

# AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

*Bethany Orange Woodbridge*  
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## Superintendent's Report – December 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**

**Medical Careers Fair:** One of the post-secondary goals at Amity is to make sure that all students graduate with a meaningful and actionable plan for life after high school. In the past two years the Career Center has gone above and beyond to make sure that students are exposed to the career options in the skilled trades. Last year, the Career Center staff instituted a new event, Trades Week, and this year they added our first Medical Careers Fair designed to foster, promote, and teach students about alternative careers in the healthcare industry. Representatives from 13 area health career organizations met with students during lunches and the student response to the presenters was excellent.

**Annual Recent Alumni Panel:** On Wednesday, November 22, 2023, ARHS hosted the annual Alumni Panel for students in grades 11 and 12. Ten graduates from the Classes of 21, 22, and 23 met with each grade for a class period to talk about how Amity helped prepare them for life in college. They also discussed what has been most surprising and most rewarding for them in college, and what advice they have for our current students in successfully planning for life after high school.

**Vaping Presentation:** AMSB will hold two separate student presentations on the topic of vaping, sponsored by Woodbridge Youth Services and BOWDAAC. Presenter Trisha Dhal has done work in our community and others in the past, and her information is timely and relevant as our students face the inevitable pressures and personal choices that surround this topic.

**Sexual Harassment and Consent Lessons:** The Milford Rape Crisis Center is in the process of presenting to each of the four academic teams at AMSO. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade presentation focuses on sexual harassment and knowing the different forms of sexual harassment. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade students focused on the concept of consent as it relates to sexually based offenses.

**Expanding Dual Credit Enrollment Offerings:** High school department chairs and leadership from the counseling department met twice with a state-wide consultant this month to identify high school courses that may be eligible for dual credit offerings in conjunction with state colleges and universities. The district was awarded grant funding to increase opportunities for students to earn college-level credit while in high school and this month's meetings represent the initial step in that process.

**Learning Walks:** The second year of Instructional Learning Walks focused on collecting observational evidence of the Portrait of the Graduate within classrooms which is actively taking place throughout the district. Weekly classroom visits have been expanded this past month to include assistant principals and

teachers in each of the schools. As of Dec 1, 2023, 56 classroom visits have been conducted across all content areas.

**Honor Society Inductions:** Congratulations to the ARHS students who were inducted into the National English Honor Society on November 9, 2023, and the Tri-M Music Honor Society on November 14, 2023!

**Parent Conferences:** The Amity Regional School District held its third session of parent conferences on December 6, 2023. We appreciate the time parents took to come into our schools, meet with our teachers, and hear about their student's progress in our schools.

**CMEA Auditions:** Over 15 AMSO students participated in the CMEA auditions on December 2, 2023. Students in the band and orchestra who are selected will have the opportunity to perform alongside other talented musicians from around the state.

**Middle School Naviance Lessons:** The AMSO 7<sup>th</sup> grade students met with their counselor to do an inventory on Learning and Productivity in our Naviance program. Students will be using Naviance throughout their years at Amity. They were able to complete a self-assessment, which identified their different styles of learning and provided different recommendations to help with learning and productivity.

**LMS Technology Workshops:** The AMSO Library Media Specialist (LMS) ran a series of technology workshops for all students throughout November. The workshops were focused on helping students learn how to access their Outlook accounts and other Microsoft applications available to them on Microsoft 365.

**MTSS & Intervention:** Teachers and support staff throughout the district met this month to discuss the district's Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for students. The major topics discussed at the meeting included: identifying and supporting high school students in need of reading interventions, the tiered intervention processes at each of the schools, and building MTSS plans within the state's new CT-SEDS database.

**Professional Learning Day:** A district-wide professional learning day was held on the afternoon of December 7, 2023. Teachers had the opportunity to attend a variety of content specific sessions. A sample of the sessions that were offered included: building inquiry-based activities for social studies, NGSS assessments and intervention for science, reading strategies for world language, questioning strategies for deepening thinking in mathematics, and vertical curriculum alignment for ELA.

