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News from September 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

As I review the list of incoming faculty, staff and administrators every year, I am reminded of the depth and breadth of expertise that is required to sustain a high-performing school district. This month we welcomed 67 new teachers and specialists --17 to Arlington High School, six to Ottoson Middle School, nine to the Gibbs School, 34 to our elementary schools and one to the Menotomy Preschool. These include teachers of Visual Art, Music, Science, Special Education, English, History, Mathematics, Spanish, English Language Learning, Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten and grades three through five. We have new Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, Nurses, and Mathematics and Literacy Coaches. These individuals range from first year to experienced, and the vast majority hold advanced degrees.

Last February I was pleased to introduce you to Brian Meringer, the new Principal at Ottoson, and in March we welcomed Kate Peretz who has replaced Kristin DeFrancisco as the Hardy Principal. Three other individuals have joined our administrative team over the summer. Rochelle Rubino is the new seventh grade Ottoson Assistant Principal and Christina Ryan is the new Elementary Special Education Coordinator. The district has a new Athletic Director as well. Stanley Vieira, a graduate of Somerville High School, brings experience in both high school and collegiate sports programs to our district. I am pleased to welcome all of the new education professionals who have chosen to become part of our community.

I am always impressed with how quickly our educators get things rolling at the start of a new semester. As I write this, so many things have already taken place. Parent Nights have been held at Gibbs and several other schools, the elementary musicians in our lesson program have picked up their instruments, fall play, Jazz Band and Chamber Orchestra auditions have taken place at OMS, our athletes have come together for Athletic Night, and the Guidance Department has gotten the college admissions process underway with small group senior seminars. These are just a few examples of how our students and teachers hit the ground running and get the new school year off to a strong start.

It is also impressive how quickly our school communities turn their attention to the needs of others and get service projects underway. Peirce has been collecting baby items, toiletries and canned goods for victims of the Lawrence gas explosions. Bishop is responding to the loss of Nora Arvestian, APS Food Service employee and the mother of two district schoolchildren, by establishing a 529 College Fund. The Stratton community came together to offer financial support to school custodian Rick Hackley and his family as he faced a serious medical challenge. Sadly, Mr. Hackley passed away. We extend our deepest sympathy to both families.

I know you will want to learn more about some of the great things underway in this new school year. Please enjoy the articles below.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## Headline View

### Safe & Supportive Schools

#### ***Teacher of the Visually Impaired Helps Students Thrive and Excel***

This summer, a Brackett student won multiple awards at the [Braille Challenge](#), an example of how the right resources and support lead to success for our visually impaired students. [Read more>](#)

#### ***SEL Spotlight: Japanese Researchers Visit APS to Explore Sensitive, Supportive Learning Approaches***

We were proud to host researchers from [Osaka Kyoiku University](#) during their visit to learn what we are doing in the areas of social emotional learning and trauma sensitivity. [Learn more>](#)

#### ***Survey Reveals Most AHS Students Have Never Tried E-cigarettes, Vapes or Juuls***

I am happy to share the positive news that 78% of AHS students responding to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey are getting the message about the dangers of e-cigarettes, vapes and Juuls, and it is important that APS, the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) and parents continue to spread the word about the dangers of these products. [Learn more>](#)

### Department News

#### ***Gibbs Welcomes Sixth Grade Students into New, Larger Community***

On the successful first day, Gibbs students joined in community as they moved from their old elementary groups to their new Advisories and Learning Centers, beginning their sixth-grade education in an environment that supports academic and social emotional learning and transition. [Read more>](#)

#### ***Arlington High School Building Project Approved for Schematic Design Phase***

After almost two years of bi-monthly meetings, public forums, surveys and engagement with community members in various venues, we are ready to create detailed designs for a new high school. [Learn more>](#)

