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News from October 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

I look forward to the time when I no longer need to send out letters like the one on October 29 that acknowledged the horrific tragedy of eleven lives taken at The Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh. Every month we seem to be confronted with hate directed toward people who are deemed “the other”—people of color, members of faiths we may not understand, immigrants, and refugees. As I reiterated in my letter, our district remains committed to providing and sustaining an environment where all students, regardless of abilities, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or immigration status are respected and supported. We want all our students to be aware of the role bias and prejudice play in our society, and we will continue to focus on a curriculum that supports our young people to be empathetic, responsible and active members of the community. In short, hate has no place in our schools or society.

I am reminded every day of the compassion and caring nature of our community’s children and their families. This month the OMS Peer Leaders collected new and lightly used children’s books and board books for [Cradles to Crayons](#), a nonprofit organization that provides donated clothing, toys, school supplies and books to young people living in poverty. A young man working toward his Eagle Scout rank contacted Gibbs and Ottoson administrators about hosting donation bins for [Operation Gratitude](#), a nonprofit group that sends care packages to deployed service members. Both schools readily agreed, and parents and students were encouraged to donate batteries, gum, hand warmers, playing cards, puzzle books and other items on the organization’s [wish list](#). Brackett collected donations for the Arlington Food Pantry this month, with each grade concentrating on a different category of food. These are only some of the ways our community shows their concern for others, and these compassionate efforts shine brightly.

You will find a lot of other good news about what is happening in our schools in the newsletter that follows. I am happy to share some of the aspirations and accomplishments of our students, faculty and staff with you every month.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Safe & Supportive Schools

SEL Spotlight: Consortium Membership, Assessment Supports Move to Comprehensive Model
Our membership in the [Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium \(MASMHC\)](#) and the work that has begun on a [SHAPE](#) assessment are important steps being taken by our Counseling Department toward actively implementing a comprehensive school mental health model. [Read more>](#)

Majority of AHS Student Survey Respondents Report They Do Not Use Marijuana

It is gratifying to learn that 80% of respondents to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey report that they

do not use marijuana, a drug known to have both short- and long-term effects on the teen brain. Learn more>

Diversity, Inclusion and Kindness Celebrated by the OMS Community

[National Bullying Prevention Month](#) was recognized at Ottoson by wearing blue, creating a chain of connection, performing random acts of kindness, honoring [Unity Day](#), and encouraging students to connect with each other in conversation and positivity. Read more>

APS Partners with Harvard in Research to Evaluate Evidence-based Counseling Practices

Several of our social work and counseling professionals are participating in the CARES Project to evaluate the Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems (MATCH), a flexible program designed to help children develop effective coping skills and function well at home, in school and with peers. Learn more>

Department News

METCO Program Apple-picking Event Starts the Year for Boston Resident Students and Friends

Connection and fun filled the day that Arlington and Cohasset METCO families and friends spent at [Honey Pot Orchards](#) in Stow, where they entered the maze, took hayrides, picked apples, ate donuts and drank cider. Read more>

Almost 600 Students Enter Kindergarten, Continuing District Enrollment Growth

The growth in our district student population continues this school year, with K-5 enrollment rising 3% over 2017 and Kindergarten leading the way with a total of 587 children. Learn more>

Hardy Construction Continues and Ribbon Cutting Opens Gibbs

I am happy to report that the Hardy classroom addition is proceeding on schedule, that two sixth grade students were among the speakers at the ribbon cutting ceremony that officially opened Gibbs, and that additional opportunities for community feedback on the designs of the new Arlington High School are coming up in November. Read more>

Interactive Theater Reflects Community Perspectives and Architects Ready AHS Designs

As the Arlington High School Building Project architecture team readied design ideas for the November 27 open forum, community members had a unique opportunity to share their thoughts and have them reflected back visually by actors from the [True Story Theater](#). Learn more>

Professional Development

Monthly Digital Learning PD Strengthens Teacher, Staff Digital Literacy

Training sessions offered by our Director of Digital Learning and her team provide the instruction our teachers and staff need to effectively use the technical management and instructional tools that are critical to preparing our students for future educational and professional success. Learn more>

Awards & Distinctions

Powerful VOTE Sculpture Connects Voting to Empathy and Love of Community

The President of the Young Progressives Club created the purple VOTE installation on the front lawn of AHS to remind us that voting is a great way to express our love for each other. Read more>

AYHSC Shares Arlington Anti-Vaping Work with Multiple Media Outlets

A recommendation from Attorney General Maura Healey led several media outlets to contact the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) to learn about what we are doing to educate young people about the dangers of using e-cigarettes, vapes and Juuls. Learn more>

Academics & Enrichment

Interactive DreamBox Software Adapts to Individual Learners and Develops Mathematics Skills

Teachers and specialists at Stratton and Dallin have seen students make tremendous progress when they spend time using [DreamBox](#), a flexible program that sees how the user approaches the work and the errors being made and tailors what is presented to the user. [Learn more>](#)

Dallin Green Team Harvests, Distributes Milkweed Seeds to Help Monarch Butterflies

Members of the Dallin Green Team have harvested their milkweed seeds from the Science Garden and made them available to the school community so that the plant can be grown at home, providing food for monarch butterfly caterpillars. [Read more>](#)

Parent Visits Enrich Thompson Second Grade Geography Curriculum

Hearing parents talk about their country of origin, or one they are very familiar with, brings geography to life and helps second grade students appreciate differences, recognize global similarities and discard stereotypes. [Learn more>](#)

Students View Groundbreaking Brain Imagery and Hear from Experts at Day-long Conference

The *Beautiful Brain Conference*, organized by AHS AP Psychology teacher Michael Sandler, offered students the opportunity to view [Santiago Ramón y Cajal's](#) remarkable [drawings of the brain](#), visit the [McGovern Institute for Brain Research](#), and listen to presentations by researchers from MIT, Tufts, Northeastern and Mass General Hospital and a prominent science writer. [Read more>](#)

AHS Science Olympiad Club Gearing Up for Competitive Year

[Science Olympiad](#) tournaments test students' knowledge and abilities in all science disciplines and engineering, and participating in the [MIT](#) and [Harvard Invitational](#) tournaments are great ways for AHS Science Olympiad Club members to prepare for the state competition. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Trips and Study Abroad Opportunities Help Create Global Citizens

