

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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December 2016

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

As a new year begins, I enjoy thinking back on all of the wonderful ways our school community comes together to help each other during the holiday season. I would like to share a few examples of this. Collectively the Arlington schools raised over \$4,500 in gift cards during the Thanksgiving food drive. In December, our schools were actively involved in the Arlington Holiday Help Drive, a wonderful program that makes sure families receive needed gifts. This program has existed for decades, and I am proud that our schools embrace it and participate every year. Bishop has participated in a Mitten Tree for the last eight years, collecting mittens, gloves, scarves and hats for children and adults that are distributed by the Arlington Department of Children and Families. Peirce Kindergarten classes collected new pajamas for children and matched each donation with a book. The third grade Girl Scout troop at Stratton collected new and gently used coats for children aged newborn through teen for [Cradles to Crayons](#).

The kindness and caring shown by our families doesn't stop on December 31. The Stratton community was recently notified that one of its families is juggling medical conditions resulting in frequent visits to Children's Hospital. Donations of grocery and gas gift cards are being accepted to help them through this difficult time. [Arlington EATS](#) has just announced that they are starting a new once-a-month Community Meal to be held at Thompson. In addition to a wonderful dinner, attendees can go home with fresh produce, eggs, milk and protein sources as well as books, toys and clothes. The group welcomes volunteers for this and their Snack Prep program, and you can sign up [here](#). Both of these efforts illustrate the willingness of our families to come forward to meet the needs of others on an ongoing basis and the role that our schools can play.

I was happy to be one of the APS team members attending the METCO Holiday Jazz Brunch on December 11. Many of you know that Arlington joined Braintree, Brookline, Lexington, Lincoln and Newton as the first districts to welcome METCO students when the program began in 1966. The event celebrated the group's 52 year legacy and the retirement of Director Dr. Jean McGuire. During her 43 year tenure, over 15,000 graduates and their families were served by this program. Arlington Public Schools continues to be an active and enthusiastic participant in METCO, and we value the contributions of the over 70 students who are with us this year.

In the following newsletter, you will learn more about the wonderful things going on in our schools. Please enjoy reading it, and I wish everyone a happy and healthy 2017.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Safe & Supportive Schools

Two Grants Support Assessment and Action Planning of District-Wide Approach

A Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education competitive [Safe and Supportive](#)

[Schools Grant](#) and a Development and Expansion Grant from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) will enable us to assess our current state, create actions plans and build on our previous work to create the safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment necessary to improve educational outcomes for all students. [Learn more>](#)

Department News

KidZone, TeenZone and VacationFun! Registration Opens at Arlington Community Education

The new [Winter 2017 Youth Catalog](#) has everything you need to know about classes, pricing and registration for the wonderful enrichment opportunities offered in the KidZone, TeenZone and VacationFun! programs beginning in late January. [Read more>](#)

Thompson Elementary School Neighbors Notified of Upcoming Construction

The patience of the community is appreciated as winter work begins on the town-approved project to add six classrooms to Thompson Elementary School. [Learn more>](#)

Professional Development

Arlington Public Schools Chosen as Catalyst District in Personalized Education Consortium

It is an honor to have been chosen as one of the 12 founding members of the [Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech \(MAPLE\) Consortium](#), a learning collaborative that will catalyze the implementation of personalized learning approaches throughout Massachusetts. [Learn more>](#)

World Language Teachers Attend and Present at ACTFL Convention

All of our World Language educators were able to attend the [American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages](#) Convention last month. Four teachers were among the many presenters who shared their expertise with the national audience. [Learn more>](#)

Visual Arts Teachers to Attend 2017 National Art Education Association Conference

I am delighted that five Arlington Visual Arts teachers will be attending the 2017 [National Art Education Association](#) Conference in New York City this March. They will share what they learn about curriculum and innovative teaching strategies with their colleagues upon their return. [Read more>](#)

Awards & Distinctions

Sixth Grade Anti-Smoking Posters Deliver Strong Messages

After careful consideration, a team of judges chose 13 colorful [posters](#) to become part of this year's anti-smoking calendar. This contest is part of our efforts to educate students on the dangers of tobacco use. [Read more>](#)

Eighteen AHS Students Chosen for MMEA Northeastern District Senior Festival

Arlington will be well represented at the [Music Educators Association \(MMEA\) Northeastern District Senior Festival](#) next month as 10 students participate in the Chorus, six perform in the Orchestra and two more play in the Band. Fourteen students will go on to All-State auditions next month. [Learn more>](#)

Stratton Principal Co-authors Article on Measuring Democratic Whole Group Classroom Conversations

In [The Democracy Empowerment Rubric: Assessing Whole Group Conversations in Early Childhood Classrooms](#), Stratton Principal Michael Hanna and co-author Ben Mardell stress the importance of cultivating the skills needed for strong citizenship, and present a rubric for assessing the democratic nature of classroom conversations. [Read more>](#)

