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News from December 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

I want to begin this newsletter by welcoming the new district Chief Financial Officer Michael Mason to our administrative team. Mr. Mason brings the experience he gained when he served in a similar role in the Chelsea Public Schools. He replaces CFO John Danizio, who moves on to be the Assistant Town Manager in Burlington.

January is a month filled with opportunities for parents and community members to learn more about the AHS Building Project as the AHS Building Committee moves forward toward submitting a detailed Schematic Design to the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#) in early February. The events included a Building Tour that enabled participants to understand the multiple issues that we must address with a new building and another Community Forum that presented a project update and cost estimates. I appreciate that so many individuals have attended tours and forums to learn more about this important project, ask questions, and share their thoughts. I encourage you to review the important and extensive documents on the [AHS Building Committee website](#), if you have not already done so. The Building Committee meeting dates can be found on the website.

I enjoy sharing how our students, staff and families engage in service projects, and there are many examples that took place in the month of December. Every year our schools take part in Holiday Help, a town-wide project that makes sure local families and children in need of community support receive Christmas gifts. Our participation made it possible for 238 Arlington Children and 127 families to receive the answers to their "wishes".

There were many other efforts as well. Hardy collected winter clothing and accessories. The Bishop fourth grade collected money that went to [Heifer International](#) to help send a girl through school. Peirce held a pajama drive and the AHS Performing Arts Department collected non-perishable food and personal items that went to [Arlington Eats](#) and the [Arlington Food Pantry](#). Arlington Eats was the focus of the OMS Release Peace Club, whose members provided snack foods and packaged them for the school snack program.

Boy Scout Troop 306 collected gifts for teens that went to the Arlington Department of Children and Family Services. This is a winter project they have done for six years. Girls Scouts at Peirce collected toiletry items for families served by [Thom Charles River Family Services](#) in Waltham. The After-School Program at Thompson got involved as well, making ornaments and bags, and collecting money for California wildfire victims.

I want to thank all the students, teachers, staff members, and families who helped lead the wonderful service projects that our schools engage in. As the above examples demonstrate, Arlington is a generous community that takes time to remember others, and makes a point of ensuring that our young people are involved in demonstrating kindness and sharing with others.

It is time to mark your calendars for special events coming up this spring. First is the 2019 AHS Spring Art Exhibit. This wonderful student showcase begins in the Teacher's Café Gallery on March 21, with an opening reception for artists and teachers from 6:00-8:00 pm that includes refreshments and live student

music. The show, which runs until April 11, is always a highlight of the spring. I hope you will be able to stop by.

I also want to mention the spring musicals. The AHS Drama Guild is presenting the rollicking comedy *Me and My Girl* at 7:30 pm on April 5 and 6 and at 2:00 pm on April 7. This very funny show will be in the Lowe Auditorium. The talented thespians from Gibbs and Ottoson will present *Mary Poppins* on May 3 at 7:00 pm and May 4 at 2:00 and 7:00 pm. It is great to have these musicals to anticipate.

In closing, I want to take the opportunity to wish everyone a happy and healthy 2019! Please enjoy the articles below.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Safe & Supportive Schools

S3 Academy Helps District Team Explore Integrated Systemic Student Support Approaches

The principals of Bishop, Brackett, and Hardy, a teacher or psychologist from each school, and four district administrators are increasing their understanding of integrated student support approaches and best practices at the [Systemic Student Support \(S3\) Academy](#) offered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. [Read more>](#)

AHS Wellness Day Raises Mental Health, Self-Care, and Healthy Choice Awareness

All students took a break from the normal routine to hear keynote presentation *Changing the Culture of Mental Illness: It's Way Past Time* by [Judge John T. Broderick](#), and attend workshops led by AHS faculty and staff and outside experts that were designed to increase self-care and wellness skills. [Learn more>](#)

Department News

METCO Bridging Two Communities Dinner Deepens Boston, Arlington Relationships

The families of Arlington and Boston resident students were able to get to know each other and foster friendships at the third annual Bridging Two Communities dinner held at the Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury. [Read more>](#)

Grants

AEF Honors District with Fall Innovations in Education Grants and Continuing Scholar Award

