

Amity Board of Education News

By Paul Davis, Amity BOE Chair

Board of Education Proposed Budget

On March 11, 2024, the Amity Board of Education adopted a proposed budget for the 2024-2025 school year that is a 3.49% increase over the current year budget. This Board adopted budget is lower than the budget approved by the Amity Finance Committee on February 26, 2024. The Board adopted budget will move forward to the District Public Budget Hearing on April 8, 2024.

The proposed budget includes raises and benefits recently negotiated in a new three-year contract with the Amity Education Association. The budget provides for 2 new teachers for middle and high school math intervention, a teacher for Personal Finance, a new mandated graduation requirement, and a Special Education teacher to assist students with disabilities in post-secondary transition. The budget also adds a coach to support a new middle school wrestling program, an assistant athletic director, and a website manager.

We appreciate the feedback received from the Public, Town Finance Committees, Town Selectmen, Amity Finance Committee, and Amity Board of Education members throughout the budget development process. The public referendum on the Amity budget will be scheduled for May 7, 2024. All registered voters in the towns of Bethany, Orange, and Woodbridge can attend the public hearing and vote in the Amity referendum. Detailed budget information is available on the District website www.amityregion5.org/boe/budget.

Middle School Schedule Changes

On March 4, 2024, the Board of Education held a special meeting to clarify the Amity Regional Schools Strategic Plan's proposed transition to unlevelled middle school classes over the next several years as new curricula are developed. Math courses will remain "leveled" in that they will continue to be separate courses (7th grade math, pre-algebra 7, pre-algebra 8, algebra, geometry,). The District is in the process of phasing in the heterogeneous classes in other middle school content areas.

Currently, Spanish is unlevelled in the 7th grade, and next year, Spanish and English will be taught heterogeneously in grades 7 & 8. These two courses were selected to be unlevelled first for several reasons. Students enter Amity Middle Schools with limited to no background in Spanish, yet we were leveling the students when they arrived at the middle schools. In English classes the Board recently approved a new curriculum which moves to the Readers Workshop model, which allows students in a class to select books that are appropriate for their individual reading level and match their interest and creates an instructional climate where every child is challenged at their academic level.

Two decades of educational research shows that there is no clearly identified academic achievement benefit to middle school homogeneous ability grouping. Further, the research shows that ability grouping has adverse impacts on students' self-concept and motivation. A recent Connecticut Association of Schools survey showed that Amity's middle schools were the only DRG (District Reference Groups) A and B school still leveling in all academic areas. The Board and administration have received numerous communications about this process with discussions continuing. It is the intent of the Board and administration that the District provides the strongest, most challenging, and most supportive level of instruction for all students. Parents should contact the principals of our middle schools if they have questions specific to their child.

Fields of Excellence Award

Congratulations to Kevin Capecelatro and Sports Turf for receiving the 2023 “Fields of Excellence” recognition from Pioneer Athletics. This nationwide program recognizes hardworking individuals, schools, and communities for their dedication and effort in keeping fields and sports facilities looking their best. Mr. Capecelatro’s care of our Amity Athletic Facilities made our District the only New England school recognized in this award.

Centralized Transportation

As part of budget reductions, the Board of Education supported a transition to centralized bus stops for students attending Platt Technical High School beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. The district administration will be working with bus contractors and town officials to identify locations for centralized stops in each of our three towns. Platt Tech families will receive more detailed information this spring and summer.

Dual Credit Enrollment Expansion Grant

Amity was recently awarded a grant to expand dual credit course offerings for students at the high school as early as next fall. Dual credit courses give students the opportunity to earn college credit for coursework taken while in high school. As part of Phase 1 of the expansion, 15 teachers are going through the approval process to offer dual credit for the courses they are currently teaching. Dual credit partnerships are being explored with colleges and universities throughout Connecticut including: University of Connecticut, Sacred Heart University, University of Bridgeport, Quinnipiac University, and Goodwin University.

Spring College Fair Coming to Amity

The annual Spring College Fair will be held on Monday evening, April 29, 2024, from 6:30 - 8:00pm in the ARHS main gymnasium. Approximately 120 college representatives will be in attendance. This is a great way for students to meet many of the college admission decision-makers in an intimate and convenient way. The college fair is **free** for students and parents and is open to the public.

Ray’s Box of Sox

The students and staff across the district are honored to be participating in the annual “Ray’s Box of Sox”. Run by the AMSO 8th grade students, collection boxes are located in all three Amity schools and will be available until March 29, 2024. Consider honoring Ray's memory by doing good for someone else and donating. This small gesture can have a big impact. The class hopes to collect over 2000 pairs of sox to donate to local shelters. Thank you in advance for your support and please spread the word!
Spartan Academy Apiary

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At the March 11, 2024, Board Meeting, Spartan Academy teachers Todd Rainey and Sean Malloy shared the success of their Apiary program with the Board of Education. Spartan Academy is the alternative education program at the high school – designed for students who need non-traditional educational programming. The Apiary program was implemented to give students a hands-on experience that leads to research, science, and mathematical learning projects. The students typically manage 4 hives. Honey

harvested from the program is used by culinary arts students or sold to Amity staff, with the proceeds going back into the Apiary program.