

News from November/December 2019

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

It is always a pleasure to start my newsletter with some affirming news about our district. In November, *Newsweek* announced the [results](#) of a joint project done with [STEM.org](#) to review US high schools and identify the top 5,000 schools offering the best experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In the report, Arlington High School is ranked at number 346, placing it in the top 7% of these schools. Both public and private schools were evaluated. The project used criteria as defined by the [Congressional Research Service](#) to rank the schools. Thirty-three Massachusetts schools were placed in the top 500 along with AHS. Schools in eight different states made the top 10, including the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science, a magnet exam school in Worcester that serves academically advanced students in grades 11 and 12. It is affirming to have an outside organization recognize AHS in this manner. I salute the many members of the district community who work so hard to educate our students in these areas.

During November and December, the Arlington High School Building Committee has been taking the necessary steps to resolve a \$24.7 million difference between the Design Development cost estimate and the budget. This gap was revealed as the design estimate was further developed and refined. The Committee is considering a variety of ways to close the gap while maintaining the educational program and functionality, building quality, and sustainability. We have looked at reducing the number of geothermal wells while still maintaining the sustainability goals of an all-electric and carbon-neutral building and considered items that might be considered as alternates which would allow them to be included later if the budget allows. The Committee remains committed to both fiscal responsibility and building an educationally exceptional facility that will serve our town for generations. You may read more about the process in an update on the AHS Building Project [website](#). You may also wish to attend an upcoming Committee meeting and those dates and times are listed on the website as well.

This fall we have experienced several instances of hate graffiti in our schools and we have responded with activities to help students understand the hurtful effects of such graffiti and emphasize that everyone in our schools must feel cared for and supported. These incidents are reminders that we must continue to be vigilant and emphasize to our young people that such divisive actions will not be tolerated, and that we expect them to treat each other with kindness and respect. We must all work together to ensure that our schools are places of safety and learning, and I ask for your continued support in this effort.



There is a new Visual Arts Slideshow on the APS [website](#). Scroll down and in the left-hand navigation column you will find the icon shown above this paragraph. Click on the icon to see some wonderful examples of student work from Brackett. Additionally, please note that Ottoson Visual Arts teachers Polly Ford and Kayla McKenna regularly display student artwork near the Children's' Room at Robbins Library. The most recent exhibit was *Event* prints which were shown until December 13. These prints illustrated important experiences or moments in the student artists' personal or world history that have impacted their lives in some significant way. Thank you, Ms. Ford and Ms. McKenna, and all our wonderful Visual Art teachers for enabling the community to routinely see the beautiful and insightful work being done by students.

November was the time for pumpkin recycling, and all of our elementary schools took part this year. [Black Earth Compost](#) visited three schools on November 5 and four on November 6 to pick up pumpkins and gourds of all sizes. Pumpkins cannot go into yard waste since they are considered food. They are heavy and filled with water, so putting them in the trash for incineration contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Composted pumpkins will be naturally processed and used to help gardens of all kinds.

November and December are the months when our community places additional emphasis on helping others. The [Arlington Board of Youth Services](#) worked with [Arlington EATS](#) to hold their Annual Food Drive for families who require assistance this time of year. Each of our schools was given a list of the food items to bring in, and gift cards to Stop and Shop or Market Basket were also accepted. I am pleased to report that our district families donated 5,000 pounds of food and \$5,500 worth of gift cards. Many volunteers also came forward to sort and distribute the food to 186 individuals and families. I am proud that our schools participate in this worthy endeavor every November and thank everyone for their generosity.

Every year the [Arlington Department of Health and Human Services](#) administers the Holiday Help program, and this is also warmly embraced by our schools. Qualified families submit their children's gift wish-list. The lists are distributed among our schools, and those who wish to participate purchase one or more items or join forces to donate a gift card to buy more expensive requests. Each school coordinates the process for their community and collects the unwrapped gifts.

There are many other examples of generosity from our students and their families this time of year. Boy Scout Troop 306 spearheaded a town-wide collection of winter hats and gloves, socks, refillable water bottles, personal hygiene items, and much more to be given to teens who are serviced by the Arlington office of the Department of Children and Family Services. The Bishop third grade had a Giving Tree, where new or unused mittens, gloves, scarves, and hats for children and adults were collected for the same organization. Hardy held a Warm Winter Wear Drive, collecting gently-used winter coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and new socks and underwear that were donated to [Boston Care for the Homeless](#).

The theme of food donations was continued in December by the AHS Performing Arts Department who collected for the Arlington Food Pantry, a program of Arlington EATS. Members of the AHS football and boys basketball teams were on hand for the Christmas tree arrival at the Boys and Girls Club. They unloaded 800 trees for the annual sale, starting at 5:30 am on back-back-to-back Saturdays. Additionally, on Saturday, December 21, members of the AHS DoSomething and Interact Club were in the main lobby to wrap any and all holiday gifts. The Club was charging \$2.00 per gift and the money went to the [American Cancer Society](#). I thank everyone who was involved in these efforts to remember others and make the holidays brighter for families facing hardship this winter.

As the holidays approach it is hard to believe that it is already time to start thinking about the 2020-2021 school year. Both Ottoson and private school students were able to visit Arlington High School on December 11 to learn about what awaits them and what a school day entails. Visitors spent the morning learning about curriculum, touring the building, walking through elective classes, and hearing from student leaders at a question and answer session. A parent night for the Class of 2024 is planned for Wednesday, January 22, 2020 starting at 6:00 pm in the AHS Lowe Auditorium. Principal Dr. Matthew Janger and Assistant Principal William McCarthy will present an overview of AHS and answer questions. That evening will also include a meeting for Special Education Services. We want all students to have as much information as possible so that the stress of the high school transition is minimized.