We are grateful to the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) for supporting our students, teachers, administrators, and staff with \$22,000 for grants in two categories: Innovations in Education Grants and the Continuing Scholar Award. [Learn more>](#)

Awards & Distinctions

AHS Bassist Joins Grammy Winner on Stage at Milton Academy

Congratulations to senior Olivia Carpenter who joined AHS Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino and others on stage with five-time Grammy winning bassist [Victor Wooten](#) at a Milton Academy concert. [Learn more>](#)

Two AHS Athletes Earn All-Scholastic Accolades

Congratulations to boys soccer player Francesco Valagussa and boys cross country runner Ryan Oosting on being recognized as *Boston Herald* and *The Boston Globe* All-Scholastics. [Read more>](#)

Ottoson Visual Art Students Display Artwork at Robbins Library

Artwork by OMS students is regularly displayed at the Arlington main library, and you will want to see what is being shown near the Children's Room this month. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Photographers Included in Teen Photography Exhibition Sponsored by Griffin Museum

Congratulations to the five Arlington High School photography students whose beautiful work is included in the first [Griffin Museum Secondary School Photography Exhibit](#) from January 6-18. [Read more>](#)

AHS Visual Art Students to Exhibit Work at Lexington Arts and Crafts Society in January

Over 50 Arlington High School students are part of the [23rd Annual Regional High School Art Show](#) at the Lexington Arts & Crafts Society. [Read more>](#)

Banner Designs by Student Artists Chosen for Spring Display in Arlington Center

Nearly 100 designs, many by Arlington Public School students, were submitted to the [Youth Banner Project](#) this year, and the twenty selected will hang in the town center during April and May. [Learn more>](#)

Academics & Enrichment

Thompson Third Grade Students Learn About Robots and Art Conservation

Engineering, robots and art preservation came to life for Thompson third graders during classroom visits by two employees of [iRobot](#) and a conservator from the [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum](#). [Read more>](#)

Writers and Reporters Reflect on the State of the Profession at AHS Journalism Panel

Five experienced journalists reflected on topics that included the effects of social media on news and reporting, what it means to find your "voice" as a writer, and the obligation of journalists in the age of Trump during an informative panel discussion hosted by the AHS Journalism Club. [Learn more>](#)

Creative Highlights

Student Artwork Shared at First Gibbs Art Exhibit

It was exciting to see all the great artwork on display at the first trimester Gibbs art show this month, and to hear from Ignition, the new after school choral group. [Read more>](#)

Two Combined Choral and Instrumental Concerts at Ottoson Warm the Winter Nights

This year's OMS winter concerts each presented singers and instrumentalists on the same bill, allowing audiences to see the range of middle school talent and hear a variety of music that ranged from Broadway to classical, holiday favorites, and more. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Winter Concert Features Three New Vocal Groups and Memorable Ending

Our talented AHS musicians and vocalists presented a wonderful evening of music on December 14 that began with the debut performance of the boys chorus Bros II Men and ended with over 200 performers delivering the magnificent *Hallelujah Chorus*. [Learn more>](#)

Continue to read the full News from December 2018 Newsletter

Safe & Supportive Schools

S3 Academy Helps District Team Explore Integrated Systemic Student Support Approaches

"We believe that enhancing our social-emotional competencies will strengthen our ability to connect across race, class, culture, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, learning differences, and age. This connection and understanding drives our commitment to a collaborative student-and family-centered environment which will empower a safe and supportive community."

The statement above is the vision of the District Safe and Supportive Schools (SASS) Team that is leading our effort to create Safe and Supportive School plans in every school. It is well recognized that

students face a range of barriers that affect their ability to achieve academically. Our district is committed to creating and maintaining a truly equitable educational system that serves ALL students. We must endeavor to close the achievement gaps we see between students with special needs, economic challenges, English language learning, and other high needs and those who do not face these barriers. Closing this gap requires that the appropriate supports be in place, that there is seamless integration between academic and social emotional practices, and that they are offered in a timely, non-discriminatory manner to all students.

