSO) was directed to shelter-in-place by the Orange Police Department while a bank robbery suspect was apprehended. The school plan was executed smoothly and students and staff moved through their day calmly and safely without compromising their instructional focus. On a related note, all-hazards plans (required annually by the State of Connecticut) are being revised and updated in each of the three district buildings and will be submitted in accordance with identified timelines. Navigate, the system that will enhance our ability to securely and rapidly share emergency information with staff and emergency personnel, will be piloted at upcoming building-based drills.

Superintendent

Professional Development. As an element of professional development for the Superintendent of Schools, I recently participated in the fall meeting of the National Superintendents Roundtable (NSR) in Washington, D.C. This national group of superintendents, state education administrators, and educational researchers worked on issues of school governance, effective school change, and public perception of schools and school systems. Facilitating the discussions were Elizabeth Rich, Commentary Editor for *Education Week*, Anthony Bryk, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, David Berliner, former president of the American Educational Research Association, and Joshua Starr, CEO of Phi Delta Kappan International.

Communication. We have continued our outreach to Member Town Boards of Finance, offering to meet with each of them to discuss the preliminary budget season (discussions with all chairmen; meeting with Orange BOF). We have extended our outreach to parents and community members by initiating regular meetings with the presidents of the three building-based Parent Teacher Student Organizations (PTSOs) and planning a meeting of area clergy with our leadership team.

Regional Leadership. On the regional level, I have been invited to work with the School of Education at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) to establish guidelines for administering scholarships derived from a recent, large bequest received by the department. My work with SCSU’s Department of Education Teacher Preparation program (with the State Department of Education, area superintendents, and University staff) continues.

Policy. Working with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), we are preparing to review and update our entire policy manual. At our Policy Committee meeting on October 24, 2016, we will be joined by CABE's Vin Mustaro, who will guide us through the process and introduce the recommended revisions for the 9000 series (bylaws). At the same meeting, we will also be presenting the updated School Resource Officer (SRO) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that we are required to have with the Town of Woodbridge. While an MOU has been in place and active, the updated version is required by law and has been delayed due, in part, to allowing changes in departmental leadership to be established at the Woodbridge Police Department.

State Leadership. At the state level, I have joined the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Legislative Committee in order to have an earlier, louder voice in legislative efforts that will improve education for Connecticut students. Additionally, I have recently been selected to serve as Co-Chairman of the CAPSS Technology Committee, a group that not only provides guidance and support for superintendents on technology issues, but provides guidance to CAPSS and other state technology organizations on the educational technology needs of Connecticut school districts.

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 thirty classrooms across all of the buildings.



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.