



ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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February 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

On February 28, I distributed an important [letter](#) emphasizing that all students, regardless of gender, race, religion, ability, ethnic background, or sexual orientation are valued members of our school community. In the letter, I reminded us that [Massachusetts law](#), which predates any federal guidelines, protects the rights of transgender students. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has issued a set of principles to help all districts create safe and supportive learning environments for LGBTQ students. We commit to these principles, and we will ensure that our transgender students have access to the restrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities that are most comfortable for them. We are proud to stand with our state and DESE in protecting and honoring the rights of all students.

As the New Year moves forward, our students and staff continue to remember the needs of others in the community, and I want to share a couple examples. Dallin's Student Council asked their community to participate in the [Souper Bowl of Caring](#) by donating canned goods and other non-perishable foods for the Arlington Food Pantry. On February 3, everyone was encouraged to participate in the *\$1 Dress-up Day*, and the collected funds also went to the Food Pantry. During February vacation, the Arlington Public Schools Food Service joined other local organizations to team with [Arlington EATS](#) in offering a lunch program at Thompson. This wonderful initiative is part of the group's commitment to make sure that our students have healthy, nutritious food during times when school is not in session and family resources may be stretched thin. It is wonderful to see the ways our school community comes together to battle food insecurity in Arlington.

The articles in this newsletter cover activities and events that happened during the month of February or before. There is one March event, however, that I want to recognize now. I don't want to wait until the next newsletter to congratulate the AHS boys hockey team and Coach John Messuri on winning the State Championship. After capturing the Middlesex Division title, the team made it into the Super 8 Championships. The win on March 19 is the [first Super 8 title in AHS history](#), and the first hockey State Championship since 1971. This is a tremendous achievement, and I join Athletic Director Melissa Dlugolecki in recognizing the commitment and hard work of everyone involved in the program. You will be able to read more about the March tournament season and the accomplishments of our winter athletes in my next newsletter.

In closing, I want to remind you to check out the AHS Online Newspaper, [Ponder Page](#). Stories about our talented gymnastics team, a visit from students who attend the Chengdu Foreign Language School and the mural that will support AHS students struggling with issues such as anxiety, depression and substance abuse are among the five excellent articles published in February. I know you will also enjoy reading the articles below and learning more about the great things that have been going on in our district.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Building Safe & Supportive Schools

Ottoson Cares About Prevention Club Members Attend Youth Conference, Host Activities

The active new OCAP Club sent two students to the [Youth Leading, Everywhere Abstaining from Drugs Conference](#), held an awareness Bingo game, created a logo and are looking forward to a dodge ball game that will be judged by members of the [Arlington High School Club 84](#). [Learn more>](#)

OMS Professional Development Focuses on Creating a Gender Inclusive School

An interactive workshop offered by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education [Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students](#) provided resources and shared knowledge on how to build a supportive school that welcomes all students, regardless of where they fall on the spectrum of gender identity. [Read more>](#)

Department News

Stratton Renovation Progressing Well

Look at the [pictures](#) taken during the Stratton Rebuild Parent Advisory Committee's tour of the building this month. [Read more>](#)

Arlington High School Improvements Move into Feasibility Phase

The [Massachusetts School Building Authority \(MSBA\)](#) has invited us to conduct a [Feasibility Study](#) for renovating and/or rebuilding Arlington High School, a step that will take 12-24 months as we determine the best way to move forward. [Learn more>](#)

Register Now for Arlington Community Education's Seven Week SummerFun! Program

With over 100 classes to choose from, including special field trip options for middle school students, [SummerFun! 2017](#) offers something that will appeal to every student entering grades 1-9. Register [online](#) now. [Read more>](#)

AHS Participates in the International OECD Test for Schools

The [OECD Test for Schools](#), taken by 85 randomly selected sophomores in March, will help us understand how well our students are being prepared to participate in a globalized society, and the school-based results will be useful for benchmarking and school improvement. [Learn more>](#)

Grants

Brackett Rock Wall Enhances Physical Education Curriculum with Non-competitive Challenge

An [Innovations in Education](#) grant from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) got the ball rolling, and the Brackett community came together to provide the donations and fundraising that made the new traverse rock wall a reality. [Read more>](#)

Thermal Imaging and Heat Transfer Comes to Life in Pictures

Being able to see heat transfer and explore different scenarios has made the eighth grade thermal imaging and heat transfer unit easier to grasp and much more fun, thanks to the adapters purchased through an [Innovation in Education grant](#) from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#). [Learn more>](#)

Professional Development

Study Tour Emphasized Co-existence and Cultural Influence for Two APS Teachers

The [Primary Source Study Tour to Spain and Morocco](#) was an enriching experience for an elementary and middle school teacher, deepening their understanding of the commonalities between peoples and religions, and providing knowledge and insights that they are sharing in the classroom. [Read more>](#)

Awards & Distinctions

Congratulations to OMS MATHCOUNTS Competitors

The hard work it took to get ready paid off handsomely as the [MATHCOUNTS](#) team finished ninth out of 30 teams in this month's tournament. [Learn more>](#)

Student-designed Banners Fly in Arlington

The beautiful [banners](#) designed by 20 young local artists under the theme *Compassionate Community* now fly proudly along Massachusetts Avenue. [Read more>](#)

AHS Students Earn National Merit Commendations and Finalist Designations

Congratulations to the 21 Commended students and the three Finalists in the [National Merit Scholarship Program](#). [Read more>](#)

Language Teachers Share Knowledge at NECTFL Conference

Two members of our World Language Department shared their knowledge of performance assessment and using art to enhance cultural and linguistic proficiency at the [Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages \(NECTFL\)](#). [Learn more>](#)

Academics & Enrichment

Peirce First Grade Students Experience Ghanaian Culture in Visits from Community Members

Thanks to local visitors, our young people were able to "fly" to Ghana and experience gathering water, dancing, speaking Twi and view pictures of typical houses and schools, experiences that enriched the first grade curriculum on Africa. [Read more>](#)

Student Committee Leads OMS Black History Month Observance with Displays, Book Fundraising

Representatives from grades 6-8 came together to plan and execute Ottoson's observance of [Black History Month](#), creating displays featuring prominent Black Americans and raising money to buy books for both the Ottoson and Robbins libraries. [Learn more>](#)

Understanding of Chinese Culture and Customs Deepens through FaceTime Conversation

Talking with one student's aunt and uncle in China enriched the curriculum and gave an entire OMS class a firsthand understanding of Chinese New Year celebrations and other cultural practices. [Read more>](#)