A district team that includes three elementary schools is taking part in the [Systemic Student Support \(S3\) Academy](#) offered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The principals of Bishop, Brackett, and Hardy, a teacher or psychologist from each school, and four district administrators will increase their understanding of integrated systemic student support approaches and best practices at three day-long, in-person workshops and two virtual convenings. We are also receiving support to assess our current systems, practices, and resources and to create a plan to make improvements.

Participating in S3 Academy is a wonderful opportunity for our district to build on the work that we have undertaken over the last few years. We have provided professional development for faculty and mental health staff, updated processes regarding referrals for outside counseling services, and maintained and strengthened a close relationship with the [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#). We offer courses from the [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity](#) to our teachers and staff. Grant support from [DESE](#) and the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) have enabled us to form our District SASS Team, assess current processes and create school action plans. Other activities include the work we are doing to understand how to collect and use data on student learning to improve our practices.

Being part of S3 Academy will give us the knowledge and assistance to integrate our student supports to address the whole child, in inclusive settings, while addressing the barriers to access and equity. I am pleased that our district will be part of the Academy and look forward to reporting on the progress of this important work.

AHS Wellness Day Raises Mental Health, Self-Care, and Healthy Choice Awareness

After Intervention Coordinator/Social Worker Andrea Razi had been at AHS for a year, an interaction with a student convinced her that all students needed to know that "...asking for help is admirable and important, that emotional issues are real and hard, and that taking care of yourself is essential, whether through counseling or some of the other options..." that are available at the school. This knowledge is the inspiration behind December's Arlington High School Wellness Day, the 11th mental awareness program that Ms. Razi has organized and coordinated for our young people. In addition to decreasing the stigma associated with mental illness, the day was structured to present a variety of ways students can take care of themselves and reduce the stresses they face.

Each grade attended an assembly, and students chose which Self Care, Mental Health Awareness and Healthy Choices & Decisions Making Workshops to attend. One period was dedicated to Self-Directed Activities such as coloring, board games, and puzzles, interacting with therapy dogs, visiting the Arcade, taking part in open gym or just hanging out with friends and socializing. This year's keynote was presented by [John T. Broderick Jr.](#), a former Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court. Mr. Broderick's message on the importance of listening and recognizing the five most common signs of mental illness is informed by his family's struggle with mental illness. Ms. Razi reports that he was "amazing", and that the students really responded to him as he challenged his audience to help decrease the stigma around mental health and talking about mental health issues. He also praised the students for being part of what he terms the least judgmental generation yet.

The Self-Care Workshops, led by AHS faculty and staff, centered on relaxation and wellness strategies and included activities such as listening to music, yoga, calligraphy, collaborative drawing, and walking, among others. Outside speakers from a variety of organizations led the Mental Health Awareness Workshops, addressing topics such as depression, overcoming challenges, grief and loss, and the stigma

associated with mental illness in the media. Both outside speakers and AHS staff members were involved in leading the Healthy Choices & Decisions Making Workshops. Substance use and abuse, overcoming anxiety and procrastination, and sexting and teen dating violence were among the topics of these sessions. Ms. Razi indicates that she has heard from many underclassmen who expressed gratitude and appreciation around this important event. Please see the [Wellness Day brochure](#) for a full listing of the workshops.

Ms. Razi is grateful to Principal Matthew Janger for his strong support, to the faculty and staff members who stepped up and ran workshops, and to the many individuals who worked hard to make the day successful. These include Intern Francisco Olivera, who created the program, Media Director Stacy Kitsis who spent countless hours on scheduling, and Vice Principal William McCarthy, whose logistical skills kept the day on track. Administrative Assistant Carolyn Simmons arranged a luncheon for the presenters, Tech gurus Jeff Snyder and Francis Dabarera planned and supported the technology needs of the day and Intervention Coordinator/Social Worker Jess Klau, who will be coordinating the event next year, helped keep things running smoothly

I want to thank Ms. Razi, all of those mentioned above, the members of the AHS Bridge Builders Club who hosted the visiting presenters and the outside agencies who participated and shared their knowledge with our students. We are grateful to the [McClean Hospital and Deconstructing Stigma Program](#), [Middlesex Partnerships for Youth](#), [Families for Depression Awareness](#), [Samaritans](#), [RESPOND.](#), [The Shannon Lee Meara Foundation](#), [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#), [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#), [New Liberty Innovation School](#), [Improbable Players](#), [Minding Your Mind](#), [The NAN Project](#), [The Children's Room](#), [Vorpahl Psychology Associates](#), and [MindOut](#), for volunteering their time to make this day a success. Thanks also to private practitioners Nick Harris LICSW and Kate Elliot Meyer LICSW, and Judge John Broderick Jr.