This year our high school students will be visiting Panama, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, France, and Japan, and can apply for a scholarship from the [Council on International Exchange](#) to take part in a summer [study abroad program](#). [Read more>](#)

Creative Highlights

One-night Reading of "The Laramie Project" Commemorates 20th Anniversary of Shepard's Death

The death of openly gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard was honored by current students, AHS faculty and staff, and AHS alumni who came together this month to present "The Laramie Project". [Read more>](#)

Athletic Highlights

Fall Spy Ponder Season Ends with Teams and Athletes Moving on to Post Season Competition

With the winter athletic season just around the corner, several fall teams move on to tournament and divisional play, while individual Golf and Girls Swim competitors head to sectional and regional contests. [Learn more>](#)

Continue to read the full News from October 2018 Newsletter

Safe & Supportive Schools

SEL Spotlight: Consortium Membership, Assessment Supports Move to Comprehensive Model

This year our Counseling Department has taken some important steps that will lead to actively implementing a comprehensive school mental health model, one built on a multi-leveled system of supports that benefit all students. Research has shown that a student's mental health is essential to their

academic success. A comprehensive school mental health model is one that offers and maximizes three service tiers:

- Universal—evidence-based school and classroom preventive services that reach all students and promote wellness. Examples of these are the [SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program](#) taken by all seventh grade students and Wellness Day offered to all students at AHS.
- Targeted—specialized prevention and intervention programs and services for students with at-risk behavior. The AHS Jive Turkeys drop-in group that provides a safe space for students who are pre-contemplative or contemplative about making changes in their patterns of substance abuse is an example of this.
- Intensive—specific and appropriate services that support individual emotional and behavioral difficulties. One-on-one meetings with School Counselors, Social Workers, School Psychologists or professionals at the [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#) are examples of this.

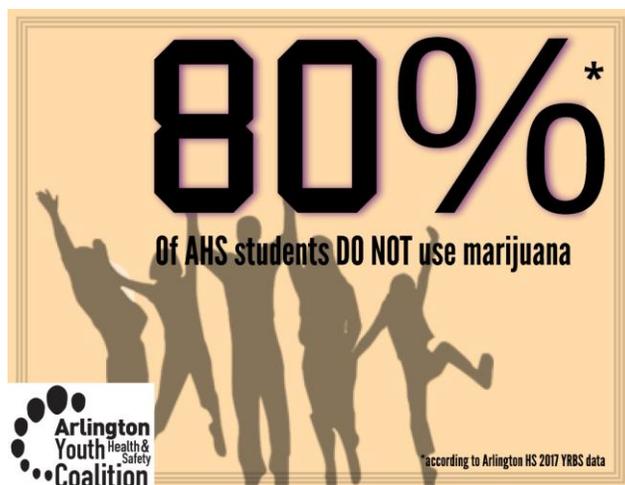
Membership in the [Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium \(MASMHC\)](#) is part of this effort. The school districts that take part in MASMHC are all committed to improving the mental health services and supports that are offered in schools across the state. Counseling representatives from Gibbs, Ottoson, and AHS attend monthly meetings where participants share resources, practices and policies, hear from experts, and consult with fellow professionals. Free professional development is offered as well.

The MASMHC also supports member districts who want to understand their current strengths, identify areas of growth, and design a quality improvement plan. These districts are encouraged to complete [SHAPE](#), the *School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System* offered by the [National Center for School Mental Health \(NCSMH\)](#) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Social, Emotional Learning Director Sara Burd reports that we are in the early stages of completing *SHAPE*, an effort that requires significant time from our counseling professionals. In recognition of our commitment to bring together the necessary individuals across our system that are needed to finish this intensive work, the NCSMH has awarded the district their Bronze certificate.

Ms. Burd emphasizes that a comprehensive school mental health model is one that provides significant levels of support at the universal and targeted tiers so that we aren't relying on students to self-identify. The goal is to recognize at-risk students early and reach out to them before they require individualized attention. Completing *SHAPE*, and our active participation in MASMHC, will help us understand where we can improve and assist us in identifying new strategies and programs for implementation.

It is important to remember the wide spectrum of individuals in our schools who work with our children to promote wellness and mental health, and that some roles have changed. The best example of this is the role of the Guidance Counselor, who traditionally spent the majority of his or her time working on college advising and application. While this aspect of the job is still important, today's high school guidance counselor takes a whole-child approach to supporting our students. They routinely meet with students to discuss issues of health and wellness, collaborate with families, and work to understand their social and home lives, areas of challenge and growth, and passions and strengths. They connect students to other professionals to ensure their safety, if required. The new title of School Counselor that we have embraced reflects the expanded role these individuals play in our high school.

I want to thank Ms. Burd for providing leadership on the implementation of a comprehensive mental health model. I am grateful to the individuals who attend the MASMHC meetings on a regular basis and I thank those who have already started working on *SHAPE* and those who will do so in the future. I am proud of the way our counseling professionals have embraced this work that will lead to improvement in the well-being of our students and support their current and future success.



Majority of AHS Student Survey Respondents Report They Do Not Use Marijuana

This month the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) wants to share some more positive news from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). I am happy to report that the results indicate that 80% of AHS students do not use marijuana. As I shared last month, research has confirmed that students offer truthful answers to a voluntary survey of this type, and over the years, we have seen that YRBS data is consistent with other survey data and with national health outcomes.

This is very good news, and it suggests that the work of AYHSC, Arlington Public Schools and parents and guardians to discourage this activity is having positive results. Unfortunately, the legalization of marijuana in Massachusetts and access to devices that allow young people to vape THC have reduced their perception of harm and made THC consumption easier. It is important, therefore, that all of us continue to spread the message that marijuana can have both long- and short- term effects on the teen brain.

I would like to refer you to a simple graphic on the AYHSC [Drug Facts: Know the Risks webpage](#) that lists the problems that can result from teen marijuana use. AYHSC suggests that parents and guardians review the [Marijuana Talk Kit](#) to get all the facts and tips on how to talk to your teens about this issue. You may also want to review [Teen cannabis use is not without risk to cognitive development](#), that describes the results of a study recently published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.