FANgeopolitics Engages OMS Students in World Politics

[FANgeopolitics](#), a game that works like Fantasy Football but involves countries, has seventh grade students excited about current events and global dynamics as they do research, draft nations and hope they get more points for "good reasons" than they lose for "bad". [Read more>](#)

OMS Students Travel to Italy Using Google Expeditions

There were several stops during the Renaissance tour of Italy taken by eighth grade students this winter, as they viewed art and architecture in an immersive experience that took place within the classroom. [Learn more>](#)

Author Shares His Journey Going From Refugee to Physician with OMS ELL Students

A videoconference with author Dr. Vinh Chung gave OMS Advanced ELL students the opportunity to ask questions and learn about his family's experiences leaving with the Vietnamese "boat people", being rescued and resettling in the United States. [Read more>](#)

OMS Sustainability Club Tackles the Challenges of Preserving and Protecting the Natural World

Responding to the interests of their members, the new Ottoson Sustainability Club has audited lunch waste, considered the effects of decreasing honeybee populations and white nose syndrome in bats, adopted endangered animals and met with the head of [Wilson Farm](#) as they strive to appreciate and connect with the natural world. [Learn more>](#)

Massive Open Online Courses Expand Offerings at AHS

High school students have taken 16 massive open online courses this year, enabling them to learn languages not offered at AHS and explore topics of interest in physical and emotional health, history and social studies, art and gender, cryptocurrency, philosophy, and linguistics. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Students Become Senators to Experience the Legislative Process First-hand

By taking part in the [Senate Immersion Model \(SIM\)](#) at the [Edward M. Kennedy Institute \(EMKI\)](#), 100 Arlington High School students were able to deepen their understanding of democracy and the legislative process this winter. [Read more>](#)

Creative Highlights

Peirce Students Take the Audience on an Adventure in "Madagascar JR."

All ends well for the traveling zoo animals in the performance of *Madagascar-A Musical Adventure JR.* presented by Peirce students in grades 2-5 this month. [Learn more>](#)

ONN Enters A-town Teen Film Festival, Continues Cooking Show and Captures Live Events

In addition to continuing their French cooking show and filming school events, the Ottoson News Network has created a 12-minute film entitled *Daydreamers* that is part of the [A-Town Teen Film Festival](#) in March. [Read more>](#)

Arlington Choral Department Concerts Span Grades, Emphasize Community

Eleven choral groups spanning elementary, middle school and high school came together for two wonderful concerts this month, demonstrating the strength of a program that builds talent and community across the district. [Learn more>](#)

Athletic Highlights

Winter Athletes Move into Tournaments as Season Comes to a Close

In addition to the boys hockey team that captured the Super 8 Championship, boys basketball and girls hockey moved into tournament play, capping an exciting winter season. [Read more>](#)

Continue to read the February 2017 Newsletter

Building Safe & Supportive Schools



Ottoson Cares About Prevention Club Members Attend Youth Conference, Host Activities

My November newsletter introduced you to the new Ottoson Cares About Prevention (OCAP) Club, and I want to give you an update on their recent activities. Two members traveled to Nashoba Valley Technical High School last month and participated in the [Youth Leading, Everywhere Abstaining from Drugs Conference](#) sponsored by the [Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletics Association \(MIAA\)](#) and [Middlesex Partnerships for Youth \(MPY\)](#). Sixth grade Club members Aubrey and Lily collaborated with teens from around the area as they created definitions of leaders and explored responses to various situations. They

left the conference understanding that all students can help others stay strong in the face of peer pressure. They learned that middle school students can play a major role in prevention by offering a variety of activities for student participation. Keeping young people active and engaged reduces the lure of experimentation. The picture above shows Aubrey and Lily with MIAA consultant Jane Biagi, MPY Director of Programs and Outreach Stephanie Buyotte, MIAA Consultant Tom Hermanowski and Club co-advisor and OMS Physical Education teacher Maureen Nee.

In February, OCAP hosted a National Drug and Alcohol Awareness Bingo game. Fifteen students put their drug knowledge to the test trying to match definitions to their bingo squares. A lot of learning and laughing took place during this fun and interactive session! In addition to gaining knowledge, students "won" Frisbees, water bottles and passes to Launch Trampoline Park in Watertown.

OCAP has also created the logo that is shown above. Members chose green to represent healthy choices and blue to represent relaxation, calmness and feelings of safety. The words written in a circle create recognition and convey inclusivity to illustrate that all are welcome in the Club. The letters interconnect and intersect to emphasize that prevention touches all aspects of students' lives: academics, extracurricular activities, social interactions, and self-esteem, among others.

The next school wide function is a Dodge Ball Tournament being held after school on March 31st in the OMS Blue Gym. During this game, Club members and other OMS students will be interacting with AHS members of the84.org club for the first time. The [Arlington High School Club 84](#) is one of the most active chapters in the state. The group engages in outreach, research, education and activism to fight Big Tobacco and encourage people to stop smoking. The AHS students will serve as game day judges. This is a terrific opportunity for OMS students to learn first-hand about leadership at the high school level.

I am excited about to hear about the progress of this new club, and congratulate Aubrey and Lily on attending the leadership conference. We are fortunate to have the club jointly sponsored by the [Sanborn Foundation](#), Arlington Public Schools Health and Wellness Department and the [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC). I thank Ms. Nee and Karen Dillon, Youth and Outreach Coordinator at the AYHSC, for leading the club that is dedicated to keeping the student community safe from any substance use and promotes healthy decision-making.

OMS Professional Development Focuses on Creating a Gender Inclusive School

This month, the entire Ottoson faculty and staff attended a workshop offered by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) [Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students](#). The 100 attendees, including teachers (cluster, FACS, technology, art, music, physical education, world language), social workers, guidance counselors, special educators, administrators and support staff came together to get a deeper understanding of how gender impacts all students.

Director of the DESE Safe Schools Initiative [Jeff Perrotti](#) led the inter-active session that included discussions, a slide show, video clips, and a conversation with a former AHS student about his experience at OMS. A video shared information on how to understand every member of a school community. This is a necessary step in order to build a supportive school that welcomes all students, regardless of where they fall on the spectrum of gender identity. Mr. Perrotti shared resources on gender inclusive schools and helped the group understand supportive pronouns and language.

The importance of empathy and respect was one of the clear themes of the workshop. Other themes included the need to examine our work with posters and books that model gender diversity and the need to normalize it. Mr. Perrotti was a knowledgeable leader, and the group left with a deeper understanding of the importance of everyday interactions with students. The need to understand all students and build positive relationships with them through modeling and language to create a welcoming school was clear.

