

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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News from June 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

June is the month when we celebrate graduations and moving on. It is important to mark these transitions as they represent distinct changes and growth for our children, and at APS, we honor these milestones at three levels. The students completing the fifth grade have spent their early academic years within their local community. Fifth grade graduation marks the time that they will leave their neighborhoods to attend school with others from across Arlington. All of our elementary schools have activities and traditions that make this time special, which include Moving On ceremonies. Other traditions might include field trips, memory books, T-shirts or having on the last day of school the entire student body lined up in the halls to "clap out" the rising sixth grade students as they exit the building for the final time.

Eighth grade graduation marks the transition to high school, a time when each student begins to chart their own course. The end of the middle school years at Ottoson included a Field Day, trip to Canobie Lake Park, Recognition Ceremony and Dance, and a tour of AHS. For our Arlington High School seniors, graduation means that they will be moving beyond our district to explore life paths, sometimes moving far away to continue their education, join the military, take a gap year or begin employment. Administrators, teachers and members of the community come together at AHS Graduation to celebrate their accomplishments and share their hopes for the future. I urge you to read ***The Class of 2018 Honors the Past and Looks toward the Future*** in the **Graduation & Matriculation** section below to learn about the ceremony and what our graduates will be doing in the near future.

As we bid farewell to our seniors, planning gears up to welcome our incoming Kindergarten students. By the middle of this month, there were 571 children enrolled to begin their elementary career in September. This continues the growth trend we have been experiencing. The number of incoming Kindergarten students has fluctuated between a low of 477 and a high of 552 over the last six years. This September's enrollment represents a 9% increase over last year. As I reported in my November 2017 newsletter, Arlington is one of the 12 fastest growing communities in the region. Many young families are choosing Arlington because of its proximity to Boston, walkability, access to public transportation, vibrancy and the strength of our schools. Our increasing student population presents many challenges, but we are grateful to see that so many families recognize what our educational community has to offer.

Many of you are already aware that the Arlington High School Building Committee has chosen Alternative 3a to recommend to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. This choice, an entirely new high school, has been made after months of work that involved all of the stakeholders. The option offers many positives that are outlined in [my letter](#) to the APS community. We believe this design will create an iconic high school for Arlington that meets the needs of 21st century education. I urge you to read ***Final AHS Design Concept Chosen After Months of Study, Public Comment*** in the **Department News** section of this newsletter to learn more about this decision and the next steps in the high school rebuilding process. This is a very exciting time for our community, and I am grateful to everyone who has taken part.

The Arlington High School Internship Program is going strong, and Principal Matthew Janger reported that about 60 students hope to take part during the upcoming school year. This program provides a valuable hands-on personalized learning experience for our young people. We have been fortunate that so many organizations have come forward to offer a wide range of experiences to our students. Last

year, AHS interns worked at non-profits, state and local government departments, science and engineering research labs, museums, banks, retail and the media, among others. For some participants, being an intern is a way to "test" certain possible career options, such as civil engineering, law enforcement, medicine, psychology, special education or service. In every case, the interns learn how to present themselves, and behave and work in a professional setting--skills that they will take with them as they leave AHS. Anyone who would like to host a student intern may contact Program Coordinator and AHS History and Social Science teacher Melanie Konstandakis at mkonstandakis@arlington.k12.ma.us. You can learn more about both intern and supervisor responsibilities in the [Host Letter](#).

I want to be sure that everyone knows that [Arlington EATS](#), the local nonprofit organization that fights food insecurity in our town, is offering free summer lunches for students and their families between July 9 and August 16. The meals are held Monday-Thursday in the Thompson Elementary School Cafeteria from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. In addition to lunch, a daily assortment of fresh produce, pantry staples and other food items will be available in a daily pantry. This program is part of the organization's mission to make sure that our students have access to healthy, nutritious food throughout the year.

As the school year ends, we treasure our memories while looking forward to creating new ones. This is my final newsletter for the 2017-2018 school year, and I hope you will enjoy reading it. I want to thank Debbie Botos, Julie Dunn, Claudia Bertoli and Karen Tassone for all the work they do to enable me to give you monthly snapshots of our student, staff and departmental achievements. I wish everyone a happy and healthy summer.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Safe & Supportive Schools

Over 180 Individuals Trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid

To date, 185 APS staff members have taken part in the [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) (YMHFA) program that provides the tools necessary for our educators to recognize mental health risk factors and warning signs and react proactively. [Learn more>](#)

Department News

With Appreciation, APS Honors Staff Milestones, Accomplishments and Changes

At our Distinguished Service Award Ceremony last month, we thanked Dr. Eileen Woods for serving as the Ottoson Interim Principal, and recognized 59 individuals for their years of service, for attaining professional status or for choosing to enter into the retirement phase of their lives. [Read more>](#)

Final AHS Design Concept Chosen After Months of Study, Public Comment

The [Arlington High School Building Committee](#) has chosen to recommend the construction of a completely new high school, an option with many key positives that are outlined in the [my letter](#) to the APS Community. [Learn more>](#)

Gibbs School and Hardy Expansion on Target to Welcome Students in the Fall

Construction work will be completed at the Gibbs Sixth Grade School by July 31, and the Hardy classroom addition and new Lake Street playground are on schedule to be ready for the 2018-2019 school opening. [Read more>](#)

Professional Development

Stratton Faculty and Students Engage in Yearlong Project-based Learning

Working with educational consultant [Steven Levy](#), 14 faculty and staff members and their students learned how to identify something that they could get excited about working on, brainstorm a project, and work through to completion within a "culture of quality" as they uncovered and engaged in projects that solved realistic, thought-provoking problems. [Learn more>](#)

Grants

AEF Awards Spring Grants for Innovation and Continuing Education

We are grateful to the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) for awarding five [Innovations in Education](#) grants and three [Continuing Scholar Awards](#) that support leading-edge teaching and professional enrichment, benefiting our students, teachers and staff. [Read more>](#)

Graduation & Matriculation

The Class of 2018 Honors the Past and Looks toward the Future

This year's graduates remembered their past, honored one who was lost, and were told that they have the capacity to make "...tomorrow brighter than today..." as they spent their last time together as a class before moving on to further education, the military, gap year activities or employment. [Learn more>](#)