Diversity, Inclusion and Kindness Celebrated by the OMS Community

This month there were many important school-wide activities at Ottoson designed to promote community and build culture. During the first week of October, OMS School Counselors Mandi Bistran, Bryan Christie

and Laurie Key kicked-off [National Bullying Prevention Month](#) by inviting students and staff to participate in *Blue Shirt Day*. [Wear Blue World Day of Bullying Prevention](#) was created by [STOMP Out Bullying](#), the leading national anti-bullying and cyberbullying organization for kids and teens, to signify the importance of the month with global solidarity. Seeing a sea of blue throughout the hallways and classrooms was a great way to kick off the observances!

During the following week, the School Counselors implemented *Project Connect* to celebrate the differences among the students and staff. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, a table holding colorful strips of paper was set up in the lobby during lunch. Everyone was encouraged to choose a strip and write their name and a quality that makes them unique and proud of who they are as individuals on the paper. The strips were then fastened together to create the beautiful, colorful chain that now hangs in the lobby. Even though *Project Connect* was only available as students were hurrying to and from lunch, excitement around participation was high. Many individuals wanted to create several links for the chain. The completed chain will serve as a visual, ongoing reminder of the power of diversity and inclusiveness in the OMS community.

The next few weeks in October saw the kick-off of *Random Acts of Kindness*. Baskets were placed in the hallways that contained Random Act of Kindness tickets. Students were encouraged to complete the task written on the ticket and then pass it on to someone else so they could do the same. Within a few days, the School Counselors noticed that the tickets were going fast, and the basket needed to be replenished! Teachers reported the students were very excited to participate and observed them passing the tickets to other students in the hallways.

[Unity Day](#), the signature event of National Bullying Prevention Month that has been recognized in the United States since 2011, was held on October 24. On *Unity Day*, individuals, schools, communities, and businesses wear orange to show support for students who have been bullied. Many OMS students and staff were excited and proud to wear orange to school in honor of kindness, acceptance and inclusion.

The end of October was marked by [Start With Hello Week](#). This nation-wide initiative was created by the [Sandy Hook Promise](#) and is a Youth Violence Prevention Program aimed at creating an inclusive school environment. On Monday, the week kicked-off by having students create name tags during the ASPIRE block that they would wear throughout the day. The purpose of the activity was for students to greet others, who they may not know, by their name. On Tuesday, students and staff were encouraged to wear Arlington or Ottoson clothing to foster community connection and raise awareness about school safety. On Wednesday, School Counselors held an activity in the main lobby during the lunch period. Students were asked to write a positive, encouraging or empowering message on a Post it Note and stick it on the *Positivity Wall*. Students were very engaged in this activity and many of them wanted to write more than one positive message!

On Thursday, School Counselors made conversation-starter cards and placed them on the tables in the cafeteria to prompt students to start conversations with those around them. More importantly, students were encouraged to include anyone that they noticed was eating alone. The School Counselors observed students reaching out to those sitting alone and inviting them to join their table and conversation. On Friday, students and staff were asked to reflect on the week and share thoughts about how they can carry the sentiment of *Start with Hello Week* and inclusivity forward throughout the year.

It was wonderful to see acts of kindness spreading throughout the school during the month. Ms. Bistran and Mr. Christie emphasize that when kindness is practiced in schools, adults and children become more responsive, caring, and socially aware of themselves as individuals who can make a difference in their shared experience. It does not matter whether the act of kindness is small or large, the effect is the same. Our world is full of stress, violence and intense competition that can cause us to feel disconnected. As we think about doing something nice for someone else, we come together in fulfillment and joy. All human beings need affection to thrive and even small acts of kindness can touch someone deeply and make their day.

I want to thank Mr. Christie, Ms. Bistran, and Ms. Key for their leadership in these initiatives that help build positive emotional connections between students and teachers and create healthy relationships. Such relationships ease anxiety and bring a sense of belonging that allows students to focus and engage in learning.



APS Partners with Harvard in Research to Evaluate Evidence-based Counseling Practices

This year our district is partnering with the [Harvard Laboratory for Youth Mental Health](#) in a research study to compare the impact of different approaches to school-based counseling on students' mental health and school related outcomes. The Counseling for Academic Resilience in Every Student (CARES) Project is working with K-8 public schools in the Greater Boston area to evaluate the Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems (MATCH). MATCH is an evidence-based treatment that builds on decades of experience in child mental health care. The approach is tailored to fit the unique needs of each individual child and family, and is designed to help children develop effective coping skills and function well at home, in school and with peers. The study is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#) participated in the study last year. When they were unable to continue, they recommended that the CARES research team contact Arlington Public Schools. This summer, several of our school counselors, social workers and one nurse attended thirty-six hours of training, at no charge to the district. These trained individuals are the Intervention Group, those using MATCH with their students. They receive consultation and are compensated for their weekly supervision time with the Harvard clinical research team. Those participating in the Usual Care group work with students as they normally do, and they will receive MATCH training next summer.

Our social workers and counselors are enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with the MATCH protocol. One of the training participants noted "...we have no curriculum..." and are "...often on our own to figure out what to do...." MATCH "...gives us something like a curriculum to follow and a resource to help us figure out what to do next."

The study continues throughout the school year and includes a six-month follow-up. Researchers will be evaluating student mental health outcomes, biological measures of potential mechanisms of counseling benefit, and an array of student school-related outcomes such as attendance, school engagement, and academic skills at multiple points in time. Participating children receive \$150 in gift cards for completing a bio-behavioral assessment and free MRI. Parents of the students who take part receive information about the counseling their children are receiving, family support by request, \$30 per month for completing online surveys and \$40 for each of the three family in-person assessments. Students from other participating districts have reported that they enjoy helping other children and families and contributing to science!

It is not too late for students and their families to become part of the CARES study. To be eligible, a student must already be seeing a counselor or social worker during regularly scheduled visits. If this is the case and you are interested in having your child take part, please contact your school social worker, counselor or principal to see if they are participating in the program. It is wonderful for our district to be

able to take part in this project, and to receive the professional development and on-going supervision from Harvard clinicians and researchers. Special Education Director Alison Elmer says that this is a once in a career opportunity for our professionals, and she hopes that we will be able to cultivate a long-term collaboration with the project leaders. I thank Ms. Elmer, the members of our staff and all the families who have come forward to participate in this unique opportunity.