I want to thank Interim Principal Eileen Woods for bringing this important session to Ottoson, and to commend everyone who attended. We are fortunate to have resources available from DESE to help us

develop a deeper understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation as we strive to build, maintain and sustain a supportive school climate for all students.

Department News



Stratton Renovation Progressing Well

The Stratton Rebuild Parent Advisory Committee was able to see the tremendous progress being made in the renovation of the school when they toured the building this month. PTO Co-President Jane Morgan captured what the group saw in several photographs. The pictures above of an ADA compliant bathroom and millwork in kindergarten classrooms (which will be uniform throughout the building) give you a taste of what you will find on the [Stratton PTO website](#). The renovation work should be completed in time for school opening in September 2017.

Arlington High School Improvements Move into Feasibility Phase

I am delighted to report that Arlington is among eight districts invited by the [Massachusetts School Building Authority \(MSBA\)](#) to conduct a [Feasibility Study](#) for renovating and/or rebuilding Arlington High School. This work is required in order to address significant infrastructure and programmatic issues at the school, which has had no major renovations since 1978. The goal of this phase of the MSBA process is to determine the best way to move forward. During the study we document our educational program, generate an initial space summary, document existing conditions, establish design parameters, develop and evaluate alternatives, and recommend the most cost effective and educationally appropriate preferred solution to the MSBA Board of Directors for their consideration and approval. Initial documentation on the educational program, existing conditions and space needs was submitted to MSBA during the first phase. However, a more detailed overview of the educational program that is informed by input from administrators, faculty and staff, students, parents, the community and School Committee will be written during this phase.

The first step is to hire an Owner's Project Manager (OPM), who will work with the town and MSBA to hire an architect. This process will take between six and nine months. Once the architect is hired, we can begin to collect input from the community. An additional 12-24 months will be required to complete the Feasibility Study and Schematic Design.

It is our hope that we can begin renovation/construction during the 2019-2020 school year. The time required for this project, which includes this year, is estimated to be about six years. I speak for the district in expressing our gratitude for the strong support of the voters in our community who approved funding for the feasibility study and schematic design by a large margin last June. I will keep you informed as the work proceeds. Documents related to this project can be found at: <http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/administration/ahsfacilities/>

Register Now for Arlington Community Education's Seven Week SummerFun! Program

Registration for SummerFun! 2017 is now open. This amazing program runs from July 5-August 16 for students entering grades 1-9. Half-day, full-day and after-care options make it possible to create the

schedule that works best for each family. Experienced teachers, including many from our district, design and teach the sessions.

There are over 100 classes to choose from, and after you review the [SummerFun! Catalog](#) or the [SummerFun! Weeks-at-a-Glance](#) I think you will agree that the range is incredible. Students can choose classes in arts and crafts, cooking, sports, special interests and games, music, theater, literature, nature explorations, and science, technology, engineering and math. There are even special field trip opportunities available for middle school students. Do you have a "fashionista" going into grade 4, 5, or 6? If so, you will want to check out *Project Runway*, offered in early August. Is your first, second or third grade student a budding artist? In that case, *Painting Exploration* in mid July would be a great choice. Is your eighth or ninth grader ready for some real adventure? The 11-day canoe, camping and kayak trip, *Mr. Zierk's Amazing Maine Adventure*, might be the perfect fit.

I want to thank the dedicated Arlington Community Education [team](#) for putting together such a dynamic and varied set of classes that will engage and excite students of all interests. Register [online](#) now.

AHS Participates in the International OECD Test for Schools

In March, 85 randomly selected sophomore students will take the [OECD Test for Schools](#), a global evaluation developed by the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD). This test is based upon the Programme for International Students Assessment, or PISA, exam, offered through OECD every three years. The OECD Test for Schools, known internationally as the PISA-Based Test for Schools, is currently available to students in Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, and has been implemented in Brunei and Moscow, Russia. Our participation enables us to measure our students' performance in the skills that are valued in the global economy: higher-order skills in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy.

As opposed to other examinations, the OECD Test for Schools does not deliver individual student scores. Instead, AHS will receive school-level information that makes it possible to compare our school with others in the state, the nation and the world. In addition to the two-hour subject test, participants complete a 30-minute questionnaire that collects data about the teaching and learning environment. The results, therefore, provide useful information for benchmarking and school improvement. Our voluntary participation places APS in a consortium of school districts domestically and abroad that has access to resources, professional development and conferences through educational organizations focused on innovation, best practices and high-quality instruction.

I am pleased that we will be participating in an exam that will help us understand how well our students are being prepared to participate in a globalized society. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about the teaching and learning environments in schools around the world and to gain insights into the best practices of high performing school districts.

Grants



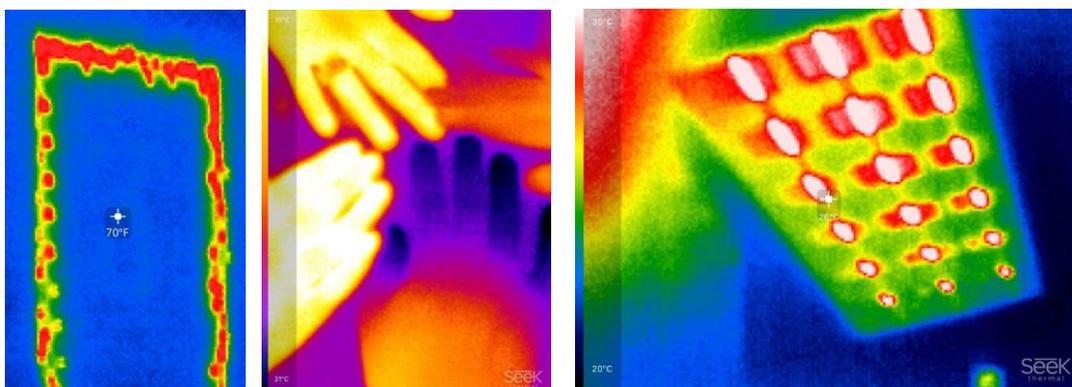
Brackett Rock Wall Enhances Physical Education Curriculum with Non-competitive Challenge

The wonderful traverse rock climbing wall installed and in use at Brackett is a terrific example of how our community comes together to create new and exciting educational experiences for our students. Physical

Education teacher Guy Schiavone wants to introduce non-traditional activities to his program at Brackett and he thought that a rock wall would be a great way to start. As he wrote in his grant application to the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF), "Rock climbing not only develops strength, flexibility, coordination and cardiovascular fitness, but also builds self-confidence, develops problem solving skills and encourages self-discipline and positive risk taking." It also "...naturally incorporates the trust and teamwork of classmates".