Awards & Distinctions

Ottoson Science Club Shines in Regional and State Competition

Several projects placed well at Regional and State Massachusetts State Science & Engineering Middle School Fairs, capping off a year of hard work for the members of the OMS Science Club. [Read more>](#)

Six OMS Performing Arts Groups Shine at Great East Festivals

It was Gold and Platinum status for the five Ottoson choral groups and the 7th and 8th Grade Orchestra that performed in front of adjudicators at the [Great East Music Festivals](#). [Learn more>](#)

AHS Visual Arts Students Display Artwork, Join Discussion at ICA Teen Program

Kudos to the two Arlington High School students who attended *The Current*, shared their artwork, and dialogued with others regarding the relationship between art and Internet technology at the [Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston](#) last month. [Read more>](#)

Racing Drone Improvements Earn Recognition for AHS STEAM Team

Congratulations to the members of the AHS STEAM Team whose racing drone captured third place at the [New England Extreme Redesign 3D Printing Challenge](#). [Learn more>](#)

AHS Music Groups and Instrumental Director Featured on Italian Television

You won't want to miss the five-minute [segment](#) created and aired by Italian Public TV this month featuring the work done by Arlington High School Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino and the amazing students in our Performing Arts Department. [Learn more>](#)

ELL Teachers Present Curriculum Work, Sharing Website and Win Grant at MATSOL Conference

Three Arlington Public Schools English Language Learner teachers presented examples of the curriculum units and ESL Unit Sharing website that the ELL team has created at this spring's [Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners](#) (MATSOL) Conference, and another one received a [Linda Schulman Innovation Grant](#). [Read more>](#)

Elementary Visual Arts Teacher's Lesson to Be Included on National Website

Congratulations to our Dallin and Hardy Visual Arts teacher on the upcoming inclusion of one of her art lessons on the website being created by an accomplished team of nationally recognized art educators. [Learn more>](#)

Activity and Excitement Follow Publication of Thompson Teacher's First Book

Visiting with young people, receiving feedback from students, reading at bookstores, and talking about her book in the company of other published authors are among the special experiences that have followed the publication of Thompson fourth grade teacher's first Middle Grade book. [Learn more>](#)

Academics & Enrichment

Stratton Boys' Book Club Creates Reading Community for K-5 Students and Family Members

About 20 boys and some family members attended the monthly meetings of the Boys' Book Club this spring, coming together to share ideas and offer support that may lead to increased interest in reading high quality fiction. [Read more>](#)

An In-house Museum Visit and Court House Mock Trials Enhance Elementary Learning

A visit from members of the Concord Museum staff and participation in mock trials at the Moakley Court House are examples of the experiential learning our young people engaged in this spring. [Learn more>](#)

AP Visual Arts Class Takes a Creative Approach to Social Activism

Arlington High School students created a powerful and moving body of work as they explored, analyzed, and strengthened their connections between social activism and artistic practice in their Advanced Placement Art and Social Activism class. [Read more>](#)

Creative Highlights

Two OMS Spring Chorus Concerts Fill the Halls with the Joy of Singing

Whether they were performing Mozart, a Ghanaian folk song, the Beach Boys or a Broadway number, the members of the eight Ottoson choral groups delighted the audiences with their enthusiasm and talent at two choral concerts last month. [Learn more>](#)

Ottoson Instrumental Ensembles Demonstrate Skills on Range of Music at Spring Concert

Over 200 OMS musicians in five different groups delighted their audience with pieces that included classics, jazz, show tunes, rock, and rhythm and blues during the Instrumental Ensembles Spring Concert this month. [Read more>](#)

Fine Performances, Excellent Casting and Lots of Laughter Marked the OMS One Act Play Festival

The Ottoson drama season ended with 15 eighth grade students directing 81 actors in six plays during an all day festival, capping an exciting season that included a trip to New York City and a Facetime call with a Broadway performer. [Learn more>](#)

Current and Former Students Make "Bejazzled" a Night to Remember

The Ottoson Middle School Jazz Ensemble, AHS Jazz Band and around 60 alumni delivered a fabulous evening of music at *Bejazzled*, the APS Performing Arts Department's biennial celebration of jazz that started in 2003. [Learn more>](#)

Continue to read the full News from June 2018 Newsletter

Safe & Supportive Schools

Over 180 Individuals Trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid

I am happy to report that we are making wonderful progress in training our teachers, administrators and staff members to recognize mental health risk factors and warning signs and take action if they see a problem or crisis developing. To date, 185 individuals have taken part in the [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) (YMHFA) program. The information they have covered includes the signs and symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis and addiction disorders, among others.

As I reported in the **Grants** section of my November 2017 newsletter, we are able to bring this program to Arlington Public schools thanks to the generous support of the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF). We know that 50% of all mental health disorders appear before the age of 14, and 75% before age 24 ([mentalhealth.gov](#)). Early diagnosis and support is necessary to prevent the problems from interfering with other developmental needs. The YMHFA training provides the tools necessary for our educators to respond and steer affected young people toward treatment and recovery. I am grateful to AEF for making it possible for us to give our teachers and staff the information they need to support students proactively.

Department News

With Appreciation, APS Honors Staff Milestones, Accomplishments and Changes

Spring is a time of celebrations, and every year we pause to recognize the special milestones in our community. At our Staff Appreciation event last month, we honored one individual who has served our district for 30 years, three who have been with us for 25 years, six whose tenure totals 20 years, and nine staff members who are retiring. We also recognized the 40 individuals who have achieved professional status. This group includes elementary, middle and high school teachers across a wide spectrum of subjects and specialties, health services employees and support personnel. Additionally, our Distinguished Service Award Ceremony recognized Dr. Eileen Woods who has been the interim principal of Ottoson for the last two years.

All of these individuals serve our young people with dedication and dignity, and we are grateful that they have chosen Arlington as their home district. We will miss those who are departing, and send our best wishes for their well-deserved retirement. I look forward to continuing to work with all of those who will be returning in the fall. Thank you for your contributions to our children and our district.



Final AHS Design Concept Chosen After Months of Study, Public Comment

The [Arlington High School Building Committee](#) (AHSBC) has chosen the preferred design concept for the new high school that will be submitted to the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#) (MSBA) on July 11. The process leading to this decision involved convening a group of teachers, administrators, parents, students and community members to develop guiding principles for the project, holding a series of public forums to discuss progress and ideas and answer questions, and collecting public feedback in person, through email and surveys. During the final feedback phase, over 1,000 survey responses were received as students, staff and community members outlined the design aspects that were of most importance to them and indicated their preferences.