Youth Designed Banners Will Fly in Arlington for the Second Year

The *Arlington Public Youth Art Banner Initiative* will soon be announcing the 20 student designs that will become banners and hang in Arlington Center next April and May. This is the second year of the project

that aims to promote and encourage development in the visual arts and foster community through public art. [Learn more>](#)

Academics & Enrichment

"Investigations 3.0" Pays Attention to Mathematics Content, Student Thinking and Understanding

The [updated mathematics curriculum](#) introduced in the Kindergarten and first grades this year emphasizes reasoning and sense making as well as content, and includes digital components that match the district technology and assessment goals. [Read more>](#)

Ottoson Math Club Encourages Creative Problem Solving and Offers Opportunities to Compete

At each meeting, Ottoson Math Club members pick up a topic sheet on a particular problem solving technique, and then choose either JV or Varsity level problems to tackle. These weekly exercises and the fun "gut rounds" that end the meetings help get interested students ready to try math contests that include the [Continental Math League](#), [AMC 8](#), and [MATHCOUNTS](#). [Learn more>](#)

OMS iPad Tech Council and Thompson Students Demonstrate that "Every Student Has a Story"

Interviews of Thompson students at all grade levels conducted by OMS iPad Tech Council members will soon be available online. The project involved researching and learning new technologies, and the results will help all of us develop a deeper understanding of some of the younger members of our school community. [Read more>](#)

Innovative Hour of Code Observances Engage Students in Various Ways

Four schools offered different experiences as students expanded their knowledge of coding in the classroom or at a special event during this year's [Hour of Code](#). [Read more>](#).

Creative Highlights

ONN Reports Live, Produces a Cooking Show and Films School Events

The Ottoson News Network is going strong, [reporting from the unveiling](#) of *Inside Out Ottoson*, producing a monthly [French cooking show](#) and filming the OMS winter concerts. [Learn more>](#)

OMS Production of "Offerings" Questions the Value of Acceptance

As each of 10 strangers comes forward, an unseen voice indicates whether the offering is accepted, but says nothing about why. The lack of explanations elicits different responses from each individual and the value of acceptance is called into question in this year's fall play at Ottoson. [Read more>](#)

Student Artwork Shines at Ottoson Fall Exhibit

The beautiful [slideshow](#) created by Visual Arts Director David Ardito illustrates the amazing work that was on display at the OMS First Quarter Art Exhibit. [Learn more>](#)

Middle and High School Winter Concerts Warm the Season

The Arlington High School Winter Concert and the Ottoson Instrumental Ensembles Winter Concert filled the air with music ranging from Mendelssohn to Mancini. Each concert featured over 200 students and vividly demonstrated the strength of our Performing Arts program. [Read more>](#)

Continue to read the December 2016 Newsletter

Safe & Supportive Schools

Two Grants Support Assessment and Action Planning of District-Wide Approach

I am delighted to report that Arlington Public Schools has received two generous grants that will enable us to assess six critical areas and create action plans to create a truly inclusive and supportive Pre-K-12 environment. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education has awarded us a competitive [Safe and Supportive Schools Grant](#) for \$31,000, and the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) is

supporting our work with a \$10,000 Development and Expansion Grant. These awards enable us to do the following:

- Create a Safe and Supportive Schools Working Group with representatives from each school. Alison Elmer, Special Education Director, is leading the group with assistance from Consultant Sara M. Burd, Adjunct Professor at Lesley University and District Leader of Social Emotional Learning in Reading.
- Complete the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Behavioral Health Framework and Assessment Tool. This will enable us to assess leadership, professional development, access to resources and services, academic and non-academic approaches, policies and protocols and collaboration with families at each school and in the district as a whole.
- Identify the greatest areas of need for change and decide on priority areas for action. This will be led by the Working Group with input from a broad range of stakeholders.
- Develop district and individual school improvement plans.

This work builds upon the efforts undertaken by our school community the last few years. A US Department of Education grant funded Project S.U.C.C.E.S.S. that enabled us to implement [Responsive Classroom](#) in some elementary schools and increase knowledge and use of [Open Circle](#) in others. We were also able to provide professional development for faculty and mental health staff, update processes regarding referrals for outside counseling services and maintain and strengthen a close relationship with the [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#). In my October newsletter, I reported on the [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity](#) courses that we are currently offering to our teachers and staff. We routinely conduct Youth Risk Behavior Surveys of our middle and high school populations, have implemented programs around mindfulness and wellness, and we have supplied standing desks and other concentration tools with the help of the Arlington Education Foundation. Additionally, we participate in the community-wide conversations around substance abuse along with the Arlington Police Department and [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#).

Creating the kind of "safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment" that the state identifies as necessary to improve educational outcomes for all students is truly a community effort. I am grateful to have the support of the Commonwealth and the Arlington Education Foundation in our work to identify ways to ensure that our schools are places where all students can thrive.