In closing I send my sincere wishes for happy and healthy holidays. May they be filled with love and joy.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools

## **Headline View**

### **Safe & Supportive Schools**

#### ***National Children's Grief Awareness Day Observed at Gibbs and Ottoson***

On November 21, clinicians from [The Children's Room](#) visited our middle school students and offered activities designed to help the young people understand grief and remember loved ones they had lost in an observance of national [Children's Grief Awareness Day](#). [Learn more>](#)

#### ***Suicide Prevention Program Increases Understanding, Provides Tools***

This is the eighth year we have implemented the [SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program](#), an evidence-based program designed to educate all seventh grade students on the signs of depression and suicide, the actions to take if such signs are evident in themselves or others, and the identification of young people who are at risk. [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 *Don't be a Juul Fool* offered by [Dr. Lester Hartman](#) of Children's Hospital and attend sessions and activities led by the [Improbable Players](#) and AHS faculty and staff that were designed to increase self-care and wellness skills. [Read more>](#)

#### ***Twenty-four Earn Certification in Creating a Trauma Sensitive Learning Environment***

I am happy to report that 24 members of the APS community have completed the four graduate courses necessary to earn certification from the [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity](#). [Learn more>](#)

## **Department News**

#### ***Arlington Remains a High Achieving District, Outperforming State MCAS Averages***

Arlington Public School children continued to do well in MCAS testing, and while there are notable improvements in many areas, we acknowledge that subgroup data reveals a gap in the performance of our African American and Hispanic students when compared to students overall. [Read more>](#)

## **Professional Development**

#### ***November Professional Day Focuses on "Equity and Inclusion"***

On November 1, members of the APS community heard from students, listened to a keynote speech, attended workshops, and held individual building meetings that allowed them to consider how to understand identity and address the needs of all students "...despite their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual

orientation, gender, socio-economic status, learning style, English Language Learner status, disability, and/or national origin." Learn more>

## **Grants**

### ***TAB Professional Development and Implementation Supported by AEF Grant***

Thanks to a \$10,000 [Development and Expansion Grant](#) from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF), all 14 Visual Arts teachers will be able to take part in [Teaching for Artistic Behavior](#) (TAB) professional development and implement this nationally recognized choice-based teaching strategy in all schools. Read more>

## **Awards & Distinctions**

### ***AHS Team Qualifies for WGBH High School Quiz Show***

I want to wish the best of luck to the members of the Arlington High School Quiz Show team as they move into [competition](#) in late January. Learn more>

### ***APS Health Educator Honored for Her Service to the Safety and Wellness of Arlington Youth***

Congratulations to APS Health Educator Carlene Newell who was honored for her work and commitment to Arlington youth at the recent [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#) Gala. Learn more>

## **Academics & Enrichment**

### ***Third Annual Brackett Culture and Creativity Night Celebrates the Diversity of Cultural Identity***

Museum tables, crafts, and food demonstrated the different ways members of the Brackett school community identify themselves at an event that shared information about national heritage, interests like Spartan Obstacle Course Racing, and the use of a Braille machine. Learn more>

### ***Thompson Storytelling Residency Develops Literacy, Performance, and Listening Skills***

Storytelling contains the building blocks of all literacy, and Norah Dooley, Project Director at [Stories Live](#), led a Thompson all-school residency involving a new elementary curriculum she is developing that teaches public speaking, specific curricular content, and the art of storytelling for its own sake. Read more>

### ***Gibbs, OMS MATHCOUNTS Teams to be Chosen in January for February Competition***

All interested middle school students are invited to attend Math Team Practices and work towards earning a place on the [MATHCOUNTS](#) teams that will compete in a regional meet in February. Read more>

### ***Ottoson, AHS Offer International Travel Opportunities***

This year Ottoson and AHS students can supplement their education with trips to countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America that are developed and chaperoned by faculty members. Learn more>

## **Creative Highlights**

### ***OMS Vocalists and Instrumentalists Shine in Two Winter Concerts***

The music ranged from traditional to classical, pop, movies, Broadway, and more at the two wonderful Ottoson Winter Concerts, each featuring over 225 students and performing in a total of 11 different groups. Read more>

### ***Swords Clash and Adventures Abound in AHS Production of "The Three Musketeers"***

Over 40 cast and crew members brought an updated *The Three Musketeers* to life in November, complete with daring swordplay, sumptuous 17<sup>th</sup> century costumes, and D'Artagnan's sister who aspires to be a Musketeer. Read more>

### ***Middle School Art Exhibits Reflect Feelings, Opinions, and Interests of Student Artists***

The first Ottoson and Gibbs Art Exhibits of the year presented the ways our young people use art to

communicate their concerns and interests and share how they feel about social and personal issues. Learn more>

### ***AHS Performing Arts Students and Faculty Present Memorable and Meaningful Winter Concert***

A violin concerto composed and played by a senior violinist and a surprise *pop-up* barbershop quartet were two of the special moments at December's Arlington High School Winter Concert that featured a varied program beautifully delivered by over 250 vocalists and instrumentalists in 10 different groups. Learn more>

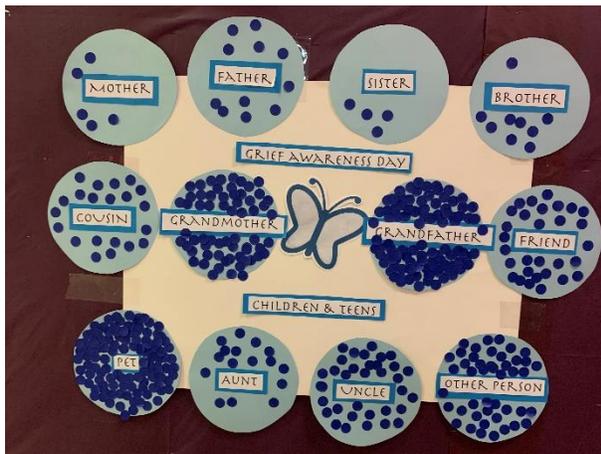
### **Athletics Highlights**

#### ***Fall Tournament Season Ends, Winter Season in Full Swing***

Congratulations to all our fall athletes who participated in post-season play, and good luck to those participating in basketball, ice hockey, indoor track, boys swimming, wrestling, and gymnastics this winter. Read more>

**Continue to read the full News from November/December 2019 Newsletter**

### **Safe & Supportive Schools**



### ***National Children's Grief Awareness Day Observed at Gibbs and Ottoson***

"Children's Grief Awareness Day allows us to advocate that any child that is old enough to love is old enough to mourn."—from Children's Grief Awareness Day [website](#)