At the last public forum, held early this month, the AHSBC presented the four options from which the recommended design would be chosen. The attendees learned about each option, about the upcoming process and about the five key criteria to be balanced during option evaluation. These considerations were:

- How well does the concept meet the educational requirements?
- Will the building provide access for community use?

- Does the design support facilities considerations, such as security and sustainability?
- Is the concept flexible enough to adapt to future needs?
- How optimal are the building costs, and phasing and timing of construction?

The above considerations and the public feedback led the AHSBC to choose Alternative 3a, a completely new building. This concept, shown above, has many key positives that are detailed in [my letter](#) to the APS Community. These include the facts that some of the front green will be retained, there is more opportunity for sustainability, it is likely to be the least expensive to operate, and it supports a shorter construction timeframe.

If the MSBA at their August meeting approves the Preferred Schematic Report that our Owners Project Manager submitted, we will enter the [Schematic Design Phase](#) of the project. During this time, a detailed design of the building will be developed that will include the project scope, budget and schedule. This is a very exciting time for our community, and I thank all the individuals who have generously given their time, talents, and feedback that has brought us to this point. We will continue to work as a community to create an iconic high school for Arlington that meets the needs of 21st century education. Please consult the [Arlington High School Building Project website](#) for more information about the overall project.

Gibbs School and Hardy Expansion on Target to Welcome Students in the Fall

In other exciting construction news, the Gibbs Sixth Grade School will be completed for occupancy by July 31. A tremendous amount of work has taken place to prepare the academic and social emotional environment that we want for this school. Many details, including how the schedule will work, ensuring grade 6-8 vertical alignment, opportunities for band, orchestra and chorus, and transportation have been addressed. Principal Kristin DeFrancisco and Assistant Principal Wendy Salvatore visited fifth grade classrooms this month to give rising sixth grade students a preview of what to expect on the first day and during the first week of school. Project Based Learning will be emphasized at Gibbs and [Responsive Classroom](#) training for teachers and staff will be occurring over the summer.

The latest and greatest information about what the Gibbs will be like can be found in the June 6 presentation, [Parent Forum for Gibbs Families](#), and I recommend that you go through it. Please be on the lookout for information about rising sixth grade student and parent tours of the new building that will take place in late August. After school has begun, we will schedule an open house for the community and a ribbon cutting. Please consult the [Gibbs School website](#) for additional information.

I am happy to report that the classroom addition project at Hardy is also on schedule. Plans are in place for the new Lake Street playground, with site preparation expected to take place in July and equipment installation in August. For additional information, please see [Facility Expansion](#) on the Hardy website. Here you will find an overview of the changes, updates, timelines and answers to frequently asked questions.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the Gibbs and Hardy projects. We are fortunate to have tremendous community support to increase our facilities to handle the growing enrollment that we continue to experience. We look forward to starting the next school year in these new facilities.

Professional Development

Stratton Faculty and Students Engage in Yearlong Project-based Learning

On June 19, Stratton parents had the opportunity to attend an exhibition that shared what 14 faculty and staff members and their students had learned by working with educational consultant [Steven Levy](#) this year. Mr. Levy is a recipient of the 1992-93 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year award who has taught every grade level from Kindergarten through college. He currently works with [ASCD](#), a membership organization dedicated to excellence in learning and teaching. Mr. Levy was engaged to introduce and foster the strategy of project-based learning at Stratton.

Working onsite in the classrooms, Mr. Levy began by helping students and teachers understand how to launch this type of learning. In project-based learning, teachers take on the role of a coach, setting the stage for the students to uncover something they can get excited about working on, sometimes using an artifact to get inquiry started. The aim is to identify a topic outside the normal classroom activities, something with an essential question that will engage the students in a way that makes them want to create and execute a project that accomplishes a goal.

After identifying a topic, students brainstormed the different things they might do, identifying the work required and the ways it could be accomplished. As the projects developed, Mr. Levy helped the teachers coach the students to develop a "culture of quality", one where each individual wants to produce something that is good. The children learned about ways to research the questions and gather information. They talked about what success would be like before they started working so they understood what they were aiming for. They also learned that it often takes many iterations to produce something that is exactly right, and that patience is important.

For example, Mr. Levy helped Kindergarten students identify the fact that their alphabet chart was not as interesting as it could be. After all, it was commercially produced, and so wasn't specific to the class. He helped them realize that this particular group of young people would never be together again as they were this year, and that they might want to consider creating something that represented them. The class considered how the alphabet chart could be made special, and how it could reflect who they are.

The students embarked upon a yearlong project to create a new chart. They received coaching and feedback from their friends as they worked through multiple iterations. They thought about what it meant to work hard on their task, to do their very best drawing, and engage in careful, thoughtful work. An attitude toward quality developed. Together, the students created a remarkable alphabet book and display strip for the classroom that truly reflected the best possible Kindergarten work.

Another example comes from the third grade. These young people decided to develop a manual that would help explain persuasive writing to second grade students. Each child committed to describe an element of persuasive writing and contribute a page to the book. As they worked through the process, they decided that it would be wonderful if they could create something visual. Each page of the finished manual has a QR code. Using this code, the second grade students can use their iPads to watch and listen to the author reading an example of persuasive writing.

Stratton Principal Michael Hanna, who engaged Mr. Levy, believes that project-based learning helps to create the kind of inquisitive and collaborative individuals that are required for 21st century work environments. Over the summer, Dr. Hanna will work with his teachers on how they can grow what they have learned during the next school year. He is grateful for the support of the PTO who made it possible to hire Mr. Levy and for the willingness of the faculty members who jumped in to try this approach. They demonstrated a very high level of caring and commitment, as well as enthusiasm for starting something new.

As the examples illustrate, the project-based learning strategy helps children understand how to start something from scratch and encourages creativity. They discover that engaging in realistic, thought-provoking problems is motivational, interdisciplinary and fun. I want to thank Dr. Hanna for bringing the opportunity to engage in project-based learning to his faculty and students.