#### ***District Goals Support Academic, Staff, Infrastructure and Engagement Excellence***

I urge you to review the [2018-2019 District Goals](#) and [actions](#) and follow our progress toward providing an educational environment that empowers all students to achieve their maximum potential and become successful global citizens. [Read more>](#)

#### ***SummerFun! Delivers another Season of Enrichment and Engagement***

Over 1,000 students participated in the 135 classes offered in the tenth year of the APS *SummerFun!* program offered through [Arlington Community Education](#), as educators created and taught innovative courses that ranged from crafts to games, computer skills, history day trips, theater skills, outdoor adventures and more. [Read more>](#)

### Grants

#### ***Organizations Work Together to Fund Gibbs Media Wall to Support Learning and Community***

Student activities and projects will be shared with the larger community on a media wall made possible by funds from the [Belmont Savings Bank Foundation](#), [Arlington Education Foundation](#) and Arlington Public Schools, enhancing the educational environment at Gibbs. [Read more>](#)

### Professional Development

#### ***Summer Learning Opportunities Support Teacher Excellence and Continuous Improvement***

Our teachers worked hard to learn skills, embrace new resources, update curricula, and plan for the new year during the summer Professional Development offered at Arlington Public Schools. [Learn more>](#)

## Awards & Distinctions

### ***AHS Students Earn National Merit Scholarship and AP Scholar Distinctions***

Congratulations to the Class of 2018 National Merit Commended Students, Semifinalists, Finalists and Winners in the 2018 [National Merit Scholarship Program](#), and to the young men and women who took Advanced Placement exams last spring and received [AP Scholar Awards](#). Learn more>

### ***U.S. Department of Education Presents Arlington Public Schools with Sustainability Award***

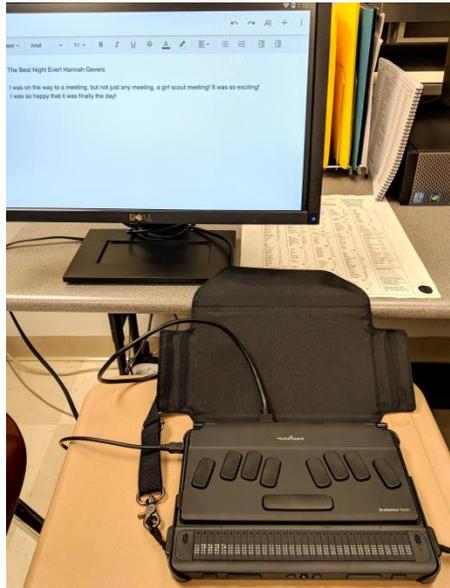
Arlington was one of only six districts across the country to be recognized with the [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools District Sustainability Award](#), honoring our commitment to three areas of 21st century excellence. Read more>

### ***Recognition by Incoming UChicago Freshman Results in Honor for AHS English Teacher***

Thanks to a nominating letter written by an AHS alumnus, English teacher Megan Kisling has received a [University of Chicago Outstanding Educator Award](#). Read more>

**Continue to read the full News from September 2018 Newsletter**

## Safe & Supportive Schools



### ***Teacher of the Visually Impaired Helps Students Thrive and Excel***

This summer, Brackett student Hannah Gevers received some wonderful recognition. Hannah competed in the annual [Braille Challenge](#), an academic competition developed and offered by the [Braille Institute](#). I am proud to announce that Hannah was the first-place winner in the Apprentice age group and was recognized for Excellence in Spelling.

Hannah is one of over a dozen students in APS who has a visual impairment that affects their ability to learn in a classroom set up for sighted learners, making them eligible to receive Special Education services under Massachusetts law. These young people work with our Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Kara Olivere, who identifies the types of adaptations that each one requires in order to achieve success. Since there are many levels of visual impairment, each student is different. For example, some students read standard materials with a hand-held magnifier or CCTV, a device that uses a camera, mount, and viewing screen to magnify near and distance information. Others use iPads to access and enlarge materials digitally. Still others use [Bookshare](#), an online library, and the application [Voice Dream](#) to customize the font, print size and the display colors of digital books. In each case, Ms. Olivere helps

the student master the necessary low vision aids, and works with the general education teachers to enhance their understanding of each child's unique needs and how to best support them.