Department News



METCO Program Apple-picking Kicks-off the Year for Boston Resident Students and Friends

Last month, the fall season got off to a great start for Arlington and Cohasset METCO families and friends with apple picking and more at [Honey Pot Orchards](#) in Stow. The children were very excited and looking forward to all the activities and things to see, including the farm animals and *Punkin' Patch*. The discounted \$18 package gave everyone unlimited hayrides throughout the orchard, access to the maze, a bag for apple picking, a free cider donut and cider. APS METCO Director Margaret Credle Thomas reports that even before the trip got started, she was hearing what the students wanted to do first.

The Arlington METCO program has been starting the year with apple picking since 2012, and Ms. Credle Thomas says it is a great way to connect. We have been participating with Cohasset for the last two years. Transportation for those who needed it or didn't want to drive to the orchard was provided from METCO Headquarters in Roxbury.

The next event the program is looking forward to is the Building Two Communities dinner that will be held in Boston this year. This is a time when the families of Arlington and Boston friends can socialize and strengthen their relationships. Holding the event in Boston gives Arlington families a sense of what every day is like for our Boston resident students who travel back and forth.

Arlington Public Schools' participation in the [Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity \(METCO\)](#) program has enriched our town for over 50 years. I am happy to be able to tell you that this year it will be easier for our Boston resident students attending AHS to stay after school and take part in extra curricular activities such as clubs, sports, etc. Thanks to the efforts of State Senator Cindy Friedman, the program has received an additional \$20,000 to be used for late bus transportation. Our Boston students travel significant distances to attend school here and having access to a late bus makes it possible for them to fully participate in the AHS community. Thank you, Senator Friedman.

Almost 600 Students Enter Kindergarten, Continuing District Enrollment Growth

We continue to see young families coming into Arlington to take advantage of the educational opportunities in our schools. Elementary K-5 enrollment across the district is at 3,145--a 3% increase over 2017. Last year there were three elementary grades with over 500 students. This year there are four. The

largest number of new students is in Kindergarten, with a total of 587. It is easy to see why 6 out of 7 elementary schools have four Kindergarten classes this year!

Gibbs has opened with an official tally of 463 students, and the combined seventh and eighth grade total for Ottoson is 855. If all of these students had gone to OMS, the grand total would have been 1,318 compared with 1,258 in 2017. Arlington High School is housing 1,380 students this year, compared to 1,325 in 2017.

This growth builds on what we have been seeing for several years. Last November, the *Arlington Advocate* reported that we experienced almost 15% growth in enrollment between 2010 and 2016. We are grateful to the people of Arlington for supporting the building projects that have made it possible for us to rise to the challenge of this increasing student population. The enrollment figures come from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Student Information System, Report 5, Enrollment Statistics, and do not include out-of-district numbers.

Hardy Construction Continues and Ribbon Cutting Opens Gibbs

I am always happy to report on the progress being made on the school construction projects. The Hardy classroom addition project is on schedule, with an estimated move-in time of January 2019. The new Lake Street Playground is completed and in use, and we are beginning a study to determine the best way to use the Chandler Street playground. A grant from [Arlington's Community Preservation Committee](#) is making it possible for us to proceed with this evaluation. The space around Hardy is limited, so it is essential that we understand the best way to move forward.

October 21 was a very special day for the Gibbs community, as the ribbon was cut to officially open our new sixth grade school. After I welcomed our visitors to the ceremony, the Gibbs Select After School Chorus gave its first performance. This was followed by remarks from several town dignitaries, including Town Manager Adam Chapdelaine, School Committee Vice-Chair Len Kardon, Permanent Town Building Committee Chair Allen Reedy, Paul Lamoureux, the Principal when Gibbs was a full middle school, Current Principal Kristin DeFrancisco, as well as State Senator Cindy Friedman. The Select Board was represented by Joe Curro.

The sixth grade speeches were the highlight of the day. Molly Dickerson and Andre Ledger were among the students who applied to represent their class as speakers and ribbon cutters. Molly spoke about her apprehensions on the first day, when she realized that "...every single student at Gibbs was experiencing this same thing together." She also shared her belief Gibbs is helping her "...learn what it is like to be in middle school step-by-step." Andrew told the audience about his five favorite things: the large music room, the Media Center, the classrooms with big windows and lots of room for projects, the lunchroom with circular tables that makes it easy to talk to friends, and the beautiful entry to the building. It was wonderful to hear from these young people, and to be sharing the new Gibbs with the community.

Interactive Theater Reflects Community Perspectives and Architects Ready AHS Designs

As I reported last month, the architects are exploring many alternatives as they design the look and feel of the new Arlington High School building and campus, and they are considering ways to honor the current look of the building. Our community had a unique opportunity to share their personal experiences and emotions that underlay their points of view or concerns on the proposed new high school at an open meeting on November 7 at Thompson Elementary School. Audience members who volunteered to share their perspectives were interviewed by Christopher Ellinger, Director of the local nonprofit [True Story Theater](#), as the actors listened. They then used mime, props, movement, and sounds to perform what they heard. The number of actors improvising a story ranged from two to a few more. Those agreeing to share their stories included former and current APS students, parents and residents, and AHS Building Committee members.

The performances were immersive and meaningful, enabling the attendees to see and hear the human emotions generated by thoughts that had been shared. Audience members were able to experience the

hope, fear, frustration, anger, and joy that the personal stories carried, glimpsing the feeling beneath the words. Space was provided for each story to be honored by the group, with no one having to figure out whether they agree, disagree, or what they might say in response. ACMi Arlington Public News reported on the event during the November 9, 2018 broadcast, and you can get a sense of what occurred by viewing the [video](#). The segment begins at time 10:49 in the newscast. I want to thank True Story Theater for using their powerful approach with our community as we work collaboratively to determine a final design for a new Arlington High School that will meet our educational vision.

Another Community Forum on the AHS Building Project is occurring on November 27 from 7:00-9:00 pm in Town Hall. I urge everyone to attend, view the design ideas that the architecture team has been working on, and provide input. For more information on the project, please review the material on the [Arlington High School Building Project website](#).

Professional Development

Monthly Digital Learning PD Strengthens Teacher, Staff Digital Literacy

Today's teachers have access to more technical teaching tools than ever before, and digital learning plays an important role in education. The range of possibilities seems almost endless. There are study aids, platforms that can be used to create and manage digital assignments, tools that sharpen critical thinking skills and promote collaboration, interactive social skill games, applications that strengthen academic performance, and tools for classroom management. But in order to take advantage of these important educational components, our teachers and staff need to understand what is available and how to use it.

