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News from April 2019

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

I want to begin this month's newsletter with a hearty congratulations to the Peirce community for winning the Textile Recovery Competition. This is the third year that our smallest elementary school has risen to the challenge and collected the most textiles for recycling—4.51 pounds per student which exceeds last year's total of 3.84 pounds/student. The annual Competition asks all schools to drop off old, worn, torn clothing, shoes, bedding, stuffed animals, and more to the outdoor collection bins between April 22 and April 26. A total of 9,226 pounds of textiles were collected for recycling throughout the district which earns close to \$500. You don't have to wait until the Competition to donate, as the collection bins are available for community use all year. [Bay State Textiles](#) records the weights of donations and returns a share of the profits to the schools. The donations are recycled as re-usable clothing, household insulation, car seat stuffing, and wiping cloths. This is a wonderful way to take discarded textiles out of the waste stream, have them converted into other products, and generate some money for the schools. Congratulations Peirce!

As the above paragraph suggests, Arlington Public Schools continues to be a state leader in environmental efforts. All of our schools have active Green Teams, and you can read more about that in ***Active School Green Teams Spearhead Environmental Action and Education*** in the **Academics & Enrichment** section of this newsletter. Next month we will receive additional recognition for this work, and you will be able to read all about this in the News from May.

The time is fast approaching to make the final decisions necessary to begin rebuilding Arlington High School. This month Town Meeting overwhelmingly voted in favor of allowing the town to borrow and appropriate funds for the project if the town approves a debt exclusion on June 11. I urge everyone to take advantage of the information sessions and all of the documents on the [AHS Building Committee](#) website so that you are fully informed on the issue and the plans for the new school. Please also take a look at the [virtual fly-through video](#) so that you are familiar with all the elements that are planned for the new school.

Throughout the year, our students, teachers, and staff engage in projects that remember the needs of others. I just want to highlight one of these that came to my attention this month. The Release Peace Club at Ottoson collected new and gently used clothing which were added to other donations from across Massachusetts through [Project 351](#). The items donated went to [Cradles to Crayons](#) for distribution to young people who can use them. I am grateful to everyone who spearheads and takes part in projects such as this one.

I am sure that you have noticed the beautiful vinyl banners that are flying proudly in Arlington center. These 20 designs, created by Ottoson and Arlington High School student artists, were among 95 submitted for consideration in the [Youth Banner Project](#) this year. This is the fourth year that our town has been able to enjoy expressive and colorful artwork created by our talented young people as we drive down Massachusetts Avenue. We are grateful to all who take part. The project is coordinated by Arlington Public Art and the APS Visual Arts Department and is funded by the family of former AHS student Gracie James in her memory.

In this introduction, I have given you a taste of some of the amazing things that are going on in our schools. There is so much happening in our schools every day, and my newsletters will never be able to capture it all. I try to present a picture of this every month, and I hope that you will take time to read the full newsletter below and learn more about what has been going on this spring. Enjoy!

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Safe & Supportive Schools

AHS Inclusion Day Provides Time to Consider Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

After attending an assembly that took the students on a musical journey through three major American social change movements, the students at Arlington High School attended their choice out of 29 workshops designed to encourage learning, conversation, reflection, sharing, and discussion. Read more>

Majority of Local YRBS Respondents Understand that Binge Drinking Is Harmful

It is good to be able to report that 94% of the AHS students responding to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) are aware that binge drinking is harmful. Learn more>

Department News

AHS Spring College Fair Provides Choices and Interactions to Help Determine “Best Fit”

Arlington High School students and their families had the opportunity to meet and ask questions of approximately 125 college representatives from across the country at this year's Fair held on April 1. Read more>

Professional Development

Dallin Teachers Learn How the Arts Encourage Social-emotional Learning at SEAL Retreat

Seven teachers participated in workshops and hands-on activities at the [Winter Social-Emotional Artistic Learning \(SEAL\) Retreat](#) where they explored the ways the arts naturally integrate with social-emotional learning. Learn more>

Grants

Whole Kids Foundation Grant Supports New Garden Learning Center at Stratton

Science study is being connected to the outdoors thanks to a \$2,000 grant from the [Whole Kids Foundation](#) that is enabling all grades to create garden beds that reflects the curricula. Learn more>

Shared Reading Experience Unites Brackett Students, Teachers, and Families

This January, the Brackett community experienced what it meant to all read the same book, as students, teachers, and families came together with [Fenway and Hattie](#), thanks to an [Innovations in Education Grant](#) from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#). Read more>

Awards & Distinctions

Gibbs Students and Teachers Share Project Based Learning Progress with Regional Educators

By opening their classrooms, showcasing their projects, and participating in a panel discussion, Gibbs students and teachers described how project based learning is being implemented to more than 20 regional educators and staff members from the [Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech \(MAPLE\) Consortium](#) and the [LearnLaunch Institute](#) during their day-long visit to the school. Read more>

Stratton First Grade Teacher Co-presents “Curated Collection” Project at MRA Conference

The goal of the Curated Collection project that teacher Laura Forse and reading specialist and consultant Leandra Elion shared at the [Massachusetts Reading Association's](#) 50th Annual Conference this month is to promote reading growth for all students by creating a tailored collection of books in the classroom that are a good match for the reading and interest levels of the students. [Learn more>](#)

Four National History Day Projects Receive State Level Recognition

Congratulations to the six Ottoson students whose projects received Honorable Mention and/or Special Awards at the State [National History Day](#) competition. [Read more>](#)

Ottoson Teams Place Well at National Academic Quiz Tournament Championship

Although they didn't make it to Nationals, the two OMS [National Academic Quiz Tournament](#) teams who competed in the [2019 Middle School National Championship Tournament](#) tackled challenging questions as they delivered strong team and individual performances. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Athletes Recognized for Excellence On and Off the Field

Congratulations to the six students who received special recognition this month for their athletic and academic achievements, service work, integrity, leadership skills, team contributions, and courage. [Read more>](#)

AHS Students Serve on Committees, Introduce Bills, Debate, and Win Awards at PENNMC

The 19 students who attended the [Penn Model Congress](#) represented Arlington with distinction, passing the majority of their bills and winning two Best Delegate awards. [Learn more>](#)

AHS 84 Club Wins Grant for Vaping Research and Members Attend Kick Butts Day

The active Arlington High School Club 84 is hard at work this spring mapping vaping retailers in Arlington, surveying student and teacher perceptions of vaping at AHS, and meeting with legislators in their efforts to raise awareness of the dangers of the practice among teens. [Read more>](#)

Recognition Ceremony Honors AHS C-SPAN Documentary Contest Award Winners

US Representative Katherine Clark was among those honoring the student filmmakers who received Honorable Mention for their videos in the national [C-SPAN StudentCam Documentary Competition](#). [Learn more>](#)

Academics & Enrichment

Dallin Family Culture Night Celebrates the Richness of the School Community

Food, cultural displays, crafts, and performances were all part of the special event that honored and appreciated the diversity of Dallin students and their families. [Learn more>](#)

Thompson International Festival Features Food, Fashion, and Fun

Goodwill and joy reverberated as the Thompson community celebrated its global diversity with a children's fashion show, the Bazaar of Countries, international arts and crafts, and food from around the world during the biennial International Festival, a school tradition since 2002. [Read more>](#)

Stratton Students Learn Skills and “Secrets” during Circus Smirkus Residency

Laughter, fun, accomplishment, and confidence were all part of the weeklong visit from [Circus Smirkus](#), as the Residency Artists taught students to balance peacock feathers, spin plates, handle devil sticks, and juggle scarves while encouraging them with “secrets” such as imagine, be patient, and try it a new way. [Learn more>](#)

Active School Green Teams Spearhead Environmental Action and Education

Our young environmentalists have been busy planting, learning about solar energy and stormwater, creating podcasts, meeting beekeepers, celebrating Earth Day, and sharing what they know with their schools communities, leading the [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's](#) April Green

Team newsletter to declare that they are "...taking the lead on environmental education and action in their community." Read more>