Department News

METCO Bridging Two Communities Dinner Deepens Boston, Arlington Relationships

On December 1, 40 families of Arlington and Boston resident students came together to foster friendships and strengthen relationships at the third annual *Bridging Two Communities* dinner. This year the event was held at the Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury, giving the Arlington families a sense of what every day is like for our Boston resident students as they travel back and forth between Boston and Arlington. Pierce, Bishop, Hardy, Gibbs, and Ottoson students and their families attended.

The [Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity \(METCO\)](#), founded in 1966, is a voluntary program intended to expand educational opportunities, increase diversity and reduce racial isolation by permitting students in certain cities to attend public school in other communities who agree to participate. Arlington was one of the first seven districts in Massachusetts to embrace the program, and today there are 78 Boston resident students attending schools in our town. Funding comes from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Bridging Two Communities provides a relaxed atmosphere where the families of young Arlington and Boston friends can socialize and get to know each other. Attendees enjoyed a catered dinner and shared the desserts they had brought. School Committee member William Hayner, Miriam Stein from the APS Superintendent's Diversity Advisory Committee and Nikecia Gadson joined APS METCO Director Margaret Credle Thomas at the event.

Arlington Public Schools' participation in the METCO program has enriched our town for over 50 years. Our Boston students travel significant distances to attend school here. Events that bring these students and their families together with the families of the friends they have made in Arlington help build the connections necessary to make them feel an integral part of our community.

Ms. Credle Thomas reports that everyone thought it was great to be together and have time to get to know each other better. Another event is being planned for February or March. I thank Ms. Credle

Thomas, Mr. Hayner and Ms. Gadson for organizing and leading the dinner. I also thank the Watertown Savings Bank and Stop and Shop in Boston for donating the food.

Grants

AEF Honors District with Fall Innovations in Education Grants and Continuing Scholar Award

The [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) has once again presented our district with generous grant support. Over \$22,000 has been awarded in two categories: Innovations in Education Grants and the Continuing Scholar Award.

Nine grants were awarded in the first category.

- *Building Culturally Responsive Skills for Engaging All Students* supports the funding of a graduate level course that provides the knowledge necessary for Pre-K-12 administrators, teachers and support staff to increase their culturally responsive skill set for engaging their students in learning and school life.
- *AHS Wellness Day, 2018 & 2019* provides funds for selected session facilitators, creative workshop supplies and additional support for this unique mental awareness program involving all students that has been offered annually since 2017. (You may learn more about the December 2018 Wellness Day in ***AHS Wellness Day Raises Mental Health, Self-Care, and Healthy Choice Awareness*** in the **Safe & Supportive Schools** section of this newsletter.)
- *Storytelling Residency and Curriculum* funds a storytelling residency at Thompson that includes two assemblies and classroom visits to help students learn to tell a story, complementing content areas of the curriculum and providing the young people with public speaking and performance experience.
- *Mobile and Flexible Digital Investigating* supports the purchase of updated digital probes that can be taken anywhere to conduct physics, chemistry and biology experiments outside the AHS classrooms.
- *Hands-on Nurturing Experience in Middle School General Music* supports flexible seating in music classrooms, providing a more nurturing, relaxed experience that will encourage creativity and collaboration and improve participation, engagement, enjoyment, and self-confidence.
- *Diversify and Innovate Stratton Library* enables the addition of approximately 150 multicultural and diverse books along with exploration stations of activities tied to the books, building multicultural awareness, empowering students, and supporting family enrichment in a community where the student body speaks 31 languages and hails from 27 countries.
- *STEAM for Second Grade* funds the purchase of materials to enable Dallin second grade students to engage in STEAM activities, helping them problem solve, collaborate, create, test ideas, and build using their hands and minds.
- *Professional Collaboration Swivl for Student Discussion and Perspective Taking* funds an iPad and a [Swivl](#) kit so that sixth grade English teachers at Gibbs can record student speakers, allowing teachers to reflect on the discussion skills in the classroom, observe strong teaching practices, and help identify areas of growth in order to improve student skills in engaging with others and building their own social emotional skills.
- *One Book, One School* funds the creation of a pilot program beginning at Brackett that creates a community-building experience and promotes increased literacy and appreciation of reading by having every child, teacher, and administrator read the same book at home and participate in follow-up activities at school the next day.