Grants

AEF Awards Spring Grants for Innovation and Continuing Education

Once again, the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) has honored our students, teachers and staff with generous grants. The \$17,540 in spring grants fall into two categories: [Innovations in Education](#) and [Continuing Scholar Awards](#).

Five Innovations in Education grants will support leading-edge teaching and learning projects.

- *Discovering Our Voices with Literature Circles* funds the books and supplies for a six-to-eight week unit that brings high-interest, high-quality literature to all sixth grade students through student-directed literature circles where the young people will take ownership of their learning.
- *Integrating Dialectical-Behavioral Therapy* will enable the high school Summit staff, a Special Education program geared towards supporting students who have social-emotional or behavioral difficulties as their primary disability, to have further consultation and training in evidence-based dialectical-behavioral therapy that supports students in building coping skills.
- *Fun & Games with Math* funds the purchase of mathematics games for each Gibbs classroom and the Media Center, supporting the [Responsive Classroom](#) approach by providing fun ways for all students to engage in the subject and enabling full days of school wide in-house play as well as an event involving the wider community.
- *Building a Multicultural Library* provides funding to purchase books that reflect the diverse population served by the Millbrook Program, a transition and assessment program for students with significant social emotional and/or academic needs who struggle in large high school classrooms, allowing them see themselves represented in what they read and improving their ability to learn effectively.
- *Beautiful Brain--AP Psychology Conference at MIT* enables an all day conference to be attended by AP Psychology students from Arlington High School and a few neighboring schools where they will visit an exhibit featuring some of the first drawings of neurons (early 1900s) and hear from experts in the world of neuroscience.

Three Continuing Scholar Awards will make it possible for educators to pursue professional enrichment experiences.

- Deborah Campagna, Visual Arts teacher at Stratton and Thompson, will attend the [Snow Farm Art Retreat for Educators](#), a four-night program with three full days of instruction and open studio time, at a nonprofit residential craft school in Williamsburg, Massachusetts that is one of only nine similar institutions in the country.
- Elizabeth Farese, first grade teacher at Dallin, will attend [The Ron Clark Academy](#) Two Day Educator Training to learn more about their innovative, out-of-the box teaching style that enables teachers to increase student engagement, promote academic rigor and create a classroom culture that leads to success for all.
- Stacie Greenland, Visual Arts teacher at Dallin and Hardy, will attend the Japanese Language and Culture Level 1 course at [The Boston Language Institute](#), building on her trip to Japan and other professional development she has taken, and allowing her to expand her teaching of Japanese art forms to her students.

All of these grants illustrate the passion our educators have for their profession and their commitment to continuous improvement that benefits their students. Thank you to AEF for their support.

Graduation & Matriculation

The Class of 2018 Honors the Past and Looks toward the Future

It is always inspiring to hear the bagpiper begin and watch the AHS graduation procession enter Peirce Field. This year, over 300 young men and women filed into their seats to celebrate the end of their education here in Arlington and to start down paths that may take them far from home. During the ceremony, the graduates honored their elementary teachers and paid a special tribute to Jeremy Kremer-McNeil, a beloved classmate who took his own life before school began in 2015. A dear friend remembered him lovingly and introduced the AHS Madrigal Singers who delivered Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* accompanied by guitar, bass guitar, keyboard and drums. Faculty speaker Paul McKnight, Collumb House Dean, English teacher and Student Council Advisor, talked about the inherent complexity of living a life that includes both "being" and "becoming". He acknowledged that the members of this class had wrestled with questions of "identity, of diversity, of inclusion and belonging" in their years at AHS. Mr. McKnight closed with these words:

"I cannot say whether tomorrow will be brighter than today, but I know that each and every one of you has the capacity to make it so."

The Class of 2018 graduated with 98.06% of students having a post-graduate plan. These plans include college preparatory schools, career education, the military, a gap year program, and employment. In addition, 91.47% of the graduates will be attending college, with 84.26% going on to four-year institutions and 7.21% electing to attend two-year colleges. Among those students who are college bound, 65% are electing to attend school in New England. Only 26% will move beyond this region, as compared to 25% in 2017, 36% in 2016 and 33% in 2015. Next fall, ten students will attend five Ivy League schools and one student will go to MIT. Eight students will matriculate to colleges in Canada, one student to a college in Ireland, and one to a school in Spain. A large number of students are pursuing their love of STEM fields, music and the arts at specialized schools, and others are pursuing the excitement of travel and aesthetics through a range of programs.

Our Guidance Counselors processed approximately 2,231 transcripts, and mid-year transcripts were sent to all colleges at the close of quarter two. The class of 2018 applied to 389 colleges in 37 states as well as Canada, Ireland, Japan, Scotland, and Spain. I want to thank everyone in the Guidance Department, as well as the APS faculty and staff for the support they provided to the members of the Class of 2018 throughout their years in the Arlington Public Schools.

Wherever life takes this year's graduates, our hopes, dreams, and wishes for accomplishment and happiness will follow. We wish each a successful college, military, gap year and work environment where they will feel fulfilled. May their future in this vast and wonderful world be filled with joy as they continue their pursuit of lifelong learning!

Awards & Distinctions



Ottoson Science Club Members Shine in Regional and State Competition

This has been another great year for the members of the Ottoson Science Club. Nine projects were shared at an OMS in-house fair where judges gave the young scientists valuable feedback on their work, approach, and presentation. The Region IV Massachusetts State Science & Engineering (MSSEF) Middle School Fair came next, where two projects earned Second Place and two earned Honorable Mention.

Award	Project	Student(s)
Second Place	Hover Tracks	Robert Khazan
	Medieval Catapult	Andy Gardiner
Honorable Mention	Hand Extension--The Amazing Mechanical Hand	Kai Collins & Max Depriest
	Titanium Dioxide in Consumer Products	Mikhail Saykin

These projects went on to the state level MSSEF Middle School Fair held in Worcester this month, along with a fifth choice. The results here were also impressive.

