

# The ARPS Caregiver Connection

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## The Purpose of The ARPS Caregiver Connection

The ARPS Caregiver Connection is a monthly newsletter that brings together updates from Amherst, Pelham, and the Regional Schools in one place. Its purpose is to strengthen the partnership between schools and families by sharing timely information, celebrating achievements, and providing insight into district initiatives. By keeping communication clear and consistent, we hope every caregiver feels informed, included, and connected to the work of our schools.



# From the Desk of Dr. Xi

Welcome

Greetings Amherst, Pelham, and Regional School Community,

As we moved through October, I wanted to take a moment to thank you for helping us begin the school year with such promise and positivity. Walking through our classrooms and hallways each day, I am continually inspired by the joy, curiosity, and compassion our students bring to learning—and by the deep commitment of our staff and caregivers who make this community so special.

October was recognized as National Bullying Prevention Month, a time when we renew our collective commitment to ensuring that every student feels seen, valued, and safe. Across our schools, students and educators engaged in classroom conversations, community-building activities, and kindness initiatives that reminded us all that belonging matters. Together, we are shaping a culture where respect, empathy, and inclusion are not just words but daily practices. This month also highlighted another essential part of student success—consistent attendance. When students are present—both physically and emotionally—they have the greatest opportunity to learn, connect, and thrive. I want to thank our families for working closely with schools to support regular attendance and for reaching out when challenges arise. Your partnership helps us identify barriers early and provide meaningful support to keep students on track.

Above all, October was about connection—between home and school, between caregivers and educators, and between our collective efforts and the success of every child. Whether it's attending a parent meeting, participating in a fall event, or simply talking with your child about their day, your engagement makes a lasting difference. Strong caregiver partnerships are at the heart of student growth, and I am grateful for the many ways you continue to show up for our schools.

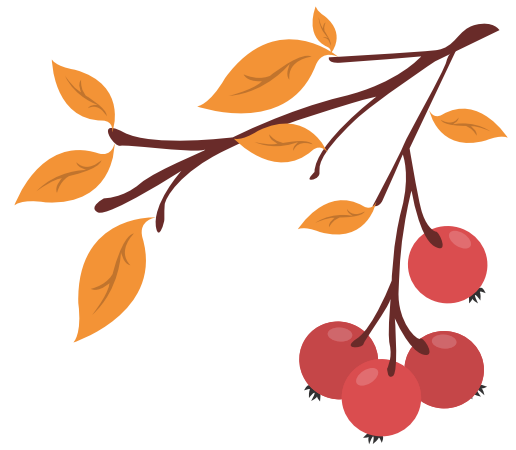
Thank you for your ongoing trust, collaboration, and care. Together, we will continue to build a community where every child feels safe, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential.

With gratitude,

Dr. Xi

## Monthlong Highlights

- 🌿 Native American Heritage Month
- 🇺🇸 National Family Engagement Month
- 🎓 National Career Development Month
- 🌟 National Gratitude Month
- 💜 National Adoption Awareness Month
- 🇺🇸 Military Family Appreciation Month
- 📖 National Scholarship Month
- 🏠 National Homeless Youth Awareness Month



## Weekly Observances

- 📅 Nov. 10–14 — National School Psychology Week
- 🇺🇸 Nov. 17–21 — American Education Week
- 🌐 Nov. 18–22 — International Education Week

## Key Days to Remember

- 🖋️ Nov. 1: National Authors Day
- 🧪 Nov. 8: STEM/STEAM Day
- 🇺🇸 Nov. 11: Veterans Day
- 🌸 Nov. 13: World Kindness Day
- ❤️ Nov. 15: National Philanthropy Day
- 👧 Nov. 20: Universal Children's Day
- 🦃 Nov. 27: Thanksgiving Day

# November

## Educational

## &

## Monthly

## Celebrations

## Family Connection Ideas

- ✨ Read books by Native American authors
- 🇺🇸 Create a "Gratitude Wall" at home or school
- 📧 Send thank-you notes to teachers or caregivers
- 🌈 Celebrate small acts of kindness every day