Continuing Scholar Awards support educators in their personal and professional enrichment that benefits their students. Ottoson Engineering and Technology teacher Brandy Whitney received this award to support her visit to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC.

I want to thank AEF for recognizing the creativity of our teaching professionals and supporting their efforts to advance the educational and social emotional skills of our students. It will be exciting to see these projects implemented in our schools.

Awards & Distinctions



AHS Bassist Joins Grammy Winner on Stage at Milton Academy

AHS senior Olivia Carpenter had the unique opportunity to join Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino and five-time Grammy winning bassist [Victor Wooten](#) on stage at a Milton Academy concert on December 3. The concert was a fundraiser for an upcoming South African tour by Academy students, and Mr. Wooten was the guest star. The founder and director of the Milton Academy jazz program, [Bob Sinicrope](#), is also an internationally known bassist. AHS and the Academy have had a musical connection for some time, and Mr. Sinicrope asked Mr. D'Agostino (also a bassist) to come and play and to bring one of his students. He was pleased to have Olivia, a talented, hard-working musician, join this distinguished group of bass players. Mr. D'Agostino reports that her performance was outstanding, and that she received many accolades from staff members, attendees, and Mr. Wooten. Congratulations Olivia!

Two AHS Athletes Earn All-Scholastic Accolades

Every sports season, Boston newspapers review the high school teams and recognize athletes for their accomplishments. Two dedicated AHS athletes were so honored this month. Senior Francesco Valagussa was named a boys soccer All-Scholastic by the *Boston Herald* and *The Boston Globe*. Francesco was cited for the 16 goals and 12 assists this season that brought his career totals to 32 and 33.

The *Boston Herald* named Senior Ryan Oosting a boys cross country All-Scholastic, calling him "...the state's best cross country runner..." *The Boston Globe* named Ryan one of the two Athletes of the Year in its boys cross country All-Scholastic lineup, noting that he "...won every race that he ran in Massachusetts this season."

Congratulations to both Francesco and Ryan for earning these distinctions.

Ottoson Visual Art Students Display Artwork at Robbins Library

OMS Visual Art teachers Polly Ford and Kayla McKenna regularly exhibit their students' work at the Arlington Robbins Library. Both three-dimensional and two-dimensional work is on display downstairs near the Children's Room. Please copy and paste this link into your browser to see images of the recent display: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14eu5B3vw8pnrYmp9VhCWpmo89qa3-Z_f?usp=sharing

To see more of the terrific work our middle school visual artists are doing, please come to the second Ottoson Quarterly Exhibit that will be held at the school the evening of January 24.

AHS Photographers Included in Teen Photography Exhibition Sponsored by Griffin Museum

It is always gratifying when our students are able to share their work with the wider community, and I am pleased to report that five Arlington High School photography students are part of the first [Griffin Museum Secondary School Photography Exhibit](#). Eighteen schools participated in this beautiful show at the Regis College Fine Arts Center, 235 Wellesley Street, Weston, MA, from January 6-18. Please click [here](#) to see the gallery hours and view the beautiful AHS photographs.

Congratulations to all the students and to AHS Visual Art teacher David Moore for inspiring them to create such outstanding work.