Department News

KidZone, TeenZone and VacationFun! Registration Opens at Arlington Community Education

Winter session registration is now open for three great youth programs offered by Arlington Community Education. For students in grades K-5, [KidZone](#) offers classes that range from four world languages to yoga, story creation, drama, video game design, stock market investing and much, much more. Children may attend the class of their choice at any school. With the exception of P.E. Plus A.M., offered at Hardy, the sessions are held after school.

[TeenZone](#) offers classes for grades 6-8 and the variety of choices range from programming to pasta cooking, parkour, chess, CADD, and babysitting basics. These courses meet at either Ottoson Middle School or Arlington High School. [VacationFun!](#), for grades K-8, is held at Arlington High School from February 21-24 and April 18-21, offering full and half-day classes in Lego robotics, cooking, art, drama, parkour, dance, yoga, LARP and more.

For older students, SAT review classes, ACT Prep, college planning and driver's education and crash prevention [are also offered](#). In addition, Arlington Community Education offers classes for mixed ages ranging from cooking Valentine's treats and making cards, to celebrating the Vernal Equinox, CADD and playing board games together.

You can review all the wonderful opportunities for learning, fitness and fun in the [Winter 2017 Youth Catalog](#). There you will find class descriptions, prices and information on how to register online. Classes begin in late January. I want to thank the great team at Arlington Community Education for putting together another exciting and varied program for our young people this winter.

Thompson Elementary School Neighbors Notified of Upcoming Construction

We are moving forward with the town-approved project to add six classrooms to the Thompson Elementary School to meet the space needs of an increasing enrollment there. The abutting neighbors have been notified that the first steps of this work are starting. The contractor has placed fencing and trailers and is paving additional walkways in the playground area so that there are new pathways to the school entrance. After that, site work for the foundation will occur, along with steel framing.

We know that this may cause some disruption to the neighborhood, and we appreciate the patience of the community as this important work proceeds. The addition is projected for completion by the opening of school in September 2017.

Professional Development

Arlington Public Schools Chosen as Catalyst District in Personalized Education Consortium

I am pleased to announce that Arlington Public Schools is one of 12 innovative districts chosen to help Massachusetts move forward in developing and implementing personalized education. Personalized education is a way to provide multiple points of access to a curriculum, with a range of possible assignments students can do to demonstrate their competency, all in the context of educational standards. The catalyst districts who are members of the new [Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech \(MAPLE\) Consortium](#) will share what they are doing and learn from each other as they move forward in implementing this approach. Over time, the number of districts participating in MAPLE will expand, enabling more schools to identify and implement successful models. This will rapidly move the state forward toward the goal that all students are prepared for success in the 21st century.

We believe that increasing personalization improves student engagement and educational outcomes for all students, and participation in this educational collaborative is an incredible opportunity for us to build on, and improve, the work we have been doing. We will meet regularly with representatives from Andover, Beverly, Burlington, Concord, Millis, Natick, Needham, North Reading, Revere, Somerville and Westford to share best practices. We will visit the other districts to see and experience the innovative approaches they are successfully using.

Research and technical assistance partners are also members of the Consortium, so our access to these resources will increase. MAPLE is a public-private partnership created by the [LearnLaunch Institute](#) and the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) with support from the [Barr Foundation](#) and the [Nellie Mae Education Foundation](#). It is an honor to have been chosen as a founding member of a group that will catalyze the implementation of personalized learning approaches throughout the state.



World Language Teachers Attend and Present at ACTFL Convention

The annual [American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages](#) (ACTFL) Convention was held in Boston last month, enabling all of our world language teachers to attend, many for the first time. The convention, which attracts over 8,000 language teachers from around the world, is a great opportunity for educators to learn new strategies from their peers.

Some of the highlights reported by our teachers give you a flavor for the kinds of information that presenters shared. Classroom instructional practices that facilitate proficiency gains was the subject of a session attended by AHS Mandarin Teacher Konwen Yuen. OMS Latin Teacher Abbi Holt was excited about *Party like it's MMXVI: The Fun and the Fruit of 21st Century Latin Teaching*, and described it as being delivered by "one of the best Latin presenters she saw." Language consultant [Greg Duncan](#), who visited Arlington last year to deliver an in-service training, gave workshops and sessions that several of our teachers attended. This gave them an opportunity to follow-up with him now that they have had a year of implementing his strategies.

I am happy to tell you that four of our teachers shared their ideas during the five sessions they presented. Three teachers delivered 60-minute sessions. OMS French and Spanish teacher Anne Zachary presented *Make an Impression: Enhancing Cultural and Linguistic Proficiency with Art. Building the Latin Fandom: A New Way to Cultivate Passionate Students* was the title of the session delivered by OMS Latin teacher Abbi Holt. World Language Director Catherine Ritz presented *Assessing Performance: Moving from Chapter Tests to Authentic Assessments* to a "standing room only" audience, and she participated in a panel discussion with World Language department chairs from Andover and Wellesley. OMS Mandarin Teacher Na Lu-Hogan presented a three-hour workshop entitled *Immerse Yourself in Chinese: Engaging Strategies to Enhance Mandarin Chinese Proficiency*

Another highlight from the convention was the nomination of our World Language Director and Current President of the [Massachusetts Foreign Language Association](#) (MaFLA) Catherine Ritz to become the MaFLA Programming Coordinator beginning in January 2017. In this volunteer role, she will coordinate all the professional development events that MaFLA offers next year.