Principal Stephanie Zerchykov was supportive, and the process to build a wall began. Mr. Schiavone's [Innovations in Education grant](#) application was approved by AEF last fall, so things were off to a good start. However, rock walls are expensive, so the entire school community got involved. The Brackett After School thought it was a great idea, and they matched the AEF grant amount. The PTO agreed to donate additional funds, and helped Mr. Schiavone strategize a fundraising plan. A raffle for tickets to a Celtics game generated over \$1,200. When it was time, the Brackett building and maintenance team got the gym ready for installation, and provided assistance throughout the project.

I want to thank everyone who was involved in making the traverse rock wall a reality. This is a great activity to reinforce the elements of physical education that are already in the curriculum while building self-esteem and emphasizing cooperation.



Thermal Imaging and Heat Transfer Comes to Life in Pictures

As she taught the eighth grade curriculum on thermal energy and heat transfer, OMS Science teacher Susan Stewart observed that the information was a little difficult for the students to grasp. The flow of thermal energy is not directly visible, so the concepts were not as tangible as in other units. It was difficult for the students to explore and observe the processes independently. She knew that it would be much more meaningful if it were possible to see what was happening.

Thanks to an [Innovations in Education grant](#), from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF), eighth grade lab groups are now using a product called [Compact](#). This thermal imaging adapter connects directly to iPads and iPhones, and makes it possible to capture photos and videos of thermal images. Ms. Stewart reports that the students now find this unit much more interesting, compelling and fun. She has created a materials list and lab kit that all clusters can use. After the unit is completed, the eighth grade Science teaching team will discuss the lab and explore modifications for next year.

This is another example of how AEF helps our teachers implement their ideas to enhance the curriculum and create opportunities for inquiry-based exploration. As the pictures above demonstrate, it is now possible for the students to "see" heat conduction in a variety of scenarios. I thank Ms. Stewart and AEF for making this learning opportunity possible.

Professional Development

Study Tour Emphasized Co-existence and Cultural Influence for Two APS Teachers

"I would like for my students to understand that there is so much to see and experience in the world outside Arlington, Massachusetts and the United States. It's one thing to read about a place, or watch a program about it on TV. It's totally another to actually be there--to smell the smells, to walk in the footsteps of history, to experience a different culture through its foods, its music, its art, and most important, its people. I would like students to know that what you experience stays with you, and it directly impacts how you view and make sense of the world around you, and your role in it."

The quote above is from Dallin fifth grade teacher Jill Connor. Ms. Connor and OMS French and Spanish teacher Anne Zachary both agree that firsthand knowledge and experience enriches their lives and their teaching. With the help of a [Continuing Scholar Award](#) from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#), the two teachers had the opportunity to take a [Primary Source Study Tour to Spain and Morocco](#) last summer and experience the way different cultures co-existed and influenced each other in this part of the world.

The fifth grade History and Social Sciences curriculum includes a unit on European Exploration during the 15th and 16th centuries. The history and culture of the "Muslim Turks" who had control over the Silk Road is covered at this time. Ms. Connor's trip included visits to southern Spanish cities that were under the control of the Moors for 800 years, a period marked by co-existence between Muslims, Christians and Jews. In Central Grenada, she stood at the foot of the statue of Christopher Columbus, and she now shares the "hidden" meaning behind it with her students. She walked through the entrance of the Alhambra where the Muslim Moors handed over the keys of their kingdom to the Catholic Spanish monarchs.

Unfortunately, much of what Ms. Connor's students know about Islam comes from media coverage, and most have never met a practicing Muslim. Ms. Connor has been sharing stories about how wonderful and welcoming the Moroccan people were during her visit. The curriculum addresses the fact that the Muslim Turks made it difficult for Christian traders to travel the Silk Road. This was one of the motivations for European Explorers to find a faster, safer water route from Europe to Asia. While the surface argument is about religious differences, Ms. Connor believes she is now better able to lead the class in more meaningful discussions about the human elements at play. The students can understand that anyone would try to protect their territory from those who try to take it away, regardless of religious beliefs.

The idea that when you take the time to get to know people you can find common ground was reinforced for Ms. Connor during her trip. Visiting Andalusia demonstrated how much Buddhism (which Ms. Connor practices), Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common. The multiple connections between these religions provide many more reasons to focus on our commonalities than our differences.

Ms. Connor describes the trip as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Sharing it with 19 other K-12 educators, each with the desire to learn about other cultures and parts of the world, was especially meaningful. She has continued her learning by attending other professional development courses on Islam and Muslim culture, and she believes that the trip has made her more culturally aware and a better teacher. Ms. Connor and Ms. Zachary are examples of the passion our teachers have for growing personally and professionally, and for sharing their knowledge and insights with their students. I am grateful that they were able to have this rich experience, and I thank the Arlington Education Foundation for helping to make it possible.

Awards & Distinctions

Congratulations to OMS MATHCOUNTS Competitors

Congratulations to the members of the OMS [MATHCOUNTS](#) team for their excellent finish in the February 4 tournament. Their hard work getting ready paid off handsomely and the group placed ninth out of 30 teams. This year's participants included an official four-person team consisting of Captain Peter

Berggren, James Quinn, William Seward and Grace Kam. Additionally, four eighth grade students and two seventh grade students competed as individuals. Both Peter and Grace led the OMS scoring with 41 points out of a possible 46.

I commend all the competitors, and thank parent volunteer coach Jonathan McIntyre and OMS Mathematics teacher Jennifer Buckley for leading the OMS Math Club. Mr. McIntyre has devoted countless hours over the past few years to helping interested middle school students develop their interest in mathematics and take part in competitions. Since his son is graduating this June, Mr. McIntyre is hoping that other interested individuals will come forward to take his place. He offers to continue being involved in planning the weekly materials and can meet with parent volunteers on evenings and weekends to go through them. He plans to hold a weekend session next year at Robbins Library for those students who want to hone their competition skills. High school students, particularly Math Club alumni, are also welcome to assist and those who do will earn community service hours. Those of you who may be interested in taking over for Mr. McIntyre next fall can contact him at jonathan.a.mcintyre@gmail.com.



