

# AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

*Bethany Orange Woodbridge*  
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## Superintendent's Report – November 2023

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**

**November 7<sup>th</sup> Professional Learning Day:** All staff reported to their individual school for a full day of professional learning on November 7, 2023, centered around the Portrait of the Graduate (POG). Teachers shared lessons they have been using that allow students the opportunity to experience the POG. Teachers also engaged in a team building activity, reflected on the exercise and placed their reflections into portfolios within Schoology. The day mirrored the same types of tasks students will be asked to engage in as we continue to implement the POG throughout the district.

**PSAT Testing:** Students in grades 9-11 took the PSAT test over two dates in October (October 12 for grades 9-10, October 19 for grade 11). Amity gives students in all three of these grades an opportunity to take the PSAT in school for a few reasons: it provides detailed schoolwide information for our teachers on our students' current levels of performance, it gives our students an opportunity to get familiar with the SAT format in a lower-stakes setting, and for our Grade 11 students it serves as their way to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

**National Honor Society Induction:** On Monday, October 16, 2023, the Amity chapter of the NHS inducted the 43 new members from the Class of 2024.

**Green Step Certification:** Last summer five Amity students participated in the "Green Step Summer Certification Program," which is an initiative to prepare students for careers in the green building sector by offering training leading to industry certification in several areas. We learned in October that all five seniors earned a combined 9 credentials through this program.

**AMSO 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Boston Trip:** Eighth grade students went to Boston on October 26, 2023. Students and chaperones started at the Boston Science Museum where they engaged in many hands-on exhibits exploring ideas and innovations in Technology, Earth Science, Life Science, and Space exploration. After lunch students went on the famous Boston Duck tour where they saw many historically significant buildings and locations throughout the city.

**Portrait of the Graduate Day at AMSO:** On October 20, 2023, all AMSO students participated in a variety of activities that focused on introducing our students to the attributes of the BOWA Portrait of the Graduate (POG). Our students participated in lessons to build understanding of what it means to be a *Collaborator, Communicator, Planner, Problem Solver, and Empathizer*.

**AMSO Counselors Deliver Lesson on Intellectual Disabilities:** In preparation for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class to read the novel *Of Mice and Men*, School Psychologist Jenn Zoppi and School Psychology Intern Megan Luckart presented on the topic of Intellectual Disabilities to all of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English classes. Our goal for this presentation included conversations about what intelligence is and how it plays a role in daily life, as well as allowing students to understand differences in abilities and learning needs. There were rich discussions about what life was like for students with intellectual disabilities during the time when *Of Mice and Men* takes place, as well as implications for the characters in the book.

**AMSB Learning Walks:** In November, the AMSB administration and academic teams began conducting learning walks. The walks are centered around the Amity Portrait of the Graduate and lead to rich discussions surrounding instructional practices, student work, and evidence of the POG in action. Overall, the first walks were a success and the conversations will help to strengthen our practices.

**SAIL Coffee Carts:** Students in our SAILS classes continue working on pre-vocational and vocational skills through the operation of a snack/coffee cart. This activity requires students to develop shopping lists for the cart, purchase the goods at a local store, price the goods for sale on the cart, and then sell the items through the traveling cart. As a self-sustaining operation, this activity also teaches the students how to deposit money into appropriate accounts.

**Curriculum Articulation Meetings:** Teachers representing the subject areas of visual and performing arts and physical education met to discuss resource usage, professional growth and development, vertical alignment of the curriculum as well as content specific data connected to the Next Generation Accountability Report.

**Complementary Observer Training:** A total of twenty-six teachers from the middle schools and high school were trained to act as complementary observers as part of this year's teacher evaluation plan. Once trained, these teachers will now partake in classroom observations of their colleagues. The focus of their work throughout the year includes collecting evidence from classroom lessons that aligned to the attributes of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching Rubric and providing teachers with beneficial, reflective feedback on their instructional practices.

**Professional Development and Evaluation (PDEC):** A committee of district and building based teachers and administrators met this month to review the new state guidelines for teacher evaluation and support. The team is developing the foundation for a new plan that is scheduled to be implemented for the 2024-2025 school year.

**Curriculum Training:** Teachers in grades 7-12 in the subject areas of world language, visual and performing arts, and ELA met with consultants from the ACES RESC for curriculum writing training. As part of the training, teachers were given the opportunity to work on specific units and performance tasks while being provided with real-time feedback on their projects. Curriculum development training will continue through the year, as social studies teachers will be included in the process this winter.

## **Resources**

**On-Going Professional Learning for Sped Teachers:** Colleen Cruz continued working with special education teachers through a modeling approach of teaching literacy skills in various classes. Ms. Cruz also began working with selected team-teaching teams (special education and regular education teachers) from each building. Ms. Cruz will be working with these teams for the duration of the 2023-2024 school year focusing on best practices in team teaching. This has been an area often identified as wanting additional professional learning by our teachers and we are thrilled to be able to offer it.

**BOWA Curriculum Leaders Meeting:** This year's first meeting of curriculum leaders from the BOWA district was held this past month. Time was used to discuss curriculum alignment, common assessment

practices, and the rollout of the Portrait of the Graduate. Future meetings are scheduled throughout the year to promote an open dialogue and consistency in practice throughout the K-12 school system.