A desire from students in Pennsylvania to bring attention to what their grieving classmates were going through was the impetus for the Highmark Caring Place to inaugurate the first Children's Grief Awareness Day in 2008. This day is now observed on the Thursday before Thanksgiving across the United States. Many of us don't realize how many grieving children there are around us. One out of every five children will face the death of someone close to them. One out of every 20 experience the death of a parent before they graduate from high school. It takes children a lot longer to deal with their grief than we expect, and it is important to understand this and offer support so that they do not grieve alone. (source: The Children's Room)

We are fortunate in Arlington to have [The Children's Room](#) (TCR), a nonprofit organization that offers grief support services for families and children from 3 ½ through 18 years of age, available to assist us in observing Children's Grief Awareness Day. On November 21, TCR brought trained experts into Gibbs and Ottoson to highlight the special needs that grieving children have, and help us all understand that it is ok for young people to mourn "...openly and authentically..."

Clinicians set up a table in each school cafeteria where they were available to talk with students and engage the young people in a simple activity that helped them to remember lost loved ones. Anyone who wished to do so could place a sticker on a butterfly chart to indicate who had departed, such as a cousin, grandmother, father, brother, pet, or other person close to them. Paper hearts and markers enabled the students to write a message to their loved one or to others who may be grieving, and there were butterfly stickers and bracelets that they could take to remember the activity and the day.

On the day of the visit, Advisory was used to help Gibbs students understand the purpose of the observance and the activities that would be available. A [video](#) about grief and coping was shown and the young people were given time to talk with a partner about what they had seen. The next day, they looked at pictures from the activities and were able to talk about them. The lessons were created by School Counselors Ron Colosi and Emily Vincent and were tied into the current Advisory theme of empathy and to *Understanding*, one of the three U's that Gibbs students are asked to strive toward.

I want to thank everyone who was involved in these important visits from The Children's Room to Gibbs and Ottoson. As adults we have the responsibility of remembering the effect that grief can have on a child and provide support so that they do not feel forgotten or alone.



### ***Suicide Prevention Program Increases Understanding, Provides Tools***

December marks the eighth year that we have offered the [SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program](#) to our seventh grade students. As in Ottoson Principal Brian Meringer's letter to parents, this "...is the only youth suicide prevention program that has demonstrated an improvement in students' knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression, as well as a reduction in actual suicide attempts." Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses, and during the last decade we have seen it appearing at earlier ages. In my last newsletter I shared the news that a report from the Centers for Disease Control finds that the overall suicide rate in Massachusetts has "...increased by 35.3% between 1999 and 2016." It is therefore critical that our students understand the suicide danger posed by depression, that they can learn to identify the condition, get help for themselves and others, and have it treated successfully.

Implementation of the program at Ottoson begins with a video shown in each Learning Community followed by a brief discussion. The students are then asked to complete a depression screening and response card where they can indicate the need to speak to a counselor about themselves or a friend. There is no attempt made to diagnosis students. The screening is designed only to bring possible at-risk students to our attention so that appropriate follow-up can be done to determine if further evaluation is necessary. Students are taught what to do if they feel suicidal, and if they ever hear a friend talk about suicide. They learn how to utilize the peer-to-peer help-seeking model known as ACT®--Acknowledge, Care, Tell. Ottoson staff is also trained on how to respond.

All parents of seventh grade students have received an *SOS Parent Newsletter* with program information and links to resources that might be helpful for those with concerns. Families can choose to have their child opt-out of the program if they wish. All of us must be prepared to speak to our young people about suicide and how to prevent it. I am grateful that we are able to offer SOS to our students and share this important information with our families.



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

On December 12, Arlington High School paused to take a breath. Between 9:00 am and 11:00 am all students took part in the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Wellness Day, a time devoted to raising awareness and decreasing the stigma around mental health issues and increasing self-care and wellness skills for students and staff. Organizer and Intervention Coordinator/Social Worker Andrea Razi put it this way: “We want students to see that taking a break and having fun can help us to care for ourselves emotionally. Working hard all day long and into the wee hours of the morning is not good for health--emotional or otherwise.”

This year all students attended the keynote address *Don't be a Juul Fool*, delivered by [Dr. Lester Hartman](#) of Children's Hospital. Dr. Hartman is a pediatrician and passionate advocate of preventing the use of dangerous nicotine products in Juuls and vapes. As reported in my September newsletter, the results of the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Study indicate that e-cigarette/vaping usage has increased by almost 15% from 2017, going from 8.3% of students to 22.6%.

In his address, Dr. Hartman emphasized the addictive nature of Juuls due to the nicotine content, and the harm that can be caused by the oils and other additives. One Juul pod is equivalent to smoking 1 ½ packs of regular cigarettes, and the pods sold in the US have 1 ½ times more nicotine than those sold in Europe due to controls there. Users get an immediate pleasure effect due to the release of dopamine to the brain, and there is evidence that nicotine rewires the brain toward addiction. Ninety per cent of users who start before the age of 18 will be lifelong smokers. Dr. Hartman shared some online cessation resources that young people can access and encouraged users to talk with their pediatricians.

Ninth and tenth grade students had the opportunity to attend one of two performances by the [Improbable Players](#): *Running on E* or *End of the Line*. This group describes themselves as “Prevention Education Theater” that uses “...performances & workshops to address addiction, alcoholism, and the opioid epidemic.” *Running on E* explores why young people start down the road to substance abuse and how to resist. *End of the Line* (pictured above) focuses specifically on starting and resisting opioids. The actors, all sober but with a substance use disorder, present powerful performances.

Eleventh and twelfth grade students were able to choose one of 20 self-care activities. The source of these activities are AHS teachers, who have been reflecting on what they do to relax and what they can share with the young people. The range of activities was broad—from pinball and board games to coloring, taking a walk in the woods, knitting, different crafts, meditation, word games, yoga, and more. Additionally, the Therapy Dogs were back, a VERY popular session from last year's Wellness Day.