Students such as Hannah, who are legally blind, need to learn braille in order to achieve maximum literacy and employment. Ms. Olivere works individually with each student, teaching them to read and write in braille. She uses resources such as the [Massachusetts Accessible Instructional Materials Library](#) to obtain braille textbooks, and works with Teaching Assistants who enter classroom materials into a computer for translation into braille and then print them out on a braille embosser. She interacts with the Orientation and Mobility Specialists who come from the [Carroll Center for the Blind](#) to teach the children how to travel safely, confidently and independently. Ms. Olivere also works to remain up-to-date on the advances in technology that enable blind students to complete their class work, writes grants to obtain this technology, masters it and teaches how to use the equipment. This leads her to consult with the district Assistive Technology Specialist Amanda Lewitis, who also works on augmentative and alternative communication.

The picture at the top of this article is an example of the braille technology that Ms. Olivere's blind students are learning and using. This is the [BrailleNote™ Touch](#), an Android tablet with full braille support, connectivity and software that can access third party applications. Students may use a smart keyboard cover that works well for learning Braille typing or creating long documents, or type on the touch screen where Virtual Keys find the user's fingers. With the BrailleNote Touch, Hannah and the other children can use braille to enter their class work into Google Docs that can then be read by their teachers.

Ms. Olivere is always on the lookout for innovative ways to help our visually impaired students learn. Last fall she was awarded a grant from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) to create a Story Box Library. Story Boxes use real-life items to illustrate objects or concepts that are important to a story. These items bring meaning to students with visual impairments in the same way pictures enhance a student's understanding and enjoyment of a story. Since visually impaired children are unable to learn through observation, they miss the information about words, their function, and how the world works that a sighted child is exposed to from infancy. Story Boxes provide directed, hands-on time with everyday items to learn basic concepts that come easily to sighted children. Each box also includes the book in large print and braille, providing Braille Exposure.

Ms. Olivere stresses that children who are visually impaired might need to do things a little differently, but in most cases, they can do the same things sighted children can do. With the proper supports, they are able to thrive within a public school setting, and they can meet high expectations. Literacy and mastery in braille, although sometimes unwieldy and expensive, is critical to academic success and to achieving meaningful employment.

Communication and learning styles are significantly affected by vision loss. As a TVI, Ms. Olivere has a multifaceted role that crosses many disciplines. She does direct teaching, consults with students, parents and school staff, prepares, acquires and adapts materials, conducts assessments and performs an assortment of administrative and record-keeping tasks. She is currently working toward her Orientation and Mobility certification, and will soon be able to offer these additional services to her students. I want to thank Ms. Olivere for all the wonderful work she does with our visually impaired students, and for the resources and education she provides to our general and Special Education teachers. I also want to congratulate Hannah on her achievements at the Braille Challenge. I am grateful that we are able to provide the services that are necessary for our visually impaired children to succeed.