**BOWA Collaborative PD:** Amity hosted Andrew Livanis, Ph.D., BCBA-D who presented to roughly 30 school psychologists, school social workers, and special education teachers representing all districts within the BOWA. Dr. Livanis presented on effective use and implementation of functional behavioral assessments. This professional learning experience was provided out of a need to better the support of BOWA school psychologists and social workers in the completion and implementation of high quality functional behavioral assessments. Additional professional learning opportunities are scheduled with Dr. Livanis throughout the year to support BOWA staff in this area.

**Career Day:** On November 16, 2023, AMSB will hold their annual Career Day. This event is coordinated by our school counseling department and will begin with refreshments in our Library Media Center. From there, the career volunteers will visit classrooms and students will attend presentations and hear about careers of interest to them.

**CT-SEDS:** District Special Education administrative assistants attended the Special Education Data Managers Training for CT SEDS hosted by the CSDE and PCG at ACES. This training focused extensively on user interface, data mining and reporting, and system capabilities. As the state enters the second full year of CT SEDS implementation, more trainings of this type are being offered to address concerns raised by local school districts.

**Signs of Suicide Assessment:** The Signs of Suicide (SOS) screening will be completed with all 7<sup>th</sup> grade students at AMSO on November 14, 2023, and all AMSB 7<sup>th</sup> grade students on November 28, 2023. The high school will do SOS with half the grade 9 students (those enrolled in health this semester) in December and will do the other half during the second semester. The screening assists school mental health staff in identifying at-risk students proactively and providing school-based interventions and/or recommendations to families for more intensive therapies.

## Climate

**SCC Coach of the Year:** Congratulations to ARHS Volleyball Coach Seth Davis for his selection as the SCC Girls' Volleyball Coach of the Year, and to senior Alexa Bonato for her selection as the SCC Girls' Volleyball Player of the Year!

**Link Crew Tie-Dye Day:** On Wednesday, October 11, 2023 the Link Crew leaders hosted their annual Link Crew Tie-Dye Day for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in the courtyard during all SSPs. Tie-Dye Day is a fun and free Link Crew event for ninth graders where they get to tie-dye cool shirts and hang out with friends and Link Leaders.

**PSAT Alternate Lessons:** On the PSAT testing days in October, the grades not taking the PSAT participated in a variety of activities designed to build their sense of school community and to give them useful information tailored to their grades' needs. For the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders this included information on the Portrait of the Graduate portfolio they will develop, and for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders this included a panel discussion on preparation for the Senior Internship program. All grades also participated in a powerful presentation from the "For Cameron" drug-prevention organization, a grade-wide team-building activity, and information sessions on academic integrity. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students were given the opportunity to work from home on post-secondary planning, and many reported to us afterwards that this work time less than two weeks before college applications were due was extremely helpful to them.

**Music in Motion:** The Amity High School Music Department presented its fall production of *Music in Motion "On Air"* on October 26, 2023 in the Brady Center for the Performing Arts! It was a fun night of

music and movement with the Amity High School Band, Choir, Jazz Band & Percussion ensemble featuring favorite radio hits from the past few decades.

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Makes First Visit to ARHS:** On October 27, 2023, ARHS hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> graders from both middle schools for an encore performance of Music in Motion, plus information on school programs provided by student representatives from multiple elective areas.

**Amity Intramurals are back!!:** The first intramural competition of the year took place on October 26, 2023, in the middle gym with Soccer Shot. There will be other sporting events during the year where students and faculty compete to earn points and become the school-wide intramural champion.

**Student Government Pink October:** During October, the Student Government raised funds and awareness for breast cancer research and treatment. This year's "No One Fights Alone" T-shirt sales raised more than \$2,800 for the Smilow *Closer to Free* Fund.

**No Place for Hate Pledge Signing:** The AMSO No Place for Hate committee created a video to introduce the No Place for Hate Pledge. Students were invited to sign the pledge as a sign of their commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive school environment.

**Veterans Day Recognitions:** Students through the district will engage in recognition of Veterans' Day in November. On November 13, 2023, several veterans will visit AMSB and share their experiences as a veteran with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students - each year we look forward to welcoming them back. At AMSO, November 10, 2023 will begin with a whole-school commemoration in which students will recognize Amity graduates who went on to serve the country. Eighth grade students will then go to the Veteran's Museum in West Haven while 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will write letters to veterans.

**Coffee and Conversation:** On November 14, 2023, the AMSB administration and counseling department will host its first Coffee and Conversation of the school year. Guests will hear from school counselors on the topic of Adolescent Anxiety Supports. Following the presentation, we hope to engage the guests in conversation and receive feedback.

**Halloween Pep Rally:** On October 31, 2023, AMSB held a school-wide Halloween dress up day and an end of the day pep rally and costume contest. The students all had a great time, competed to earn prizes, and voted for their favorite classmate costumes. The staff and students were all smiles and the costumes were impressive!

**ATA Unified Soccer:** Thank you to all of our ATA staff for their support and planning in hosting our annual Unified Sports soccer match. This event would not be successful without the substantial help from our partners at Albertus Magnus College. By all accounts, our students and the students from the six neighboring school districts that attended created memories and experiences that they will remember forever.

**District Art Show at Woodbridge Library:** On November 1, 2023, the Amity VPA Department hung the first district art show of the year at the Woodbridge Library – 48 framed works hang on the walls. That is the most we have hung in a long time and the walls are filled! The show is open for viewing anytime through November 30, 2023. A reception will be held on November 16, 2023 from 5-7pm and all are invited to attend.