That is where Susan Bisson, our Director of Digital Learning, comes in. Before becoming a teacher (she taught third grade at Hardy), Ms. Bisson worked for the IBM Center for e-Business Innovation. That experience led to her belief that a constructivist approach to teaching and digital learning resources provides students opportunities for making their thinking visible, increases engagement, and prepares them for post-secondary education and job success.

As Director of Digital Learning, a position she accepted last January, Ms. Bisson is responsible for:

- Developing, managing, and evaluating all digital learning resources and technologies that support teaching and learning
- Defining and communicating an instructional/learning digital literacy vision
- Providing overall leadership for the design, development, and implementation of the digital learning resources.

Every month, Ms. Bisson and her Digital Learning Team of individuals from each of our ten schools, offer Professional Development. Their goal is to ensure that our teachers and staff have the digital literacy they need to maximize digital learning opportunities for their students and use classroom management tools effectively and productively. The offerings are created in response to a teacher survey that identified needs and are a combination of instruction and guided practice for beginners and those with experience. In most cases, team members provide the instruction, although an outside trainer is sometimes brought in.

This month the Team offered sessions for K-12 teachers on how to set up their gradebooks in [PowerTeacher PRO](#) and on how to use new [Google Classroom](#) features. Next month she is offering a session on how to use [Read & Write for Chrome](#) and a session designed to assist individuals who normally use Macs, laptops and Microsoft Office products make the transition to Google Drive and Docs, widely used in our schools.

Digital literacy is critical to ensuring that our student receive a 21st century education, one that prepares them for future success. The Professional Development that Ms. Bisson and her team offer to our teachers and staff gives them the skills necessary to effectively use the technical management and instructional tools that make that a reality.

Awards & Distinctions



Powerful VOTE Sculpture Connects Voting to Empathy and Love of Community

The importance of exercising one's right to vote is a topic that Griffin Gould, Co-president of the AHS Young Progressives Club, feels very strongly about. As he talked with friends about the upcoming election, he was surprised to learn that many said that voting, even if they were 18 and eligible to do so, did not seem important to them. They felt that they were not affected by many of the modern political issues. In fact, a "...poll from the Public Religion Research Institute and the *Atlantic* conducted in June showed only 28 percent of young adults ages 18-29 say they are "absolutely certain" they'll vote in the midterms,..." (Goldshan, Tara, [Poll: only 28 percent of young voters say they will certainly vote in the 2018 midterms](https://www.vox.com), www.vox.com, July 18, 2018).

Griffin feels differently. He believes that if young people don't register and vote, they are delivering a message to our legislators that they don't care about issues or politics, and that no one needs to listen to them. He believes that voting demonstrates a sincere love for our community, and our commitment to all of those who are affected by the issues in ways that we may not even understand.

These are the ideas and beliefs that drove Griffin to create the wonderful VOTE installation that was installed on the front lawn of Arlington High School until the week after the midterm elections. He decided to model the sculpture on artist Robert Indiana's *Love*, hoping that those who see it would connect the act of voting with empathy and love. It took about a month of work in the AHS MakerSpace to create the wooden installation, where he was assisted by MakerSpace teacher Nathan Muehleisen. The choice of color, purple, was deliberate to render the sculpture bipartisan and not "red" or "blue". Griffin and other Club members were also active registering voters at their meetings and events.

I want to thank Griffin and the other members of the Young Progressives Club, is a chapter of the non-partisan organization [March for Our Lives](#), for creating and installing this powerful visual message. I also thank Mr. Muehleisen for providing his support. As Griffin says, when we vote we show law makers that we care.

AYHSC Shares Arlington Anti-Vaping Work with Multiple Media Outlets

Last month, I reported that Arlington Public Schools and the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) are working hard to spread the word about the dangers of using e-cigarettes, vapes and Juuls. This risky behavior may have serious consequences due to the presence of addictive and dangerous substances in the aerosols that are produced and the initiation toward addiction that nicotine introduces to the developing youth brain.

Your children are receiving information about the dangers of vaping as part of the APS tobacco education programming. Teens also have an opportunity to engage in peer outreach and prevention efforts by joining the AHS chapter of [The 84](#), one of the most active in Massachusetts. Last spring the members mounted an [anti-vaping poster campaign](#) to raise awareness to the consequences of using e-cigarettes

and vapes. The group is currently designing a mural for AHS that will raise awareness about the harms of nicotine use. Members are also researching the tobacco industry, as well as the local policy and social justice issues that are influenced by these corporations.

This youth advocacy, and the fact that Coalition Director Karen Koretsky met with a Juul company representative in February to learn about their supposed vaping “prevention program”, led Attorney General Maura Healey to suggest Arlington as a source of information about vaping prevention and outreach. During the last month, Ms. Koretsky and Youth Coordinator Anna Collins were filmed by *Vice News* and were interviewed by *Wall Street Journal* and *BuzzFeed* reporters and a Netflix producer. The *BuzzFeed News* article about the Juul company program can be found [here](#).

It is wonderful that the work of our students, staff and town officials to educate our young people about the dangers of e-cigarettes, vapes and Juuls is being recognized in this way. Kudos to everyone who spreads the word on this important issue. I also thank Ms. Koretsky for understanding and then rejecting the “prevention program” and its associated funding and sharing what she learned with Attorney General Healey. Hopefully our experiences in Arlington will help other communities as they strive to reduce this risky behavior and keep their children safe.

Academics & Enrichment

Interactive DreamBox Software Adapts to Individual Learners and Develops Mathematics Skills

[DreamBox](#), an online interactive K-8 math tool being piloted at Stratton and Dallin, is an excellent example of how digital learning can result in academic progress. The software is flexible and adaptive, which means that it tailors what is presented to the user based on how they are answering questions. The program sees how a user is approaching the work and the errors being made, and diagnoses misconceptions or areas that need to be retaught. The application also tracks a child’s progress, and this data is available to teachers who can decide when to stay the course, reteach, or accelerate mathematics instruction. It is aligned to the [Investigations 3](#) mathematics curriculum being used in our elementary schools and corresponds to the [Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework](#). A user license enables students to work in *DreamBox* both at school and at home, and teachers can see how much time each student is spending on the program.