I am delighted that all of our teachers were able to take part in the ACTFL Convention, and that so many of them shared their expertise with such a wide audience. Thank you for taking part and congratulations to Ms. Ritz on her new role at the MaFLA.

Visual Arts Teachers to Attend 2017 National Art Education Association Conference

I am delighted that five Arlington visual art teachers will attend the 2017 [National Art Education Association](#) Conference in New York City this March. The 3-day event features numerous workshops that focus on curriculum and innovative teaching strategies. Upon their return, AHS teacher David Moore and

elementary art teachers Stacie Greenland, Melody Wolfe-Thomas, Deborah Campagna and Samantha Kasle will be sharing what they learn with other staff members. This conference is a wonderful opportunity for our educators to meet others from across the country who share their passion for teaching, and I look forward to learning about their experiences.

Awards & Distinctions

Sixth Grade Anti-Smoking Posters Deliver Strong Messages

Educating students about the dangers of tobacco use is an important part of our health and wellness efforts at Arlington Public Schools. We know that the tobacco industry targets our children, and we want to be sure that they have the right information to make informed decisions. Instructor Carlene Newell leads the way in this effort and with the support of the [Sanborn Foundation](#) and the OMS sixth grade cluster teachers, she holds an anti-smoking poster contest every year. All sixth grade students may participate, and they have about five weeks to complete their work.

The goal of the contest is to create a calendar that delivers strong anti-smoking messages. After receiving the colorful entries, a panel of judges reviews them in June and selects three winners from each cluster. An additional poster is chosen from the total number of entries to serve as a cover. The calendars are printed over the summer and every winner receives a copy in the fall. I am happy to tell you that you can see all the winning entries that are part of the latest calendar by clicking [here](#).

We are fortunate to have the Sanborn Foundation supporting cancer prevention programs in our schools. In the spring, Ms. Newell delivers a program to all second grade students on Sun Safety. Helping our young people understand the dangers of e-cigarettes is her next challenge. I want to thank Ms. Newell for her dedication to this important work.

Eighteen AHS Students Chosen for MMEA Northeastern District Senior Festival

Congratulations to the 18 young people who will represent Arlington High School at the Massachusetts [Music Educators Association \(MMEA\) Northeastern District Senior Festival](#) at U Mass Lowell. The concert takes place in Durgin Hall at 1:00 pm on January 14.

Hannah Alton, Olivia Bonardi, Henri Choi, Joseph Dalton, Neeraja Deshpande, Olivia Graceffa, Benjamin Horsburgh, Venice Mountain-Zona, Sylvie Remillard and Adrian Verspyck are performing in the Chorus. Liam Barthelmy, Charlotte Bell, Giulia Haible, Sarah Kam, Fiona Lessell and Stefan Winkler are taking part in the Orchestra. Amy Cunniff and Greg Foley are performing in the Band. Our musicians and vocalists were among the many outstanding young people from 58 cities and towns who auditioned on November 19. Being chosen is a tremendous honor, and a testament to their skill and dedication to excellence.

Additionally, 14 of these students have been chosen to audition for the MMEA All-State Festival and Concert that will be held in the spring. I know that everyone participating in the district ensembles will have a meaningful experience, and I wish the best of luck to those going on to All-State auditions next month.

Stratton Principal Co-authors Article on Measuring Democratic Whole Group Classroom Conversations

"Most importantly, a democratic classroom is a community where children have the opportunity to make meaning together and develop ideas collectively. This involves far more than children voting for what kind of crackers they want for snack or having several options of where to play during choice time. It involves children and teachers together creating a culture — the rules, rituals, stories, artifacts and ideas that define their group. It involves a group of children "who are emotionally, intellectually and aesthetically engaged in solving problems, creating products and making meaning" (Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001, p.285). These are exactly the conditions

young children need in order to flourish academically and personally in our new economy, where available jobs are those that cannot be performed by a robot or computer; jobs that require creative, collaborative and communicative skill (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009)."

The quote above comes from the recent article co-authored by Stratton Principal Michael Hanna and professional colleague Ben Mardell in the Fall 2016 edition of the *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice*, volume VII, Issue 1. In [The Democracy Empowerment Rubric: Assessing Whole Group Conversations in Early Childhood Classrooms](#), Mr. Hanna and Mr. Mardell stress the importance of cultivating the skills needed for strong citizenship, and present a rubric for assessing the democratic nature of classroom conversations.