Ms. Razi wants everyone to know that “Wellness involves taking time each day to have fun and enjoy ourselves! It's important not to go at full throttle for 16-20 hours a day. Therapy is one way to care for ourselves but there is a lot we can do along the way to nurture, enjoy, and appreciate our lives. Wellness Day is about balance and self-care and taking time out for that.”

I want to thank Ms. Razi for spearheading this event, and all the other members of the AHS faculty and staff who helped with logistics and led activities. I also thank the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) for awarding a \$3,000 [Innovations in Education Grant](#) that provided the funds to purchase workshop supplies

and have the Improbable Players participate. Wellness Day is a wonderful example of how the APS community can come together to take a break and support the health and well-being of our young people.



**Twenty-four Earn Certification in Creating a Trauma Sensitive Learning Environment**

Congratulations to the 24 members of the APS community who have completed the four graduate courses necessary to earn certification from the [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity](#). Offering these courses has been part of our work to create safe and supportive classrooms where all children can learn to the best of their ability. We know that each child comes into the classroom with different life experiences, some of which may affect their ability to learn. Traumatic experiences disrupt neurodevelopment, leaving an imprint that can make it difficult to process and retain information or recognize non-verbal cues. Behavior or social problems may result. If not overcome, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can negatively affect lifelong health and opportunity.

Unfortunately, ACEs are widespread, but with the right social and emotional supports, the effects of these experiences can be overcome. The courses offered by Lesley University help teachers and staff understand the relationship between trauma and learning and how to create trauma sensitive environments to benefit all children—not just those with a trauma history.

Associate Dean Patricia Crain de Galarce of the Lesley Graduate School of Education was on hand to present the certificates at a recent School Committee meeting. We have been fortunate to be able to make the four courses of the program available, and to have had our Director of Counseling and Social Emotional Learning Sara Burd (Adjunct Professor at Lesley) and Dr. Sal Terrasi, Director of the Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity, teach them. We plan to continue to offer these valuable courses and I am pleased that many of our faculty and staff have participated in this opportunity to further their professional education.

**Department News**

***Arlington Remains a High Achieving District, Outperforming State MCAS Averages***

I am pleased to report that Arlington Public School students continue to do well in MCAS testing, outperforming the state averages in every category. Improvement over last year is notable in a number of areas.

Category	Grade	Year over Year % Improvement in Specific Areas	Overall % Meeting and Exceeding Expectations--2018	Overall % Meeting and Exceeding Expectations--2019
English Language Arts (ELA)	3	7% In Meeting Expectations	68%	73%
	7	8% in Exceeding Expectations	66%	72%

	8	6% in Exceeding Expectations	69%	75%
Mathematics	4	7% in Meeting and Exceeding Expectations	60%	67%
	5	8% in Meeting and Exceeding Expectations	59%	67%
	7	14% in Exceeding Expectations	66%	74%

It is also notable that while the total percentage of students in Meeting and Exceeding Expectations in Grade 8 remained consistent at 73% year over year, the percent Exceeding Expectations grew while the percent Meeting Expectations declined. In 2018 the percentage of eighth grade students Exceeding Expectations was 13 and in 2019 this was 21%.

I want to note that third grade is a critical time for children to acquire reading skills. Up until then, students are learning to read. After third grade students read to learn, since over 85% of the curriculum is taught by reading. (source: The Children’s Reading Foundation) Our vision, therefore, is to have all students Meeting or Exceeding ELA Expectations in the third grade, and our scores show steady improvement over the last three years.

This year’s scores are a baseline for Grades 5, 8, and 10 in Science/Technology & Engineering testing as it is the first year that this exam has been given in its current form, but I can report that all grades exceeded state averages. It is also a baseline year for Grade 10 in ELA and Mathematics as this is the first year that our tenth grade students have taken the online Next Generation MCAS exam. Here again, our scores exceeded state averages: ELA, 80% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations compared to 61% (state); Mathematics 80% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations compared to 58% (state).

When we disaggregate the data and explore the performance in various subgroups such as race, ethnicity, and gender, we notice a gap in the performance of our African American and Hispanic students when compared to all students. We are actively taking steps to address this gap. In the following section of this newsletter you will see an article that describes the November 1 Professional Development Day that focused on *Equity and Inclusion*. Our commitment is to provide 8 hours of cultural literacy training for all APS staff, and we have completed 6 ½ of these hours.

In my September newsletter the article ***School Leadership and Wise Data Use Grant Supports the Goal of Educational Equity*** in the **Grants** section described work being done to continue to promote and support a culture that uses data to make decisions. This will help us understand every student and their individual needs sufficiently to give each one what is needed to achieve at their highest academic and social emotional level, providing equity.

Last February I reported on the project to reduce barriers to mental health care for African American/Black individuals in our community, supported by a \$7,000 [Mental Health and Racial Equity Grant](#) from [Community Health Network Area \(CHNA\) 17](#), one of several areas established by Massachusetts Public Health to promote community collaboration on health issues. An emphasis on increasing the awareness of racism in the community and its impact on the mental health of African American/Black students and their families is part of the project, as is support for the AHS Black Student Union. This group is in the process of creating a relationship program for Ottoson students of color.

For detailed information on the district MCAS results, please go to the [MCAS webpage](#) where you will find two presentations that were delivered to the Arlington School Committee in October. We are proud to be a high achieving district with moderate room for growth.

## Professional Development

### **November Professional Day Focuses on “Equity and Inclusion”**

On November 1, Arlington Public Schools had the opportunity to spend the day considering *Equity and Inclusion*. The morning began at Arlington High School with *Student Voices*, a locally produced video that gave the audience a clear picture of how our students identify themselves and of the problems they face due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, body size and shape, and ethnic and economic backgrounds. The voices shared examples of when they felt unsafe, ways they believed the school community can support students, experiences that made them feel welcome and supported, and what they wanted their teachers to know. Thank you to AHS Visual Art teacher David Moore, AHS Music Technology teacher John DiTomaso, K-12 Visual Art Director David Ardito, AHS student Grace Walters, and ACMi Youth Coordinator Kevin Wetmore for creating the video.