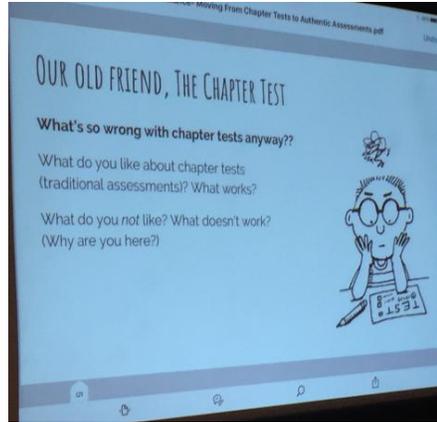
Student-designed Banners Fly in Arlington

By now you have noticed the beautiful [banners](#) that line Massachusetts Avenue. These were the final choices in the Arlington Public Art Youth Banner Project under the theme *Compassionate Community*. The designs came from 18 AHS students, one OMS artist and one St. Agnes student. Funding for this project, offered by [Arlington Public Art](#), was generously provided by the family of Gracie James. Congratulations to the talented artists whose work was chosen, and thank you for the part you played in creating a colorful and caring display that all the community can enjoy.

AHS Students Earn National Merit Commendations and Finalist Designations

I am happy to announce that we have 21 Commended students and three Finalists in the 2016 [National Merit Scholarship Program](#). Approximately 1.6 million U.S high school students participated in the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) in 2015. Commended students are those whose scores place them in the top 3%. Scholarship winners are chosen from a group of 15,000 Finalists. The three AHS Finalists are Francis Lin, Elijah Steres and Alexander Klein

Congratulations to all of the students who have achieved National Merit designations. These are outstanding achievements. I also extend my thanks to their teachers whose hard work supports them in their quest for academic excellence.



Language Teachers Share Knowledge at NECTFL Conference

I am pleased to report that OMS French and Spanish teacher Anne Zachary and World Language Director Catherine Ritz were presenters at the [Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages \(NECTFL\)](#) Conference in New York this month. Meetings like this one, which gather teachers together from around the region, present a wonderful opportunity to explore different strategies for instruction, learn what other states are doing and gather new ideas for engaging students.

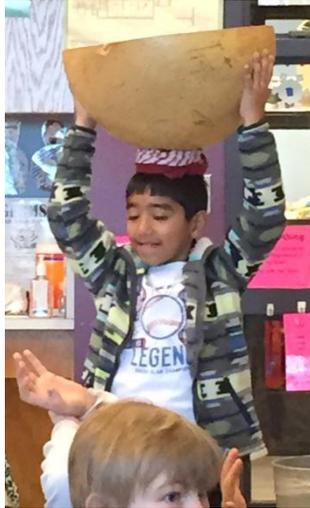
Ms. Ritz presented *Assessing Performance: Moving From Chapter Tests to Authentic Assessments*. Traditional chapter tests are those that typically include grammar fill-ins, vocabulary questions and other drill-type exercises. In contrast, performance assessments give students prompts that are more open-ended so they will show what they can do with the language. For example, students might receive a prompt about running into a friend while traveling abroad. The prompt then asks how they would bring that person up-to-date on what they had been doing since they last met. At AHS, student performance is assessed by filming students holding these types of conversations.

Ms. Zachary delivered *Make an Impression: Enhancing Cultural and Linguistic Proficiency with Art*. Her presentation shared lessons she learned at the [National Gallery of Art's Summer Institute for Teachers](#) in 2014. At the Institute, she spent a week with about 30 other teachers learning about the genre of Impressionism including its history and art techniques. She focused her NECTFL presentation on Manet's *The Railway*, using it to demonstrate how to observe a work of art before interpretation, create a poem about it, ask questions to glean more information and how to build target language vocabulary based on the work. All of these lessons except the last one can be conducted in English for a cultural focus, or in the target language for an added linguistic focus. She also discussed the history of Impressionism and how it developed during the period in which Paris was being redesigned from medieval to modern.

The most interesting workshop Ms. Zachary attended was about addressing the needs of LBGQT students in a World Language classroom. Many languages, including French and Spanish that she teaches, do not use gender-neutral pronouns, adjectives or even nouns. She learned some new terminology, such as ending a Spanish adjective with the sound "x" or "ex" as opposed to the masculine "o" or feminine "a", that she can introduce in her classrooms.

I am glad that Ms. Ritz and Ms. Zachary were able to attend and present at the NECTFL Conference. This is a wonderful example of the willingness of our teachers to share their expertise and knowledge with others and gather new ideas that will make them better educators.

Academics & Enrichment



Peirce First Grade Students Experience Ghanaian Culture in Visits from Community Members

Every day our teachers work hard to create memorable educational experiences for our children, and find ways to bring the curriculum "to life". We are fortunate to have the help of our community in this endeavor, and two wonderful examples of this happened at Peirce this winter.

The first grade History and Social Sciences curriculum includes a unit on Africa, with a specific focus on Ghana. Students begin by getting an understanding of location, climate and weather and move on to culture. The best way for the young people to get a sense of Ghanaian culture would be a trip to the country. That is not possible, but a Ghanaian woman and her husband who live across the street from Peirce have come up with the next best thing.

They approach their visit with the first grade students as if they are all going on a trip. Everyone "flies" to Ghana and gets to experience how they are welcomed. After "arriving", they learn about the differences between American and Ghanaian culture, focusing on things like chores, daily life, school and music. Our students learned how water is gathered, how people dress, and even learned some words in the language of Twi. Music, drumming and dance are important in Ghanaian life, and those elements were a large part of the "trip". The visitors also shared information about the king and queen of Ghana and why they are so important to their people. Being able to see the clothing, drums, jewelry and other items and to experience the music and dance was very meaningful for the students, who were fully engaged. In a separate visit, a parent who spent time in Ghana as a Peace Corps volunteer shared her pictures with the students in Marybeth Wall's class. During this visit, the children were able to see what a typical home and school looks like, getting another perspective on daily life in Ghana.

I want to thank Peirce first grade teachers Daniela Hurley and Marybeth Wall for facilitating the visits by members of our community who could share so much about Ghana. I am grateful to the visitors who gave their time to help our young people understand this country in such a personal and immersive manner.

Student Committee Leads OMS Black History Month Observance with Displays, Book Fundraising

"America is not a blanket woven from one thread, one color, one cloth."--Rev. Jesse Jackson

Every U.S. President since Gerald Ford has officially designated the month of February as [Black History Month](#), a time to celebrate the achievements of Black Americans. Interim Principal Eileen Woods and History and Social Sciences teacher Alison Sancinito knew that the students at OMS would want to honor

this special time. The first step was to solicit volunteers to serve on a committee. Representatives from all grades came forward, and they began generating ideas for things that would get everyone involved.