Award	Project	Student
Second Place	Hover Tracks	Robert Khazan
Third Place	Hand Extension--The Amazing Mechanical Hand	Kai Collins & Max Depriest

Honorable Mention	Exploring Alternatives to the Sugar Maple, the Tree that is Used to Produce Syrup	Rose Lavin
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Ottoson Science Club members began working on their projects at various times throughout the school year. Their personal interests and questions served as the starting point. OMS Science teacher Robin Varghese and volunteer Michael Hansen, a dedicated OMS substitute, worked with the students to craft their ideas into a project that would qualify for competition, keeping in mind the restrictions on the type of experiments permitted by the [Massachusetts State Science & Engineering Fair](#) organization. The two mentors were available to provide guidance, make suggestions and remind the students of deadlines, helping them balance their projects with the other demands on their time.

Dr. Varghese is proud of all the dedicated members of the Ottoson Science Club, and grateful for the support of the community. The Ottoson Parent Advisory Council has provided the funding for the last couple of years, and a parent volunteer and numerous OMS staff members were on hand as judges during the in-house fair. Thank you to Dr. Varghese and Mr. Hansen for their leadership of our young scientists and to those who came forward to support the Club. Congratulations to all the students who took part.

Six OMS Performing Arts Groups Shine at Great East Festivals

The [Great East Music Festivals](#) are non-competitive performance opportunities for vocalists and instrumentalists. The judges are music educators who watch and listen intently, and then offer a mini-clinic where feedback and suggestions for improvement are provided. Each group receives recorded comments, a score sheet and a rating.

This year, five Ottoson choral groups and the 7th and 8th Grade Orchestra took part in the festival. All of the groups did an outstanding job. The Select Chorus (The Keynotes) and Acoustics (A Cappella), both led by Music teacher Cori Smith, were awarded Gold status from the adjudicators. The Girls' Ensemble led by Ms. Smith, the Boys' Chorus and Show Choir led by Music teacher Greg Condakes, and the 7th and 8th Grade Orchestra led by String teacher Jing-Huey Wei, achieved Platinum status. Choreography for the Show Choir is done by Special Education teacher Randi Flynn.

Congratulations to everyone who participated, and to the dedicated teachers who lead these groups. The Ottoson [Performing Arts](#) program has grown significantly over the last few years, and the Great East results are a testimony to the talent and passion our young people bring to the groups they join. The Ottoson Band, conducted by Woodwind, Brass and Percussion teacher Paula Demetrio, also has the opportunity to receive feedback and guidance. Rather than traveling to Great East, Ms. Demetrio invites a Guest Clinician to visit Ottoson and work with the students in-house.



David Ardito David Moore Isa Dray Mary Raboy Nikki McCulloch Annle Rebola



AHS Visual Arts Students Display Artwork, Join Discussion at ICA Teen Program

I am pleased to report that Arlington High School students Mary Raboy and Isabella Dray each had two artworks displayed at the [Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston](#) during a teen forum about the relationship

between art and Internet technology. The young women applied to attend *The Current*, share their work, and take part in a dialogue with students from greater Boston about how technology affects their artwork and their lives. AHS Visual Arts teachers Nikki McCulloch and Annie Rebola-Thompson supported their participation and attended the program along with teacher David Moore and K-12 Director David Ardito. It is wonderful when our students have the opportunity to share their talent and ideas with members of the wider community. I applaud Mary and Isabella for wanting to take part, and thank the members of the AHS Visual Arts Department for the instruction and support they provide our students.

Racing Drone Improvements Earn Recognition for AHS STEAM Team

Congratulations to the AHS STEAM Team whose racing drone captured third place at the fourth annual [New England Extreme Redesign 3D Printing Challenge](#) held at Worcester Polytechnic Institute last month. The competition asks entrants to think about how they can make something better, and this year AHS entered a remote-controlled plane, a remote-controlled boat and the racing drone. It was the last one that captured the judges' attention. The drone was envisioned, 3D-printed, cut, and assembled by the students. I want to thank CADD teacher Kambiz Vatan for his leadership of the STEAM Club, and congratulate the students on their fine work.

AHS Music Groups and Instrumental Director Featured on Italian Television

Even if you don't speak Italian, you will want to look at the wonderful [segment](#) created by Italian Public TV that features the work done by Arlington High School Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino and the amazing students in our Performing Arts Department. The five-minute piece, filmed on location in Boston, was aired on the *Community* program in Italy and on RAI Italia, a station that is viewed by Italians all over the world. It is very special to have members of our community highlighted internationally, and I know you will enjoy watching the video. Kudos to Mr. D'Agostino and all our high school performers!

ELL Teachers Present Curriculum Work, Sharing Website and Win Grant at MATSOL Conference

The creation of a Grades K-12 model ESL curriculum and an ESL Unit Sharing website are excellent examples of the work our teachers do during their summers, and how they strive to collaborate and learn from colleagues across the state. This summer, the English Language Learner (ELL) team is continuing work that began in 2016 when two members attended the ESL Model Curriculum Units Facilitator Training Workshop offered by the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) (DESE). Anxious to foster collaboration between ESL teachers across Massachusetts, the team has partnered with the Burlington ELL program to build a [sharing website](#) to house ESL curriculum units modeled after those posted on the DESE website.

Encouraged by APS ELL Director Carla Bruzzese, ELL teachers Jessica Nguy (Ottoson), Carol Bennett Dessureau (Bishop) and Heather Smith (Hardy and ELL District Family Liaison) submitted an abstract about their work to the [Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners](#) (MATSOL) that was accepted. The group attended the 2018 MATSOL Conference this spring and was able to introduce the ESL Unit Sharing site and share snapshots of three of the units they have created. Their presentation, *New Ready-to-Use ESL Curriculum Units at Your Fingertips!* was delivered to a packed room and Ms. Bruzzese describes it as "amazing".

The three teachers have been working hard to raise awareness about the sharing website, and they expect to receive more curriculum unit submissions in the fall. They are looking forward to teachers across the state using each other's units and providing feedback. The team is convinced that teaching a well thought-out, language-focused unit as recommended by DESE creates a more fluid and efficient teaching and learning experience for everyone involved. Ms. Nguy, Ms. Bennett Dessureau and Ms. Smith believe this initiative could help narrow the gap between native English speakers and English Language Learners across the state. The entire ELL team is hoping to pursue collaboration and team teaching with classroom and content teachers and curriculum coaches within Arlington Public Schools.

