

**AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5**  
**Bethany Orange Woodbridge**  
**25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525**



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**Superintendent's Report - September 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.

The 2016-2017 school year is off to a great start. Many staff members have shared that it is one of the best openings that they have experienced, and I believe that it can be credited to a system-wide focus on the relationships that make our school system strong and the coherent nature of the opening convocation, professional development, faculty meetings, and opening day activities.

Instructional Rounds, a system for taking a diagnostic look at teaching and learning in classrooms across the entire district, is entering its second year of implementation. Last year's focus was a district level implementation; this year's focus will be the schools; next year's focus will be extending the practice to all teachers. A problem of practice, or an area of focus, will be developed at each school and will be tied directly to the instructional needs of the school and the district goals and objectives. Principals have been sharing their plans (for this year and next) with me in these opening weeks of school.

Amity Social Studies teachers LeeAnn Browett, Jen Schuchat, and Sarah Sharkey have been working directly with Connecticut State Department of Education consultant Steve Armstrong on the new Red, White, and Blue Civic Engagement Initiative. Ms. Browett, Ms. Schuchat, and Ms. Sharkey recently participated in the production of a webinar with the Commissioner of Education and the Secretary of State that will be made available to teachers across the state.

The Amity Regional School District Scientifically Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) plan was revised and finalized for implementation this fall. SRBI is an approach to delivering instruction that ensures students receive both high quality classroom instruction and high quality, targeted, individualized instruction when necessary. To facilitate tracking of interventions and fidelity of the implementation of support plans, all forms have been revised and all tiered interventions are clearly defined. All of the tracking will now be done in PowerSchool, our student data management system.

Psychologists and administrators (both of whom regularly run Planning and Placement Team meetings [PPTs]) from across all four Bethany, Orange, Woodbridge, and Amity (BOWA) districts will be participating in joint training with our legal counsel on topics such as the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the forms used for eligibility, manifestation determination, and other items.

The configuration of rooms at Amity Regional High School has been adjusted to create a distributed special education presence in the building and a consolidated area for department leaders. The reconfiguration has resulted in the creation of a dedicated digital media lab.

We have reached a formal agreement with our BOWA partners that will allow us to share student STAR testing data. STAR is a universal literacy and numeracy assessment administered to students across BOWA, and specifically to students in grades 7-11 at Amity. This new data configuration will allow our teachers to see longitudinal data for students from all of their previous administrations of the STAR assessment, right down through their earliest elementary administration.

In an effort to maximize connectivity, reduce redundant logins, and facilitate the elimination of unnecessary database connections and supplemental configurations, we are examining opportunities to take advantage of more of PowerSchool's native abilities and powerful add-ons. To that end, we have switched from using ScanTron Achievement Series, which is used to administer and track data for common assessments, to PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics. PowerSchool Assessment and Analytics maintains all of the functionality of ScanTron Achievement Series, includes numerous additional features, and costs less per student. It also connects seamlessly with our PowerSchool student information management system, serves as our data warehouse, and allows us to better track SRBI. With the cost savings, we will be able to utilize this powerful application at all three Amity schools, whereas ScanTron Achievement Series was used at only the high school.

In additional efforts to work more efficiently, Stephanie Kilburn, our District Student Database Specialist, has been working directly with administrative assistants to reinforce the capabilities of our student management software.

Beginning this fall, we will be employing NaviGate software to enhance our school safety and security programs. The software securely organizes *and* accesses important emergency preparedness plans and associated information, including call lists, personnel photographs, building maps, color-coded floor plans, and 360-degree photographs of important building areas. NaviGate will allow us to be better prepared for emergency situations, allowing our staff to focus on our students while emergency responders easily and securely access all of the information that they need to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Key card access at primary entry doors at each of the three Amity schools has been installed and is active. Access cards are being printed and distributed. The back end of the camera system has been upgraded and we are now recording video from all three campuses to the new server system. The new visitor kiosks, which employ the same concept as all of our Member Town elementary schools and the same system as two of our Member Town elementary schools, are currently being configured and prepared for unveiling later this month. The system will perform background checks based on a State-issued identification for all visitors and prepare a time-sensitive visitor badge that automatically expires.

The CAFE policy review process will begin with a review of the process and protocols by CAFE staff at the Board of Education's *October* Policy Committee meeting. In recent conversations with CAFE, I have learned that our 9000, 0000, and 1000 series have been prepped and are being formatted, but will not be ready for distribution or review by our scheduled *September* Policy Committee meeting date.

Across the district, the opening of school focused on the relationships between and among students and staff, emphasizing the wonderful experiences and opportunities that are available to Amity students. At Amity Middle School Orange, classes opened with relationship-building activities and the introduction of Habits of Work and Learning (HOWL) and *STAR* (Safe, Timely, Accountable, Respectful). Be AMITY! (Accountable, Motivated, Independent, Trustworthy, Your best self) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) were introduced at Amity Middle School Bethany. At the high school, Link Crew introduced the incoming freshmen to the high school through a well-structured and time-tested transition program run by a dedicated group of high school teachers and motivated student leaders. Upper classmen at the high school experienced three powerful and inspiring speakers, and viewed a moving documentary before attending brief classes and meeting this year's teachers.

As part of our efforts to (1) include all staff in learning opportunities and professional development and (2) extend and refine our focus on the social/emotional aspects of a quality education, the entire Amity staff participated in our in-service day on Friday, August 26, 2016. We engaged in a day of activities developed, tested, and facilitated by Narrative 4, a global organization whose mission is to "build a community of empathic global citizens who improve the world through the exchange of personal narratives." After months of preparation, localized trials by our own teachers in their own classrooms, extensive training for our local facilitators, and establishing multiple strong supports for all of our staff, we engaged in a district-wide story exchange. Overall, staff found the experience powerful, enlightening, empowering, and, in the words of many who participated, "the best professional development I have ever participated in," which led to "one of the best opening's ever."



*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.*