AHS Students Converse with Journalist Who Received Papers from Edward Snowden

While studying NSA Surveillance, Edward Snowden, and the Patriot Act, the students in James Barry's *Current Issues: America & the World* class were able to pose questions directly to reporter [Barton Gellman](#), the only American who received documents from Mr. Snowden. Learn more>

Moving Holocaust Study Tour Puts Human Face on History for AHS Students

Visits to museums, memorials, and concentration camps in Berlin, Warsaw, Krakow, and Prague illuminated the pre and post-World War II history of the region and the realities of the Holocaust for 36 AHS students and six teachers. Read more>

AHS Students See the Civil Rights Movement Through the Eyes of a Freedom Rider

Using personal stories from childhood and his days as a Freedom Rider, former Boston College History professor and activist Paul Breines helped the members of US History 2 Honors and AP US History understand the ways ordinary people put their lives on the line during the Civil Rights movement, a topic covered in both classes. Learn more>

Creative Highlights

"Mary Poppins Jr." Flies High at Bishop

Over 180 students presented *Mary Poppins Jr.* to four sold-out performances last month, the seventh musical produced by the cooperative program the Bishop Players. Learn more>

"The Phantom Tollbooth" Takes Audiences on a Transformative Journey at Thompson

A record number of students participated in this month's Thompson Drama Project production of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, presented as a musical and straight play for both school and public audiences. Learn more>

OMS Third Quarter Art Show Demonstrates Elements of the Visual Arts Program

This month, a beautiful exhibit showcased the work of all Ottoson students taking art during the Third Quarter, each accompanied by an artist statement that shared the inspiration, personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that motivated the creation. Read more>

AHS Performances of "Me and My Girl" Fill the Auditorium with the Gift of Laughter

The Arlington High School Gilbert & Sullivan Club treated the audiences to a musical filled with word play and physical gags that had the attendees laughing with delight as they watched unrefined cockney Bill Snibson prepare to assume the title of the Earl of Hareford while keeping the love of his life. Learn more>

The Joy of Creation is Evident at AHS Spring Art Show

If you didn't have a chance to come to the wonderful AHS Spring Art Exhibit, you may click on the link to the full newsletter and see some examples of the beautiful work that was on display. Read more>

Continue to read the full News from April 2019 Newsletter

Safe & Supportive Schools

AHS Inclusion Day Provides Time to Consider Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students is a responsibility that Arlington High School takes very seriously. Each year, the school hosts two very important days that enable all students to take a break from the normal routine and engage in activities that are designed to promote and encourage learning, reflection, sharing, and discussion. The first of these, Wellness Day, was held in December. This was the 11th mental health awareness program that has been held at AHS that is designed to decrease the stigma associated with mental illness and present ways students can take care

of themselves and reduce the stresses they face. (See ***AHS Wellness Day Raises Mental Health, Self-Care, and Healthy Choice Awareness*** in the [News from December 2018](#).)

On April 10, the second annual Inclusion Day was held. This event focused on highlighting and supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the school community. All students attended an assembly presented by singer-songwriter [Alastair Mook](#) who led the attendees on a musical journey through three important American social change movements: Labor Rights, Civil Rights, and the Vietnam era Anti-war Movement. The young people then had a choice of 29 workshops that they could attend. Some were headed by outside groups that included the Arlington Human Rights Commission, Greater Boston PFLAG, the NAACP, Pathways 4RC, and Hammer + Chisel, among others. The topics explored in these sessions included human rights and LGBTQ+ advocacy, inclusivity in sport, restorative practices to build school community and repair harm, and the African philosophy known as Ubuntu.

The majority of the workshops were led by students and faculty members. These sessions gave the attendees the chance to explore topics such as civic engagement, art and social change, gender and sexuality, implicit bias, engaging in difficult discussions around race and ethnicity, and Armenian culture and history. The day ended with a Cultural Festival hosted by the AHS STAND Club. Please click [here](#) to see the agenda with the full list of the amazing workshops.

Inclusion Day developed out of the school's experience holding Wellness Days and the ongoing efforts to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This process began in 2015, when human rights educator and consultant [Steve Wessler](#) met with students to gather information about their experiences with bullying, bias, harassment, and degrading language. The *AHS Voices United* initiative was launched the following year. The initiative, which involved groups of approximately 30 students coming together in all-day workshops around bullying, bias, harassment, and degrading language among peers, was designed to improve school climate through student leadership. (See ***"AHS Voices United" Aims to Address Bullying, Bias and Create a More Positive School Culture***, in my [October 2016 newsletter](#).)

Workshop topics were chosen from responses to surveys and other input from the school community. Harvard Graduate School of Education intern Scott Bolton, who spearheaded Inclusion Day this year, reports that the feedback from the students was very positive. I want to thank Mr. Bolton and the other individuals that worked on the creation and execution of Inclusion Day: Media Center Director Stacy Kitsis, Intervention Coordinator and Social Worker Andrea Razi, Computer Science teacher Dan Sheldon, Instructional Technology Specialist Jeffrey Snyder, FACS teacher Lisa Moore, and Vice Principal William McCarthy. I also thank all the students and teachers who came forward to lead workshops and host presenters.



Majority of Local YRBS Respondents Understand that Binge Drinking Is Harmful

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) report that underage drinkers tend to consume more drinks per occasion than adults, and that the national results from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) indicate that 14% of high school students had engaged in binge drinking during the prior 30 days. [Data on binge drinking](#) compiled by the CDC includes the following:

- “Most alcohol-impaired drivers binge drink.”
- “More than 90% of the alcohol youth drink is while binge drinking.”

It is very good news, therefore, to be able to tell you that our high school students are getting the message about the dangers of this behavior. Ninety-four per cent of the AHS students responding to the 2017 YRBS indicate that they know that binge drinking is harmful.

Alcohol's effect on the teen brain is illustrated in an excellent graphic on the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition's](#) webpage [Drug Facts: Know the Risks](#). There is also a link to the Mayo Clinic [Tween and teen health webpage](#) that contains information and suggestions on how to talk with children about underage drinking. The Arlington Public Schools will continue to work with AYHSC to make sure that our young people have the facts about alcohol use that will help them make informed decisions and stay safe.

Department News

AHS Spring College Fair Provides Choices and Interactions to Help Determine “Best Fit”

At Arlington Public Schools, we are dedicated to preparing our young people for success in the world beyond high school. Helping them to determine “next steps” after graduation is a key element of this mission. The Annual AHS Spring College Fair, held on April 1st this year, is one of the many ways our School Counseling Department promotes a spirit of lifelong learning and the opportunity for students and their families to explore continued education.

You may not know that most area high schools do not hold college fairs, but at AHS, we believe that having the opportunity to meet, speak, and ask questions of college representatives and alumni, some of whom will actually be making admission decisions, can play an important role in helping young people and their families understand which schools will be the "best fit" for their life goals. It is also important that college applicants get their name and face known to admissions staff members who will be reviewing their applications. A College Fair is one of the ways to make our wonderful students and involved parents stand out to admissions offices, especially when they are reviewing a bevy of college applications from many cities, states, and countries!

This year's AHS College Fair was attended by approximately 125 representatives from across the country including two and four-year schools, US military academies, and public and private colleges, both large and small. The Fair is always free and open to all AHS students and their families as well as those from neighboring high schools, and between 500-700 attendees generally attend. The School Counseling Department provides a guide that includes questions students can ask of representatives in order to define and narrow down the kind of school they are looking for, and gives suggestions on how to research colleges of interest before the Fair.

The AHS Spring College Fair offers students and families the chance to learn more about college majors, admissions requirements, and processes, as well as the opportunity to get clarifications that will allow them to make comparisons, better informed decisions, and to develop a list of ideas to explore further. Inviting the schools and executing the Fair is a tremendous effort, and I want to thank the members of the School Counseling Department, the AHS Parent Helpers, and the Student Guides who volunteer to assist, welcome attendees, and make the evening a noteworthy experience and a yearly success!