### ***SEL Spotlight: Japanese Researchers Visit APS to Explore Sensitive, Supportive Learning Approaches***

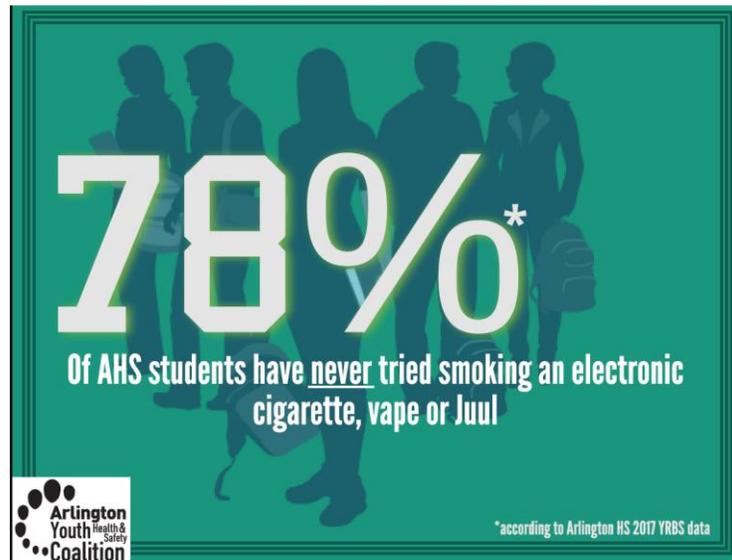
It is always gratifying when other professionals reach out to our district to share their own experiences and learn from what Arlington is doing. This fall we were visited by researchers from [Osaka Kyoiku University](#), which has nine affiliated schools. One of these schools experienced a devastating incident in 2001. Eight children were fatally stabbed, and 13 students and two teachers were seriously injured by an intruder with a knife. Many students were witnesses and experienced psychological trauma. The National Mental Support Center for School Crisis headed the response, and this experience led our visitors to explore the idea of Trauma Sensitive Schools and what could be done every day to support the social emotional health of students. They have attended conferences, gone to trainings and visited school districts and universities across the United States to learn and gather information.

We have been focusing on social emotional learning and trauma sensitive practices to support the personal safety and emotional health of our students for several years. Let me give you just a few examples. [Responsive Classroom](#) has been implemented in our elementary schools and Gibbs. This approach gives teachers the skills to build caring and engaged communities and foster a nurturing environment that gives students a sense of belonging and significance. [Botvin LifeSkills® Training](#) for middle school students helps build personal self-management, general social and drug resistance skills. We have offered mindfulness for educators and students. Special activities such as [Start with Hello Week](#) at Ottoson help students learn the skills needed to reach out and include others, helping to combat social isolation and foster connection.

Many members of our staff have attended [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) training that provides the tools necessary to recognize mental health risk factors and warning signs and react proactively. We have also offered graduate level courses from the [Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity](#) to our teachers, teaching assistants, administrators, related service providers and support staff, and we are among the first districts in the state to have a cohort of individuals that have taken all four of the courses that are offered. We know that traumatic experiences disrupt neurodevelopment, leaving an imprint that can make it difficult to process and retain information or recognize non-verbal cues. These Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are widespread, and each child comes into the classroom with different life experiences, some of which may affect their ability to learn. The Lesley courses are designed to help create a trauma sensitive environment, one where all children feel safe and supported. It is through this collaboration with Lesley University that the researchers from Japan came to learn of Arlington Public Schools and our work in this area.

Our Japanese visitors spent two days in conversation with our teachers, specialists and special educators exploring the many ways our district works to create safe and supportive environments. They spent time at Dallin and Stratton, hearing from the principals and visiting classrooms to see our teachers in action. They also engaged in a round table discussion that included several of the individuals who have completed all four of the Lesley Trauma Sensitivity courses. I want to thank Special Education Director Alison Elmer and Director for Counseling and Social Emotional Learning Sara Burd for coordinating this

visit, and our principals, teachers and specialists who generously offered their time and knowledge to our visitors. I am proud that our district is recognized as a place where a lot of good things are taking place in the areas of trauma sensitivity and social emotional learning.



### ***Survey Reveals Most AHS Students Have Never Tried E-cigarettes, Vapes or Juuls***

Last year I was happy to share some of the very positive results from the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) 2016 Parent Survey in my monthly newsletters. This survey informed us about parent awareness, attitudes and understanding of youth substance abuse. The AYHSC will be conducting another survey in October, and when the results are available, I will report key findings every month.