AHS Visual Art Students to Exhibit Work at Lexington Arts and Crafts Society in January

Another wonderful show that includes talented Arlington student artists is happening January 12-27. Over 50 AHS students are part of the 23rd Annual Regional High School Art Show at the Lexington Arts & Crafts Society. Young artists from Bedford, Burlington, Lexington, Winchester, Waltham, and Concord-Carlisle High Schools, the Lexington Christian Academy and Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical are also included. Gallery hours are posted on the Society's [website](#), and admission and parking are free.

The art forms on display include sculpture, pottery, digital photography, painting, drawing, mixed media, and embroidery. An open reception will be held on Sunday, January 27 from 2:00-4:00 pm in the Parson Gallery at the Society. Congratulations to the exhibiting students and to AHS Visual Art teachers Aimee Archambault, Nikki McCulloch, David Moore, and Annie Rebola-Thompson.

Banner Designs by Student Artists Chosen for Spring Display in Arlington Center

Once again, Arlington center will be graced with beautiful large vinyl banners during April and May. Nearly 100 designs were submitted for consideration in the [Youth Banner Project](#) this year. Designs from many Arlington Public School student artists are among the 20 that were chosen this month.

This year's theme is *Trees*, and I know you will be impressed with the glorious [designs](#) the judges have selected. A reception for the artists is being held March 21 from 5:00-7:00 pm in the Media Center at Arlington High School. Thank you to the family of Gracie James for generously donating the funding for this project. Please note that you can find information and a calendar listing all the cultural and arts events going on in town on the Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture [website](#).

Academics & Enrichment



Thompson Third Grade Students Learn About Robots and Art Conservation

In my October newsletter, I reported that parents have been coming forward at Thompson to share information on their country of origin or one they know a lot about with Ms. Dichter's second grade class. This month I have two other examples of the willingness of parents and community members to share their time and knowledge with our young people.

Thompson third grade teachers talk at length with their students about the engineering process of designing, testing, and problem solving to make improvements. So, when a parent came forward with knowledge of other parents who worked at [iRobot](#), the idea for a visit was born. This month a Dallin parent and a colleague visited Thompson with three robots, putting each through its paces and asking the students to think about what it might be used for. One demonstration illustrated how iRobot vacuum cleaners can be controlled using [ScratchJr.](#), a software coding application for young children.

The visitors showed pictures of engineers and designers and the kinds of activities they like to do in their spare time, such as dancing, reading, carpentry, and writing books. This helped the students understand how engineers come from all walks of life with a variety of interests besides science and math. In other words, they are just like them! The speakers asked lots of questions, and time was available for the students to do the same and share their thoughts.

Teacher Elizabeth Ferola reports that the students were "...super engaged and loved seeing the robots and what they do." The gutter cleaning robot with a spinning arm was particularly popular. All four third grade classes were able to participate in what teacher Siobhan Foley describes as "... a great visit..."

Parent Jess Chloros visited Ms. Foley's class this month to talk about her work as an art conservator. Her PowerPoint presentation included embedded videos showing how she uses lasers and other tools to clean sculptures at the [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum](#). To illustrate how she works on cleaning and preserving pictures, she used a mock-up created by one of her colleagues that showed the different layers of Renaissance paintings. The gold leaf that Ms. Chloros brought was a big hit with the students. Ms. Foley describes the event as "spellbinding".

These visits brought two very different careers to life for the children, opening their eyes to some of the possibilities for the future. I want to thank all the individuals involved, and the many others who come forward to enrich our students' education. Thanks also to the third grade teachers at Thompson who facilitated and hosted the visits.

Writers and Reporters Reflect on the State of the Profession at AHS Journalism Panel

On December 7, the AHS Journalism Club hosted a panel of distinguished journalists that explored the state of the profession today and the challenges it faces. The five panelists, each having experience in various aspects of journalism, included:

- David Whitford--Nationally known journalist who has written for both [Forbes](#) and [Inc.](#) magazines and is now pursuing a freelance project
- Abbi Matheson--Former writer for the *Arlington Advocate* who is now a web producer for *The Boston Globe*
- Heather Beasley Doyle—Local and national freelance writer who focuses on social issue and is particularly drawn to stories where ethics is involved
- Brenda Mahoney—Adjunct professor at Emerson College and Assistant News Director at *ACMi*
- Dave Dennison—Experienced national journalist who has worked at the *Arlington Advocate*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The Boston Globe* and is now an editor for [The Baffler](#).