Professional Development

Dallin Teachers Learn How the Arts Encourage Social-emotional Learning at SEAL Retreat

This winter, seven Dallin teachers had the opportunity to attend the two-day [Winter Social-Emotional Artistic Learning \(SEAL\) Retreat](#) offered by [The Inspired Classroom](#). These sessions provide educators with the knowledge, experiences, and strategies to help them integrate the arts with social-emotional learning (SEL). Visual art, music, poetry, dance, and theater fit naturally into an SEL framework that

strives to develop student competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

At the Retreat, our teachers were involved in workshops and hands-on activities that had them exploring the connections between what they were doing and the ways the movements or art creation encouraged SEL skills. For example, a Geometry Movement Activity, Morning Yoga, and Drumming are all ways to encourage stress-management and social-awareness. Brainstorming a list of words that describe oneself, cutting them out, and arranging them encourages self-awareness and self-management. Creating a picture of an eyeball with imagery that is meaningful to the artist encourages relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Since their return, Visual Arts teacher Stacie Greenland has been sharing what the group learned at staff and PTO meetings. A community art project to create Wish Flags, modeled after Tibetan Prayer Flags that promote peace and empathy, is now underway. Students throughout Dallin are at work, some in their art classes, some working with their reading buddies, to create the flags that will be sewn to clotheslines and hung outdoors. Teachers and parents are encouraged to participate as well. Each wish can be for the creator or for someone else and must be something that cannot be purchased. Students are thinking hard about what the school, the community, and the world needs. This project unites the school community and encourages the SEL skills of responsible decision making and social awareness. The hope is that as the colors fade, the wishes will come true.

Thank you to Ms. Greenland, and Dallin teachers Ruby Liu, Michelle Crowley, Jennifer Cubides, Jennifer Bench, Adriane DiPasquale, and Jill Connor for attending the Winter SEAL Retreat. These rich professional development experiences are important for the knowledge they impart and for the time they provide to reflect on one's own teaching practices and learn from others. I look forward to seeing the finished project, which is due to be completed at the end of May.

Grants

Whole Kids Foundation Grant Supports New Garden Learning Center at Stratton

Stratton students will have a direct connection from their science curricula to the outdoors thanks to a \$2,000 grant from the [Whole Kids Foundation](#). Volunteer parent coordinators and faculty members have been busy mapping out spaces in the raised beds outside the school so that each grade can get busy with plantings that reflect what is being studied. All the plantings are being done by the students.

Stratton parent Yuko Handa spearheaded drafting the grant proposal, with assistance from Stratton Green Team Coordinator Katherine Whang, various faculty members, Arlington Recycling Coordinator Charlotte Milan, and School Sustainability Coordinator Rachel Oliveri. The hard work of cultivation will be completed by the end of the school year. The plants will grow and flourish throughout the summer and there will be flowers to welcome the students back in the fall. I want to thank the people involved in submitting the grant proposal and those working with the children to create a beautiful garden learning center.

Shared Reading Experience Unites Brackett Students, Teachers, and Families

When Brackett parent and local author Whitney Scharer learned about [One School, One Book®](#) from a friend in upstate New York, she was impressed. The program is offered by [Read to Them®](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting family literacy and an appreciation of reading throughout a group. Giving all the students and families in a school community the shared experience of reading the same book sounded wonderful, so Ms. Scharer went to work to make that happen.

The *One School, One Book* program launched for the Brackett community in January, was funded in part by an [Innovations in Education Grant](#) from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF). Ms. Scharer and the Library Committee reviewed the books offered by Read to Them, and Librarian Judy Schumacher created a list of about a dozen good possibilities. The choices were put to a vote by the teachers, and

[Fenway and Hattie](#), a story of change from a dog's point of view, came out on top. The teachers were drawn to the book's themes of looking at the world through someone else's perspective, and thrilled when they found out that the author lived just down the street in Arlington.

Read to Them supplies all the materials needed to make the program successful: books for students and teachers, letters to send to families, reading schedules, suggested activities, supplements for parents and teachers, and tips on reading aloud. Research has shown that reading aloud to children helps them learn to listen better and longer, builds bigger vocabularies, helps them understand concepts better, and increases positive feelings about books and learning.

Over a period of two and a half weeks, families read *Fenway and Hattie* at home, while the children engaged in supplemental activities at Brackett. Principal Stephanie Zerchykov used the trivia bank that the organization provided and greeted the students with new questions on the board in the front hall each day. Core themes were explored in the classrooms, and the Brackett After School Program did book-related activities in the afternoon. The Art Squad, a group that facilitates artistic endeavors after school twice a month, created a giant book cover featuring the dog Fenway. Students were then invited to take selfies and add themselves to the illustration.

The Library Committee was careful to make sure that all families could be involved. Families of English Languages Learners were connected to Reading Specialists who could read to the children in school. Braille copies of the book were ordered for vision-impaired students.

The program concluded with a day-long visit from author Victoria Coe who did experiential workshops for all grade levels. Through a slide show and participatory writing and brainstorming exercises, she encouraged the children to see the world from a dog's perspective. For example, she showed a picture of a trash can and asked what they thought of it. "Yuck" and "icky" were the primary responses. Then she asked what they would think if they were dogs, and the words ("Yum!" and "Dinner!") were quite different. Ms. Coe answered lots of questions and engaged the older students in a short writing exercise where they pretended to be a pet.

The feedback that the Library Committee has gotten from the students, teachers, and a parent survey indicates that *One School, One Book* was a big success. The AEF grant provides enough funds to choose another book for Brackett next year. The *Fenway and Hattie* books and all accompanying materials are going on to Thompson so that community can enjoy reading together. Ms. Scharer's vision for the program is to keep buying new books and moving them along to other schools so that the program is district-wide. She also wants to stress that Brackett will be taking the cultural diversity of the Arlington community into account as new books are chosen so that a variety of experiences are presented.

I thank Ms. Scharer, Library Committee Chair Carrie Finison, Ms. Schumacher, Principal Zerchykov, and everyone in the Brackett community that worked hard to bring this program to our district. I am grateful to AEF for recognizing the importance of this experience and providing the funding. I know that Thompson will enjoy reading *Fenway and Hattie* next year, and I look forward to seeing *One Book, One School* expand.

Awards & Distinctions

Gibbs Students and Teachers Share Project Based Learning Progress with Regional Educators

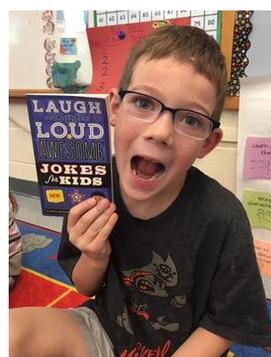
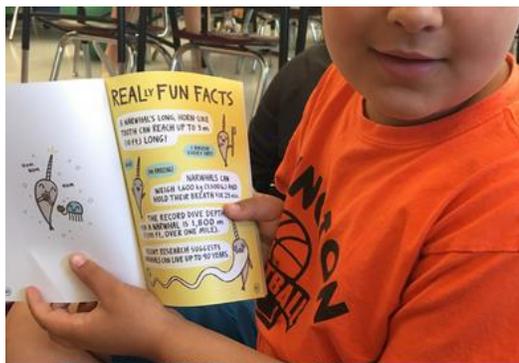
Last month I shared the fact that three Gibbs students were selected to show and discuss their project *The Ultimate Rock CD* with educators at the [LearnLaunch Institute 2019 Conference](#). This month 18 students were able to share their work with educators from four school districts, one charter school, a nonprofit school support organization, and staff members from the [Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech \(MAPLE\) Consortium](#) and the [LearnLaunch Institute](#) when they visited Gibbs to learn how project based learning (PBL) has been implemented there. The goal of the day was for the visitors to be able to experience what was being done, understand how it was being accomplished, and to have the time to ask questions and reflect on lessons learned thus far.

The participants had a full day. Four teachers opened their classrooms during Project Block and regular class time so that the visitors could observe their teaching practice. Six student projects completed during the second trimester were on display in the black box theater as examples of the kind of work that has been completed to date. At Gibbs, Overcoming Adversity has been the project theme, and the teachers have worked with the students to approach the topic in a way that reflects their individual disciplines. For example, students working with a World Language teacher wrote a play about immigrants and immigration. The group working on an English Language Arts project published their own book containing children's stories that they had written about women who overcame adversity. Another project described how gardening can overcome adversity, and one group used stop animation to create a video about overcoming the transition from elementary school to sixth grade at Gibbs. As the visitors moved from project to project the students were able to describe their work and answer questions.