The result has been a month filled with meaningful learning experiences within the classrooms and beyond. Three bulletin boards were designed and created, as the Committee wanted to have a visible display that the entire school community would see. Together with Ms. Sancinoto, they spent multiple lunch hours looking for the perfect quotes and pictures. The boards include quotes from prominent Black Americans such as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Langston Hughes, Martin Luther King and Barack Obama.

The Committee thought it would be great to be able to add books by Black authors that include Black characters to the Robbins and OMS libraries. To raise the money they needed, the group sold hot chocolate two days after school and one morning, selling out each time! The librarians at each location are now working on their "wish lists" which the students will review. The group hopes to be able to present the books sometime before spring vacation.

There were plenty of in-class observances as well. Students in sixth grade History classes created Martin Luther King six-word memoirs have been collected in a [Padlet](#). Some of these are also on display in the media center. Ms. Sancinoto asked her History students to write essays that were inspired by the [BECAUSE OF THEM WE CAN](#) initiative. Children each chose a person who has inspired them to greatness and wrote an essay about the influence the individual had on his or her life.

This has been a wonderful observance of Black History Month at Ottoson, and I thank Dr. Woods, Ms. Sancinoto and the student Committee for their hard work and great ideas. I look forward to reporting on the book choices when they are available.

Understanding of Chinese Culture and Customs Deepens through FaceTime Conversation

Perhaps the best way to understand holidays and customs in another country is to have a conversation with someone who lives there. So, when the students in Alison Sancinoto's sixth grade History and Social Sciences class came to the unit on China, that is what they decided to do. One of the class members has an aunt and uncle living on the southern tip of the country. With Ms. Sancinoto's help, the young woman set up a [FaceTime](#) chat so that everyone could hear firsthand about the events and activities involved in celebrating Chinese New Year. The student translated as her aunt and uncle shared their stories. The conversation evolved into a question and answer session about other cultural practices such as education and food.

This is a wonderful enrichment of the sixth grade curriculum, which covers geography, history and cultural practices of ancient China. The conversation took the class from the past into modern day China, and created a very personal connection to the material. Ms. Sancinoto reports that the students loved the experience and they have been talking about reconnecting later in the year. Extending student learning beyond the classroom engages all types of students. Creating international connections deepens everyone's understanding of the world and its people and I thank Ms. Sancinoto and her student for helping to make this happen.

FANgeopolitics Engages OMS Students in World Politics

Seventh grade students in History and Social Sciences teacher Chris Mahoney's classes are so excited about current events and global dynamics that they can't stop doing research--even when they are in another classroom! What has made these students *want* to learn world politics? The secret is to have them play [FANgeopolitics](#), a game that works like Fantasy Football, but involves countries. The goal is to "draft" countries that are likely to be in the news for "good reasons", and then see how many points your team scores.

The first step is to form student teams, choose a captain, and get going on research in order to create a list of countries to draft. The list needs to be long, since another team might draft a country you want

before you get your chance. During this stage, students review the news, searching for conflicts, the status of different economies and other clues as to whether and how often a country will be mentioned for "good reasons." After five countries are drafted, points can be accumulated, and teams can drop or trade countries whenever they choose. This keeps the research going throughout the season.

Each time a country is mentioned in the *New York Times*, the team holding that country gets four points. This is just the beginning. Positive points are accumulated when the country is mentioned for what are deemed "good things", such as promising material support to others (worth 5.2 points) or extending economic aid (worth 7.4 points). Points can be lost, however. If a country halts negotiations, for example, the team loses 3.8 points. If it engages in a military attack, 10 points are lost.

Mr. Mahoney acts as the League Commissioner, which involves setting up the draft, monitoring trades and doing general oversight. He reports that his students really enjoy FANgeopolitics, and the teams take pride in their positioning in the league. They especially enjoy it when a few teachers join in with their own teams, and lose! He also notes that in addition to learning a lot about different countries, the game is a great way for the students to understand how the news focuses on certain topics and to begin to recognize patterns. I salute Mr. Mahoney, who overheard two teachers talking about FANgeopolitics at a professional development conference, for recognizing the potential of the game to create a fun learning environment that has really engaged his students and connected them to the world around them.



OMS Students Travel to Italy with Google Expeditions

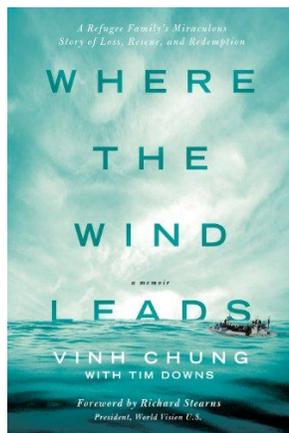
Eighth grade students made several stops on a Renaissance tour of Italy this winter. At Florence's Uffizi Gallery, they stopped in the medieval room to see the work of Giotto, the Botticelli room to view *La Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus*, and the Raphael room to see his portraits of popes and *Madonna and the Goldfinch*. They visited the Piazza della Signoria to see the Loggia, the original site of Michelangelo's *David*, and the current location of other sculptures. Venturing above the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore gave everyone a bird's-eye view of Brunelleschi's dome and the city of Florence. A look at St. Peter's Basilica and some of Michelangelo's architecture in Rome rounded out the trip. In some classes, there was a little time to "visit" Venice as well.

This adventure was particularly amazing in that, thanks to [Google Expeditions](#), the students never had to leave the classroom. History and Social Sciences teacher Julianna Keyes learned about the application at a Technology Ed Camp held at OMS during an early release day. She had previously used Google Earth and Google Street View to help her students see Florence and Rome and some of the art. Google Expeditions, however, allows a more immersive experience. As the viewer holds the iPad and turns, the image turns as well, as if the viewer is actually there.

The application provides talking points and allows the teacher to serve as the "guide". Using the guide iPad, Ms. Keyes could point to a spot on the image and students who were looking elsewhere saw an arrow directing them to the focus location. Since she has been to Florence several times, she was able to supplement the provided material with her own knowledge, creating a very special experience.

Ms. Keyes really enjoyed using the application and received feedback from her students that ranged from "It was an outstanding visual", to "I thought it was very good" and "I thought it felt like we were actually in the places". Google Expeditions is adding locations frequently and she hopes to use it again to visit the Forbidden City and the Great Wall when the students study China.

Our technology experts are working hard to find the best ways to use Google Expeditions on the district network. Like most school systems, we do not use a peer-to-peer network for security reasons, which is what the application calls for. With the assistance of Assistant Superintendent Laura Chesson and Digital Media & Literacy Teacher Johanna Bradley, a special connection was set up so Ms. Keyes could try the application. Another method that yielded the same results has since been used, so hopefully other teachers will get a chance to take their students around the world without leaving home. I want to thank everyone involved for making the "trip" to Italy possible, and I look forward to learning about all the places our students "visit" in the future.