Stratton has been employing *DreamBox* as a mathematics intervention tool for five years and has seen significant growth in the students who have been using it. Students in grades one through five are asked to spend 120 minutes a week on the program, and those in Kindergarten are asked to spend 60 minutes per week. Children in grades K-3 are asked to report to the school cafeteria by 8:10 am every day to work with *DreamBox*. Trained parent volunteers are there to assist them with the application until it is time to go to class. High need learners who are not able to come in early are given times to use the program throughout the day.

Additionally, teachers at Stratton can use *DreamBox* to work on specific topics and assign lessons to students that are related to what they are doing in class. Math Coach Liz Van Cleef monitors usage to make sure that the required hours are achieved, and she watches to see which areas are proving most troubling to the students so that teachers can be alerted. Different adults volunteer on different days and Ms. Van Cleef works on their training along with Math Interventionist Stewart Deck, making sure that there is consistency. She reports that she has seen students make tremendous progress by using *DreamBox*.

Dallin piloted *DreamBox* for three months last school year and purchased a new license after seeing solid gains in mathematics skills among a group of children who used it consistently. Dallin students will have access to the application both at home and at school. Teachers have the flexibility to use *DreamBox* differently in each classroom, based upon their familiarity and comfort with it. Teachers can set the strands that individual students need to learn and/or students can choose lessons that the program tailors to their level. Many teachers offer *DreamBox* as a station option during mathematics or choice time, allowing students to use the application to reinforce or reteach concepts they are working on in class.

Other teachers offer the application during WIN (What I Need) block, and students who are caught up on their classwork will use it then. Teachers who have experience with *DreamBox* consistently confirm that the program is accurate in recognizing the strengths and areas for growth.

Dallin Assistant Principal Samantha Karustis says having eight months of data in a larger sample size to examine this year will help her better understand the progress students make based on how much time each one spends using the program. Teaching Assistant Vivien Tang has worked hard to understand the application, help the teachers launch it in their classrooms, and support the student users. She is starting a morning mathematics group for students in grades three through five that will meet three mornings a week.

Both schools report that students and families are enthusiastic about *DreamBox*. Students like that it feels like a “game”, and that they have some control over what they play and learn. Parents like that it is free of advertising, that children want to engage with it, and that progress is evident. I want to thank Ms. Van Cleef, Mr. Deck, Ms. Tang, the parent volunteers and all others who have worked hard to understand and pilot this new learning tool.

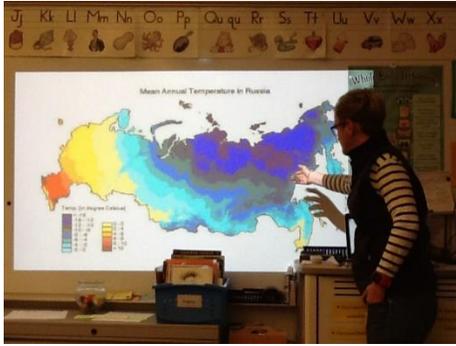


Dallin Green Team Harvests, Distributes Milkweed Seeds to Help Monarch Butterflies

Thanks to the efforts of interested students, parent volunteers and the School Sustainability Coordinator Rachel Oliveri, our district has active Green Teams that pursue a variety of environmental projects throughout the school year. This month, I would like to highlight the Dallin Green Team and the wonderful monarch butterfly work they have been doing for several years. Monarch caterpillars will only eat milkweed, but climate change and pesticide use has led to a shortage of this plant. The group is hoping to alleviate this by encouraging people to grow milkweed in their home gardens.

Team members have harvested the seeds from the *Asclepias tuberosa* plants grown in the Dallin Science Garden and made them available to the school community. Harvesting takes a bit of work since the large pods need to be opened and the seeds separated from the silks. The group says that the seeds can be planted directly in the soil by placing them just $\frac{1}{4}$ " below the surface. For those who wish to wait, the seeds can be cold-stratified over the winter and planted in the spring. You need to be a little patient since the plants do not usually bloom until their second year.

I want to thank the Dallin Green Team for their continued work to tackle this important environmental issue. Monarch butterfly populations have declined by more than 80% over the past two decades. The work they are doing makes us aware of this problem and gives us the tools necessary to make a difference.



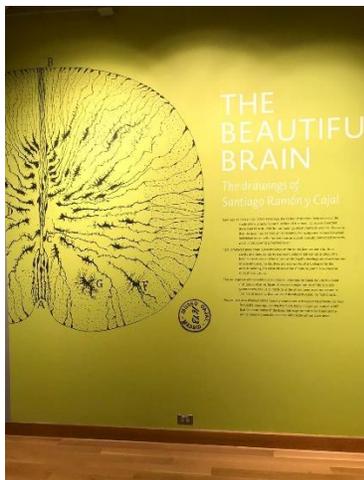
Parent Visits Enrich Thompson Second Grade Geography Curriculum

It isn't possible for every Thompson second grade student to visit the countries they hear about in their geography curriculum. But they can do the next best thing--hear from people who have experienced them. That is why the second grade teaching team at Thompson decided to invite parents to visit the classrooms and share information about their country of origin or one that they are familiar with. Second grade teacher Lynne Dichter presented the idea at Curriculum Night and asked parents to sign-up if they were interested. As the term progresses, she will contact them and arrange visits. The hope is that as the visits get started and students talk about them at home, people who have not signed up will come forward so they can take part as well.

The parents always tell Ms. Dichter how much they enjoy the visits. Many put together a Power Point presentation that may contain a map and other photos that reflect the geography or culture of the country. The presentation on Russia included a slide of the animals found in various parts of the country, as well as the popular foods. Other presentations, such as the one on Nigeria, which included drumming and dancing, help to break stereotypes the students may have about life in different parts of the world. This fall the students have also learned about South American culture including Carnival, the tango and capoeira martial art. The students have seen African textiles, discovered that frogs and snails are eaten in France, learned about the Dead Sea in Israel, and heard about the geography, history, language and food of South Korea. Upcoming visits include a mom who will teach the class some Chinese characters during her talk about China, as well as presentations about India and Lebanon.

The second grade curriculum teaches students how to identify the continents and oceans on a map, and to know major rivers, mountains and landmarks. Ms. Dichter reports that the parent visits often lead to great discussions based on what the class knows about the country's location in the world. She hopes that the students will not only see the differences between cultures but will be able to make connections and understand how life is similar for people globally. Ms. Dichter always learns something during the visits, and they fit in well with Second Grade Worldfest, coming up in November. For this event, each child selects a country of interest or origin, does some research to gather information and creates a poster to share with the parents at a "museum" in the cafeteria.