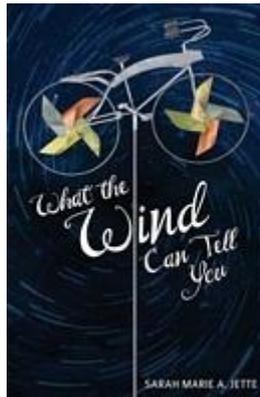
Additionally, I am happy to announce that ELL teacher Hannah Dingman (Stratton) received a [Linda Schulman Innovation Grant](#) at the MATSOL conference. Several teachers receive this award annually to use to fund pedagogical projects that promote creative English Language Learning. Ms. Dingman plans to use the summer to create language goals for a unit involving robotics and STEM technology that she will purchase.

I am glad to be able to share this example of how our teachers take part in Professional Development and use what they have learned to make a difference, not just in Arlington, but across the Commonwealth. Our ELL Team has assumed a task that teachers in other districts are struggling with, and I know their efforts will be much appreciated. I want to thank all of our ELL teachers for their dedication to creating and sharing curriculum that will further students' English proficiency and congratulations to Ms. Dingman on receiving the innovation grant award.

Elementary Visual Arts Teacher's Lesson to Be Included on National Website

I am pleased to report that Dallin and Hardy Visual Arts teacher Stacie Greenland will have one of her art lessons published on a website that is being created by one of the most accomplished teams of art educators in the country. The launch of the website will coincide with the August release of their new book, [Studio Thinking from the Start, The K-8 Art Educator's Handbook](#). Much of the current APS Visual Arts curriculum, developed over the last eight years, is based upon [Studio Thinking2](#), an earlier publication that several of the authors helped to write. Our curriculum is also informed by the research that resulted in the [8 Studio Habits of Mind](#) developed by one of the authors.

It is very gratifying to have one of our talented educators recognized nationally in this way. Kudos to Ms. Greenland, and thank you for the art program you are developing in our schools.



Activity and Excitement Follow Publication of Thompson Teacher's First Book

"The days following my book launch, students were walking through the halls of Thompson with their noses in my book. They'd stop by my room or catch me in the hallway and tell me about their favorite scene or a part they loved. It was so exciting. Book reviews written by grown-ups are great and all, but I write for kids and hearing feedback from kids means the most to me."--Sarah Marie Jette

As you can see from the above quote, it has been a very special time for newly published author and Thompson fourth grade teacher Sarah Marie Jette. Last month's release of her first Middle Grade book, [What the Wind Can Tell You](#), has led to a flurry of activity. She has done readings at Belmont Books and at the Silver Unicorn in Acton, and her attendance at the Chenery Author's Festival in Belmont marked the first time she has talked about her book in the company of other published authors. She made author visits to Bishop, Brackett and her daughter's school in Belmont where she met with fourth grade students. Ms. Jette says that she really looks forward to the insightful questions that the students ask about the writing process, character development and revisions.

As I shared in my January newsletter, *What the Wind Can Tell You* revolves around Isabelle and her brother Julian, who has a severe form of epilepsy, and the emergence of the magical world of Las Brisas where Julian has no physical limitations. The idea for the book came to her after visiting friends who had just welcomed their second child home. The elder boy in the family has epilepsy, and as she thought about the love that was going to exist between the two children, the idea for the book took form.

I am delighted that Ms. Jette's book has been published, and that she is able to share her love of writing with so many young people. One of her former high school teachers has invited her to be a guest author in his Young Writer's program. This program was a formative experience for her, and it is so exciting that she will be able to return as a published author. Congratulations, Ms. Jette!

Academics & Enrichment

Stratton Boys' Book Club Creates Reading Community for K-5 Students and Family Members

Last March, Peter Cipparone, Principal Intern at Stratton, reached out to families to determine whether there was interest in having a Boys' Book Club. He knew that school data showed, on average, that some third through fifth grade boys had scored significantly lower than girls on the literacy portion of the MCAS tests. The same finding was evident from in-house reading assessments. Mr. Cipparone knew that children's authors and experts in literacy education have found that boys can benefit from the support of a reading community and having adult role models. Additionally, he believed that having a club would help boys find higher quality fiction, which would also be beneficial. Research has shown that reading good books can help people develop empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence.

It became apparent that there was interest, and Mr. Cipparone convened the initial meeting on April 26. The first book aimed at Kindergarten through third grade readers was [*EllRay Jakes is Not a Chicken*](#) by Sally Warner. [*The One and Only Ivan*](#) by Katherine Applegate was offered to third through fifth grade readers. In addition to boys, moms, dads, grandparents, siblings, and friends from other schools were all invited to attend--as long as they had read the book. Participants could choose to read independently, have it read aloud, or listen to the book on tape. They could also read both books.

I am happy to report that the Boys' Book Club drew an enthusiastic group, attracting about 20 boys and a number of family members, many of whom read the book with their child. April, May and June meetings have been held, with different books being read and discussed each month. The meetings began with the entire group brainstorming ideas around what makes a good book club. After that, the attendees broke into groups depending upon the books they had read. Third through fifth grade readers were generally able to lead the discussions on their own, with Mr. Cipparone and a few parents chiming in with questions as needed. Parents prompted the younger students to think about different characters and aspects of their book.

Mr. Cipparone hopes that parents will remain interested in continuing the Boys' Book Club next year. He would love to see ways for older students to facilitate discussions for the younger students be explored. I want to thank Mr. Cipparone for recognizing a need and coming forward with a creative and engaging way to address it, and I wish him well as he continues on the path toward principal certification.



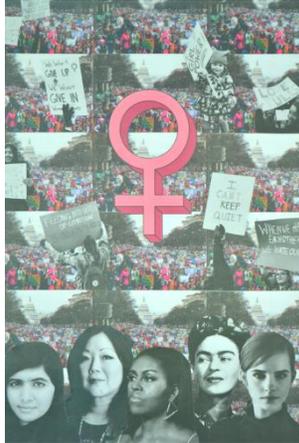
An In-house Museum Visit and Court House Mock Trials Enhance Elementary Learning

Our elementary teachers are always finding wonderful ways to make history and civics come alive for their students. Hardy teacher Laura Doherty's third grade students explored the early interactions between the Massachusetts Colonists and Native Americans thanks to the Concord Museum's [outreach program](#) *Two Worlds Meet*. During the visit by a member of the museum staff, the young people explored reasons for conflict and looked at the ways the two cultures worked together. They analyzed primary sources, handled artifacts and experimented with writing using quill and ink. Together they constructed two homestead dioramas that were used to compare how each culture built shelters, used rivers, planted crops and used the land. Ms. Doherty reports that it was an amazing presentation, and a great example of experiential learning.