This was followed by the keynote address, *Identify-Conscious Leading and Learning in Education*, presented by [Dr. Liza Talusan](#). Dr. Talusan focuses on building skills in diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools and other organizations. She believes that “Who we are informs how we see the world around us” and that building community begins with identity. She suggests that the first step to understanding how we learn about identity is to reflect upon our own. Dr. Talusan then asks us to accept the “...challenges and opportunities that come from having conversations about identity with young people.” She acknowledges that these conversations may be uncomfortable and take us out of our comfort zones, so she asks that we accept discomfort and gather the tools that help us do this. As she ended her remarks, she emphasized the importance of these conversations and quoted Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, President Emerita, Spelman College, who said, “For those children from stigmatized groups, it is especially important to feel affirmed in those identities to offset the devaluing messages the wider society is likely to send them.”

The video and keynote address set the tone for the rest of the day. Each attendee had the choice of attending one two-hour or two one-hour workshops, led by outside facilitators and APS faculty members and administrators. In the words of Assistant Superintendent Dr. Roderick MacNeal, the workshop choices “...offered focus on how to address the needs of all of our students despite their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, learning style, English Language Learner status, disability, and/or national origin.” Here are just a few examples of what was available:

- *How to Talk About Race & Racism (and other “isms”) with Colleagues, Students, and Parents/Guardians*—Doug Weinstock & Paula Martin, [IDEAS](#)
- *Culture and Classroom*—Kathy Lopes, [METCO](#)
- *Equity & Inclusion for English Learners: How to Engage ELLs in Your Classroom*—ELL teachers Heather Smith & Jessica Nguy
- *Exploring Individual Barriers to Equitable Classrooms: Supporting Teachers*—Counseling and Social Emotional Learning Director Sara Burd
- *I Know Diversity is Important, but How Do I Talk About it with Young People*—Dr. Liza Talusan
- *Restorative Justice 101: Introduction to Restorative Practices and Approaches*—[Dr. Stefani Harvey](#), Affiliate Consultant, Strategy Matters
- *Schooling for Critical Consciousness: Equipping Students to Thrive In and Transform the World*—[Dr. Scott Seider](#), Boston College
- *Supporting Transgender Youth*, Kathleen C. Marchi, [Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth](#)
- *Building on and From Students’ Lived Experiences: Engaging in Courageous Conversations Around Race, Racism, and Language*—[Dr. Davena Jackson](#), Boston University
- *Diversity in Children’s Books*—Robbins Children’s Librarian Pam Watts Flavin

After lunch, participants traveled to their individual schools to meet, reflect on what they had learned, and continue conversations around the theme. It was wonderful to be able to devote an entire day to further our learning around ways to ensure that all children feel safe and able to learn. Thank you Dr. MacNeal for planning and executing this meaningful experience for our district. Feedback on the day has been very

positive and I share Dr. MacNeal's hope that the "...authentic and robust conversations about *Equity and Inclusion...*" that began on November 1 will continue throughout the year.

## **Grants**

### ***TAB Professional Development and Implementation Supported by AEF Grant***

The K-12 Visual Art Department and I are pleased to announce that the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) has approved a \$10,000 [Development and Expansion Grant](#) that supports the professional development required to implement [Teaching for Artistic Behavior](#) (TAB) in all our schools. TAB is a nationally recognized choice-based art teaching strategy that empowers teachers to help their students become confident and expressive art makers, independent thinkers, and learners. TAB creator and arts educator Katherine Douglas reports that the strategy effectively convinces many student artists that they can set their own problems to solve, make their own decisions about what kind of art they need to create, and know when to work collaboratively with fellow artists. Additionally, since students are encouraged to express their own feelings, personal ideas, and concerns, this approach increases students' appreciation for individual differences.

Arlington Public Schools began exploring this approach when a 2017 [AEF Innovations in Education Grant](#) made it possible to hold an after-school TAB experience at Peirce. This has been followed by several teachers using TAB in the classroom. With this grant and additional support from the district, all 14 Visual Arts teachers will be able to engage in multiple forms of professional development. This includes on-site workshops and presentations by TAB experts, attendance at the [Social Emotional Artistic Learning Retreat](#) for teachers who have not already had the opportunity to take part, visits to TAB teacher's art studios in Massachusetts, participation in [Beautiful Stuff](#) workshops, and expert consultant visits and evaluation during and after our implementation.

Thanks to the grant we are able to offer our Visual Arts teachers the ability to implement this program. The grant also makes it possible for our teachers to integrate TAB with the Studio Thinking philosophy that forms the basis of the current APS curriculum and with social emotional learning. I thank AEF for supporting this important work.

## **Awards & Distinctions**

### ***AHS Team Qualifies for WGBH High School Quiz Show***

Congratulations to the members of the Arlington High School Quiz Show team who have qualified for this year's [competition](#). Arlington is one of 11 schools chosen to participate. Matches and TV taping begins on January 25, 2020 and shows will be scheduled on WGBH after this. I want to thank AHS Latin teacher Edward Foley for directing the team and wish everyone good luck!



### ***APS Health Educator Honored for Her Service to the Safety and Wellness of Arlington Youth***

The annual [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#) (AYCC) Gala is a special event that brings the community together to support this amazing resource. This year the evening was extra special for those of us in the

Arlington Public Schools since the town [Board of Youth Services](#) chose our Health Educator Carlene Newell as the honoree. AYCC Director Coleen Leger says that Ms. Newell was chosen "...because of her exceptional service to the youth in the community over the past several decades."

Ms. Newell has made many important contributions to the health and well-being of our students. In 1986 she decided that Arlington High School seniors should have a safe way to celebrate graduation together, so she created the first Last Blast all night party—a tradition that continues to this day. She is well known for her work in tobacco education and awareness with our elementary and middle school students. Every year she encourages students to create anti-smoking ads which are judged by other educators and prevention specialists in town. Twelve images are selected to become part of a wall calendar that is printed and distributed in the community. Additionally, she assists APS Director of Wellness Cindy Bouvier in coordinating the Parent and Community Forum series every year.

