

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
Bethany Orange Woodbridge
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Superintendent's Report – January 2024

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

Post-Secondary Planning for Juniors: An information night for the parents of Juniors was held on January 3, 2024 in the Brady Center. Ann Fleming Brown, Director of Admissions at Union College, gave a presentation on the overview of the college admissions process. Parents and students in Grade 11 were strongly encouraged to attend.

STAR Testing: On January 10-11, 2024, all middle school students will take the winter STAR Reading and Math assessments. The data will be used to help teachers make group and individual decisions for their students and will help us identify any students in need of additional academic interventions during 2nd semester.

Professional Learning Day: A district-wide professional learning day was held on the afternoon of January 4, 2024. The keynote speaker from convocation in August, that teacher, author, and host of the weekly *Teach Happier* Podcast, Suzanne Dailey, returned to the district to revisit some of the key points from her book *Teach Happier This School Year: 40 Weeks of Inspiration and Reflection*. As with her August presentation, time was reserved for both teacher participation and interaction throughout the afternoon session.

Hour of Code: As part of the Hour of Code program, the student members of the Computer Programming Club designed and delivered lessons during the first week of December to students in Math and English classes.

Author Visit to AMSO: AMSO 7th Grade students participated in an online discussion with author Lissette Norman. Ms. Norman is a poet and author of the Spanish children's books *My Feet Are Laughing* and *Plátanos Go with Everything*. She is also co-author of the picture books, *On the Line: My Story of Becoming the First African American Rockette* (w/ Jennifer Jones) and *Until Someone Listens* (w/ Estela Juarez). This was an authentic learning experience for students as they learned about the writing process and how an author's personal life and culture are reflected in their writing.

Pupil Services Department Begins Transitioning: Members of the high school and middle school pupil services department met during the month of December to begin preparing for the transition to high school for our middle school students. These meetings between service providers are an essential step in the process to ensure a smooth transition to high school.

Prepping for Class of 2030: AMSO administrators met with Orange Elementary principals to begin the transition process for next year's 7th grade students. Information was shared regarding changes in the placement process and updates to the middle school program.

Amity Hosts Mathletes: On December 14, 2023, the Amity Math Team hosted more than 100 “Mathletes” from 13 other high schools in the region for an after-school math competition. It was great to see so many students from around the area here to challenge themselves academically. Following this meet, the Math Team has a robust schedule of competitions scheduled throughout the winter.

Blues and Beyond: On January 24, 2024, AMSB 7th Grade students will all participate in the Blues and Beyond presentation during their Social Studies classes. This event will educate the students about history of the Blues and will incorporate the cultural and period influences that lead to the creation of this type of musical expression.

Annual Holiday Concerts: AMSB held its Winter Concert on December 14, 2023 and the audience turnout was overwhelming! The students all did a fantastic job and sounded great, as they played to a packed house. AMSO had their Winter Concert on December 16, 2023. The choir, orchestra and band students performed a repertoire that highlighted the skills and various genres of music they have been exploring all year. The ARHS Orchestra program’s winter concert was held on December 19, 2023, followed by the ARHS Band and Chorus programs’ joint concert on December 21, 2023.

Unified Theater is Back!: Unified Theater is back at ARHS this year under the advisement of School Psychologist Intern Rhiannya Byrne and Paraprofessional Samara Koproski. Unified Theater’s mission is to create a safe space for students with disabilities and their peers to explore their creative side and spend some time in the spotlight together through the performing arts. Participating students will be meeting bi-weekly as they prepare for an end of year culminating show!

District Data Team: A meeting of the District Data Team convened this past month. The team consists of administrators and teachers from across the district representing a variety of subject areas. The purpose of the committee is to review district-wide data to determine areas of strength and opportunities for growth. At this meeting, team members reviewed the district’s most recent Next Generation Accountability Report to monitor progress toward the district’s three-year goals. The team also reviewed PSAT data to target areas of support for students who will be taking the SAT in March.

Professional Development and Evaluation (PDEC): The district-wide Professional Development and Evaluation Committee met in December to continue building the framework for a new teacher evaluation plan. The focus of the work has been on defining the characteristics of an effective Amity teacher and identifying the rubric and assessment tools that best reflect these characteristics. The committee will continue to meet throughout the year with the goal of having a draft plan developed by June.

CT TEAM – All new Amity teachers in the district’s Teacher Education and Mentoring Program successfully completed their first modules. A total of five modules are required to be completed in order for teachers to maintain and advance their certification. All new staff are on track to finish three modules this year and will conclude their participation in the program by June 2025.

Committee Meetings: A meeting of the Wellness, Health, and Safety Committee met this month. District-wide updates were provided by school nurses, security personnel, facilities, finance, and food services. The committee also reviewed the results of the latest BOWDAAC Survey in an effort to identify ways the district can help to increase prevention and awareness related to at-risk behaviors.