**BOWA Curriculum Leaders Meeting:** The monthly meeting of curriculum leaders from the BOWA district was held to discuss Reader's Workshop, social studies curriculum alignment, EL student populations, and intervention and support processes. Future meetings are scheduled throughout the year to promote an open dialogue and consistency in practice within the K-12 BOWA school systems.

## **Resources**

**Chinese ECE Expansion:** World Languages Department Chair Xia Feng gave a presentation at the UCONN ECE Chinese Instructors workshop on December 1, 2023 on developing college-level Chinese curriculum for high school students. Her work is being used as a model by UCONN, and starting next year, ARHS will offer UCONN ECE Chinese 1114 for Chinese IV students and 3210 and 3211 for our AP and Chinese V students. This means that Amity High School students can earn 10 UCONN Chinese credits while in high school, and some of these courses can be counted towards UConn's Chinese major or minor.

**Amity Alumni Guest Speakers:** Over the past month, Amity students have had several opportunities to hear from alumni guest speakers about their lives after graduation. Recent events included:

- Performing arts students had the opportunity to hear from and work with the two lead actors from the original Broadway production of *Mean Girls* (ARHS 2024 spring musical) thanks to Black Rock Theater (directed by Amity 2010 grad Connor Deane) and the Jamie Hulley Arts Foundation.
- 2013 Amity graduate Sabrina Brier, who has gone on to become a successful performer, writer, and social media celebrity spoke to more than 50 students from several different classes, discussing how brand deals work, and how she thoughtfully plans the content she publishes on social media.
- Tyler Jennes, ARHS Class of 2017, is an assistant comic book editor and showrunner's assistant for the upcoming Amazon Prime original series *Wytches*. Tyler worked with ARHS students enrolled in The Graphic Novel elective, who recently began working on their own original comics as part of their final project. Tyler provided the class with general drawing and storytelling recommendations before viewing students' work individually and providing them with one-on-one commentary and feedback. Tyler also presented to larger groups of English and art classes in which he discussed his experiences working in both the comics and television industries.

**On-Site College Acceptance Days:** We have held several events recently where college admissions officers reviewed and interviewed our Seniors, then offered them immediate acceptance to their schools. Participating schools and the number of Seniors granted on-site acceptance included:

- Quinnipiac University: 17 students
- Southern Connecticut State University: 14 students
- Central Connecticut State University: 6 students
- Western Connecticut State University: 8 students
- University of New Haven: 14 students

**Testing Accommodations Webinar for Parents:** On December 11, 2023, the Pupil Services and Counseling Departments hosted a webinar on Testing Accommodations for Standardized Assessments including College Board and ACT. The webinar was geared to parents whose students may be eligible for accommodations, but who may not be aware of how to best support their children or how to request them. The recorded webinar is available on the school district website.

**Staff Attend NYASP:** Tom Brant, Pupil Services Director, presented at the New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP) Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY. Mr. Brant and colleagues from Meriden Public Schools and Connecticut Central School District presented on *Supporting Students With School Refusal: From Functional Assessment to Intervention*. Additionally, Amity School Psychologists, Eric Bacik and Clare Collins, attended the three-day conference.

**ARHS Heads to NAEA National Convention:** ARHS Art teacher Lisa Toto's proposal for the presentation *Voice, Vision and Purpose - Authentic Experiences with Art*, was accepted for inclusion in the program for the 2024 NAEA National Convention, taking place April 4-6, 2023 in Minneapolis.

**Signs of Suicide Screening:** Amity Middle School Bethany (November 28th) and Orange (November 14) 7<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in the *SOS Signs of Suicide* prevention program during the month of November. *SOS Signs of Suicide* is a prevention-based program that is empirically proven to reduce the likelihood of suicide through educational and screening components. In total, over 280 students participated across our middle schools. Of those screened, 10 students indicated significant concerns regarding thinking about or attempting suicide. In total, 51 total students were individually followed up with by mental health staff. Mental health staff from all three buildings were available to meet with

students on the days of screening. This is the fourth year of implementation of the *SOS Signs of Suicide* Program with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students being screened this week (December 11-14th).