# Celebrating Growth and Partnership: MCAS 2025 Results

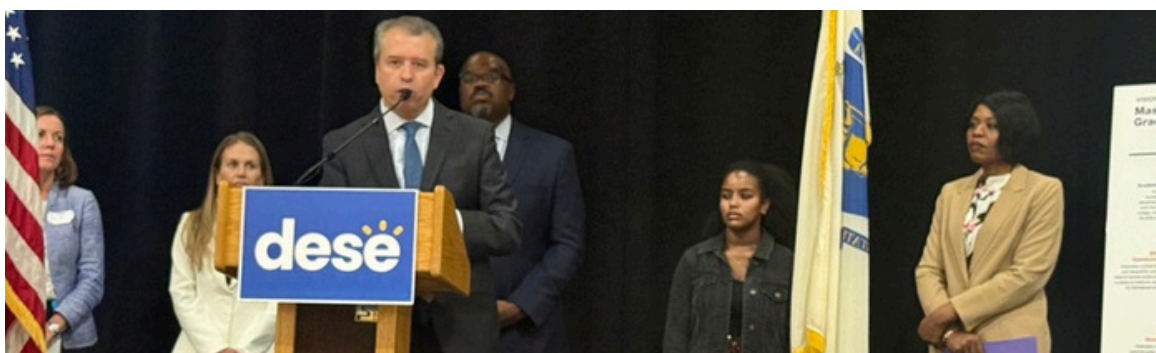


On September 29, I joined Commissioner Pedro Martinez, Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, and fellow educators at Ottoson Middle School in Arlington for the statewide release of the 2025 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results. The report showed that while Massachusetts continues to make modest gains in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, the statewide recovery from pandemic learning loss remains ongoing.

I am proud to share that our own districts were recognized among just 13 across the Commonwealth that have met or exceeded pre-pandemic performance in both English and math. Specifically, Amherst Elementary was recognized for strong performance in ELA and Math, and our Amherst Regional Middle School earned recognition for excellence in Math.

This achievement reflects the extraordinary dedication of our teachers, the perseverance of our students, and the unwavering partnership of our caregivers. As I emphasized during the release event, "These results are a powerful reminder of what happens when a community believes in its children and works together to support them. Our progress is not by chance—it's the product of intentional teaching, consistent attendance, and the deep collaboration between families and schools."

As we move forward, our focus remains clear: sustaining growth, closing opportunity gaps, and ensuring that every student continues to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Together, we are building not just strong learners—but a stronger community.





## **Update: Strengthening Our Bullying Prevention Systems**

Creating safe, supportive schools where every child feels they belong remains one of my highest priorities. Over the past several months, our district has taken a close and honest look at how we respond to reports of bullying, intimidation, and harassment. Through that work, we found areas where our systems needed to be stronger—particularly in how we document reports, complete investigations, and communicate outcomes with families.

We have already begun putting new safeguards in place, including clear timelines, training for all staff, and centralized documentation through BRIM, our district’s online reporting system. BRIM is available on every school’s website and allows students, caregivers, and staff to report concerns safely and directly. These reports are reviewed and tracked to ensure accountability and timely follow-up.

If you ever feel that a concern has not been addressed appropriately at the school level, please know that the Superintendent’s Office serves as the official point of appeal. You can contact me directly at [officeofthesuperintendent@arps.org](mailto:officeofthesuperintendent@arps.org), or reach out to my executive assistant, Meghan Dushko ([dushkom@arps.org](mailto:dushkom@arps.org)), who will coordinate next steps.

As caregivers, you play an essential role in maintaining the culture of respect and trust we are building across all schools. When you speak up, report concerns, and stay engaged, you help us protect every student’s right to learn in a safe environment. Together, we are strengthening our community—one report, one conversation, and one act of care at a time.



# What Families Can Do to Stay Informed and Engaged

Your partnership is essential in this work. Together, we can create a culture where every student feels protected and empowered.

Here's how you can help:

- Talk with your child about their school experiences. Encourage them to share when something doesn't feel right.
- Report concerns through BRIM: [https://bit.ly/ARPS\\_BRP](https://bit.ly/ARPS_BRP) – available on every school website.
- Request updates if you've submitted a report—you have the right to know how it's being addressed.
- Review our plan: Read the [Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan](#). It will be updated as part of our current review.
- Encourage your child to view reporting as an act of courage and self-advocacy.
- Appeal to the Superintendent's Office if you feel a matter hasn't been resolved appropriately.

You can contact [officeofthesuperintendent@arps.org](mailto:officeofthesuperintendent@arps.org) or reach my assistant, Meghan Dushko, at [dushkom@arps.org](mailto:dushkom@arps.org) for support or follow-up.