Author Shares His Journey Going From Refugee to Physician with OMS ELL Students

Powerful messages of perseverance, compassion and hope were delivered to the Ottoson students in Jessica Nguy's Advanced English Language Learner (ELL) class during their videoconference with author, dermatologist and refugee Dr. Vinh Chung. Dr. Chung was born in South Vietnam just eight months after it fell to the communists. In 1979, his family left the country among the "boat people". His memoir, [Where the Wind Leads](#), relates their experiences being set adrift to possibly die among hundreds of thousands of others in their search for survival.

The students read some excerpts from this remarkable book, and Ms. Nguy, who knows the author, believed the class would benefit from a conversation with him. Although he now runs a busy practice in Colorado, he graciously agreed to set up a videoconference. The class asked him questions they had carefully constructed: What was it like to leave Vietnam? What was it like to come to the U.S.? What is he doing now? Dr. Chung was interested in learning about the backgrounds of the students as well, and a clear connection was established. The class was fully engaged, listening hard to his every word.

As he shared his journey going from refugee to dermatologist, Dr. Chung reminded the students to be diligent in their studies. He told a funny story about his first Halloween in the United States, which got everyone laughing. Most memorably, he told the class how scared his family felt to leave their home, and how they drew strength from one another, their faith, the people who rescued them, and those who helped them resettle.

This year the ELL students are considering how they can use language to influence others. After their conversation with Dr. Chung, they wrote letters to local government officials about allowing (and in one case not allowing) refugees into Massachusetts. Reading from Dr. Chung's book, listening to him speak,

writing these letters and discussing significant global issues such as the refugee crisis has helped the students learn many ways to use their words in a persuasive manner.

The videoconference with Dr. Chung was an important reminder about how difficult it is to be a refugee, and how some people are left with no choice but to leave the place they call home in order to survive. We must all consider the obligations we have to support those who need our help in the local and global community. I thank Ms. Nguy and Dr. Chung for providing this moving and meaningful experience for our young people. Arlington Public Schools values and appreciates all our students, and we encourage everyone to listen and learn from the experiences of those who choose to immigrate to our country.



OMS Sustainability Club Tackles the Challenges of Preserving and Protecting the Natural World

Covered head to foot in protective clothing, the members of the new OMS Sustainability Club have been tackling a tough problem: how much food waste is created at lunch? The waste audits began with the eighth grade lunch on December 7. At that audit, the group discovered 9 pounds of unopened food, 10 pounds of recycling, 14.4 pounds of liquid, 19.8 pounds of trash, 47.2 pounds of food that could be composted either on-or-off-site, and \$1. Once all audits are completed, the information needed to begin conversations about composting and waste reduction at OMS can begin. The Club plans to share their findings during an Advisory session on May 2.

This activity is only one of the many interests the Sustainability Club has been pursuing. The ideas of what to learn about come from the students as they consider the problems facing our natural world. One student wanted to know more about the decrease in honeybee populations, so the Club invited beekeeper Mel Gadd to speak at one of their meetings. Another was concerned about how white nose syndrome is affecting the bat population. The group held a bake sale and raised money so Dave Erler from the [Squam Lakes Natural Science Center](#) could visit and present a program on this topic. Extra revenue generated from the bake sale allowed each Club member to select an animal for adoption through the World Wildlife Fund. Interest in local farming led to a visit by Jim Wilson of [Wilson Farm](#), who talked about sustainability in agriculture and integrated pest management.

The Sustainability Club is led by Special Education Teaching Assistant Rachel Cilley, who holds a B.A. in Zoology and an M.A. in Environmental Education and worked in these fields for many years. She is passionate about making sure our young people understand the issues affecting the world they will inherit. She wants them to consider the local and global challenges and think about what each of us can do to leave the world in a better place. Ms. Cilley is concerned that the high level of technological "connectedness" has led to a "disconnect" with the natural world. She believes everyone should understand what is needed to sustain our planet and how we can use resources responsibly.

The topics suggested by the members of the Sustainability Club demonstrate OMS students are both interested in the natural world and are concerned about its future. Ms. Cilley hopes that learning more about topics that are of interest to them will foster a sense of belonging to the local natural community. I

want to thank Ms. Cilley for providing this leadership, and helping our students understand that as responsible citizens they can take action and become advocates to sustain and preserve our world.

Massive Open Online Courses Expand Offerings at AHS

In my October newsletter, I reported on two classes requested by students that have been among our massive open online course (MOOC) offerings this year: [Stanford Introduction to Food and Health](#) and [The Emergence of the Modern Middle East: Parts I & II](#). These are only a subset of the [Coursera](#) courses that AHS students have taken this year. Health and Physical Education teacher William Darling is overseeing *Mindfulness*, Science teacher Danielle Raad is hosting *Sexing the Canvas: Art & Gender*, Computer Science teacher Dan Sheldon leads *Bitcoin and Cryptocurrency Technology* and Science teacher Joseph Shay is the adviser for *Introduction to Philosophy*.

Online courses have proven to be a great way to supplement our language offerings, and thanks to the efforts of World Language director Catherine Ritz, we have students studying American Sign Language, Arabic, German, Japanese, Korean and Russian. This semester Ms. Ritz is also hosting *Miracles of Human Language: An Introduction to Linguistics*. This explores topics such as human language versus animal communication, phonology and phonetics, morphology and syntax, pragmatics and semantics and language in the brain and society.

Coursera offerings come from a variety of worldwide universities. For example, *Bitcoin and Cryptocurrency Technology* is from Princeton, and *Sexing the Canvas: Art & Gender* comes from Australia's University of Melbourne. A professor at the originating institution teaches each one and AHS teachers act as faculty advisors. These courses are a wonderful way for students to take charge of their own learning and pursue their interests. I am pleased to see so many students taking advantage of massive open online courses, and I thank all the teachers who serve as faculty advisors.

AHS Students Become Senators to Experience the Legislative Process First-hand

Making certain that our children are ready to assume the responsibilities of citizenship after they graduate is important to all of us. One of the amazing teaching tools we have available in the Boston area is the [Senate Immersion Model \(SIM\)](#) at the [Edward M. Kennedy Institute \(EMKI\)](#). The SIM is a 2.5 hour program that takes place in a full-scale reproduction of the US Senate Chamber. Participants work with Institute staff to function as Senators, creating a bill and interviewing presidential nominees.

