

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

Bethany Orange Woodbridge
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Superintendent of Schools

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Superintendent's Report – February 2019

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.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE FOURTH ANNUAL AMITY STEAM DAY ON MAY 29TH!
All Bethany – Orange – and Woodbridge fifth grade students are invited to attend this wonderful day and actively engage in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics activities.

Instruction

Parent-Teacher Conferences at ARHS: The final conference night of the 2018-2019 school year was held on Wednesday, February 6th.

First NEASC Self-Study Standard Report Approved: On Monday, February 4th, Chris Borelli, Social Studies Teacher and Co-Chair of the Core Values, Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectation Standard Committee presented the self-study report to the ARHS faculty. After the presentation, the faculty had the opportunity to vote to accept the committee's findings and the report was accepted with 116 yes votes and 3 abstentions. The rest of the self-study reports will be presented and voted on in the same fashion over the next few months. The final report will be presented to the Board of Education at the June 2019 meeting.

Piloted "Blended" Report Card Released: Parents and students received the first iteration of the "blended" report card, which offers traditional letter-grades in content-areas as well as rubric-based scores on the 6 academic, the social and civic learning expectations. The administration will be soliciting feedback from parents and students during the spring semester regarding the new information disseminated through Unified Classroom and on the report card.

Curriculum Review for Social Studies & English: In January, high school and middle school teachers, content area leaders and administrators met with members of the ADL and Westport School District to review current curricular aspects regarding Holocaust education along with units that specifically address bigotry and hatred. The curriculum discussion resulted in programmatic and curricular planning that will take place during the spring of 2019, including having older students in the high school partner with 8th and 9th grade English teachers to reflect on the impact of important texts and training opportunities for Amity Regional School District #5 teachers in mid-March on Holocaust curriculum.

Program of Studies and 8th Grade Orientation Night: Parents and their 8th grade children are invited to attend an "orientation" night at the high school on Tuesday, February 12th to learn about the various programs and expectations at the high school. This will be followed by a Program of Studies fair for the current high school students to be held on Wednesday, February 13th in preparation for the course selection process to begin scheduling for the 2019-2020 school year.

Amity Middle School Outstanding Math Students: The AMSO Math Team competed at the Regional Math Counts Competition on February 2nd. Two of our students scored in the top 16% and are moving on to the State level competition in March.

AMSO Welcomes a Second Chinese Delegation: Sixteen distinguished Chinese educators from Changchun, Jilin Province visited Amity Middle School Orange on January 18th. The purpose of the visit was to explore how schools in the United States: Employ innovative teaching methods and inquiry processes to challenge creative students, design the school day for quality learning in middle (junior high) and elementary school, design curriculum for STEM instruction and lastly, how teachers work to develop open-mindedness to prepare global citizens.

AMSO Students Study Picasso: AMSO students had the opportunity to paint their own interpretation of one of Picasso's masterpieces. Students participated in a workshop run by Picasso Parties to explore Picasso's style of painting to create their own work of art. Students continued to study Picasso through the lens of other disciplines; learning about Cubism in art, discussing how Picasso's work reflects events happening in the world in social studies, and through poetry in English. We want to thank the Jamie A. Hulley Arts Foundation for their generous grant to make this event possible for our students.

CAS Leadership Conference: Fifteen AMSB student council members took a field trip to Trinity College for a CAS student leadership conference. Several eighth graders in partnership with Woodbridge Youth Services, presented at one of the workshops, giving an overview of what our student council does to promote "Making Acceptance Acceptable," the theme of the leadership conference. Kathy Habersang, Student Council Advisor, organized the trip.

Assembly & Awareness of Global & Local Issues: A Collaborative Approach to Assessment: On January 24th, all 7th graders were treated to *Journey into Africa*, an interactive dance and drumming program. Full of audience participation focused on traditional rhythms, songs, instruments, stories, and dances that are an integral part of everyday African life. This program tied into the reading of *A Long Walk to Water*, as well as the study of African geography and culture in social studies classes. The program also kicked off the interdisciplinary Global Issues unit, in which all students will explore an issue impacting the modern world and propose solutions to the issue, culminating in the Global Issues evening expo on March 5, 2019.

"Being the Change" Mentoring: During the midterm exam period, eleven Amity High School students volunteered to speak to students at AMSB about their leadership activities and how they are making an impact in our school community and beyond. These students were invited by Marika Wissink, Team Leader, with the goal of inspiring our eighth grade students who have been challenged to do an interdisciplinary "Capstone" project to "Change the World."

