

Amity Board of Education News - October

By Paul Davis, Amity BOE Chair

Amity Supports Rigorous and Challenging Academic Classes

The *Milford-Orange Times* and the *Orange Town News* recently published an editorial from a local resident that contained damaging misinformation about the Amity Regional School District – information that is harmful to our students, our teachers, our schools, and our community. It is regrettable to have to continuously correct such misinformation, however the Board finds it necessary to provide the unequivocal correct facts. At no point has the Superintendent of the Amity Regional School District made a recommendation to eliminate Honors level classes. At no point has the Board of Education voted to eliminate Honors level classes. The 2023-2024 Amity Regional High School “College Admissions Profile” reports that Amity offers 39 Honors level classes in addition to 27 Advance Placement courses. In fact, the Strategic School Plan developed by the Superintendent and approved by the Board of Education includes goals to expand the number of advanced classes by increasing dual-enrollment courses through partnerships with Connecticut colleges. These dual-enrollment courses will not only be academically rigorous but will also allow Amity students to earn more college credits for classes taken in high school. The district applied for and received a grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education to support this exact goal. The Board is committed to ensuring students have access to opportunities and resources necessary to develop to their full academic potential – including Honors, AP, and dual-enrollment courses.

National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalists and Commended Scholars

Congratulations to the seven Seniors who have been selected as Semi-Finalists in the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program: Aditi Bhattamishra, Haseeb Chaudhry, Edward Han, Deborah Luo, Jack Morrison, Alice Xu, and Annika Yun. They are among the top 16,000 scorers nationwide out of the more than 1.3 million students who took the PSAT-NMSQT test during their Junior year. Amity is tied for the 5th highest number of Semi-Finalists among all public high schools in Connecticut this year. All seven recipients were recognized at the October 16, 2023 Board of Education meeting and are now in the competition to become National Merit Finalists later this year. Additionally, that evening, the Board recognized another sixteen Amity students as Commended Scholars for having been named among the top three percent in the country.

Pass Demonstration

The Board of Education received a demonstration of “Pass” (formerly E-Hall Pass) during its October meeting. Mathematics teacher Michelle Shoop and Library Media Specialist Vicki Hulse demonstrated how students or teacher can create virtual hall passes; how hall passes are approved and ended by teachers; and the information available in the teacher’s dashboard. They discussed how Pass is used to schedule intervention support, use of the library, and how Pass has reduced student traffic in the halls. Principal Andre Hauser shared how Pass is used during emergency situations to improve student safety and accountability. Technology Director Shaun DeRosa answered several questions on data privacy and collectively the presentation clarified concerns and misinformation identified during the September Board of Education meeting, including the following – 1) Students **do not** need to download the Pass application onto their phone. Students may access Pass through their school issued device; 2) Students **do not** need to carry their phone or device with them when using Pass; 3) Pass **does not** track a student’s location – it is a record of where a student is coming from and where they are going; 4) Pass **does not** download data from a student’s phone or device; and 4) Pass is FERPA compliant, CT Student

Data Privacy Act compliant, encrypted with minimum 256 encryption on its servers, and by contract, the data is owned by the District and may not be used by Pass or sold to a third party.

PSAT Administration

Students in Grades 9 and 10 took the PSAT on October 12, 2023. During the test administration, students in grades 11 and 12 were involved in a variety of activities, including a grade-wide team-building activity, information sessions on senior internships, Spartan Seminar lessons on academic integrity and a powerful presentation from the “For Cameron” organization – a local non-profit dedicated to education of the risks of self-medication and recreational drug use and lessening the stigma and shame of addiction. On October 19th, juniors will take the PSAT, seniors will have the opportunity to spend the day off-campus working on their post-secondary plans, and 9th and 10th grade students will participate in grade level activities, including their opportunity to see the presentation from “For Cameron.”

Senior Planning

The Counseling Department hosted its annual Senior Parent Night (September 20, 2023) and Financial Aid Night (September 27, 2023) to provide families the information they will need to assist their children in researching, applying to, and financing their college educations. School Counselors have spent the last month conducting small group “College Application Process” meetings with seniors to ensure that all of our students have the information and support they need to successfully develop and carry out their post-secondary plans.

Frozen Jr. Coming to Amity Middle School Bethany

The date(s) for the Amity Middle School Bethany fall musical, *Frozen Jr.* have been announced and tickets are on sale now! Actors and crew are hard at work to bring this heartwarming story to life on the AMSB Stage on Friday, November 10, 2023, 6:30 pm; Saturday, November 11, 2023, 6:30 pm; and a final matinee performance on Sunday, November 12, 2023, at 2:00 pm. Tickets can be purchased through the AMSB PTSO Board. Also, any families with an aspiring Anna, Elsa, or Olaf at home, are encouraged to send their future actor/actress in costumes to the musical; the cast will be available during intermission and after each show for photo ops.

Hispanic Heritage Month

The Board of Education received a presentation from Middle School World Language Content Leaders Elaine Hashemian Theresa Garrity during the “3A’s and POG” item on the October Board agenda. Middle school Spanish teachers shared how they integrate cultural instruction with direct teaching and acquisition of a new language. Through a grant from the Jaime Hulley Foundation, they shared how 7th grade students from both middle schools participated in an interactive presentation centered on the music and culture of various Hispanic countries. Additionally, students participated in advisory activities to broaden students’ understanding of the contributions and influence of Hispanic culture in their lives. At the high school, students in Amity’s National Spanish Honor Society started the month off with a special message during morning announcements followed by a curated playlist of music that was broadcast between classes throughout the day. Throughout the month Amity students and the National Spanish Honor Society presented information on Hispanic culture and history with announcements, videos, and displays around the school.