Journalism Club Editors Claire Kitzmiller and Isabella Scopetski skillfully moderated the discussion, posing questions to the panelists who answered in turn. The group explored topics that included social media and its effect on news and reporting, what it means to find your "voice" as a writer, the effect of partisan networks such as Fox and MSNBC, changes in the field since the election of Donald Trump, and the obligation of journalists under this administration.

In responding to the last topic, Mr. Dennison urged journalists to proceed without fear or favor, to remember their role in democracy, and to be constantly skeptical but never cynical. Mr. Whitford stated that the mission of the journalist is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" while upholding the highest standards of the profession. Ms. Beasley Doyle reminded the audience of the need for journalism to hold the powerful accountable, and that reporters need to approach everyone and their stories with

respect and compassion. Ms. Matheson stressed that journalists need to continue to question, check facts, and interview multiple sources and Ms. Mahoney emphasized the need for reporters and readers to think critically and search out multiple perspectives. Despite the many challenges that reporters and writers face today, the group agreed that journalists will always be needed and always exist.

The importance of both print and digital media was also stressed during the evening, and copies of the print version of the AHS newspaper, the *Ponder Page* was available for all attendees. Members of the Journalism Club were on hand to sell pizza and cookies to raise money to publish the next edition. I want to thank the Club for hosting this important and informative event, and thank all the panelists who shared their perspectives.

Creative Highlights



Student Artwork Shared at First Gibbs Art Exhibit

Over 200 students and parents attended the first trimester art show at Gibbs this month and it was a great success. The attendees viewed student work, supported the artists and were treated to a special performance by Ignition, the after school choral group. It is always wonderful for our young visual artists to see their work on display and to receive all the positive feedback they get from the viewers. Please copy and post this link in your browser to see more examples of the terrific work that was on display: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AaS0vjNJeNwYOj5K0o2FtXCZsEBost_0?usp=sharing
Trimester 2 students will show their work at the end of the session in March.

The Visual Art curriculum at Gibbs is based on the philosophy that all students are artists and can use their art to express personal feelings and ideas. The curriculum supports the educational position that students' individual voices and artistic independence are of the highest priority in their visual art experiences.

Two Combined Choral and Instrumental Concerts at Ottoson Warm the Winter Nights

The number of ensembles and the overall size of the Ottoson Music program has meant that two concerts needed to be held every season for some years now. But instead of holding separate choral and instrumental concerts as in previous winters, each of this year's concerts gave their audiences a chance to hear from both singers and musicians, which everyone enjoyed.

The first concert, held on December 11, featured choral groups led by Music teacher Cori Smith and orchestral groups led by String teacher Jing-Huey Wei. The evening began with a warm welcome from over 100 voices as the Combined Choirs delivered *Sorida (A Zimbabwe Welcome Greeting)*. The Chamber Orchestra came next. This group of about 20 members presented an overture by Rossini. The addition of percussion in both performances added a special flare.

Three choral groups followed. The 7th Grade Chorus, with about 75 members, performed three numbers, beginning with a spiritual and ending with a contemporary number from *The Greatest Showman*. Several

soloists were featured in the latter piece, as well as guitar and percussion. The 30 member a capella group *Harmonics* delighted the audience with their two number set that included *My Shot* from *Hamilton* featuring vocal and spoken soloists. Over 40 members of the Girls Ensemble delivered the final choral performance, presenting the inspirational *Amazing* by Pinkzebra, a contemporary producer and composer known for uplifting music.

The evening ended with a performance of three numbers by the 7th and 8th Grade Orchestra, a string group with over 75 members. The players began with Smetana's *Themes from The Moldau*. *Hungarian Dance No. 5* by Brahms was conducted by Berklee College of Music Intern Megan McGarry. The last number, *Trepak* from *Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker*, was a glorious way to send the audience home on a chilly night.

