

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

Bethany Orange Woodbridge
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Superintendent's Report – September 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

ARHS Back to School Nights: ARHS hosted two well-attended *Back to School Night* parent open houses, on September 5 and September 11, 2024. Both nights started with an all-parents greeting in the Brady Center, and then parents followed a shortened schedule of all eight periods for informational sessions with teachers.

AMSB Opening 2024: The first weeks of the 2024-2025 school year have been fantastic! Our staff and students all returned eager to learn and the teachers spent the first two half days reorienting the students to our building. They also spent some time on ice-breaker activities and sharing summer stories. On the second day, we came together as a whole-school and held our first assembly of the year where we welcomed our students and staff, outlined expectations for the year, and talked about the art, academic, and athletic opportunities at Amity. AMSB held the annual back to school night on Tuesday, September 10, 2024. The feedback from our parents was positive and it was nice to meet our new AMSB families.

9th Grade Library Media Center (LMC) Orientation: The ARHS School Librarians and 9th grade Social Studies Teachers have collaborated to conduct a formal library/media center orientation program for all 9th grade students that covered topics ranging from how to access the library and resources available for students in the library to ways that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is likely to impact their learning in high school.

AMSB POG-A-POLUZZA: The students and staff of AMSB spent the first Friday of the school year getting oriented to the Amity Portrait of the Graduate. The day-long event was organized by our POG committee and was our kickoff to the POG for this school year. Students participated in many activities throughout the morning including a POG scavenger hunt, people bingo, and maker stations. After each activity students were given a POG bracelet that corresponded to one of the characteristics. The students heard from guest speaker Jeanine Dames, Director of the Office of Career Strategy and Senior Associate Dean at Yale College. The day ended with a little outdoor activity and a movie...with the PTSO providing snacks, of course!

Hispanic Heritage Month at AMSO: Students participated in a variety of activities to build appreciation and understanding of Hispanic culture. Throughout Hispanic Heritage month students are participating in advisory activities to broaden students' understanding of the contributions and influence of Hispanic culture in their lives. 7th grade students participated in a presentation of Spanish culture from a local Mariachi band. 8th grade students will explore Hispanic music and try their hand at salsa dancing.

Portrait of the Graduate Committee: A meeting of the members of the district-wide Portrait of the Graduate (POG) Committee met this month to discuss the plans for the culminating portfolio reflection projects that all 11th graders will engage in this spring. The culminating project will take place on April 24, 2025, as students will have the opportunity to reflect on their learning journey through the Amity schools while making connections to the characteristics of the POG.

District Data Team: For the first meeting of the District's Data Team this year, team members reviewed the district's spring SBAC, STAR and I-Ready results. The team also reviewed the progress being made toward the district's three-year academic improvement goals based upon the CSDE's Next Generation Accountability Reporting. The District Data Team will continue to meet monthly to review any new data and determine areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Data Talks: Instructional Coaches Lisa Lassen and Andrea Drewry held meetings at each of the middle schools to review classroom level SBA, STAR, and I-Ready ELA and math data. Information shared at these meetings will be used to assist teachers when making informed decisions about instructional practices and the development of student achievement goals tied to teacher evaluation.

Amity Advocates Teach Others: Students in the Amity Advocates class designed and delivered a lesson on high school health management to students in all 9th grade Health and Wellness classes on September 26 and 27, 2024.

Community Garden: Spartan Prep students at ARHS are working on the final fall harvesting of their community vegetable garden. Through this process, students will prepare the garden beds for the coming winter months, including composting the beds. This will prepare the garden beds for our spring planting season.

SAILS Coffee Cart is Back!: Students in Ms. Borer's and Ms. Kopjanski's classes continued working on pre-vocational and vocational skills through the operation of a snack/coffee cart. This activity requires students to develop a shopping list for the cart (based on feedback/requests from staff), purchase the goods at a local store (Costco/Target), 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.

TEAM Induction: The district's Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM) Committee held its first meeting of the year. The group prepared the materials for new teachers' induction which is scheduled for mid-October. At the induction workshop, new teachers will review the requirements for completing the TEAM program which includes the completion of five modules of professional learning over a two-year span. Mentors and teachers will be provided with a chance to collaborate and create plans for sharing and support throughout the year. Our district TEAM Coordinators plan to lead the group through a conversation that focuses on ethical and professional dilemmas and their professional responsibility to students, the larger school/district educational community, and to families.

Professional Learning Day: A district-wide professional learning day was held on the afternoon of September 20, 2024. Teachers had the opportunity to develop their professional growth goals for the new Amity Teacher Evaluation Plan. Under the new plan, teachers can create collaborative goals with their colleagues and set goals that stretch over a 3-year span. Teacher goals are due by October 15th.

Curriculum Development: Social studies teachers in grades 7-12 met this month to collaborate on curriculum development. Throughout the day teachers created units and lesson activities aligned to the recently revised social studies state standards.

Resources

Amity Expertise Joins NPR & CNN: Tom Brant, PPS Director, was a guest on CNN Weekend Morning Edition where he spoke about returning to school after a shooting has taken place. You can see the interview [HERE](#). Additionally, Tom Brant and Joel Cisneros, LCSW Director of Student Health and Human Services for Los Angeles Unified School District joined Steve Inskeep on NPR Morning Edition to discuss school safety procedures and practices. This interview is scheduled to air in the coming days.

ARHS Updates Student Parking Procedures: ARHS has updated our student parking procedures this year. Student parking has been divided into two Senior parking zones and one Junior parking zone. These changes to how parking assignments are assigned were made with the two goals of making the parking lots safer for everyone driving to school as well as providing greater motivation for students to arrive on-time to school. Early indications are that the changes have been successful in promoting both goals.