The Arlington community is fortunate to have families who have come from, or experienced, so many different parts of the world and are happy to share their knowledge with our children. These visits are a wonderful way to bring the second grade curriculum to life, and I thank Ms. Dichter and the other second grade teachers who make this part of their teaching.



Students View Groundbreaking Brain Imagery and Hear from Experts at Day-long Conference

This month, 110 AHS AP Psychology students and 11 chaperones were joined by 13 teachers and students from four other high school programs at a day-long scientific conference. The idea for the *Beautiful Brain Conference* came to AHS AP Psychology teacher Michael Sandler when he saw that the MIT Museum was holding an exhibit of [Santiago Ramón y Cajal's drawings of the brain](#). Cajal's work on the anatomy of the brain and nervous system earned him the Nobel Prize in 1906. Mr. Sandler realized that being able to view these astounding drawings was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and he wanted his students to be able to take advantage of this. He felt that visiting the exhibit could be part of a daylong conference like one he had attended last year. In the spring, Mr. Sandler was awarded a grant from the [Arlington Education Foundation \(AEF\)](#), and the October *Beautiful Brain Conference* was born.

The attendees met at the MIT Stratton Center and divided into groups so that they could move around between the four different venues. By the end of the day, all participants had visited the museum exhibit and had the opportunity to attend 2 or 3 amazing presentations. Sixty of the attendees also visited the [McGovern Institute for Brain Research](#), which included tours of the [Martinos Imaging Center](#) and talks by graduate students working in the areas of magnetic resonance imaging and magnetoencephalography. The three speakers described their research in auditory processing, how the brain recognizes faces and the neural basis of language, focusing on dyslexia.

Five presentation sessions were delivered by researchers from MIT, Tufts, Northeastern and Mass General Hospital and one was given by a prominent medical writer. [Dr. Heather Brenhouse's](#) discussion of how different levels of stress can be either helpful or damaging was especially appreciated by the students in the audience who are going through the stressful college application process. [Dr. Aniruddh Patel's](#) talk about music being the language of the brain was found particularly interesting as well.

Students were fascinated by [Dr. Nancy Kanwisher's](#) session about her discovery of the area of the brain dedicated to facial recognition. Mr. Sandler reports that Dr. Kanwisher is a "rock star" in the world of neurology and her [TED talk](#) has been viewed over 1,000,000 times. Another highlight was seeing an AHS alum (and former student of Mr. Sandler's) sharing the stage. Hannah Alton, Class of 2018 and now at Harvard, had worked in [Dr. Abigail Koppes'](#) lab during high school, and the picture above shows them jointly delivering the presentation. The other speakers were [Dr. Randy Gollub](#) and [Dr. Randi Hutter Epstein](#).

During the museum visit, the students completed a scavenger hunt that helped them think about the different drawings they were seeing. Back at school the next day, the group engaged in a "Chalk Talk" --a silent forum in which they were able to pose and answer questions about the overall experience.

I want to thank Mr. Sandler for giving our students the opportunity to not only see Cajal's drawings, but to experience a *real* scientific conference and hear from a diverse group of experts. We are grateful to two generous community members who helped find spaces for the Conference. Dr. Jang-Ho Cha, an AHS parent, helped to secure the auditorium at Novartis where he works. Paul Parravano, parent of AHS graduates, works for the MIT Office of Government and Community Relations, and he helped secure the conference room at the Stratton Center for the group's use. I also want to thank AEF for their generous grant that also covered t-shirts for all the participants and copies of Dr. Epstein's book for those who attended her talk. The *Beautiful Brain Conference* is an event that the attendees will remember for a long time, and as Mr. Sandler says, perhaps in ten years he will hear from a student participant that the day sparked a career in neuroscience or a related field.

AHS Science Olympiad Club Gearing Up for Competitive Year

It's still early in the year, but AHS Science Olympiad Club members are already getting prepared to compete in the [MIT Invitational](#) tournament in January. This competition, and the [tournament at Harvard](#) in February, are great opportunities to practice and learn before the State contest in March. [Science Olympiad](#) tournaments, which test students' knowledge and abilities in all science disciplines and engineering, are held all over the country, with the top scoring team from each state going on to Nationals. Club advisor John Macuk, who teaches Physics and Engineering, believes that the competition is a great way for students to challenge themselves and have fun with science at the same time.

Each tournament can have as many as 23 different areas of competition, depending upon the venue and the number of people available to assist. Some examples from last year's state competition include Anatomy & Physiology, Chemistry Lab, Ecology, Fermi Questions, Helicopters, Materials Science, Optics, and Thermodynamics, among many others. Club President Liam Nokes reports that preparation varies for each student depending upon their choice of event, but that it is the most important part of competing. For some events, this means building something that is taken to the tournament and tested. To get ready for an event that involves a written test or lab, the competitor must take a more studious approach to the material. It is common for students to work together in teams of two in order to be best prepared to take part. This year Liam says that he is more focused on biology, so he plans to compete in the Water Quality event about aquatic ecosystems and the Protein Folding event about the monumental CRISPR Cas9 protein. He is also considering an event about designer genes, and he might take the Astronomy test just to mix it up and have a little fun. Teams are generally limited to no more than 15 individuals, and Liam expects that number to take part at MIT.

Volunteers run the Science Olympiad competitions, and everyone is expected to pitch in and help. This year Mr. Macuk will be running the Wrong Stuff airplane event at the State contest. This is one of the events that requires something to be built ahead of time, and it emphasizes home-built solutions as opposed to kits. He supports the AHS team with anything related to Physics or Engineering and calls on additional science teachers to answer questions on other topics. Parent assistance is always welcome, both at competitions and with the Club.