Ms. Bouvier has worked with Ms. Newell for over 25 years and had this to say: "Her commitment to Arlington and the youth in this community is incredible. Students love when she visits their classroom, she has taken students on field trips for training and to the Statehouse to advocate for tobacco prevention for many years. She continues with the latest vaping epidemic and forges ahead with Sun Safety as well. Her commitment to these issues is one [The Sanborn Foundation](#), the organization that has been sponsoring her work for many years, can be proud of."

Director of the [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#) Karen Koretsky echoes these thoughts and says that "...Carlene has been an incredible Coalition member and has contributed so much to our efforts. Carlene has chaperoned students to youth leadership conferences, suggested community health initiatives, been at almost every meeting, and is always the first Coalition member to volunteer for various subcommittees and boards. Carlene exemplifies devoted youth service in our community and always wants to improve the health and well-being of our young citizens."

Ms. Leger adds that "Carlene has been on the Board of Youth Services for over thirty years, and in that time, she has been a fierce advocate for AYCC and child and adolescent mental health services in general." We are fortunate to have individuals like Ms. Newell who work tirelessly with the schools and community members to keep our children safe. Congratulations Ms. Newell on receiving this well-deserved honor!

### **Academics & Enrichment**



### ***Third Annual Brackett Culture and Creativity Night Celebrates the Diversity of Cultural Identity***

"We identify ourselves in so many ways—by language or origin, abilities, family structure, ethnicity, etc. This diversity of cultural identity enriches our school. We want to highlight and celebrate the cultural diversity of our community."

The quote above describes the intent of the annual Brackett Culture and Creativity night—a celebration that asks the school community to consider that there are many sources of culture and to find ways to share them. On November 14, students, families, and friends gathered together to highlight these sources. The evening included museum tables focusing on different countries such as Slovakia, El Salvador, India, Denmark, and Thailand, crafts from around the world, and wonderful food that came from Thailand, Mexico, Denmark, India, Ireland, Slovakia, and Italy, most contributed by parents. The Brackett Diversity and Inclusion group had a table of books about all different kinds of children and families, and there was an art activity in which the young attendees traced their hands and added to an “I am…” poster.

The goal of the event is to be as inclusive as possible in representing how individuals define their cultural identity. For some that means fitness and pushing yourself beyond your limits. A table on [Spartan Obstacle Course Races](#) illustrated this. Another activity, a highlight of the evening, was manned by fourth grade student Hannah Gevers. At her table, Hannah typed out the name of student attendees using her Braille machine.

Parent Alejandra Katz, who enthusiastically shared her Slovakian culture through food and a museum table, was one of the volunteers who exemplified the spirit of the event. Caitlin Sweeney, one of the organizers, believes that the annual Culture and Creativity Night is a great way to get to know other members of the school community in a non-academic setting. I thank Ms. Sweeney and all the other volunteers for sharing their cultures and creating an experience that widened the world for all those who attended.



### ***Thompson Storytelling Residency Develops Literacy, Performance, and Listening Skills***

This fall, every Thompson student and teacher had the opportunity to gain new skills while participating in the development of a new elementary literacy curriculum. Norah Dooley, Project Director at [Stories Live](#), currently offers a storytelling curriculum for middle and high school students, one that uses the genres and forms of storytelling to teach public speaking, specific curricular content, and the art of storytelling for its own sake. Storytelling contains the building blocks of all literature, content, and literacy, but is seldom taught in schools. In November she conducted a residency at Thompson using the innovative elementary curriculum she has been developing for younger students.

The residency began with three assemblies, one for Kindergarten that focused on fables, one for grades one through three that focused on folktales, and one for fourth and fifth grades that centered on personal narrative stories. The visiting storytellers got ready to work with students by meeting with teachers and providing an overview of what was going to take place. They also provided some professional development around the art and science of storytelling.

The next step was for the storytellers to conduct three workshops in every classroom. The leaders helped the students learn to tell a story from the appropriate genres (fables, folktales, and personal stories)

chosen to complement other content areas of the curriculum. There were oral exercises, short written check-ins, storytelling practice, and feedback. The residency ended with story performances, either in small groups or to the class as a whole. In future years, Thompson teachers and graduates from each grade will be able to model each type of story and use the curriculum to continue to teach the art of storytelling.

Principal Karen Donato found the residency to be a positive experience for the whole school. She says, "While it was an introduction, it truly lent itself to access for all students, and was an opportunity for each to make it meaningful for them." She also believes that "...it is more important than ever for students to be encouraged to *tell their story* and find their voice and power in expression."

I want to thank the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF), who awarded an [Innovation in Education Grant](#), and the Thompson PTO for providing the funding to make the storytelling residency possible. Thanks also to Thompson PTO Enrichment Chair Tonja Bishop and second grade teacher Jeanne Orlando who applied for the grant and played a large role in the program, and to Administrative Assistant Vicki Rose for the support she provided to the storytellers. I am happy to announce that this project was named an AEF [Dawn Moses Memorial Innovations Grant](#), an acknowledgement that pays tribute to the creative spirit of a former board member. Telling stories is a wonderful way for our young people to learn literacy skills and gain confidence in their own identities, and I am pleased that the entire Thompson community was able to participate in the residency.

### ***Gibbs, OMS MATHCOUNTS Teams to be Chosen in January for February Competition***

Volunteer coach Jonathan McIntyre wants all Gibbs and Ottoson students to know that practices are now taking place to earn a spot on the [MATHCOUNTS](#) team and are open to all who are interested. MATHCOUNTS teams are limited to 10 students per school, and the Gibbs and Ottoson teams will be determined in January. The teams will be chosen based upon attendance at Math Team Practices, scores on a January contest, and the amount of work done on an online practice tool.

MATHCOUNTS is a national program that holds competitions for students in grades 6-8. The teams will take part in a regional meet in Melrose on Saturday, February 8 against teams from 25 other area schools. The top scoring teams advance to the state meet held at Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston in March.

Math Team Practices are held on Sundays at 2:30 pm on the fourth floor of Robbins Library, and Thursdays at 6:45 pm in Room 330 at Arlington High School. See the Math Team [webpage](#) on the OMS website for details, or contact Coach McIntyre at [jonathan.a.mcintyre@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.a.mcintyre@gmail.com). I thank Mr. McIntyre for providing the opportunity for our young people to challenge themselves with mathematics practice and competitions.