The launch of [Tools of the Mind](#) in our Kindergarten classrooms connected Mr. Hanna with Mr. Mardell's work. [Mr. Mardell](#) is a Project Director at [Harvard University's Project Zero](#). Stratton Kindergarten teacher Ashly Nolan agreed to be filmed deploying the rubric, and the film and the rubric was used to work with teachers and building leaders in early childhood programs in Tucson, Arizona and Albuquerque, New Mexico. I am pleased to see the work or one of our educators shared in this way, and congratulate Mr. Hanna on the publication of the article.



Youth Designed Banners Will Fly in Arlington for the Second Year

We all look forward to learning which 20 designs have been selected for display through the *Arlington Public Youth Art Banner Initiative* this year. The project invited residents aged 12 to 18 from Ottoson, Saint Agnes, Arlington Catholic, Arlington High, Medford High and Minuteman High Schools to submit designs under the theme *Passionate Community*. The chosen pieces will be digitized, printed as large vinyl banners and hung on utility poles in the town center during April and May.

[Arlington Public Art](#), a town committee under the auspices of Vision 2020, sponsors the project. The goal is to promote and encourage development in the visual arts and foster a sense of community through public art. Members of the selection committee included Selectman Joseph Curro, Public Art Committee Chair Adria Arch, and graphic designer Jill Manca. The family of Gracie James provided funding.

Academics & Enrichment



"Investigations 3.0" Pays Attention to Mathematics Content, Student Thinking and Understanding

This year, our Kindergarten and first grade students have been experiencing the newest edition of the Investigations Mathematics Series, [Investigations 3.0](#). This update to the curriculum we have been using in our elementary grades is notable for the way it weaves reasoning and sense making throughout the lessons. Mathematics Director Matthew Coleman reports that the Standards of Mathematical Practice that are part of the [Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics](#) are sometimes overlooked, *Investigations 3.0*, however, does a very good job of attending to these while still covering the content

standards well. The emphasis is on the process of mathematics as opposed to just finding the answer. In addition, the digital components of the newest version are an excellent match with some of the technology and assessment goals in our district.

Preparation for implementation began at the end of last year when Kindergarten and first grade teachers previewed a unit and reflected on the organization and lesson flow. Early in the summer, the Mathematics Coaches and ten teachers attended a two-day workshop facilitated by [TERC](#), the creators of the curriculum. Our Mathematics Coaches then led a half-day summer workshop to plan the first unit and do a curriculum review.

Professional development is continuing throughout the school year. A full-day workshop centered on the technology platform was held for Coaches, mathematics mentors and teachers in October, and all Kindergarten and first grade teachers attended a full-day workshop in November. Differentiation, technology tools, planning and the use of classroom routines were all featured during this time. Additional unit planning will go on at upcoming half-day workshops, and at least two more professional development sessions will focus on classroom routines and the technology platform.

When compared to earlier versions, *Investigations 3.0* shows improvements in teacher resources, the technology platform and the assessment components. Mr. Coleman believes that the state content standards are covered more appropriately as well. The updated curriculum will be introduced in grades two and three next year, and in grades four and five the following year. Implementations of this size are a challenge for our teachers and staff, and I appreciate the time everyone has taken to be ready to understand what is required to deliver the new lessons to their students. I thank Mr. Coleman for his leadership throughout what will be a three-year process.

Ottoson Math Club Encourages Creative Problem Solving and Offers Opportunities to Compete

- How many positive integers from 1 to 100, inclusive, have an even number of positive divisors?
- What is the 2016th digit after the decimal point when $1/7$ is expressed as a decimal?
- Carolina M. was born on Saturday, November 5th, 2016. On what day of the week will Carolina be 705 days old?
- What is the minimum perimeter of a triangle with integer side lengths, two of which are 8 inches and 14 inches?

The questions above are a sample of what [Ottoson Math Club](#) members work on at a typical meeting. Each weekly practice starts with a warm-up problem, designed to be quick and easy and get the students ready to tackle more challenging questions. The group then focuses on a particular problem solving technique, giving them the opportunity to really dive into it and learn it well. Students pick up a topic sheet on the technique and choose to work on 10 [Mathcounts](#) problems at either the JV (slightly easier) or Varsity level. Clues provided on the back of each problem set help the students determine how best to think about the problems. Some of the techniques that the Club members practice include the difference of squares, sum of arithmetic series, formula for number of factors of any number, dimensional scaling and Pythagorean triples.

Parent volunteer and math tutor Jonathan McIntyre and OMS Mathematics teacher Jennifer Buckley, the Club co-leaders, report that the students dive right into the practice problems, working together with friends. After about 30 minutes, Mr. McIntyre goes over the topic sheet and explains the technique with more sample problems. The group then splits into JV and Varsity, and the co-leaders go over the most difficult problems. The meeting ends with a "guts round" competition, with separate JV and Varsity competitions between two or three teams of about three people. Three sets of three problems are distributed, and the first team to turn in a set gets the most points for correct answers.