In the meantime, AYHSC has asked me to share some of the positive findings from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Many of you know that Arlington administers a YRBS to our middle and high school students periodically. Most US states administer this type of survey as part of a cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control.

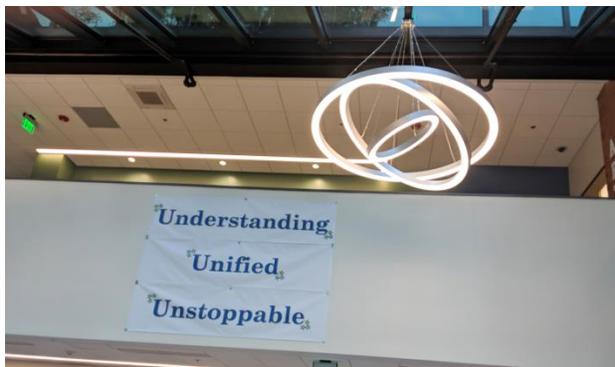
The survey was designed to understand youth behavior in the six areas most often associated with illness and death. Research has confirmed that students offer truthful answers to a voluntary survey of this type, and over the years, we have seen that YRBS data is consistent with other survey data and with national health outcomes. The information provided through the YRBS is extremely valuable in designing programs and support systems to keep our students safe. In April 2017, 906 students took the test online at Arlington High School.

This month I am happy to report that 78% of the AHS students who responded have *never* tried smoking an electronic cigarette, vape or Juul. Given the presence of addictive and dangerous substances in the aerosols produced by e-cigarettes and vape pens, this is very good news. Arlington Public Schools and the AYHSC continue to work hard to spread the word that this is risky behavior that may have serious consequences. Your children are receiving information about the dangers of vaping as part of our tobacco education programming. The AHS chapter of [The 84](#), one of the most active in Massachusetts, mounted an [anti-vaping poster campaign](#) last spring that was designed to raise awareness of the dangers of e-cigarettes and vapes.

The YRBS result suggests that the majority of our students are hearing the message. It is important for all of us to work together to help keep our young people safe and I urge all parents to have conversations with your children on this important issue. You will find more information about the use of these products

among teens and the dangers at the US Surgeon General's website [Know the Risks](#) and in an American Cancer Society [article on JUULs](#).

## **Department News**



### ***Gibbs Welcomes Sixth Grade Students into New, Larger Community***

The "official" Ribbon Cutting is scheduled for Sunday, October 21, but the beautiful new Gibbs sixth-grade school is already going strong! As they entered the gym on the first day, the students were asked to sit in their elementary school groups, marking the last time they would identify in this manner. Principal Kristin DeFrancisco led a review of the core values at each of their previous schools. She stressed that these had prepared them for the new values they will now embrace as a sixth grade community:

- Be *Understanding* of each other and what makes us each unique
- Be *Unified* in the efforts to support one another's abilities to grow and learn
- Be *Unstoppable* when reaching for personal and community goals

After every Gibbs teacher had introduced themselves by department, the students dispersed into their Advisory groups that have about 14 students each group. Here the discussion focused on what to expect in sixth grade. After lunch, the students formed into their five Learning Communities (called Clusters at OMS), and their Gibbs education got underway.

A lot of groundwork had already been done to prepare students, parents and teachers for a successful first day. Principal DeFrancisco visited all seven elementary schools in the spring to give fifth grade students a preview of what the next year would be like. At the end of summer, many young people took advantage of the opportunity to tour the new building in groups of about 30 students. This early tour prepared them to guide their parents around the building at a subsequent Open House. A two-day teacher orientation was held that examined the first days of school and introduced a common vocabulary so that everyone would be speaking consistently in a unified voice. Additionally, all parents received email communications from Principal DeFrancisco before school began, helping them understand what to expect and suggesting questions to ask their students about their first day.