### ***Ottoson, AHS Offer International Travel Opportunities***

Travel is a wonderful way for our young people to expand their knowledge and develop an appreciation of other cultures. Every year, Ottoson and AHS teachers facilitate trips to international destinations. Arlington's Sister City relationship with Nagaokakyo, Japan enables an annual summer [Exchange Program](#) as well. The following chart lists the trips that are currently available for 2020.

<b><i>Destination</i></b>	<b><i>Travel Dates</i></b>	<b><i>Eligible Students</i></b>	<b><i>Faculty Leader(s)</i></b>
Vietnam	February break	All AHS	Scott Matson
London and environs	April break	All AHS	Rebecca Walsh Bradley, Tim Marten
South Africa	April break	All AHS	Rebecca Bennett, Jayce McG
Nagaokakyo, Japan	July 2020	OMS/AHS entering grades 7-12	Rebecca Walsh Bradley, Justin Bourassa
Belize	April break	All OMS	Jennifer Buckley

A trip to Puerto Rico for AHS students is under development and may be available soon. I want to thank all of the faculty members who develop and chaperone these trips, as well as Mary Villano, who coordinates the travel opportunities along with our Foreign Exchange Program. Please contact Ms. Villano at [mwillano@arlington.k12.ma.us](mailto:mwillano@arlington.k12.ma.us) for information about scholarships and trip applications.

## **Creative Highlights**

### ***OMS Vocalists and Instrumentalists Shine in Two Winter Concerts***

It is always fun to come to the Ottoson Winter Concerts and see what our young people have been working on since school began. Performing Arts at OMS is so popular that two separate concerts are held at this time of year, each featuring instrumentalists and vocalists. On December 5, the curtain rose on the show choir Dynamics, whose singers danced their way through a number from *Wicked* before switching to *Memory* from *Cats*. The final song in the Ottoson Middle School Concert Band's performance took the audience into the holiday movie season with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. The Singing Bros, over 70 strong, included a wonderful performance of *Nobody Cares About Santa* from *Elf* in their set, complete with Santa hats, Rockettes-style kicks, and four excellent soloists.

The Ottoson Middle School Jazz Band presented a smooth rendition of a Gershwin song before moving on to *Fat Cat* which featured improvisations from 11 musicians. The final group, the Ottoson Middle School Grade 8 Chorus, delivered some great harmonies on *Elijah Rock!* before singing a traditional Israeli folk song in Hebrew and a popular Christmas ballad. The group ended with a number from *Hamilton* that featured a bewigged Colonial soloist. Over 225 students took part in what was a wonderful way to spend a cold December evening.

The second concert on December 10 featured six groups. The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Chorus got things going with a rhythmic Polynesian folk song, an energetic Spiritual, and a number by Pink Zebra accompanied by electric guitar, finger snapping, foot stomping, and clapping. They were followed by the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Orchestra who gave an exciting performance of the first movement of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto, No. 3*. The girls chorus Bel Suono began their set by singing *Il Est Bel Et Bon* in French before moving on to a touching song from the Broadway play *Waitress* that featured some lovely and challenging solos.

Four talented string soloists were featured in Bach's energetic *Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor* and Grieg's lyrical and lively *Prelude and Rigaudon from Holberg Suite Op. 40* performed by the Chamber Orchestra. The mixed chorus Harmonics started off their set with a South African freedom song complete with djembe before closing with a tune by Stevie Wonder that included a wood block, cowbell, and tambourine. The combined 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Orchestra delivered a beautiful set that began with the majestic and soaring second movement of Mahler's *Symphony No 1 in D* and moved on to the folk-inspired *Hopak* by Moussorgsky. The group sent the audience out into the night air with the peaceful and soothing *A Midwinter Fantasy* by Holst. Over 260 young musicians and vocalists took part in this lovely concert.

Each night featured two of our dedicated Performing Arts teachers and I thank them for leading our young people in these splendid evenings of music: December 5, Band teacher Paula Demetrio and Choral teacher Greg Condakes; December 10, String teacher Jing-Huey Wei and Choral teacher Cori Smith. Congratulations to everyone who took part.



### ***Swords Clash and Adventures Abound in AHS Production of “The Three Musketeers”***

As soon as D’Artagnan leaves for Paris with a note requesting he be considered as a Musketeer, you have the sense that his quest is not going to be easy. He and his sister Sabine are soon caught up in a rapidly moving story of daring and deceit, with plenty of action and humor to keep the audience on their toes. Over 40 AHS cast and company members, outfitted in 17<sup>th</sup> century finery, delivered swashbuckling performances in this year’s fall play, *The Three Musketeers*—updated by playwright Ken Ludwig to include Sabine as an aspiring Musketeer.

The story calls for significant combat, and we were lucky to have AHS graduate Nathan Malin, Class of 2017, onboard to serve as Fight Choreographer. Before every rehearsal and performance there is a “fight call” and all combat is run to make sure that everyone is accurate and safe. On those days when Nathan could not be present, AHS junior Eileen Tucci, who had learned all the combat, served as the Fight Captain. This ensured that the staging was consistent and that the sequences could be performed without injury. Nathan first started studying stage combat at a Boston University Summer Theatre Institute while he was still at AHS, and he continues to hone these skills as a BU junior pursuing his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts. Thanks, Nathan!

Congratulations to the talented cast and crew of *The Three Musketeers* on creating a wonderful evening of theater. Kudos to AHS Drama teacher and Director Michael Byrne, English teacher and Production Manager Lianna Bessette, and MakerSpace teacher and Set Designer Nathan Muehleisen. I want to also thank Mr. Muehleisen and the members of his Woodworking II class for constructing and painting the sets that had the actors climbing the ramparts. Please click [here](#) to read more about the cast and what went into producing the show.

The next offering from our talented AHS thespians will be the Student Directed One Acts coming up on January 21, 22, and 23 at 7:30 pm in Old Hall. This will be followed by the spring musical, *The Who’s Tommy* on April 3 and 4 at 7:30 pm and April 5 at 2:00 pm in the Lowe Auditorium. Mark your calendars now!