Mr. Macuk says that Liam and Vice President Grace Kam, Treasurer Haneen Abderrazzaq, and Sowmya Yelleswarapu recruited a lot of freshmen to join the returning veterans and he is excited about the upcoming competitions. When asked about the Club and why he enjoys being part of it, Liam had this to say:

“Overall, Science Olympiad is just a great place to be surrounded by people who have a similar fascination about the way the world works, and it is home to a very welcoming community of people who know that every day is a learning experience and that nobody is really an expert. I personally am drawn to Science Olympiad because I enjoy the competition and because I have made many close friends through preparing for team events. It has also reminded me how little I really know about the world around me and given me a structure for always learning more. As for others, I would recommend joining Science Olympiad because in it they will find a community of science lovers who love the process of learning and investigating, and regardless of one's interests or knowledge base there is always a place on the team”.

I want to thank Mr. Macuk for all the work he does to enable our young science enthusiasts to take part in one of the premier science competitions in the country. Please contact him at jmacuk@arlington.k12.ma.us for more information about how you can help support Liam and his teammates.

AHS Trips and Study Abroad Opportunities Help Create Global Citizens

Being able to experience the history, geography and culture of another country is an enriching experience that helps us recognize our responsibilities as citizens of an interconnected world. I am happy to report that AHS is offering several different trips abroad this year, and that our students may apply for scholarships to travel or study abroad during the summer.

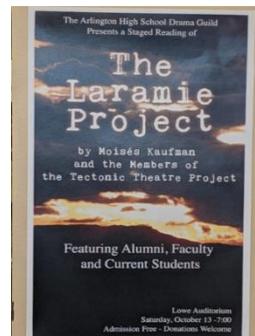
In February, students can visit Central America with Science teacher Jayce McG who is leading an educational STEM tour to Panama. History teacher Scott Matson and the AHS History Department are planning an April vacation trip to Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic focused around the Holocaust. April is also the time that French teacher Veronique Lahey will take students to France, a trip that she coordinates every other year. A summer travel opportunity to Asia is available to those who want to participate in the [Sister City Exchange](#) with Nagaokakyo, Japan. This trip is being coordinated by English teachers Justin Bourassa and Rebecca Walsh Bradley.

The [Council on International Educational Exchange](#) (CIEE) has earmarked \$25,000 in Global Navigator Scholarships for Arlington students who wish to take part in summer travel and learning opportunities. AHS International Travel Coordinator [Mary Villano](#) is the in-house contact for this. Three types of [summer study abroad programs](#) in over 30 destinations are offered by CIEE.

- Language & Culture--language and cultural immersion programs in Spanish, French, Mandarin Chinese, German, Japanese, Italian or Arabic
- Service & Leadership--service projects focusing on community development, children's rights or education in countries that include the Dominican Republic, Ghana or Morocco, among others
- Global Discovery--programs such as *Filmmaking & Documentary*, *Global Entrepreneurship* or *Marine Science* in countries such as Thailand, Costa Rica or South Africa

Each of these travel and study options offer tremendous opportunities for personal growth and will help our young people move toward becoming global citizens. As Mr. McG says, "...it is critical for our students to become more culturally aware, explore new ideas and grow their potential." I am grateful to all the teachers and staff who will be helping our young people travel abroad this year.

Creative Highlights



One-night Reading of "The Laramie Project" Commemorates 20th Anniversary of Shepard's Death

"Hate crimes in the nation's 10 largest cities increased by 12 percent last year, reaching the highest level in more than a decade."—reported by AHS Drama teacher and Director Michael Byrne in *The Laramie Project* program.

On October 12, 1998, the country was shaken by the brutal murder of openly gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard. This horrific act focused our attention on hate crimes and the lack of protections at the state and federal level. It also focused attention on the town of Laramie, Wyoming where the crime took place. In the aftermath of Matthew's death, playwright and director Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project traveled to Laramie, interviewed townspeople and collected a variety of different perspectives. These interviews, along with news reports, courtroom transcripts, and journal entries, were used to create *The Laramie Project*, a play that reveals the levels of hatred and compassion that lie within an average community.

The Arlington High School Drama Guild decided to honor Matthew Shepard with a performance of *The Laramie Project* and to challenge the school community to reflect on how to accept others. On October 11, students viewed a [video](#) created by AHS senior Ben Horsburgh during Advisory, and considered how they can spread love, erase hate, and remind others that they are accepted and have allies.

The one-night only reading of *The Laramie Project* was held on October 13, 20 years and one day after Matthew's death. Over 80 individuals participated. The cast included over 40 current students and 12 members of the AHS faculty and staff. Graduates from the classes of 1998 to 2018 returned, some traveling significant distances to take part.

Drama teacher and director Michael Byrne reports that *The Laramie Project* was an overwhelming piece to work on. The performance was free, but donations were accepted to benefit the Drama Guild and the [Mystic LGBTQ+ Youth Support Network](#). I want to thank everyone who was involved in creating this powerful way to help our school community remember Matthew's death and reflect on what it means to respond to each other with compassion.

Athletic Highlights

Fall Spy Ponder Season Ends with Teams and Athletes Moving on to Post Season Competition

Under the direction of our new Athletic Director Stanley Vieira, the Spy Ponder teams have finished their regular fall season competition with several moving on to post season play. The Girls Volleyball team's season finished strong and the players were set to meet Revere High School in the first game of the MIAA Tournament. The Girls Soccer team's eight wins qualified them for tournament play as well, where they would face Beverly High School in the first game. The Boys Soccer team moved into tournament play after 11 wins and was ready to meet Belmont High School in the first game.

The Boys Cross Country team finished undefeated with a 6-0 record, becoming Middlesex League Liberty Division Champions and Middlesex League Champions for the first time in school history. Their win against Lexington High School was a fall highlight—an accomplishment that has only happened twice in 22 years! The team now competes in the Eastern Divisionals with the possibility of the State Championships after that. The team will also compete in the Nike Northwest Regionals during Thanksgiving break.

The Golf team finished their season with four wins and had a strong showing at the Middlesex League Championship. Two players, Mark DeCoursey and John Gallagher, qualified for the Regional Tournament and both missed making the State Tournament by only one stroke. The Girls Swim team had a very successful season, finishing sixth at the Middlesex League Swim Championship. Several individual swimmers and relay teams have qualified for the sectional and regional contests.

The Girls Cross Country team, a young team headed by first year coach Maria Arevalo, was very competitive and is poised to make big strides in the coming years. Another team that should be a force in the future is Girls Field Hockey, led by Brianne Mansfield. The Football team has been playing in the non-playoff bracket, and Cheerleading worked extremely hard while battling through cold weather this fall.

I salute our hard-working athletes and coaches on their strong fall season.