Club Day 2024: ARHS's Annual Club Day took place on September 12, 2024 during all SSP sessions. We had approximately 75 different student organizations represented at the event, which is designed to give students an opportunity to learn about and sign up for any of our student organizations at the start of the school year.

Professional Learning: A district-wide team of ELA teachers attended a curriculum writing workshop hosted by a consultant from ACES. In addition to learning curriculum writing techniques, teachers were introduced to a variety of instructional strategies that can be used to assist with the implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms. Math teachers from grades 7-12 attended a full day conference on the topic of "Building Thinking Classrooms." At the conference, they engaged in a series of breakout sessions that gave them the chance to practice instructional strategies that promote problem-solving skills in the math classroom.

AMSB Fall Musical Set: For the 2024 Spartan Players fall production, we will be performing '*Seussical the Musical*'. Auditions were held throughout the week and the student interest was overwhelming! Callbacks will be held later in the week, and although not everyone will receive a call back, just as in past years all students will be part of the production in some way.

CSDE Special Education Back to School: Tom Brant, Jaime Guthrie, Steve Mendelsohn, Amanda Mills, Jodi Everone, and Aleisha Zawadski attended the Bureau of Special Education's 21st Annual Back to School meeting on September 6, 2024. Information regarding CT SEDs, Dyslexia, Secondary Transition, and CSDE Monitoring was presented.

Fall Sports Begins: Fall sports registration was a success, as parents utilized online resources to request information, submit forms, and register for sports. Thank you to the parents who attended information night and are supporting our athletes at our competitions. We appreciate our coaches and volunteers who make athletic events possible and we are looking forward to a successful fall season...GO Spartans!!!

Climate

Link Crew Supports Incoming 9th Grade: Amity's annual Link Crew 9th grade orientation program took place on August 23, 2024 from 8:00 am – 1:15 pm. The day was organized and conducted by five ARHS teachers and 75 students in grades 11 and 12, and it included whole-class and small-group activities designed to welcome our newest Spartans and get them ready for the start of the school year and a cookout organized by several more members of the ARHS faculty.

Amity Celebrates All Students' Success: The members of the ARHS Principal's Committee have selected "Amity Celebrates All Students' Success" as the school wide theme for the 2024-2025 school year. Recent efforts to address the theme have included:

- During the first week of school all students participated in small-group discussions of the theme, how well the school is meeting this goal now, and suggestions they have for better meeting the goal. The faculty are now studying the student feedback in Inter-PLC groups and will use their findings to drive school climate improvement efforts this year.
- DEI Instructional Coach Peter Downhour is scheduling student focus groups in late September and early October to get direct student feedback on topics including recognizing student achievements, building pride in our school, and how students' day-to-day experiences affect the school environment.
- In the CTE department, culinary arts teacher Adrianna Linkstrom has created a "Chef of the Week" recognition program that will highlight an excelling student in our culinary program weekly on both a bulletin board in school and on social media (e.g. PTSO Facebook page). Our first Chef of the Week is senior Todd Evans, who is currently enrolled in two culinary arts classes and who is recognized for his leadership among his peers in those classes.
- The Math department has begun honoring "Math Students of the Month" who best demonstrated characteristics of the Portrait of the Graduate and the qualities of a successful math student in the previous month.

National Honor Society Induction: This year's National Honor Society induction ceremony took place on September 12, 2024. The 33 new NHS members were selected due to their demonstrated achievement in all four of the NHS pillars of Service, Character, Leadership, and Academics.

Student Government Annual Pink Out: The annual ARHS Student Government "Pink Out" fundraiser selling T-shirts to support Smilow Cancer Center's research and treatment work has been a success, raising more than \$2,000 to support the work.

AMSO After School Activities: Over 100 AMSO students are enjoying the start of several after school sports and clubs. Students are participating in a variety of sports including volleyball, soccer, field hockey and cross country. Many clubs have started to meet including Student Council, STEM Club, Dungeons and Dragons Club, Garden Club and the Lego Club. These activities allow students to explore interests outside of the academic realm, while developing positive social skills.

Unified Sports Returns: Unified Sports at ARHS will once again be led by Wendy Carrafiello and Alli Tucker. The season begins the first week of October with a home tournament scheduled for October 16, 2024.

Great Kids Highlights Amity Sophomore: Amity sophomore Emma Ivanov was featured on the most recent edition of WFSB Eyewitness News' *Great Kids* highlight for her involvement in the school and community. You can see WFSB's story here: [WFSB-Great-Kids-Amity](#).

No Place for Hate Meetings at AMSO: The No Place for Hate (NPFH) committee had their first meeting on September 23, 2024. Students reviewed the No Place for Hate Pledge and began plans to introduce the pledge to their peers. The group hopes to create several school wide activities that build students empathy and promote community.

AMSO Parent Coffee: The AMSO administration had their first parent coffee of the year on September 17, 2024. The conversation centered on building a strong home-school connection to promote student success. The open forum allowed parents to ask questions and get more information on helping their child with homework, accessing assignments through Schoology, and building independence in adolescents.

AMSB Color Fun Run: Save the date - On **October 19, 2024**, the Amity Middle School Bethany PTSO will host our Annual Color Fun Run. Registration begins at 9:00am and the event will kick off at 9:30am. This event is one of the main fund-raising activities for our PTSO and is a wonderful way to come together as an AMSB family. This school community event is always memorable and always

FUN! This is a family event and is a great way to spend a fall morning, running the streets of Bethany while being sprayed with colored water packets and powder. There are always laughs, plenty of selfies, and our community spirit is high.

Thank You to Our PTSOs: Over the summer, the PTSOs in all three schools planned for a wonderful welcome for students and staff. The PTSOs provided our teachers with wonderful welcome back lunches and snacks during our professional development days and had special treats and activities to welcome our students.