Mr. McIntyre and Ms. Buckley have several goals for the Ottoson Math Club. They want to help the students understand the creativity that underlies mathematics, and keep them from seeing the topic as boring. They want to provide interested students with the opportunity to handle more challenging

mathematics problems than they get in class. Additionally, they want to offer interested middle school students the opportunity to participate in mathematics competitions.

[Continental Math League](#) (CML) contests are offered once a month for five months. They are the easiest level offered at the Club while still requiring creative problem solving. Different problems per grade level are offered, and the time limit of 30 minutes for six problems gives the students time to think them through and learn from the experience. The contests are scored on-site so feedback happens much more quickly than other competitions. The CML is an excellent stepping-stone for those students who want to move on to more challenging contests. This year 22 students took part in the first CML test--seven from the sixth grade, nine from the seventh grade and six from the eighth grade.

The [AMC 8](#), offered by the [Mathematics Association of America \(MAA\)](#), is more challenging and it is held at middle schools around the country every November. Competitors have 40 minutes to complete 25 problems, and OMS had 66 students take part this year. Participants tackle 25 questions in 40 minutes.

Another challenging competition that Math Club members take part in is [MATHCOUNTS](#). The in-school competition to determine the team that will represent OMS will be held on January 17. The top ten students will participate in the Metro Chapter regional meet in Melrose on Saturday, February 4.

I want to thank Mr. McIntyre and Ms. Buckley for their leadership of the Ottoson Math Club. They create an environment that enables all levels to take part, and makes it easy for students to become involved in competitive mathematics. Approximately 30 students are active attendees of the Club, and small rewards for those who attend most often and work hard to learn keep the momentum going. Here are the answers to the sample problems at the beginning of this article: 90 (all except for the perfect squares), 2, Thursday and 29.



OMS iPad Tech Council and Thompson Students Demonstrate that "Every Student Has a Story"

"I learned that elementary school students, however young they are, have lots to share and plenty to talk about. We often underestimate them, but I learned that they should be encouraged and supported."

As the above quote illustrates, a wonderful example of bringing people of different ages together with the help of technology has been underway between the OMS iPad Tech Council and students at Thompson. *Every Student Has a Story* began with the simple idea that giving older and younger children an opportunity to work together will let them get to know each other, develop empathy, make connections and increase appreciation of diversity in the APS Community.

The iPad Tech Council is a group of 15 seventh grade students who meet with History teacher Alison Sancinito every D Day lunch period to discuss technology initiatives. Their project concept was to interview Thompson students from each grade level, edit the interviews, and then make them available to the greater community online. This meant that the group had to do research on a variety of digital tools so that they could determine which ones would allow them to design and create their online content most

effectively. They needed to learn interviewing skills, get Thompson Principal Karen Donato on board so that interested young students could be identified, and perform the interviews.

Council members worked with Ms. Sancinito to do their research, develop questions and get tips on how to conduct an interview or discussion with a younger student. Before going to Thompson, they participated in a planning day in conference rooms at Robbins Library. They reviewed podcast formats and styles. They presented their idea to Principal Donato several weeks before they wanted to perform the interviews. With her agreement, Thompson teachers identified students who might want to participate and permission slips were distributed. Everyone was asked to bring a small item along that represented something special about them.

The Council members were ready to go on the morning of the interviews, but it soon became apparent that not every Thompson student had brought an item to begin the discussion. No worries, however, as the OMS students adapted quickly and used Google Docs to create a new set of questions and share them with all the interviewers. Time was also available for the elementary students to ask questions of the older students, establishing a two-way sharing conversation.

Immediately after the interviews, it was apparent that this had been a very positive experience for the members of the iPad Tech Council. Here are some of their reactions:

"Interviewing a young student was really enjoyable. I feel like I got to connect with a young person who inspired me, and who was happy about the opportunity to share stories and feelings they had for others to hear."

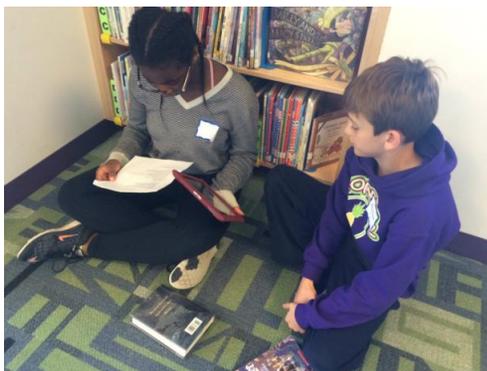
"I feel like it was definitely an interesting experience, talking to a younger student. The student wasn't that much younger than me, so it was like talking to a fellow classmate. I learned that when talking to a younger student, you should try to have it as a conversation."

"Interviewing a younger student was a fun experience for me. It also taught me about how much students really learn each year."

"I loved interviewing a younger student!"