Resources

Amity Alumni Healthcare Panel: On December 21, 2023, the ARHS hosted the Amity Alumni Healthcare Panel, during which four Amity graduates, working in the health care field (Yuliya Faryna ’17, Sarah Nevolis ’17, Carly Marchitto ’18, and Mariana Marchitto ’15), came in to speak to current Anatomy students to discuss their paths to careers in healthcare and answer student questions.

Trades and Apprenticeship Programs: On December 21, 2023, the ARHS Career Center hosted Keri Valente from the CT Department of Labor, who spoke to 33 Amity students interested in careers in the skilled trades about various apprenticeship programs available to interested students.

AMSB Student Leadership Conference: On January 12, 2024, a group of 12 AMSB students will travel to the Connecticut Association of Schools Student Leadership Conference. The students were selected by their teacher teams and will spend a day learning from peers from across the state.

FAFSA Completion: Now that the updated FAFSA has been released, the ARHS Counseling department is encouraging all our Senior families to complete this important form that can qualify students for potentially thousands of dollars in financial aid for college. Completion of the FAFSA or signing a waiver if a family elects to *not* fill out a FAFSA is a mandated state requirement.

Senior Scholarship Opportunities: “Scholarship Season” is starting for ARHS Seniors, and the College and Career Center has collected dozens of scholarship opportunities for our students and made them available along with qualification details and links to the applications. Our staff will continue to update this list throughout the winter and spring, and students are encouraged to check back regularly to see what new scholarship opportunities have been added.

ACES Cognitive Coaches Training: The district-wide instructional coaches successfully completed their Cognitive Coaches Foundations Training at ACES in Hamden. This eight-day professional learning series provides the Coaches with research-based strategies they can draw from when working directly with teachers on lesson planning, problem-solving, and reflective practices.

Soap Lift: Amity Transition Academy students have been assembling Soap Lift (<https://soaplift.com/>) products for the past several schoolyears. Similar to last break, a staff member found a soap lift potentially assembled by our students during their winter vacation in Austin, Texas. Kudos to our students and staff for this great community vocational experience!

Climate

ACT is Back!: Amity Creative Theater presented a three-night run of the play *Love/Sick* from December 7-9, 2023, and they have already followed that up with the auditions for their spring musical performance of *Mean Girls*. The cast and crew are now busy at work rehearsing for their next show.

Department Chair Cheer: Throughout December, the ARHS Department Chairs took it upon themselves to spread some seasonal cheer for everyone at ARHS. Over the course of three weeks, they organized a series of contests and celebrations that involved both students and staff.

Stockings for Soldiers: Students at the Amity Middle School Orange banded together to say thank you to our veterans through the Stockings for Soldiers community outreach program. The students, staff, and families of AMSO sent in various toiletry and snack items that were put into stockings delivered on December 22, 2023 to the V.A. Hospital in West Haven. This year the students, families, and staff of the middle school donated over 776 items, that went into over 25 stockings.

Winter Wonderland: Following up on their December toy drive, on December 21, 2023, members of the National Spanish Honor Society and the National Latin Honor Society hosted the enchanting "Winter Wonderland" event at Fair Haven School in New Haven. Amity students brought great joy along with toys to Fair Haven students through various engaging activities like games, cookie decorating, and face painting. The team has already celebrated Thanksgiving at Fair Haven, with more events planned for the remainder of the year.

Pitch-In Club: The Pitch-In Club spent December collecting new and gently used baseball and softball equipment to donate to the Hamden and New Haven Little league organizations, and their charity drive

successfully collected thousands of dollars' worth of sports equipment to share with younger kids who will appreciate it.

ARHS Pep Rally: Student Government hosted a holiday pep rally in the main gym to end the day on December 22, 2023. It was great to see so many students having fun together and getting ready for the winter break.

AMSB Pep Rally and Spirit Day: AMSB held its final spirit day and pep rally of 2023 on December 22, 2023. Students and staff were encouraged to wear their funniest or ugliest sweater as we stayed warm and had a little fun before heading off to winter break! The next school spirit day will be on January 12, 2024 as students are encouraged to dress like their favorite musician.

AMSO Pep Rally: AMSO students and staff enjoyed an energy-filled pep rally prior to the Holiday Break. Students participated in team building games and enjoyed competing alongside teachers in a friendly competition.

AMSB Recognizes Students and Staff of the Month: Each month, the staff at AMSB vote to select a staff member deserving of recognition from their peers. In December, the staff unanimously selected to recognize Speech and Language Pathologist, Jodi Everone. AMSB also held the monthly student of the month breakfast on December 21, 2023 and celebrated 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 the cafeteria.

Downtown Cabaret Trip: For the second year in a row, students in the 7-12 Spartan Academic and Independent Living Skills (SAILS) program attended a holiday theme field trip to the Bridgeport Downtown Cabaret. Year two of this trip featured students taking an active role in the planning and execution of the trip! Additionally, students attending this field trip practiced various independent living and community engagement skills.

AMSO PJ Skate Night: Our thanks go out to the Amity Middle School Orange PTSO for hosting a PJ Skate Night on Dec. 2nd. Students enjoyed getting together for a fun evening out. The PTSO will use the proceeds from this event to help offset the cost of upcoming trips for students.