## Climate

**Amity Military Wall of Honor Dedication on Veterans' Day:** To better recognize the military service of Amity graduates, a group of our faculty, staff, and students have been working all fall to create the Amity Veterans Wall of Honor. It took the efforts of many to create the display, and a big thank-you goes out to faculty and staff members Andrea Santos (Army veteran), Miguel Pickering (Army veteran), Peter Downhour (Navy veteran), Ed Rostowsky, Carl Teravainen, Lisa Toto, Jessica Zamachaj, Paula Vallie, and the CTE students who all had a part in the design and creation of the project. We unveiled and dedicated the permanent display on Veterans' Day for an audience that included faculty, staff, and graduate veterans and family members, and the staff and students involved in the project. You can watch the dedication ceremony, which was livestreamed on Facebook and Instagram, at this link: [https://fb.watch/od\\_jMyUw0H/](https://fb.watch/od_jMyUw0H/)

**Holiday Bear:** The Amity Teachers, Staff, and Administrators participated in our annual event of giving – Holiday Bear. This year, our collective Amity employees sponsored 42 children (up from last year's 34 children). The nominated students from Shepard Glen Elementary School and Helen Street Elementary School received toys, coats, gift cards, clothes, and a variety items from their wish lists. We had so many elves this year, but special recognition goes to Head Elf Wendy Carrafiello who organized, orchestrated, and encouraged the participation of our teams and individual employees in giving.

**Spirit Week and Homecoming:** The Amity Student Government organized theme days for each day of Spirit Week. Spirit Week wrapped up with the Freshman Tailgate cookout hosted by Link Crew before our home football game on November 17, 2023, followed by our Homecoming Dance on November 18, 2023 for 900 students.

**Annual Powder Puff Game:** The annual Flag Football game took place at home on November 20, 2023. It was a cold night, but our team and coaches did a great job playing in front of an enthusiastic crowd.

**Link Crew Ice Cream Social:** The Link Crew 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition program hosted the annual Ninth Grade Ice Cream Social for our Freshmen on November 8, 2023, after school in the cafeteria. At this end-of-the-marking period event, all ninth graders shared free ice cream sundaes and an opportunity to chat with their Link Leaders and other friends.

**Supporting Student Growth in Community Service:** The students and staff in Spartan Academy donated food to the Human Services Department for the town of Woodbridge. Additionally, they volunteered time in the pantry to support the mission of the pantry.

**AMSB Student of the Month:** AMSB held its monthly Student of the Month breakfast on November 30, 2023 and celebrated with close to 40 students. Teachers select one student a month to recognize for their citizenship, behavior, or academic achievement and the students are treated to breakfast in our cafeteria.

**AMSB Staff Member(s) of the Month:** In a home-grown program run by staff for staff, each month the staff at AMSB vote to select a staff member deserving of recognition from their peers. This month the staff unanimously selected our food service staff as the employees of the month. Congratulations to Candie Kader, Justina Cortigiano, and Lauren Evans.

**AMSB Pep Rally and Spirit Day:** AMSB will hold its final spirit day and pep rally of 2023 on Friday December 22, 2023. Students and staff will be encouraged to wear their funniest or ugliest sweater as we stay warm and have a little fun before heading off to winter break!

**Cookie Decorating:** Woodbridge Youth Services held a cookie decorating gathering after school on December 8, 2023 at AMSB. Students spent time making colorful and tasty creations while spending time laughing and enjoying each other's company on a Friday afternoon! We appreciate these partnerships with our community Youth Services leaders.

**AMSO Skate Night:** The PTSO sponsored a Skate Night for AMSO students. Over 150 students enjoyed an evening together on the ice. The money raised by the PTSO will help offset the cost of upcoming field trips for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Thanksgiving Food Collection:** The AMSO student council collected over 500 food items for the local food bank in time for the Thanksgiving Holiday.