### ***Middle School Art Exhibits Reflect Feelings, Opinions, and Interests of Student Artists***

In November, our community was treated to two wonderful displays of creativity and beauty that reflected the ways our young people can use artworks to communicate their feelings, opinions, and concerns. On November 1, Ottoson Middle School held its 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Art Exhibit. As we have come to expect, the seventh and eighth grade artists reach into their hearts and minds to communicate how they feel about social and personal issues. Most artworks included artist's written statements that bring the meaning of each work into even clearer focus for the viewer. A beautiful *Day of the Dead* altar was also part of the exhibit. This was created by Joanna Katz's seventh grade Spanish classes. Senora Katz's students were all asked to bring something to add. Please click on or copy and paste this link [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10f69kzWqPESGF74ac5BPZ1X\\_10YMToiw?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10f69kzWqPESGF74ac5BPZ1X_10YMToiw?usp=sharing) into your browser to see the altar and other examples of the wonderful work.

Gibbs held its 1st Trimester Art Exhibit on November 20, and the lobby and adjacent hallways were filled with unique two-dimensional and three-dimensional works that revealed the interests and concerns of each artist. An added treat of the exhibit was a performance by the vocal group the Keytones directed by Music teacher James Ham.

The Visual Art program that teacher Alecia Serafini has developed at Gibbs over the past year affirms the artistic identity and independence of each student artist. Student choice related to media, technique, and theme is a top priority in this strong exploratory program. Please click on or copy and paste this link [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18hpdMwON\\_sRVuPNkvXrvYycrHkFyCj2E?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18hpdMwON_sRVuPNkvXrvYycrHkFyCj2E?usp=sharing) into your browser to see examples from the Gibbs show.

I want to thank OMS Visual Art teachers Polly Ford and Kayla McKenna, and Ms. Serafini for the wonderful work they do to help our students explore their creativity and display their talent. Thanks also to Ms. Katz and her seventh grade students for including the altar inspired by the Mexican holiday in the art show, and to Mr. Ham for including the Keytones. Congratulations to all our middle school artists on beautiful exhibits.

### ***AHS Performing Arts Students and Faculty Present Memorable and Meaningful Winter Concert***

On December 13, the AHS Performing Arts students and teachers delivered an excellent concert with a varied program and pieces that were well-chosen for the season as well as the skill of the young people. Over 250 instrumentalists and vocalists participated in 10 groups, and there was even a surprise set performed by a *pop-up* boys quartet that had everyone smiling.

The evening began with Boys II Men, the men's chorus, who presented a gentle and haunting song from *Carousel* before shifting gears to finger-snap their way through Billy Joel's *The Longest Time*. Next up was the Concert Band who started their set with the two contrasting movements of *Chant and Jubilo*. This was followed by the *Adirondack Festival Overture*, a taste of Americana that incorporated folk melodies, and the spirited and affirming piece *Acclamations*.

The Chorale took the stage next, but before they could begin, the barbershop quartet Tenor Bass Dissonance surprised the audience with their versions of the Beatles' *When I'm 64*, and Ricky Nelson's *Hello Mary Lou*. The Chorale then presented a wordless version of Nutcracker's *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* before closing their set with the warm and reflective *Season of Light*. The Madrigal Singers followed with a beautiful piece by Rachmaninoff and then sat down on the risers to deliver a terrific number made popular by the Pentatonix, complete with rhythmic clapping and finger snapping.

The Honors Orchestra started with a fast moving piece with folk elements by contemporary English composer John Rutter and then thrilled the audience with *Violin Concerto in A*, composed by senior violinist Liam Barthelmy who served as soloist. The women's chorus Bella Voce presented a lovely 14<sup>th</sup> century German carol and then captured the blues nature of *All I Want for Christmas is You* perfectly. The Jazz Band came next, getting things going with a challenging arrangement of a Dave Brubeck favorite

followed by a big band number made famous by Count Basie, and ending with the Latin-flavored *SWAY*, complete with a vocalist and lots of great instrumental solos.

The Concert Choir honored the upcoming holidays with *Gaudete*, a sacred carol from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the traditional *S'Vivon*, a Hanukkah song sung in Hebrew. All the vocal students came together to then sing two more modern songs of the season, the well-known *Carol of the Bells*, and the gentle *Glow*, by American composer Eric Whitacre. The Symphony Orchestra came next. Mozart's energetic *Horn Concerto in D* was another showcase for a talented soloist, and this was followed by Tchaikovsky's dynamic *March Slav*. The evening ended with every vocalist and instrumentalist upfront to perform holiday favorite *Sleigh Ride*.

I want to thank the members of the Performing Arts faculty who led our talented young people at this memorable Winter Concert: Music Teacher Greg Condakes who led Boys II Men, Choral Director Mara Walker who directed the wonderful vocal ensembles, and Instrumental Director Sabato D'Agostino who conducted the bands and orchestras. I also want to thank Berklee College of Music Student Intern Santanio Jackson who led the Concert Band and Jazz Band on several numbers and directed all the instrumentalists in the finale. Congratulations to all the students who took part and gave us this very special evening.

### **Athletics Highlights**

#### ***Fall Tournament Season Ends, Winter Season in Full Swing***

Congratulations to our fall athletes who participated in post-season play this year. The Girls Varsity Soccer team had a great run in the Division 2 North Tournament, beating Woburn, Billerica, and Concord before losing to Winchester in the finals. The Boys Soccer team ended their tournament play in the first round, losing to Belmont in a penalty kick. Field Hockey, making it into the tournament for the first time since 2009, lost to Lexington High School in the first round 3-2 in overtime. The Arlington High School Football team was victorious over Waltham 28-13 in their first Thanksgiving Day matchup.

At the Division 1 State Meet, the Girls Swim Team finished ninth overall and came in fourth in the 400 Freestyle Relay. There were also some excellent individual finishes. The Boys Cross Country Team finished second in the Middlesex League Meet and the Girls Cross Country Team came in fourth. Nice endings to the season for all.

In December, the winter sports season got underway, and we all look forward to following our basketball, ice hockey, indoor track, boys swimming, wrestling and gymnastics athletes. Good luck to everyone!