During a working lunch, the group shared what they had seen, and then participated in a question and answer session with Principal Kristin DeFrancisco and a panel of Gibbs teachers: Anne Zachary (World Language), James Ham (Music), Wendy Brown (Reading), and Travis Woodward (Science). Ms. DeFrancisco says that while they consider themselves still in the early stages of implementing PBL and that it will continue to evolve, the visitors were very impressed with the progress being made at Gibbs.

Ms. DeFrancisco, her teachers, and the other district representatives that included APS Director of Digital Learning Susan Bisson, Assistant Superintendent Roderick MacNeal Jr., Gibbs Assistant Principal Wendy Salvatore, Digital Learning Specialist Johanna Bradley, and I stressed that implementing PBL is as much or more about the process than the topics. Students need to develop and internalize the elements of group collaboration—cooperation, listening to others, planning meetings, agreeing respectfully, researching, organizing, reflecting as a group, taking the work to completion, and presenting the results. Advisory Blocks are important places where the social emotional skills that are required can be emphasized. Success with PBL means that schedules must be adjusted to provide the necessary time that is required for success.

All of us in the district welcomed and appreciated the validation for our PBL work that was expressed by the visitors. This was a good reminder of the progress we are making and that what we are doing is not necessarily happening in other places. I appreciate the willingness and courage of Ms. DeFrancisco and her teachers to openly share their work and receive comments from educators outside the district. LearnLaunch Chief Academic Officer Ann Koufman-Frederick has asked us to share more about our PBL implementation at the [MassCUE Fall Conference](#) in October, and the plan is for Principal DeFrancisco to lead a workshop. I thank everyone who participated in the wonderful day of sharing and learning.



Stratton First Grade Teacher Co-presents "Curated Collection" Project at MRA Conference

While reading specialist and consultant Leandra Elion of [Crafting Minds](#) was filling-in at Stratton, she shared information with first grade teacher Laura Forse about a workshop she had attended. The workshop was led by Annie Ward, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in the Mamaroneck, New York public schools and co-author of [From Striving to Thriving](#). As they reflected

together on what Ms. Elion had learned, the two became focused on a question: Are the collections of books in the classroom libraries sufficient, varied, and appealing enough to feed the range of readers in each room? Both educators knew that students will only grow as readers if they read, and to do that they need to have access to lots of books and they need to want to read them. They started to ask themselves whether the books available to first grade students were a good match for their reading and interest levels.

This was the beginning of the Curated Collection project that Ms. Forse and Ms. Elion shared with educators at the [Massachusetts Reading Association's](#) (MRA) 50th Annual Conference on April 5. An MRA grant awarded in 2018 supported the project. Ms. Elion inventoried the books on hand and counted how many were at each reading level and genre. Her next step was to conduct individual reading interviews with each student to understand what motivates and interests them. She describes this as the “heart of the project”—the best and most valuable part!

Armed with this knowledge and the funds provided by the grant, the collection of books was calibrated through weeding out and purchasing new books that better matched the students' interests. Students have been encouraged to make choices and take the books home. Ms. Forse reports that her students LOVE the books and that they are sharing them with each other, trading them, and bringing books home to share with their families.

Ms. Forse and Ms. Elion presented this work during the session entitled *Riverkeeper Leadership: Maintaining Vital Streams of Books for All Readers* led by Ms. Ward. It is always gratifying when our teachers are recognized and asked to share their good work with others. I am delighted that the funds were secured to execute the Curated Collection project and thank both educators for supporting it.

Four National History Day Projects Receive State Level Recognition

I am happy to report that four of the 11 [National History Day](#) (NHD) projects that moved on to State competition were recognized with either Honorable Mentions and/or Special Awards. All the students listed in the following chart are from Ottoson.

Category	Placement	Project	Student(s)
Historical Paper	Honorable Mention	<i>The Battle of Thermopylae, Triumph and Tragedy</i>	Brandon Drapeau
Individual Website	Honorable Mention	<i>The Triumph and Tragedy of the Chase for Typhoid Mary</i>	Julia Bihari
	The Center for the History of Medicine (Best Project in Medical History)	<i>The Triumph and Tragedy of the Chase for Typhoid Mary</i>	Julia Bihari
Group Documentary	Honorable Mention	<i>Yellow Fever: A Disease That Shaped America</i>	Clara Schneider and Emily Neoh
	The Theresa Ruth Joens Prize in the History of Science and Engineering	<i>Yellow Fever: A Disease That Shaped America</i>	Clara Schneider and Emily Neoh
Group Website	The National Maritime Historical Society (Best Project in Maritime History)	<i>Typhoon Cobra and the Triumphs and Tragedies of the Worst Storm to Ever Hit the US Navy</i>	Elliot Elkin and Mo Hagenbush

Congratulations to the students listed above, and to all those from Gibbs and Ottoson who participated in the twelve projects that were submitted for consideration at the district level. Six months of work is involved in preparing for NHD competition. All entries must include a Project Paper describing how the research was conducted and how the project relates to the theme. An Annotated Bibliography separated into Primary and Secondary Sources is also required. During competition, each group defends their project and thesis in front of a panel of 2-3 judges for 10 minutes.

I want to thank NHD Advisors and Social Studies teachers Thomas Bushell (Gibbs) and Jason Levy (OMS) for supporting and guiding our young people through the NHD process.

Ottoson Teams Place Well at National Academic Quiz Tournament Championship

Although they didn't make it to National competition, the Ottoson [National Academic Quiz Tournament](#) teams can be very proud. Team A, made up of eighth grade students Rafi Nelson, Owen Shi, and Cameron Connell and seventh grade student Henry Mastro, made it to the Championship Round at the [2019 Middle School National Championship Tournament](#) in Darien, Connecticut. They did extremely well in all eight of their matches but missed their chance to move on by one very close game. Captain Cameron Connell came in third overall in Individual Rankings for the tournament. His standing as one of the top five players going into the Championship Round earned him a book. Rafi and Henry tied at 26 in individual rankings. Sixty-nine players took part overall.

Eighth grade student Armaan Merchant, Team B Captain, finished at 21 in Individual Rankings. Alex Perhanidis from the eighth grade and seventh grade students Allison Dixon and Greta Mastro were the other members of Team B.

Congratulations to everyone who took part in what is a very challenging competition. Teams compete to hit the buzzers first when challenged with questions such as:

- This country is not Libya, but its second most populous city is Tripoli. Its president is typically a Maronite Christian. The militant group Hezbollah is based in this country, whose flag depicts a green cedar tree. (Lebanon)
- Eliza needs to know her average speed, in miles per hour, given that she first travelled at a constant speed of 45 miles per hour for 40 minutes, then rested for 20 minutes. Since her total time adds up to one hour, she computes what average speed? (30 miles per hour)

I commend the members of both Team A and B for their willingness to prepare and take part in these tournaments. I thank OMS ACE teacher and sponsor Amy Duke and parent Coach Dr. Michael Connell for their leadership and support of these young people.

AHS Athletes Recognized for Excellence On and Off the Field

This month I am happy to be able to share news of recognition among our Arlington High School Athletes. Two competitors were among *The Boston Globe* Winter 2018-2019 All-Scholastics announced this month. Senior Ryan Oosting was honored for his status as All-American in the 2-mile and his All-State and Division titles in Boys track. Anthony Messuri was recognized for his 15 season goals and 19 assists as part of the Boys hockey team that earned its fourth straight Super 8 berth.

Every year, two juniors are recognized for Service, Integrity, Leadership, and Spirit (SILS) at each school in the Middlesex League. Awardees are selected by the faculty and administration, and must have an attendance rate of at least 90%, a grade average of B or above with no grade below B minus, and be active in extra-curricular activities. This year's AHS SILS winners are Girls cross country and outdoor track athlete Lena Goodnow and Boys lacrosse and soccer athlete Ben Kohlberg. They joined the other 24 winners from Middlesex County at a luncheon held in their honor this month.