The December 18 concert featured the groups conducted by OMS Music teacher Greg Condakes and Band teacher Paula Demetrio. The Show Choir, with over 25 members, presented two classic Broadway numbers, complete with choreography and solid harmonies. They were followed by the Ottoson Middle School Boys' Chorus, whose 46 members delighted the audience with the rousing *Cossacks of the Steppes* and *Those Canaan Days* from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, that included soloists wearing colorful berets.

The Concert Band of over 60 musicians began their three number set with a classic march and ended with the challenging and complex *Suite from Hamilton*. They were followed by the Grade 8 Chorus, over 75 voices strong, who moved from Mozart's *Dies Irae* sung in Latin, to Mel Torme's ever popular *Christmas Song*, the joyous Hanukkah song *Celebration of Light*, and *The Greatest Showman*. The 20 members of the Jazz Ensemble sent the audience home swinging with *Cool Joe*, *Mean Joe* and *In the Mood*, two great jazz standards that each featured several soloists.

It was wonderful to see over 150 young people participating in each concert! Thank you to Ms. Smith, Ms. Wei, Mr. Condakes, and Ms. Demetrio and congratulations to all the students who took part in these special evenings. I also thank OMS Special Education teacher Randi Flynn who assists Mr. Condakes with the Show Choir and is responsible for their fun choreography.

AHS Winter Concert Features New Vocal Groups and Memorable Ending

The AHS Winter Concert, always wonderful, had some extra special elements this year. First, the audience was introduced to three new vocal ensembles. The program began with the debut of Bros II Men, a 24-member all male chorus conducted by OMS Music teacher Greg Condakes. (Mr. Condakes also conducts the very successful Boys Chorus at Ottoson.) They got the evening off to a great start with *Ride the Chariot*, a spiritual that featured several soloists. Bros II Men includes all the male students in the Madrigal Singers, as well as young men from other groups.

Bel Canto, the new 24-member girls ensemble, performed later in the program, singing Monteverdi's 1620 *Cantate Domino* and the spiritual *Poor Wayfaring Stranger*. This group includes all the Madrigal women as well as others. The last of the new groups that performed is the Freshman Choir consisting of male and female voices. This ensemble is a great way for younger vocalists to work on their skills before moving on to other groups. The Freshman Choir presented three numbers that included the Israeli folk song *Zum Gali Gali* featuring several soloists, hand drums and finger cymbals and a beautiful *Ave Maria* accompanied by a flute soloist. Both these groups are conducted by Madalyn Kitchen. It is wonderful to have these new opportunities for our vocalists to share their skills with us.

The Madrigal Singers and the Arlington Chorale, conducted by Ms. Kitchen, completed the list of vocal ensembles that delighted the audience at the Winter Concert. Members of the Jazz Band joined the 29 Madrigal Singers on their final number, Johnny Burke and Erroll Garner's *Misty*. The three-number set delivered by the 50-member Chorale included a South African folk song accompanied by djembe, ashiko and cowbell and a beautiful piece by Johannes Brahms.

At the concert, both the Concert Band and Jazz Band, directed by Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino, were conducted by Berklee College of Music intern Anthony Abate. The first group, 90 musicians strong, presented *Accolade*, the composer's tribute to a special person, and three movements of William Schuman's Newsreel (*In Five Shots*)--*Tribal Dance*, *Fashion Show* and *Horse Race*. The 28-member Jazz Band pleased their audience with music by jazz greats Charles Mingus and Herbie Hancock and American keyboardist, songwriter and original member of the rock band Toto Steve Pocar.

The set presented by the Honors String Orchestra began with *Gaia*, written, arranged and directed by senior Julian Carpenter. Works by Holst and Saint-Saens completed their performance. The string players of the Orchestra presented the first movement of Mozart's *Symphony no. 40*, and the full Symphony Orchestra of over 80 members performed the fourth movement of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*. Mr. D'Agostino directed these groups.

The second extra special element of the Winter Concert came at the end when all the vocalists and musicians came together (over 200 students!) to perform the magnificent *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*. It was an amazing and inspiring end to a beautiful evening. Congratulations to all the student performers, Mr. Condakes, Ms. Kitchen, and Mr. D'Agostino for bringing us such a memorable Winter Concert.