The sixth grade Gibbs School has been designed to support the transition of the young people coming from seven elementary schools into a single, larger community. The first six or seven weeks provided a hands-on approach to navigating sixth grade. Ms. DeFrancisco stresses that the faculty and staff want the students to take ownership of the building and feel comfortable. She is grateful to have been involved in the planning and renovation of the structure, allowing her to ensure that the building truly meets the needs of this age group. There are plenty of breakout areas and spaces to learn. The staff is a mix of veteran and new teachers, with most of the teachers having taught at Ottoson. Everyone is ready to work together to create a new culture, one that values student feedback and life-long learning.

Gibbs is also structured to prepare the students for their eventual transition to the Ottoson. Unlike OMS, there will be no auditions to take part in after school activities such as Chorus or Drama. The Drama Club will use a workshop model to introduce members to theater, bringing in experts to talk about the different

roles required in a production. Working with someone from the Arlington Children's Theater, the group will determine what to present as an end-of-year project. During the year, students will learn how to audition so that they will be ready to do so when they arrive at Ottoson.

Project Based Learning is an important component of the Gibbs experience. During Project Block, students will learn how to define a question, plan research to answer it, evaluate the credibility of sources, make changes along the way, collaborate, resolve disagreements, and complete and present the work. They will experience project work led by a teacher, then in partnership with another student, and then in small groups. One example is a Music project that explores how rock and roll was used to deliver messages, such as how to overcome adversity. Students will develop a play list that illustrates this, designing a cover and including commentary on why and how they chose the songs. A FACS project will explore how stressors can interfere with performance, and then the participants will design a health fair that meets the needs of sixth grade students.

Advisory is a key element to build community and foster social emotional learning at Gibbs. Throughout the year, all students will explore topics such as curriculum, social skills, sharing, communications, self-advocacy, bullying, Gibbs core values, and cultural awareness and valuing differences. They will meet in these small groups four days out of the six-day cycle.

Ms. DeFrancisco is grateful for all of the support she and the teachers are receiving from sixth grade families, and she reports that communication between teachers and parents is already strong. Feedback is positive, and all the elements are in place to support the district vision of students as lifelong learners and global citizens.



### ***Arlington High School Building Project Approved for Schematic Design Phase***

It is very exciting to be at the point in the AHS Building Project when we will create detailed designs for a new school that will meet our educational vision. The work to create a 21st century school began in April 2015, with our Submission of Interest to the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#) (MSBA) that indicated our desire to collaborate with them to improve our high school. The AHS Building Committee began meeting in late 2016, and after almost two years of bi-monthly meetings, public forums, surveys and engagement with community members in various venues, our Preferred Schematic for an entirely new building was accepted by the MSBA.

Our building site presents us with numerous challenges. The MSBA recommends a minimum of 25 acres, and our location is slightly over 22. There are contaminants that have been capped, but require testing twice a year. We need a facility that will accommodate 1,755 students, a state-mandated preschool, the LABBB collaborative program that provides holistic special education services to young people from the five partnership towns (Lexington, Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Bedford), and the Arlington Community Education program. We are exploring the possibility of moving several town/district offices that are currently housed in AHS to other locations in town.

During the process that brought us to this point, we explored a variety of alternatives, including renovation only, partial renovation/rebuild and total rebuild. The voting process that resulted in the decision to completely rebuild AHS was public and thoughtful. It was clear that partial renovation would be more costly, take more time, leave the students without an auditorium for two years and then without a gym for two more years, and require many modular classrooms in a constrained site. In his remarks at the community forum held on September 24, AHS Building Committee Chair Jeff Thielman summed up the decision this way:

"We chose Alternative 3A because it meets the educational plan, avoids a potentially costly and much higher-risk renovation of buildings constructed in 1914 and 1938, responds to community desires for a new facility, retains some of the green, and minimizes student disruption and modular costs. Alternative 3A is less expensive than the design/renovation options, and it provides the best path to a net-zero facility, one in which the energy used by the building is roughly equal to the amount of renewable energy created by the site. As you will learn in the second part of tonight's forum, Alternative 3A provides a more accessible use of green space for students and teachers to gather, learn, and build community."