The National Football Foundation began awarding National Scholar-Athlete Awards in 1959 to recognize students with postgraduate scholarships for their combined athletic, academic, and leadership abilities. I am delighted to report that AHS athlete Adam Bowler (football and baseball) is a 2019 recipient of this award. Currently a senior, Adam plans to attend Wesleyan University in Connecticut where he will compete in both sports.

Another AHS football and baseball player has been honored as well. The Massachusetts High School Football Coaches Association recognizes student athletes with the Paul Costello Courageous Player Awards every year. These awards go to players who overcome adversity to contribute to their teams.

Captain Peter Roche, who faced a variety of medical issues in the early years of his career, received this award at a dinner this month.

It is so gratifying to see our student athletes recognized for their accomplishments on and off the field. Congratulations Ryan, Anthony, Lena, Ben, Adam, and Peter!

AHS Students Serve on Committees, Introduce Bills, Debate and Win Awards at PENNMC

Congratulations to the 19 AHS students who attended the [Penn Model Congress \(PENNMC\)](#) at the University of Pennsylvania this year. PENNMC is the nation's most competitive model congress competition and the most difficult to enter. Approximately 800 students take part, and many are experienced debaters from elite high schools. Each participant brings a bill forward for consideration--first in their assigned committee, and then if the bill passes committee, to a full session where it is debated and voted on by 60-70 students. This is the twelfth year that AHS students have traveled to Philadelphia to take part.

Each student spent three days as a member of an assigned House or Senate Committee and presented and debated bills just as they would if they were sitting legislators. Ottoson English teacher Rebecca Walsh Bradley, Model Congress Co-advisor, reports that the majority of our students had their bills passed and two students won awards as Best Delegate in their respective committees: Patrick Gallagher for Blue House Science, Space and Technology Committee and Neil Tracey for White House Financial Services Committee.

Ms. Bradley was very proud of our young people and found it very exciting to watch them in action as they debated their ideas. She also reports that during the opening ceremony, many of the attendees were talking and being disrespectful to Congresswoman Madeline Dean of Pennsylvania who was speaking. Our students, however, were not among those who were making noise and messing and moving around. She and AHS English teacher and Model Congress Co-advisor Tim Marten who also accompanied the group said that the AHS students sat quietly and listened through the entire ceremony. The announcement of the awards was accompanied by these remarks to the teachers: "Congratulations to all your students. They had an extremely high number of bills passed in committee, and our Chairs were extremely impressed!"

I congratulate the award winners and all the students who took part in Penn Model Congress this year. Thank you, Ms. Bradley and Mr. Marten for accompanying the students and working throughout the school year helping the group with bill writing, parliamentary procedure and debating. Participating in PENNMC is a wonderful way for our young people to enhance their skills in public speaking and civic engagement.

AHS 84 Club Wins Grant for Vaping Research and Members Attend Kick Butts Day

[The 84](#), based out of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, is a statewide movement of students fighting tobacco, and the AHS 84 Club is one of the most active chapters. This year the group worked with Youth Coalition Coordinator Sagar Desai and [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) Director Karen Koretsky to apply for a grant to study vaping in our community. Mr. Desai is a Zuckerman Fellow at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health who is working with Ms. Koretsky this year. I am happy to report that the Club has received a \$4,000 mini grant from The 84 to pursue this research.

The work has been divided into two sections. One group of six students is completing a Community Mapping project. They are mapping vaping retailers around Arlington in relation to schools, public parks, playgrounds, and other areas where young people congregate and creating a visual representation of their findings. The group is also completing a Photovoice project about point-of-sale vape purchases, highlighting how these products can appeal to youth. Photovoice projects, which combine photographs and narratives, are useful tools for creating awareness around issues and concerns. The findings and associated policy recommendations will be presented to the Arlington Board of Health on May 22.

A second group of six students is doing a qualitative Vaping Survey of Arlington High School that will capture current vaping behaviors and perceptions. Both teachers and students are being surveyed in early May. These results will be analyzed and also presented to the Arlington Board of Health on May 22.

In other news, Club members Sasha Beck, Maya Jacob, Olive Eng-Canty, and Claire Egan represented the group at [Kick Butts Day](#) held at the statehouse this month. This annual event, hosted by Arlington Representative Sean Garballey, brings over 200 young people from across the state together to raise the importance of preventing tobacco use among teens. Sasha, Maya, Olive, and Claire took part in leadership training on how to meet and advocate with public officials and then met with legislators. Here is what two of the students had to say about this experience.

“ During Kick Butts Day, our group shared stories about how vaping affects our community, mostly in our schools. At Kick Butts Day, we learned about how menthol, mint, is not considered a flavor but technically it should be. We also learned about what is in tobacco products and how they harm us. This was very helpful because now we can relay this information to others who need to stop smoking or just want to know the affects. I enjoyed talking to the legislators because I feel like they learned more from teens than they would have from adults.”

"I feel that this experience was helpful because of the way our opinions on the topic were being shared and backed up by science and the studies conducted. It was a way that not only raised awareness but proved that what we had been saying was true and needed to be taken seriously. The training session in the beginning was helpful because it showed us how to speak out about vaping so that our voices were heard. "

I want to congratulate the members of the 84 Club for undertaking this important work, and I look forward to the results of the research. I want to thank AHS Social Studies teacher John Amirault for advising the Club and Mr. Desai and Ms. Koretsky for working closely with the group to support its work.

Recognition Ceremony Honors AHS C-SPAN Documentary Contest Award Winners

The AHS Media Center hosted a very special event on April 25. On that day, I joined US Representative Katherine Clark, Town Manager Adam Chapdelaine, AHS Social Studies teacher Glen Fant, representatives from C-SPAN, and other guests to recognize the students who won Honorable Mention in the national [C-SPAN StudentCam Documentary Competition](#). The young people received their awards for the following two videos that responded to the theme “What does it mean to be American? Choose a constitutional right, national characteristic, or historic event and explain how it defines the American experience.”

- [The Evolution of Modern News](#) by 10th grade students Serena Bernstein and Mia Umali
- [Locally Sourced Government](#) by 12th grade students Michael Graham-Green, Hikaru Koga, and Samuel Monks

At the recognition ceremony, Congresswoman Clark spoke about the important role that C-SPAN plays in holding government officials accountable, and how it creates links between citizens and their representatives. She reflected on the critical nature of the topics the students chose for their videos—the importance of local government and media literacy—and the challenges we face today with “fake news”. Representative Clark praised them for their work to create the films and for their investment in understanding and communicating the important issues in government.

Attendees at the ceremony were able to view the documentaries and hear from the students as well. Mr. Fant said that the young filmmakers spoke with poise and humility, and thanked *ACMi* Youth Liaison Kevin Wetmore for all the help he provided during video creation. The students received certificates from C-SPAN and will be receiving the \$250 prizes that come with the Honorable Mention designation. They also received citations from Congresswoman Clark and Senator Elizabeth Warren.

I am delighted that we were able to host such a meaningful ceremony that our student winners could share with their families. It was a wonderful way for the young people to understand how accessible our US Representatives are to all of us. Creating a documentary video and submitting it to the contest is a requirement of all students in Mr. Fant's AP Government Class. You may read more about the video project in ***Two AHS Documentaries Receive Honorable Mention in C-SPAN's StudentCam Competition*** in the [News from March 2019](#). You may also wish to see the [ACMi news story](#) on the award ceremony.

Academics & Enrichment



Dallin Family Culture Night Celebrates the Richness of the School Community

The Dallin community celebrated its diversity during the second Family Culture Night held on Saturday, March 2. This wonderful event featured food, international display tables, crafts, and performances that left attendees proud and excited about the number of different cultures among Dallin families.

Young instrumentalists led by String teacher Jing Huey-Wei welcomed students, families, and friends into the cafeteria to discover an amazing array of international food. Over 30 different dishes prepared by Dallin families offered the taste of Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. French Canadian specialties and food from Appalachia were examples of the different cultures that encompass North America. Favorites such as Polish cabbage rolls and kielbasa, and Irish soda bread, cheese, and butter were among the choices.