Technology Specialist Susan Bisson reports that the iPad Tech Council members did a fabulous job throughout the project. Their upfront work led to them being enthusiastic, well prepared and diligent on the day of the interviews. The project enabled the students to demonstrate a variety of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [2016 Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards](#) in tools, collaboration and communication and research. Several students have expressed interest in continuing the project at other elementary schools.

The interviews are now being edited, and I look forward to sharing them with you when they are ready. I want to applaud the members of the iPad Technology Council and the Thompson students who took part, and thank Ms. Sancinito and Ms. Bisson for their leadership and support of this fine work. This is a tremendous example of how we can bring people together and learn from each other.



Innovative Hour of Code Observances Engage Students in Various Ways

The [Hour of Code](#) is a one-hour introduction to computer science that is designed to give every student the opportunity to learn coding basics. It is organized by [code.org](#), and promoted in December during Computer Science Education Week. As in previous years, several of our schools sponsored special activities that enabled our young people to expand their knowledge of coding. Here are four examples of how Hour of Code was observed in our district.

At Ottoson, the [activities](#) on the Hour of Code website provided the basis for what was done. Teachers expected the students to be silently coding during the event, but Principal Eileen Woods indicates that there was quite a hum as the young people worked collaboratively. Students felt particularly empowered when they could help others. Sharing the best games with each other was very popular. The students enjoyed the experience so much they requested that teachers leave the activities up on their websites so they could continue coding on their own time.

At Brackett, parents took the lead to offer activities in the classrooms, and this year there were over 30 volunteers. The Brackett PTO STEM Committee selected games for each grade based on skill level. Committee member Johanna Wood said it was clear that the participants were having fun while learning coding basics. Everyone was encouraged to continue at home by visiting [hourofcode.org](#) or [code.org](#) to play the self-paced activities themselves or with their parents.

The Hour of Code observance at Thompson began during Computer Science Education Week with the introduction of [Scratch Jr.](#) to the five and six year olds in the Kindergarten classes. Teachers Nicole Melnik, Allie Abbott, Amanda McNulty and Kate Giovannini created mini-sessions of coding during the science or mathematics blocks. Each session was a new challenge and the teachers report that the students had a great time using the coding program on their iPads. Once they accomplished the challenge, such as making the sun set or causing characters to disappear, they had time to create their own programs. Use of the application will continue throughout the school year.

Dallin makes Hour of Code a community event by holding it on Saturday morning. The school supplies iPads and this year PTO STEAM Coordinator Gil Irizarry began the December 10 event with a 1-hour introductory lesson to get coding started. All grades were welcome, and parents were encouraged to accompany their children.

These examples illustrate how our district has embraced the Hour of Code and the value of learning coding to develop problem-solving skills, logic and creativity. I want to thank the teachers and parent volunteers who have worked hard to come up with innovative ways to expose our young people to coding.

Creative Highlights



ONN Reports Live, Produces a Cooking Show and Films School Events

The Ottoson News Network (ONN) is off and running, filming important school events and producing shows of their own. You will want to be sure and watch the wonderful [Arlington Public News segment](#) the

group created at the unveiling of *Inside Out Ottoson*. In the film, ONN reporter, editor and director David Gorbunov interviews Interim Principal Eileen Woods as well as Visual Arts teachers and project organizers Alicia Serafini and Polly Ford about what the project hopes to accomplish and to get their reactions to the finished installation. Additionally, Mel Goldsipe, Vice Chair of the Arlington Human Rights Commission, reviews the distressing incidents that led Ottoson and the community to come together and create this wonderful celebration of diversity at our middle school. Dinor Nallbani, Noah Kuznick, Brandan Leu, Vittorio Prete, George Estrada, Sofia Gruniou, Page Gromfin and Nadia Ayad assisted David in the production of the segment.

The monthly cooking show *Teens Cook: French Edition* is a very exciting project. In each show, ONN members work with Francoise Matte and Cecile Penot-Dietrich of [French in the Kitchen](#) to create seasonal delights. Filming takes place from 2:30-6:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month. You won't want to miss the first episode, [Apple Roses](#), featuring a recipe from the cultural region of Brittany. Seventh grade student Dinor Nallbani and ONN alumni and ninth grade student Marie Beck are onscreen with the cooking teachers, while members Daniel Gorbunov, and Catriona Beck work with ONN Advisor and Special Education teacher Susan Taylor and tenth grade ONN Alumni Felix Moisand on the filming. The latest episode, *Chocolate Yule Log*, will be ready to share shortly. OMS Librarian and Media Assistant Edith Moisand and ACMI's Kevin Wetmore are the producers.

The Ottoson News Network continued their tradition of filming the OMS Winter Concerts. Links will be soon be available for the Instrumental Concert and the Chorus Concert which took place in December. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of students eager to do this work and it is so exciting to see their skills develop over the year. I want to thank Ms. Moisand and Ms. Taylor for providing the leadership to ONN.