Taking part in a mock trial was a great way to learn about the U.S. Judicial system for Christina Perkoski and Heather Dooley's fifth grade students at Peirce. The young people traveled to the Moakley Courthouse where they tried the case of the Boston Massacre through a program offered by [Discovering Justice](#). The children portrayed the different trial participants, including witnesses, judges, clerks, and defendants. Using a basic script, the trial was conducted and the jury decided who was guilty. Being present in the courthouse was a great way to understand where the people who take different trial roles sit. Working through a case "live" increased their understanding of what a court proceeding looks and feels like. Ms. Dooley reports that the class found it very informative to see people that work in the courthouse on a day-to-day basis and that Discovering Justice did a fantastic job organizing the mock trial.

Discovering Justice also worked with Stratton first grade students when they visited the Moakley Courthouse to try Goldilocks for breaking and entering. The trial was the culmination of a Social Studies/English Language Arts interdisciplinary unit that focused on understanding a situation from another person's perspective. The students had been exploring questions around rule definition, whether it is ever ok to break a rule, what results from following rules and breaking them, and how our government works. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* was one of the fairy tales that the students examined as they considered when and where rules were followed and broken, and how the story would change if viewed from a different perspective. At the Courthouse, the students assumed the roles of judges, witnesses, attorneys, clerks and members of the jury, and a verdict was rendered. First grade teacher Kim Pratt organized the trip.

These are just a few examples of the experiential learning that happens in our elementary classrooms on a daily basis. We are fortunate to live in an area that offers many opportunities for our young people to explore and experience history and government in lasting ways. I am proud that our teachers take advantage of what is available to provide meaningful learning experiences to our children.



AP Visual Arts Class Takes a Creative Approach to Social Activism

The AHS students who took part in Advanced Placement Art and Social Activism taught by Visual Arts teacher Nikki McCulloch were given the opportunity to explore, analyze, and strengthen their connections between social activism and artistic practice. As Ms. McCulloch describes it, "Artistic activism is more than just an innovative tactic. It is an entire approach: a perspective, a practice, a philosophy."

Each student was asked to consider several questions:

- What changes do I want to see within a community?
- What message do I want to communicate?
- How can I use metaphorical and symbolic thinking to communicate these ideas?
- How can I socially engage the public with my artwork?
- How can I craft an environment to spark discussion and social change?

Each student selected an issue and thought deeply about their connections and relationships to it. Some students explored issues of culture, while others looked at identity, self-perception, mental health, body image, gun violence, racism, or sexism. One example is the installation piece that was inspired by the "A White Dress Doesn't Cover the Rape" protests in Lebanon against domestic abuse and violence that sought to make changes in the Constitution to protect women. (shown above left) The artist describes the piece as meant to educate anyone who views it, passing the message down.

The body of work that was created reflected each student's ideas about social activism, human rights, and their own identities within these lenses. Ms. McCulloch and four of the young artists were able to share their work with the School Committee this month. Visual Arts Director David Ardito reports that the students articulately explained what they had experienced in the course. Powerful and moving artworks were created. Reflecting on their accomplishments, Ms. McCulloch had this to say, "...I am so proud of these students and their ability to make work that is socially engaging for themselves and our community, to encourage viewers to continually ask questions, challenge their social consciousness, and [express] empathy towards other global communities. These artists encouraged viewers to step back to say HOW can we use art to impact social change.?" I am pleased that Arlington High School is able to offer a course that provides our young activists, artists and thinkers a creative way to understand and participate in social change.

Creative Highlights

Two OMS Spring Chorus Concerts Fill the Halls with the Joy of Singing

The vibrancy of the [Ottoson Choral Program](#) is evident every time the groups come together to share their talent and love of music with the community. It is wonderful that there are so many student vocalists in our middle school that two separate concerts are required each season. The first spring concert was

held on May 24, and it featured the five groups directed by Music teacher Cori Smith. World music, classical, traditional, rock, popular and show tunes were all part of the program presented by around 220 singers. Ms. Smith reports that the AHS Lowe Auditorium was filled with many enthusiastic arts supporters, and that the concert was a perfect way to end the year.

The 6th Grade Chorus presented a three number set that included works by Telemann, Althouse and Beate George Harrison. This group was followed by the Girls' Ensemble delivering a song by R. Vaughan Williams and a version of *Defying Gravity* from *Wicked* as performed on the television show *Glee*. The Keynotes, the OMS Select Chorus, began their set with an Italian folksong, and ended with *This is Me* from *The Greatest Showman* that featured five soloists and three students doing vocal percussion. The popular rock numbers presented and arranged by the a capella group Acoustics were familiar to everyone in the audience and each one featured a soloist. The 7th Grade Chorus ended the wonderful concert with a spiritual, a Ghanaian folk song and two show tunes.

On May 31, it was time for the three groups led by Music teacher Greg Condakes to take the stage. The Boys' Chorus, 60 members strong, started things off with a traditional spiritual and Scottish folksong before being joined by some AHS vocalists to deliver the Beach Boys *I Get Around*. The three songs delivered by the Show Choir brought a touch of Broadway to the Ottoson Wood Gym as they presented songs from *Pippin*, *Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang* and *Hairspray*. The songs in the set delivered by the 8th Grade Chorus included numbers by Mozart, Irving Berlin and the *Glee* version of Freddy Mercury's *Somebody to Love*. *Stay, I Pray You* featured four vocal soloists, and four violinists and two cellists playing a string arrangement by former APS Music Director Pasquale Tassone. About 170 students took part in this memorable evening of music.

I want to thank Ms. Smith, Mr. Condakes and Special Education teacher Randi Flynn who creates and directs the choreography for the Show Choir, for all the wonderful work they do with our middle school students. The joy that our children get from singing and performing shone through in every number presented in the two spring concerts. I congratulate everyone who took part.