Attendees found over 26 cultural displays in the gym. The tables were arranged geographically, and each one used a poster and artifacts to tell the story of the nation or culture of the hosts. Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, India, Japan, and Korea were among the countries represented. Several hosts dressed in traditional clothing. A display of Jewish culture and the heritage of those in the Appalachian region of the United States were also present. A Scavenger Hunt had students roaming the tables for facts as they tried to get as many stamps in their "passports" as they could.

The wonderful performances by Dallin students added music and joy to the evening. One young man played the yangqin, a Chinese hammered dulcimer, and a group of young Chinese dancers performed. Two girls presented *John Ryan's Polka*, and invited audience members to come up and give Irish Step Dancing a try.

Additionally, the library had a display of diverse books and a world map in the hall recorded the many nations that make up the cultural heritage of Dallin families. I want to thank the members of the Dallin Cultural Enrichment Committee for organizing the event, all the volunteers who prepared food and hosted display tables, and the talented performers who came together to make Family Culture Night so special. I understand that a request for recipes has gone out so that a collection can be created. What a wonderful way to continue celebrating and appreciating the rich diversity of the school community!



Thompson International Festival Features Food, Fashion, and Fun

The biennial Thompson International Festival, a school tradition since 2002, took place on Saturday, March 16. The Festival exemplifies the global diversity of the school community, and it is wonderful to see so many students proudly sharing their heritage with others. Current families, teachers, and staff, as well as former students and their families were among the attendees, and the half-day celebration reverberated with goodwill and joy.

International Week, organized by the PTO in coordination with Principal Donato and school staff, was held during the week leading up to the event. Daily morning announcements included global music and greetings read by students in different languages. Bilingual books from different countries and other diverse books were displayed in the library. Visual Arts teacher Deb Campagna incorporated activities from different countries and the Social Emotional Learning theme for the month, Acceptance, was coordinated to align with the upcoming Festival.

Multiple activities kept the attendees busy throughout the event, which was attended by around 500 children and adults. The children's fashion show was a special highlight, with over 60 Thompson students walking the runway in traditional outfits from different countries. Arts and crafts activities included the opportunity to make African masks, Mexican paper flowers, Chinese fire breathing dragons, worry dolls, and mandalas.

The Bazaar of Countries included tables from 31 countries ranging from South Sudan, Morocco, Senegal, Serbia, Uzbekistan, Spain, Norway, Australia, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand, Brazil, and Colombia, among others. Each table, representing the country of origin, ancestry, or interest of the hosting family, showcased artifacts, books, foods, and cultural highlights. Many included interactive activities. These included a Canadian lingo quiz, an art activity with African beads at the South Africa table, Irish dancing, and a dress-up photo booth at the Japan table. Student visitors to the Bazaar could participate in a Scavenger Hunt to match flags from different countries to the ones in their "passports".

The Thompson cafeteria was transformed into an International Cafe bursting with food from around the world. Over 30 local restaurants generously donated food for the Cafe, and Thompson parents brought international desserts to share. Additionally, each grade sponsored a Raffle Basket representing a continent. The lucky winners got to take home baskets from South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Antarctica (always a favorite!).

The International Festival is one of the main PTO-sponsored family events of the year, and the planning process began two months prior to the event. I want to thank Sabrina Kias, Lucy Thiboutot, Meghan Ostrander, Sri Thumati, Joselyn Dennis, Christy Macinta-Murphy, Maja Fiket, Patricia Gallen, Nora Dybdal, Jessica Minners, Linda Kang, Lisa McCarty, and Amy Mulholland for all the work they did to organize and execute the Festival. I also thank the many parent volunteers and AHS students who assisted on March 16 and helped to make the event special for everyone who attended.

Stratton Students Learn Skills and “Secrets” during Circus Smirkus Residency

Lots of laughing and fun took place during the week that two Residency Artists from [Circus Smirkus](#) were sharing their “secrets” at Stratton Elementary School. But there were other things as well. Circus is amazing in that it is incredibly inclusive and open, offering something for everyone. It is non-competitive yet collaborative, combining many avenues of creativity with physical activity. As the week progressed, students experienced joyful feelings of accomplishment and new confidence, and it became clear that circus “secrets” aren’t only for circus.

The upcoming residency was introduced to students over several weeks using the information and curriculum materials that Circus Smirkus provides. Circus books were acquired and displayed in the library. Classroom teachers talked about what was coming up and the Visual Arts teachers had everyone creating artwork related to circus. The PTO, which funded the residency, hosted a coffee to share the plan with Stratton parents.

During the residency, students read circus facts and jokes during morning announcements and fifth grade students produced a video. It took some schedule-juggling, but everyone had three or four sessions of circus activities. The Residency Artists worked with the young people to learn and practice how to balance peacock feathers, spin plates, handle devil sticks, and juggle scarves. Fourth and fifth grade students also tried their hand at building human pyramids. The activities were introduced in all grades in increasing levels of complexity. As the children worked to hone their skills, the Residency Artists were there to share the circus “secrets”—listen with your eyes, look with your ears, imagine, try, try again, try a new way, be patient—that helped the students persist and accomplish them. The “secrets” and the way they were delivered were a perfect fit with the social-emotional learning curriculum and disposition centered teaching employed at Stratton.

The week ended with an open-house style showcase that enabled the students to show their friends and families what they had learned. Over the course of two hours, students volunteered to man stations and demonstrate the different skills, teach their parents, and practice with the adults. Stratton teachers took part, and Circus Smirkus Board members came to observe. The wonderful week was revisited again when the fifth grade video was shown at a school-wide PRIDE meeting.

The Circus Smirkus residency was spearheaded by parent Beth Saunders. She and her family had seen the group’s performance during their [Big Top Tour](#), and she learned about the school residency program when she was investigating [Smirkling Camp](#). Mr. Hanna had some personal experience with the program, and he thought it would be a great fit for Stratton. Feedback has been extremely positive. One parent expressed it to Ms. Saunders this way: “I was anxious about what was going to go on during circus week. My daughter has PT and OT needs. She came home day 1 and told me she was so proud because she persisted and was able to do it [balance the feathers].”

I want to thank Ms. Saunders, the Stratton PTO, and all the teachers who embraced the residency with enthusiasm. I would like to end with this quote from Ms. Saunders: “The Smirkus residency was the most all-encompassing enrichment activity I have seen during our years at Stratton. The collaboration of classroom teachers, specialists, the principal, and the parent support and PTO funding made the week possible and successful. The activities leading up to the residency and the showcase and PRIDE meeting following it meant that the school community was touched far beyond one week. Every single student, regardless of grade or ability, experienced the visit. This was an experiential learning activity that went well beyond anyone’s notion of circus.”

Active School Green Teams Spearhead Environmental Action and Education

Our amazing school Green Teams have been very active this spring, planting, learning, and sharing what they know with their communities. Let’s take a look at what these dedicated environmentalists have been doing.

Peirce Green Team students ran a wind energy activity and members from Bishop, Brackett, Ottoson, and Thompson participated in the *Trashformations* student art exhibit at Arlington EcoFest last month. Lots of teams are looking forward to getting things growing, and I am happy to report that teachers at Brackett and Gibbs and Green Team parent leaders at Hardy and Thompson applied for and were awarded school garden grants from the Arlington Garden Club.

The Dallin Green Team hosted [SunBug Solar](#) to hear how solar power is made. They learned how production can vary based on various environmental factors in addition to how much sun there is and how solar panels are installed. The group has also been busy getting ready to distribute *Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly weed) seedlings, and they are very happy to report that the seeds sown in March are coming along well. The Team has created a skit about the importance of monarch butterflies and this plant that was presented at a school assembly. Additionally, the group was visited by a local beekeeper.

The big news from the Stratton Green Team is that the four month collection of plastic bags and film has ended. About 440 pounds of material were collected—the equivalent of 47,000 plastic bags! The project was part of the school's participation in the nationwide [Trex® plastic film recycling challenge](#). Team members and their families sorted and weighed each week's collection and took it to either Stop & Shop or Whole Foods for recycling. The project helped the entire school understand how much plastic of this type is being generated and wasted on a daily basis. Additionally, Eversource visited the Team to share different ways to save energy, and to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a fundraiser.