This work matters deeply—to you, to your children, and to all of us. As we continue through this audit, training, and policy refinement process, we will keep you informed every step of the way. Together, we can ensure that our schools are places where every student is safe, respected, and ready to learn—every day.



# UPDATE ON OUR K- 6 RESTRUCTURING



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Construction for the new Amherst elementary school is well underway! Each day, new progress brings us closer to opening a beautiful, energy-efficient, and inclusive building designed around student collaboration, accessibility, and joy in learning.

The School Committee will oversee the process of naming the new school, which will include opportunities for community input and student voice. This is a wonderful way for our district to honor its history while looking toward the future.

We are also working carefully through the redistricting process. As part of that work:

- Established students (those currently enrolled in a school but who, due to redistricting, may be assigned to another building) will have the option to remain in their current school under specific conditions.
- Siblings of these students will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to maintain stability for families whenever possible.
- Families will receive direct communication outlining eligibility, timelines, and how to request consideration for remaining in a current school.

This process is guided by compassion and practicality—we want to minimize disruption for children while ensuring balanced enrollment and equitable access to programs.

## 6th Grade Academy: A Space to Learn and Growth

The planning for the 6th Grade Academy—housed within Amherst Regional Middle School—is moving forward with great care. This model provides sixth graders with a sense of independence and identity, while still offering the structure, support, and connection they need as they prepare for adolescence.

### Space & Facilities

- The 2019 building study guided how hallways and classrooms on the second floor will be dedicated to each grade.
- There are ample bathrooms and learning areas, and no space limitations are anticipated.

### Logistics for Families

- School Schedule: 6th grade will follow the same start and end times as Amherst Regional Middle School.
- Lunch: There will be a dedicated lunch period exclusively for 6th grade students. ***There will be recess!***
- Transportation: Amherst will fund its portion of transportation costs, and 6th graders will ride the same buses as middle school students. Bus routes will be reviewed this spring to ensure efficiency and minimal disruption.
- Sports: Since 6th graders are part of the Amherst district (not yet the Region), they are not eligible for MIAA sports waivers. However, this does not affect current middle school sports programs or student opportunities.
- Orientation: We will host family information sessions and student orientation events this spring to help students and caregivers become familiar with the new space, schedule, and staff.

# Amherst K-6 Parent FAQ: What Families Are Asking

## Q1: What does “established student” mean?

An established student is one who is currently enrolled in a school but may be reassigned to another due to redistricting. These students will have the option to remain in their current school, based on certain conditions.

## Q2: How will I know if my child qualifies to stay at their current school?

Families will receive direct communication with details about eligibility, timelines, and the request process.

## Q3: Will siblings be allowed to remain together?

Siblings of established students will be reviewed case by case, and we will do our best to support family stability when possible.

## Q4: When will we learn more about the 6th Grade Academy?

We'll host information sessions and student orientations in spring 2026 to share more about the schedule, programs, and supports in place.

## Q5: What if I have questions or concerns right now?

You can always reach out to your school principal or contact the Superintendent's Office at [officeofthesuperintendent@arps.org](mailto:officeofthesuperintendent@arps.org). We're here to support you.



## Creating a Sense of Belonging for Every Student

In the Amherst, Pelham, and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools, we believe that belonging is at the heart of learning. Every child deserves to enter school each day feeling valued, respected, and safe to be who they are.

This month, our district is deepening that commitment through a partnership with the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools program—a national initiative that helps schools build inclusive, respectful environments for all students and families.

On October 22, 2025, our district leadership team—including Principals, Executive Directors, Directors, and Assistant Principals—will participate in Welcoming Schools training focused on creating the systems and structures for successful implementation. Then, on November 4, 2025, the training will extend to all ARPS staff, ensuring a unified, district-wide approach.

This work reinforces our promise: to make every classroom and hallway a place where students feel seen, heard, and supported. Together, we're building schools where belonging isn't just encouraged—it's expected.

 All-inclusive

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## Until Next Month...

As we wrap up this edition of the Caregiver Connection, I want to thank you for taking the time to stay connected, engaged, and informed. Each month, I'm reminded that our greatest strength as a district comes from the partnership we share with our families and community. Thank you for all that you do to support your children, their teachers, and our schools. I look forward to sharing more updates, celebrations, and stories with you in next month's issue.