Ottoson Instrumental Ensembles Demonstrate Skills on Range of Music at Spring Concert

On June 7, it was time for the Ottoson musicians to shine, and they did exactly that during their Instrumental Ensembles' Spring Concert. Over 200 students were on hand to demonstrate how their skill has grown over the year, and share their accomplishments with the audience. String teacher Jing-Huey Wei conducted three groups, and Band teacher Paula Demetrio, who conducted the OMS Jazz Ensemble, was assisted by musician Seth Hamlin as Conductor of the OMS Concert Band. Mr. Hamlin worked with the Band during Ms. Demetrio's brief medical absence this spring.

The Chamber Orchestra got things started with *Brook Green Suite for String Orchestra*, a piece in three movements by Gustav Holt. The set delivered by the 6th Grade String Orchestra featured some wonderful violin, cello and piano solos on two out of the three pieces. The Concert Band treated the audience to a traditional band number, along with the *Earth, Wind & Fire Dance Mix* and highlights from the *Tarzan* soundtrack. The 7th and 8th Grade String Orchestra moved from Brahms to the Beatles in their three-number set. As is traditional, the OMS Jazz Ensemble closed out the night, performing four swinging numbers that featured tenor sax, trumpet, bass, piano and alto sax solos.

I congratulate Ms. Wei, Ms. Demetrio, Mr. Hamlin and all the wonderful musicians who came together to create beautiful music and lasting memories at their Spring Concert. I thank the volunteers and instrumental specialists who work with them throughout the year. The Ottoson music program is going strong, and we are fortunate to have solid support from the students and their families. Most of the students who took part last month began their instrumental studies in our elementary program, led by Ms. Wei and Ms. Demetrio. Seeing them play as middle school students is great testimony to both their hard work and the strength of this program.

Fine Performances, Excellent Casting and Lots of Laughter Marked the OMS One Act Play Festival

The Ottoson One Act Play Festival on June 16 closed out a terrific season for the Ottoson drama program. Fifteen eighth grade students directed 81 actors from grades six, seven and eight in six plays

- [*Imperfect Proposal*](#) by Lisa Parry
- [*The Internet is Distract--OH LOOK A KITTEN!*](#) by Ian McWethy
- [*The Invasion of Earth as it Began in Grover's Mill, New Jersey*](#) by J. R. Mimbs
- [*Appropriate Audience Behavior*](#) by Ian McWethy
- [*Action News: Now with 10% More Action*](#) by Jonathan Rand
- [*The 9 Worst Breakups of All Time*](#) by Ian McWethy

The Festival was an all day event, with three plays presented in the morning and three in the afternoon. Lunch was provided in between for cast, directors, and audience members. OMS English teacher and overall Festival director Jenna Fernandes reports that lunch was a "great time", and that the day ran smoothly thanks to the wonderful parent volunteers.

Students who are interested in directing find a play and then submit a proposal that speaks to what they would like to do. They also respond to questions about how they would handle scheduling, communication and being an authority while still being a peer. Once they are chosen, all directors attend a meeting before auditions are held that helps to prepare them for the ups and downs and gives them some strategies for success.

Ms. Fernandes believes that one act plays create more opportunities for young actors to be featured than is possible in the fall drama or spring musical. They also allow the directors to help students who might not have a lot of stage experience learn the fundamentals. Ms. Fernandes supports them from the sidelines all along the way. They check in frequently to talk through issues that arise, and brainstorm solutions around any difficulty they are having with things like props, sets or costumes. She says that watching the young directors develop the skills they need to be successful is one of the highlights of her year. The rehearsals are fun, and the younger cast members enjoy the relationship they are able to have with eighth grade students.

Ms. Fernandes reports that all of the performances were "excellent", and that the audience "loved" all the shows. In fact, the audience enjoyed the morning comedies so much that they ran over time because of all the laughter. In choosing the shows, each directing group found something that they really loved, and Ms. Fernandes says they did a "fantastic" job casting. A couple of the traditional comedies relied on really deep character development, some were more in the farce genre with lots of absurd situations and great one-liners, and one play was a heavy, thought-provoking drama.

The other June drama events were big successes as well. Fifty-one students had a great time in New York City where they saw *Anastasia*. The Facetime call with Broadway performer [Rachel Schur](#) was another highlight of the month. Many students joined to ask questions about her New York theater experiences, and wanted to know the path she took to achieve this. Ms. Schur advised the callers to work hard and find the "special something" that makes them unique.

Another Festival highlight was the announcement of next year's shows. In the fall, the one act drama *Tracks* will be performed, and *Mary Poppins* is the spring musical. I want to congratulate Ms. Fernandes and all the student directors, actors and volunteers who made the One Act Festival so successful.

Current and Former Students Make "Bejazzled" a Night to Remember

It is hard to say what makes the biennial *Bejazzled* concert so much fun. Is it seeing the Ottoson Middle School Jazz Ensemble on the same stage as the AHS Jazz Band? Is it the terrific music? Or is it seeing around 60 AHS Jazz Band alumni back on the stage, playing their instruments along with the current students and having a great time doing it.

I suspect it is all three elements that make *Bejazzled* so special. Founded in 2003, the concert is a tribute to jazz, the APS music program, and to all the current and former talented students who take part. The OMS Jazz Ensemble, an audition group that rehearses one afternoon a week, got things rolling with four numbers that featured tenor sax, trumpet, bass, alto sax and piano solos.

The Arlington High School Jazz Band took the stage next, and they were joined by different alumni musicians on all of the 14 pieces they presented. Both current and former students performed solos throughout the evening, and some great vocalists joined the musicians on *Revelation* and *Sweet Home Chicago*. Early in the set, the seniors in the Jazz Band came forward to present *I Remember Clifford* in tribute to Jeremy Kremer-McNeil. Jeremy was a trumpet player in the Ottoson Band, Jazz Ensemble and AHS Concert Band who took his life before school began in September 2015. One of the students arranged the number, which was written to honor influential and highly regarded jazz trumpeter Clifford Brown who died in an automobile accident in 1957 at the age of 25.

All the musicians filled the stage to deliver the final number, Herbie Hancock's *Watermelon Man*, and end the concert. I want to thank OMS Band and Jazz Band Director Paula Demetrio and AHS Instrumental Director and Jazz Band leader Sabato D'Agostino for presenting this wonderful evening of music that drew alumni who graduated as far back as 2000 to the Lowe Auditorium stage again. I also thank the many volunteers who worked hard before and during the concert to make the night so successful. It is good to know that we have another *Bejazzled* to look forward to in 2020.