The Thompson Green Team wants everyone to know about the new [ACMi Green Team web page](#). The group has created three terrific episodes as part of their *Small but Mighty: Kids Change the World* podcast series that are posted there. Please take a look at these as I know you will enjoy them. The Team was also involved in a school pollinator garden planting project this month.

As I reported in my January newsletter, the Peirce Green Team has been learning about stormwater thanks to a three-part interactive series led by an educator from the [Mystic River Watershed Association](#). The Team will share what they learned with the entire school at an assembly on May 10. As I mentioned in my introduction, the Peirce community won the Textile Recovery Competition this month after collecting 4.51 pounds of textiles per student. This is the third year in a row that Peirce has won this challenge.

Several schools celebrated Earth Day with celebrations and events, Bishop had playground clean-ups, a visiting beekeeper, Zero Waste Day in the lunchroom, and held EcoBlitz nature observations. Brackett held a nature adventure walk to Menotomy Rocks Park, a playground cleanup, and a green film festival. Hardy worked on garden clean-up that included weeding, trash pick-up and pruning. The Team also planted seeds that the students will be able to take home and had a vermicomposting demonstration so everyone could learn about the science of worm composting. AHS hosted their first Earth Day Fair on May 1, with entertainment, lawn games, refreshments by [FoodLink](#), Animal Control Officer Diane Welch with her red tailed hawk, and representatives from the SAVE and Sustainability Clubs and the Zero Waste Advisory Committee.

I am happy to share the news that the Ottoson lunch leaders were featured in the April issue of the [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's](#) Green Team newsletter. The leaders were called out in the GREEN TEAM Spotlight that talked about how our district "...Green Teams are taking the lead on environmental education and action in their community." This is wonderful recognition and I congratulate all the students, teachers, and parent volunteers that are making this happen.

AHS Students Converse with Journalist Who Received Papers from Edward Snowden

Technology makes all kinds of exciting things possible, and this month I have a great example of how our teachers use it to create unique learning experiences for their students. The young people in AHS Social Studies teacher James Barry's *Current Issues: America & the World* class were studying National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance, Edward Snowden, and the Patriot Act. They watched a [PBS Frontline video](#) on this topic that included an interview with *Washington Post* reporter [Barton Gellman](#). Mr. Gellman had received a document from Mr. Snowden concerning a program called PRISM. The

document revealed that nine US Internet companies were collecting data on American civilians for the NSA.

Mr. Gellman's article on PRISM appeared in *The Washington Post* on June 7, 2013, and it was followed by many more stories about NSA Surveillance. Mr. Barry thought that this would be the perfect person for his students to have a conversation with, so he sent Mr. Gellman an email asking him if he would agree to take part in a [Google Hangout](#) session. Since the conversation would be with high school students, the reporter readily agreed.

Prior to the event, the class worked on questions to ask. The conversation was interactive, with students posing questions directly and Mr. Gellman doing the same back to them. Mr. Barry reports that the journalist was very engaging, and that the young people really enjoyed it.

This is not the first time that Mr. Barry has set up conversations with experts for his classes. In the past, Mr. Barry's students have been able to hear from former Saudi Arabian Ambassador [Chas Freeman](#), former UN Ambassador [Samantha Power](#), and former NY Times correspondent and editor [Bill Keller](#). In early May, his AP History students are doing a Skype session with [Tim Naftali](#), former Nixon Library director and CNN contributor.

Mr. Barry believes that bringing students into contact with experts helps them understand the importance of expertise in government, the media, and other professions. Mr. Gellman led *The Washington Post* teams that won Pulitzer Prizes for their reporting on Vice President Dick Cheney in 2008 and NSA Surveillance in 2014. His book on Vice President Cheney, *Angler*, was a *New York Times* best seller and he is currently working on a book about surveillance and privacy. He is currently based at the [Century Foundation](#). I want to thank Mr. Barry for recognizing the importance of enabling our young people to hear directly from remarkable individuals who have shaped or played a role in history and for making it happen.



Moving Holocaust Study Tour Puts Human Face on History for AHS Students

This month, 36 students from all grade levels traveled to Berlin, Germany, Warsaw and Krakow, Poland, and Prague, Czech Republic on a trip that increased their understanding of the Holocaust and World War II history. Two stops in Berlin established the grounding for what they were about to see during their trip. The [Jewish Museum Berlin](#) includes collections that document Jewish life in Germany from the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. The [Topography of Terror](#) is a permanent exhibition at the site of the Secret State Police, the SS, and the Reich Security Main Office. Their visit here enabled the students to come face-to-face with the infrastructure that organized and carried out the persecution and extermination of European Jews, the nomadic Sinti and Roma peoples, and other political opponents of the regime.

While in Berlin, the students also visited the Soviet War Memorial that commemorates the 80,000 Soviet soldiers who died during the Battle of Berlin in the spring of 1945. The young people were able to connect to the post-war history of the city with visits to Checkpoint Charlie, the former border crossing between East and West Berlin, and the remains of the Berlin Wall, that fell in November 1989.

Their time in Warsaw included a visit to the [Warsaw Rising Museum](#) which is dedicated to documenting what life was like during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. This large military effort was undertaken by the Polish resistance movement, lasted 63 days, and resulted in massive retaliation by German troops. The group also visited the [Monument to the Ghetto Heroes](#) located in the area that the first armed clash of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place, and toured the old town section of the city.

In Krakow, an early capital of Poland, the students learned about the country's early history during a visit to [Wawel Castle](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site built during the 13th and 14th centuries. The group visited the old Jewish Quarter, Kazimierz, where Jewish life flourished before being destroyed during World War II. Outside the city, the students had a moving visit to the [Auschwitz-Birkenau](#) concentration camps, the site of the deportation and murder of over 1 million people between 1940 and 1945.

The visit to Prague included a tour of [Prague Castle](#), a UNESCO World Heritage site that dates back to the 9th century. The students also visited several synagogues in the [Jewish Quarter](#), a ghetto which once housed over 18,000 people.

AHS Social Studies teacher Scott Matson, who organized and led the trip, believes that visiting these locations puts a human face on the Holocaust, and creates a connection that students can't get by reading about it. To prepare for the journey, Fusco House Dean Robert DiLoreto gave a presentation on Auschwitz, a location he has visited three times. An activity from [Facing History and Ourselves](#) also got the students ready for what they were about to see.

Mr. Matson reports that the students behaved beautifully throughout the trip and were extremely respectful during the visit to the camps at Auschwitz—the most powerful parts of the tour. He believes strongly that young people need to be exposed to different cultures and he made sure the group was able to try the local cuisines. I want to thank Mr. Matson for his leadership, and thank AHS Social Studies teachers and chaperones Lisa Clark, Sarah Stoe, Kevin Toro, John Amirault, and REACH teacher Lauren Peterson for accompanying the students on this very moving journey.

AHS Students See the Civil Rights Movement Through the Eyes of a Freedom Rider

It is very meaningful when our students hear directly from individuals who have played a part in the history they study in the classroom. Approximately 120 juniors from US History 2 Honors and AP US History had this experience when former Boston College History professor and Civil Rights activist Paul Breines visited Arlington High School.

Dr. Breines grew up in a very progressive family and he described how he learned first-hand what it meant to be considered an outsider. He was on the receiving end of anti-Semitism from his classmates and other members of his Scarsdale, New York community when he was growing up. One year, his African American nanny accompanied the family on vacation. Arriving at their destination, they were told by the owners of the hotel that African Americans were not allowed to stay there. Dr. Breines' mother replied that the nanny was part of the family and thus they would never stay there if she was not welcome. These childhood experiences shaped his thinking and he developed empathy for those who might be considered "the other".

Dr. Breines was a student at the University of Wisconsin when he traveled down South to participate in the Freedom Rides. These interstate bus rides were designed to drive enforcement of the Supreme Court decision declaring segregated public buses unconstitutional. Part of this experience involved training in non-violent protest. One evening he was invited to dinner by a group of African American activists and was quite surprised to discover the lodge stocked with weapons. Why would members of a non-violent movement have such weapons? Dr. Breines was informed that it was necessary to be able to protect themselves if confronted. At this point he understood that the women who were in the kitchen preparing the food were essentially putting their lives on the line to feed the Freedom Riders. This story was a moving reminder for our young people that there were many ordinary people involved in the Civil Rights Movement—not just the "big names".