This winter, 100 AHS students had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of how our legislature works by taking part in this experience. To begin, everyone received a tablet with information about the party to represent and a biography of the "Senator" to become in the simulation. Actors explained the Senate rules and the goals of the bill that the students would address. The actors played the parts of expert witnesses and cabinet nominees. The group followed the legislative process, holding hearings, evaluating new provisions to add, and debating amendments. Students were able to draft and deliver speeches on the floor of the Chamber to support or oppose the bill. The simulation ended with a roll call vote.

Sophomores, juniors and seniors coming from AP Government, Public Policy, AP US History and US History 1 filled the chamber as Senators for a day. I want to thank History and Social Sciences teachers Glen Fant, Lisa Clark, Joseph Sancinoto, Kevin Toro and Department Head Denny Conklin for their part in helping our students understand what representative government really means.

Creative Highlights

Peirce Students Take the Audience on an Adventure in "Madagascar JR."

On February 13, the cast of 21 students left the Central Park Zoo to explore the world during a performance of *Madagascar-A Musical Adventure JR*. This is the sixth year that Library Specialist Jane Torregrossa (Mrs. T) has spearheaded a dramatic production at Peirce. She and Producer Talib Hussain

called for interested students in grades 2-5 to come forward early in the school year. Auditions were held to assign the different roles, and bi-weekly rehearsals got rolling.

Throughout the fall and winter, family members were busy helping with costumes. Mr. Hussain and the cast handled the props and sets. When all was in place, the entire school attended the dress rehearsal. The after school performance took place the following week, with additional students handing out programs and passing a basket to collect donations.

Mr. T reports that the children really enjoy being in the plays, and that it is common for them to participate several times over the years they are at Peirce. She believes that performing helps young people develop self-confidence and public speaking skills, two things they can use throughout their lives. Past productions include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Shrek and Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. I want to congratulate everyone involved in this year's Peirce play, and thank Ms.T for offering this opportunity to the children.



ONN Enters A-town Teen Film Festival, Continues Cooking Show and Captures Live Events

I am delighted to share the news that the 12-minute short movie produced by the Ottoson News Network is being screened at the [A-Town Teen Film Festival](#) in March. Twenty-one members of the talented ONN crew acted in *Daydreamers*, the story of a young teacher faced with a classroom where all the students are daydreaming. Time seems frozen as the movie hops from one dream to another. OMS student Daniel Gorbunov served as the producer and the entire group took turns filming. OMS Librarian and Media Assistant Edith Moisand, who provides leadership to the group, reports that the students exhibit some nice acting skills in the movie.

The ONN crew has continued to work on their monthly cooking show, *Teens Cook: French Edition*, which I reported on in my December newsletter. In each show, ONN members work with Francoise Matte and Cecile Penot-Dietrich of [French in the Kitchen](#) to create seasonal delights. Three more episodes have been filmed: Pistou Soup, Crepes and Madeleines. The group ventured to Barnes & Noble in Burlington to film a performance by the OMS Show Choir, and was on hand to capture the Live Bats presentation at the Sustainability Club. We are fortunate to have such a committed group of students taking part in ONN, and I thank Ms. Moisand for the direction she provides.

Arlington Choral Department Concerts Span Grades, Emphasize Community

The annual All-Town Concerts held by the APS Performing Arts Department really demonstrate the strength of our district program. This month, elementary, middle school and high school vocalists performed together. Since we have so many students taking part in our choral program, two concerts were held. If you were fortunate enough to attend both of them, you were treated to the talents of over 450 young people!

Five groups took the stage on February 15: the Elementary Treble Chorus under the direction of Jenna Havelin, the 6th Grade Chorus led by Justin Moore, the Ottoson Boys Chorus conducted by Greg Condakes, the Ottoson Show Choir directed by Mr. Condakes and Randi Flynn and the Arlington Madrigal Singers conducted by Madalyn Kitchen. The program included songs from classical composers such as Handel and Britten, an Israeli dance song and round, Paul Simon's *The Sound of Silence*, Broadway show tunes and *One Note Samba* by Brazilian composer Antoni Carlos Jobim.

Seven groups were on hand the next night: the 7th Grade Chorus, Ottoson Girls Ensemble and Ottoson Acoustics that are all directed by Cori Gaffney, the 8th Grade Chorus led by Mr. Condakes, and the Ottoson Select Chorus, Madrigal Singers and the Arlington Chorale, all conducted by Ms. Kitchen. The evening ended with a combined number featuring the high school Arlington Chorale and the OMS Select Chorus. The program featured a wonderful song from the Broadway show *Hamilton*, folk and traditional numbers, and Mozart's *Ave Maria*, among many others.

One of the pleasures of attending the All-Town performances is the incredible sense of community that is evident. Parents, students and community members are able to understand that each of the groups is part of a larger, district picture. All the performers are part of a "family" and having an experience that begins in the elementary grades and moves forward, threading through middle and high school. The students who participate in these concerts are able to see and feel that each one has a place within this experience, and that they all belong to something larger than themselves. I want to thank Ms. Havelin, Mr. Moore, Mr. Condakes, Ms. Flynn, Ms. Kitchen, Ms. Gaffney and all the other talented teachers in our Performing Arts Department for providing this warm, inclusive atmosphere for our children and sharing it with us at these beautiful combined concerts.

Athletic Highlights

Winter Athletes Move into Tournaments as Season Comes to a Close

By now, you are aware that the boys hockey team went through their tournament play to come out on top in the Super 8 Championships. As I stated in my Introduction, the win on March 19 is the [first Super 8 title in AHS history](#), and the first hockey State Championship since 1971. This is such a significant accomplishment that I wanted to include it in this newsletter. Other teams moved into tournament play as well, and I will report on that in the March issue.

There were several notable events and accomplishments leading up to the tournaments. The boys hockey team hosted their annual Catherine Malatesta Scholarship game on February 12th at Northwestern University's Matthews Arena. This game raises money for the Catherine Malatesta scholarship. Catherine died in August 2015 after battling cancer.

Eight members of the wrestling team qualified for state competition during the Sectionals tournament. The team placed third and there were two Sectional Champions: Matt Pickett in the 132 pound weight class and John Bowen in the 195 pound weight class. Matt holds an impressive 34-2 record for the season. John's Sectional win made him the first wrestler in the program's history to capture such a title in his first year of wrestling.

Boys basketball and boys hockey were the Middlesex League Champions going into tournament play. The basketball team earned the #1 seed in the Division 2 North for the first time in AHS history. Girls hockey also qualified for tournament competition. Congratulations to all our winter athletes.