

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



Dr. Jennifer P. Byars
Superintendent of Schools

jennifer.byars@amityregion5.org
203.392.2106

Superintendent's Report – December 2020

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

Middle Schools Return to In-Person Learning: On December 9, 2020, the middle schools returned students to full in-person learning. Approximately 21% of students are participating in voluntary remote learning at AMSO and approximately 26% of students are participating in voluntary remote learning at AMSB. We completed a walk-through of AMSO with the health department on December 10, 2020 and have a walk through scheduled at AMSB on December 15, 2020.

Restorative Practices Training: Staff members from all three schools participated in a week long Restorative Practices training and are now certified trainers in Restorative Practices. The team is looking forward to running professional development to their colleagues as we work to broaden the use of these practices throughout the district.

Courageous Conversations Continue: Luis Versalles, Director of PreK-12 District Partnerships for Courageous Conversations for the Pacific Educational Group (PEG), provided ARHS teachers and administrators a customized workshop session on December 7, 2020 as an extension to the November 3, 2020 session *Introduction to Courageous Conversations about Race*. AMSO and AMSB teachers and administrators will participate in the same training on the scheduled early dismissal minimum professional learning day on February 12, 2021.

Active, Engaging, Remote Classes: Throughout the weeks of remote instruction at ARHS, many members of the physical education department collaborated to create fitness experiences for students during their regularly-scheduled physical education classes while also demonstrating strong collaboration skills. Many PE classes met together as a class through their regular Google Meet link and, after an introduction by the assigned teacher, joined a larger conglomerate through Zoom where one of the designated teachers ran the actual fitness class (for roughly 25 minutes), before each class met back in their original “classroom” for wrap-up and closure. Each of the teachers took on a different activity, including high intensity training, yoga and more.

NHS Virtual Induction Ceremony: On Tuesday, December 8, 2020, the new inductees of Amity's National Honor Society were inducted during a virtual ceremony hosted by the NHS Advisors, Shannon Martin and Matt Stanley. After addresses by Principal Anna Mahon and Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Byars, the students and families were treated to a keynote address by high school Science Research Program Teacher, Ms. Cathy Piscitelli.

Special Services Professional Learning: School Psychologists, School Social Workers, & Speech and Language Pathologists have been attending Communities of Practice (COP) offered by the local RESCs in collaboration with the CSDE. The COP allows staff from similar related service positions to meet together and discuss current issues related to their field of practice. Our middle school social worker and a middle school counselor completed their Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools Training (CBITS). We now have multiple providers trained in all three buildings. Mr. Brant facilitated an expert panel discussion on Best Practices in Assessment during the COVID-19 Pandemic that was hosted by Fairfield University and the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists.

Professional Learning Updates: Two of our teachers attended the virtual five-day International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Conference. The ISTE Standards provide a framework for providing technology opportunities in an effort to transform innovation in education. Voluntary Professional Learning sessions will continue throughout December on Thursday afternoons. Sessions will include focusing on technology tools and apps that are particularly useful for hybrid/remote instruction.

Scooter Racing!: Students in the Adaptive PE class at ARHS recently participated in scooter racing as a fun and exciting way to develop their fine and gross motor skills while working on team building.

Show Me the Honey: Students in Spartan Academy have continued their active care of our Amity bee hives which have yielded over 50 jars of honey this school year!

Resources

Use of Building-Based Substitutes: Through hard work and organization, the main office staff in each of our schools have worked to use substitutes efficiently through strategic assignments and use of larger spaces such as the cafeterias at the middle school, or the Lecture Hall or Brady Center at the high school. Their tireless work has not only been cost-efficient, it has helped to keep our school up and running while continuing to follow all mitigation strategies for students and adults.

Parent Teacher Conferences: Parent teacher conferences were held throughout the month of November and at the beginning of December. This year all meetings were virtual. Thank you to the members of the technology department as they were a great support to set up this process and ensure that the staff and parents were prepared to meaningfully engage.

BOWA Curriculum Articulation: The BOWA Curriculum Directors met via Zoom on November 13th. Discussion focused on the Social Studies Curriculum Grades 6-8; Middle School Math Update; Smarter Balanced (SBA) Interim Assessment Blocks and the SBA testing and reporting.

Public School/Post-Secondary Partnership: The Amity Regional District No. 5 was represented by Dr. McPadden at the Albertus Magnus College Advisory Board meeting. The college is currently in the planning stages for the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation Programs (CAEP). The Advisory Board thanked their members from public schools for providing their input into the process.

Climate

Portrait of the Graduate: On December 7, 2020, the teachers of AMSB and AMSO participated in a joint professional learning session where we began the discussion of the Portrait of the Graduate. The lively discussion included a presentation from administration and a member of the faculty as we identified the academic and social/life skills that we hope to develop in our students.

Amity Creative Theater is BACK! Throughout the fall, students and faculty advisors have rehearsed through tireless Zoom sessions and some in-person (following mitigation protocols) to carry on the Amity tradition of performing a fall play. While the medium is slightly different, *It's A Wonderful Life* is written as a "radio play" and was seamlessly adapted to a recorded version of the

live theater rendition. The members of A.C.T. are excited to share this performance with the school community and spread some Amity joy this holiday season!

Supporting our ARHS Faculty/Staff: In an effort to keep the faculty and staff connected during the orchestrated remote-only week, Associate Principal Monica Kreuzer created a pre-Thanksgiving holiday survey that asked Amity faculty/staff to offer shout outs to members of our school community, share favorite Thanksgiving foods and other uplifting pieces of information. Ms. Kreuzer shared bits of the information throughout the remote-only week to support a sense of community and gratitude.

Student Government Appreciation Video: Members of this year's ARHS Student Government worked together to create a video to share their appreciation for the work their classroom teachers and administrators have put in to making a return to school a possibility for this year, even though things look different for the time being. The video was shared with faculty/staff on Friday, November 20, 2020.

Amity Hall of Honor & Amity Hall of Fame Returns: The Amity Hall of Honor & Amity Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony has been set for Thursday, October 21, 2021.

Jackie's Nine Reimagined: The AMSO support services team continues to promote the Jackie's Nine Character Education Program. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, many of the activities and special events have been reimagined this year. Each month, we will be focusing on one of the nine traits to live by, and activities which are posted on the counseling Google Classroom pages.

Canned Food Drive: The AMSB PTSO sponsored a food drive prior to the Thanksgiving break and the response from our students and staff was overwhelming!! Each advisory kept track of who could bring in the most food, and the PTSO gave awards to the advisory groups who brought the most. All donations went to a local food bank.

AMSO Team T: AMSO Team T is conducting its' annual fundraiser for the Hamden Children's Center. The team hopes to raise \$300 in support of an art project on the Children's Center campus.

Drexel University High School Photography Contest Exhibitor!: Congratulations to Riley Palazzo. Her photograph was selected to be included in the 2020 Drexel University High School Photography Contest Exhibition. This popular photo contest is one of the best and biggest in the country and Riley is the first Amity student to ever receive this honor. Riley's photograph and the entire exhibition can be seen virtually at www.drexelphotocontest.com