Social Studies Director Denny Conklin reports that Dr. Breines fielded some excellent questions from the audience. He was asked about the meaning of justice, and whether it could ever really be obtained. Students also wanted to hear his views on “Stand Your Ground” laws, and the connections between the Civil Rights Movement and recent events such as the shooting of Trayvon Martin. Both classes who attended Dr. Breines’ talk have spent significant time during the year discussing human behavior--bystanders, perpetrators, collaborators, and upstanders--and his remarks fit in perfectly. I want to thank Mr. Conklin for arranging this visit that helped our young people see the Civil Rights Movement through a different lens.

Creative Highlights

“Mary Poppins Jr.” Flies High at Bishop

Over 180 young actors, divided into two casts, took their audiences to London last month as they presented *Mary Poppins Jr.* in four public performances. This was the seventh musical offered by the Bishop Players, a cooperative theater program open to all Bishop students. Actors in Kindergarten through third grade performed in grade-level ensemble and chorus roles, while the fourth and fifth grade students tackled the lead roles or participated in the Tech Crew.

The members of the Tech Crew worked behind the scenes, changing sets and handling special effects, the curtain, spotlight and props. The annual production is a real community affair, and this year over 150 parent volunteers assisted with costumes, sets, rehearsal and backstage supervision, programs, props, make-up, sound, lights, and ticket sales. Director Sarah Morrison, an actor and educator, was assisted by Choreographer and Assistant Director [Noa Barankin](#) and Assistant Choreographer Julie Joseph.

I want to thank all the volunteers who came together to support the Bishop Players this year. Congratulations to the young people who took part in this wonderful production!

“The Phantom Tollbooth” Takes Audiences on a Transformative Journey at Thompson

“So many things are possible just as long as you don’t know they’re impossible.” *The Phantom Tollbooth*

Those words, delivered by King Azaz and the Mathemagician as they part from main character Milo, were among the many lines that resonated with Thompson students and their audiences during performances of *The Phantom Tollbooth* this month. In order to accommodate as many young people as possible, the show was offered as both a musical and a straight play, each performed three times—once for a school audience and twice for the public. Volunteer Co-producer Karen Roth reports that the 124 children on stage coupled with those helping with costumes, sets and props, and the members of the backstage crew set a new record for participating in the Thompson Drama Project (TDP).

The TDP was started 13 years ago by parents who wanted the students to be able to experience what it means to be part of live theater. The group relies on parents and other volunteers to direct, produce, create costumes and sets, and run the production over a 12-week cycle. Donations, ticket sales, and playbill ads are the only sources of funds. All interested third, fourth, and fifth grade students are able to audition and receive a part.

The Phantom Tollbooth is a magical fantasy that captivates with ingenious wordplay, memorable characters, and the transformative journey of Milo, who starts out bored with life and school and comes home with a love of learning and a new appreciation of the many things he has taken for granted. The Directors said that the children really connected with the plot and the characters and shared lots of questions and theories during rehearsals. There were many special moments, and one actor, who was reading the novel at the first rehearsal, even got to play her favorite character. Parents who had loved the book as a child really enjoyed rediscovering it with their families through theater.

This year's choice offered opportunities to connect theater arts to the Thompson academic community. An example of this is how English Language Learners teacher Nicole Fraktman added *The Phantom Tollbooth* to her curriculum. The way the book uses words and the themes of curiosity, education, and striving for what you want to do made it a perfect choice. She and her students traveled with Milo, working on understanding the word play through mapping his journey, thinking together about numbers and words in a variety of creative ways, and comparing the book to the script. This enhanced the understanding of the students who were taking part in the play and those who were watching it. Ms. Fraktman knows that extra-curricular creative art and athletic opportunities enable her students to feel included and important, and that those who participated in the play feel a stronger sense of belonging to the Thompson community. The confidence they develop leads to higher academic performance, and their sense of belonging extends to the town community as well.

The Thompson plays are a real community event, and I am grateful to everyone who takes part. This year former Thompson parents Maf Terry and Lise White came back to direct the musical and current parents Gaggi DeStefanis and Yael Beals directed the play. Ms. Roth shared producing duties with Tonja Bishop. The terrific costumes, props, set, sound, and lighting were the result of hard work from Lauren MacKenzie-Stead, Taffy McParland, Lois Kaznicki, Philippe Le Hegaret, and Diana and Travis Trudell. Principal Karen Donato and Thompson and afterschool teachers and staff provided much-needed support. I congratulate all the children involved in these wonderful productions and thank everyone who participated in making *The Phantom Tollbooth* such a success.

OMS Third Quarter Art Show Demonstrates Elements of the Visual Arts Program

For the third time this year, the students and Visual Arts teachers at Ottoson installed a beautiful exhibit that included artwork from every student who took the class during third quarter. To see examples of what was on display, please copy and post this link in your browser:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tl3m-0aZU2H3Zt9CkM6NIfB_65LOTzW?usp=sharing

The written statements by students that accompany each work help the viewer understand the artist's inspiration and the personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that motivated them to create the piece. I encourage you to read the statements that you see in some of the pictures. I think you will be amazed at the depth of students' feeling and the clarity of their thought as they create the powerful artworks.

Commendations to OMS Visual Art teachers Polly Ford and Kayla McKenna for developing a program that gives students important opportunities to express themselves in powerful visual and verbal ways. Many parents were able to celebrate their students' achievements during a reception on April 11, and I congratulate each student artist who was represented. You may want to mark your calendars, so you don't miss the Fourth Quarter Exhibit reception on the second floor of Ottoson on June 13, from 5:00 – 7:00 pm.



AHS Performances of "Me and My Girl" Fill the Auditorium with the Gift of Laughter

The Arlington High School Gilbert & Sullivan Club has done it again! This month they staged another knock-out musical, complete with memorable comic acting, gorgeous singing, beautiful costumes, dynamic

dancing, colorful sets, and a great pit orchestra. AHS Drama teacher and play director Michael Byrne says he chose *Me and My Girl* because "...it's a feel-good show with a fantastically funny book and great songs." He also wanted to "...bring as much laughter into Lowe Auditorium as possible." I think the audiences would agree that this goal was achieved.

The show has an unusual history. A big hit in the 1930's, it was lost to history until it was revived in London during the 1980s to great success. After a three and a half year run on Broadway, it was kind of forgotten again. Mr. Byrne thought that the time was right for Arlington to bring it back because he felt that fun and silliness was just what we needed right now. A throwback to The Marx Brothers and other early vaudeville acts, the show is mostly word play and physical gags. The cast had a great time exploring it, seeing how they could milk gags out of every scene, and talking about comedians of the early 20th century and what was funny then and now.

About 60 talented actors and singers made up the cast and company, and three stage managers, three assistant stage managers, and eight students working backstage made up the crew. Sets were built and painted by around 40 of Makerspace Nate Muehleisen and Visual Arts teacher Nicole McCulloch's students. Six students did the amazing choreography that included a dance where everyone played spoons. The 21 pit orchestra musicians included 11 current students and two alumni.

Mr. Byrne believes that "The high energy of high school students being asked to just be silly and give a joyful gift to the community made the performances really special. Often, we're so mired in our own stuff that it can become overwhelming. This show was just a gift of laughter to the audience." I want to thank Mr. Byrne, AHS Choral Directors Madalyn Kitchen and Justin Moore, AHS Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino, Mr. Muehleisen, Ms. McCulloch, AHS English teacher Lianna Besette, and all the students who worked together to make the performances so memorable. In the words of Mr. Byrne, "Each performance was like a surprise party with the audience the guest of honor."



The Joy of Creation is Evident at AHS Spring Art Exhibit

The annual Arlington High School Spring Art Exhibit closed this month, and I hope that many of you had a chance to stop by. Every student taking Visual Art at AHS had at least one artwork included. The creativity of our young artists is extraordinary, and I am happy to share some examples of what was on

display. I commend AHS Visual Art teachers David Moore, Aimee Archambault, Nikki McCulloch, and Annie Rebola-Thompson for their inspirational teaching.