Pupil Services Teams at Middle Schools Host Orientation for Grade 6 Parents: Held at AMSO on January 17th and AMSB on January 24th, the staff of each school conducted an orientation for parents of incoming special education students. Each night included presentations and Q & A sessions. Mary Raiola and Kristi Bellara were in attendance at both sessions.

Board of Education Curriculum Committee: The Committee will meet prior to the regularly scheduled BOE meeting in February to review new textbook proposals for Chemistry and U.S. History/Modern American History for possible adoption and budget planning.

February 15th Minimum Professional Learning Day: ARHS will focus their attention on continued NEASC planning. Both middle schools will engage teachers in working with grade level content partners on assessments - reviewing interim assessments, placement recommendations, and end of year plans for assessments. Lisa Lassen will also present the Early Indicator Tool: Understanding the Data and Developing Action Steps.

Resources

Alignment of End of Year Dismissal: Two years ago, ARHS changed their end of year exam schedule to accommodate longer exam blocks. This year, the middle schools will also adjust their end of year exam schedule so all students across the district will be dismissed at 12:15pm on exam days and at 10:30am on the last day of school.

Proposal for a Research Study at ARHS:

- Topic of the Study: International Ocean Literacy Survey; measuring ocean literacy; how students think about and experience marine science education.
- Benefit to District: Understanding the impact of marine science instruction and providing feedback for improved instruction.
- Cost to District: Time needed by students to complete online or paper survey (approximately 30 minutes).
- Participants: Students who are currently enrolled in marine biology, select freshmen enrolled in biology as a comparison group; must have parent permission to participate.
- Additional Considerations: None at this time.

Healthy Workplace Gold Level: The District is being recognized by the Business Council of Fairfield County as a Healthy Workplaces Best Practices Award Gold level winner for its successful efforts in promoting a healthy workplace. The awards ceremony is Thursday, February 14, 2019 and the celebratory dinner sponsored by Anthem will be held on February 13th.

Keyboard arrives at AMSO: Through effective reallocation of music equipment, our AMSO music department was able to move an electronic keyboard to AMSO from the high school. By repurposing the electronic keyboard, the music department is able to save \$500 in tuning and repairs.

Roundtable at Omni: A group of administrators and teachers attended a District Leadership Roundtable conference in New Haven sponsored by the District Management Group. The presentation, *Five Ways School and District Leaders Can Improve Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports* was welcomed by participants who learned strategies for how to improve social, emotional, and behavioral supports.

Climate

Unified Club Awareness: Members of the Unified Sports Club have been working on raising awareness about the use of intolerant language and fostering more inclusive behavior. As a fundraiser for the Unified Dance, which is scheduled for March 7th, members of the club have been selling bracelets to encourage students to stop the use of the “R” word. Club members also put together a Public Service Announcement for school viewing during homeroom on February 7th.

AMSO School Climate Meeting: The AMSO School Climate committee met in January to review recent school wide activities to enhance the school climate including the advisory kick-off, the character of the month awards, and ADL Step-Up program. The committee also began planning for upcoming events including Mix it Up Lunch, Diversity Week, and ADL bystander training for 8th grade students.

Amity Middle School Orange Holds Fundraising Breakfast: Team X is hosting a breakfast fundraiser to benefit the Mariposa Foundation. This foundation promotes and supports education for women and girls in the Dominican Republic. AMSO students raised over \$700 for this worthy cause.

Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) Step Up! Assembly Program: On Friday, January 4th, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) presented their *Step Up!* program to all seventh and eighth graders at AMSB. This program, coordinated by our Climate Committee and done several times in past years, is designed to give a voice to the targets of bullying and bias; build empathy in the perpetrators; and, inspire and empower bystanders to become allies against prejudice and bullying. Parents and guardians are

encouraged to talk to their children about their *Step Up!* experience and were provided with links to free resources curated by the ADL.

AMSB Climate Committee: The committee had its monthly meeting on January 15th in the media center. The purpose of the AMSB Climate Committee is to provide stakeholders in the school with an opportunity to discuss current trends and issues within the school community, as well as implement programs and strategies to help improve the climate for all. Thayer Doyle, Chairperson, reviewed an agenda that included a review of our “Be Amity” positive behavioral intervention strategy, the progress of our Advisory Program implementation, and data on discipline.

Unified Sports: AMSO hosted a great Unified Basketball Tournament on January 29th that was attended by our current Amity students and well as many Alumnae. This was a great time for all of the students and all of us enjoyed seeing our graduates. Pizza was provided after the tournament. Additionally, our Unified Basketball team participated in the first Gaelapalooza at Shelton High School on February 5, 2019.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer P. Byars". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer P. Byars, Ed.D.

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.