OMS Production of "Offerings" Questions the Value of Acceptance

Ten strangers come together, each bearing an object that has meaning for them. As they offer the object to someone unseen, a voice tells them if their offering is accepted. There are no explanations. What does it mean to be accepted? What does it mean to be rejected? What happens next in either case?

This was the situation faced by the cast members of *Offerings*, Ottoson's fall drama production. As the characters question the meaning and value of acceptance, different emotions are evident. Some individuals become angry. Others are defiant. Still others feel desperate. The play ends without final resolution, leaving some audience members unsettled, and left to question whether seeking acceptance from others is meaningful or absurd and futile.

The message of the play was one of the elements that led English teacher and Director Jenna Fernandes to choose *Offerings*. Producing a fall play means there is only time for about 13 rehearsals, so it is helpful to be able to produce a show with low requirements for sets and costumes. In addition, *Offerings* includes several monologues. This presented the opportunity for students to get some guidance on how to deliver a good monologue and to learn how to communicate character nonverbally while listening to someone else give theirs.

Eleven students participated in the *Offerings* cast, and about 10 more helped by folding programs, hanging flyers, and selling tickets. Special Education teacher Randi Flynn was on hand to sell tickets and to take the head shots of the cast for the beautiful display board she created. Interim Principal Eileen Woods opened the evening with a short speech.

Ms. Fernandes is happy to report that the drama program at Ottoson continues to grow, and she was pleased to see almost 150 students turn out to audition for the upcoming spring production of *Beauty and the Beast*. I want to congratulate everyone who took part in the thought-provoking fall play. Accepting the challenge of creating a dramatic production and driving it to completion is an empowering experience for young people. I want to thank Ms. Fernandes for providing this experience for our middle school students.



Student Artwork Shines at Ottoson Fall Exhibit

It is always a pleasure to visit Ottoson Middle School at the end of each quarter to view the amazing exhibit that features at least one artwork from every student. On November 9, parents and community members attended a reception where they were able to see the hundreds of artworks on display and meet the art teachers and student artists. I hope you will take a few minutes to view the wonderful [slideshow](#) created by Visual Arts Director David Ardito. The images included in the slideshow give you a sense of how the new and improved art curriculum at Ottoson has expanded student learning and understanding through new media including digital media and photo manipulation. Students personalize their artwork by basing their themes and subjects on concerns, ideas and feeling relevant to their lives.

I want to thank Mr. Ardito for creating this beautiful slideshow so that those of us who were unable to attend the reception can see the amazing work being done by our middle schools students. I also thank OMS Visual Arts teachers Alicia Serafini, Polly Ford and Kayla McKenna for helping our children find their artistic voice.



Middle and High School Winter Concerts Warm the Season

For many of us the holiday season means music, and we always look forward to the December middle and high school concerts. The Arlington High School Winter Concert held on December 9 included over 200 instrumentalists and vocalists in a varied program that ranged from classical to popular selections. The Concert Band's 73 members took the audience into space with *Jupiter* from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. The Madrigal Singers came next, presenting an a capella number sung in Italian, a Hebrew prayer for peace and the ever popular *Moon River* by Henry Mancini. The performance by the Honors String Orchestra included music by Koussevitzky and Monti and a set of contemporary Celtic pieces. The three number set offered by the Jazz Band ended with *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* by the late, great Josef Zawinul as played by Buddy Rich's Big Band.

There is nothing like the sound of over 80 vocalists, and that is what came next when the Arlington Chorale took the stage. They sang three numbers, ending with a tribute to the season as they delivered Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*. Over 50 instrumentalists performed next, and the Symphony Orchestra delighted the audience with Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No. 5* and the first movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. The wonderful evening of music ended with the Chorale and Orchestra combining forces to deliver the powerful Vivaldi's *Gloria in D Major*.

The music program at Ottoson is so large that two winter concerts are held, one for the musicians and one for the vocalists. I will feature the Instrumental Ensembles Winter Concert in this newsletter. This concert took place on December 13 and there were over 200 musicians involved. Pieces by Vivaldi and Mozart played by the Chamber String Orchestra started the evening off. The Concert Band performed next, delivering a lively march and *Beyond the Riverbend* by Robert Sheldon that captures the spirit and hope in each of us. Ottoson string players are now divided between a 6th Grade Orchestra and a 7th and 8th Grade Orchestra. The sixth grade musicians performed pieces by Mendelssohn and William Owen, and the older group followed with works by Mendelssohn, Bach and Dvorak. The Jazz Band brought the concert home with favorites, *Al Shook Up*, *Birdland* and *Sweet Georgia Brown*.

The strength of our K-12 music program is particularly evident when we have the opportunity to see and hear our older students play and sing. We are fortunate to have talented and dedicated Performing Arts teachers to help our young people develop their musical gifts. I would like to thank Paula Demetrio, Jing-Huey Wei, Sabato D'Agostino and Madalyn Kitchen for bringing us these two wonderful concerts and for all the work they do throughout the year. Bravo to all who took part!