We now turn to designing of the look and feel of the building and campus, and we look forward to hearing from the community regarding green space, exterior facade and interior features. Our architects are exploring many alternatives, including possibilities for reusing physical elements of the current building and honoring the current look. The next Community Forum will be held in Town Hall on November 27 from 7:00-9:00 pm. Another forum(s) will be held at Town Hall in January/February on a date to be determined. The AHS Building Committee meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in the School Committee room on the sixth floor of the high school. These meetings are open to the public and those attending have the opportunity to comment or to ask a question. I urge everyone to attend these forums and meetings, and to review all the material on the [Arlington High School Building Project website](#), to be informed about the project. In particular, I hope you will review Chair Thielman's September 24 [presentation](#) and read the [full text of his remarks](#). Together we will move forward toward a detailed design for a flexible and sustainable high school that meets our educational vision and hopes for our students.

### ***District Goals Support Academic, Staff, Infrastructure and Engagement Excellence***

The [2018-2019 District Goals](#) that were approved by the School Committee in June support our vision of students as valued learners and global citizens taught by talented professionals who are skilled in cultural competency and ways to promote and encourage social emotional growth. The goals also support our commitment to provide the required infrastructure in a cost-effective manner and to engage with stakeholders in a collaborative and transparent way. I urge you to review the [presentation](#) I made to the School Committee on September 27 and learn about the specific actions that support each Goal Objective.

I look forward to sharing newsletter articles that describe how we are working toward these goals and objectives. Examples of this can be found in this issue. This section includes an article about moving into the Schematic Design phase of the AHS Building Project, work that supports Goal Objectives 3.2 (completing the Schematic Design plans) and 4.1 (providing all stakeholders opportunities for input into the design). The article about summer Professional Development illustrates curriculum work that supports Goal Objective 1.1 (curricula designed in response to the district's vision of student as learner and is aligned to state standards) and our commitment to professional learning that is Goal Objective 2.1. I hope you will look for articles such as these throughout the next year.

### ***SummerFun! Delivers another Season of Enrichment and Engagement***

Now in its tenth year, the Arlington Public Schools *SummerFun!* program provided educational and recreational opportunities throughout the summer for children entering first through ninth grades. Experienced teachers, most from APS, design and lead their own classes in this self-sustaining program offered by [Arlington Community Education](#). Our district teaching staff includes talented cooks, skilled crafters, outdoor enthusiasts, masters of improvisation, creators of stop-motion video, singers, and

dancers. *SummerFun!* provides the opportunity for them to share these areas of interest with students. The children who take part are able to learn a skill without pressure to be perfect. The result is excited instructors that provide a schedule of innovative and fun classes.

This year's offerings included:

- **STEM Experiments**--Hardy teacher Brandon Jackson led students in daily design and construction projects and challenges.
- **Wacky Science**--Peirce teacher Crystal Power guided her young students in many hands-on experiments.
- **Full STEAM Ahead!**--The Wall sisters, a Dallin School duo, led a full week of science, technology, engineering, art and math activities for grades 1-3.
- **Adventure Day Trippers**--Ottoson teacher Chris Mahoney guided students as they hiked Mt. Monadnock, kayaked in Rockport, zip-lined, hit a water park, and body surfed at the beach. Mr. Mahoney also ran a week of **History Day Trippers** that included a trip to the WWII Museum in Natick for a tour of one of the largest private collections of WWII artifacts in the world.
- **Maine Adventure Trips**--OMS teacher Tom Zierk and Jeff Bruno of AHS each led weeklong outdoor trips to Maine, where groups of 12 students hiked, camped and canoed in the beautiful Maine wilderness.
- **Summer Stock Musical Theater**--OMS teachers Cori Smith, Jenna Fernandes and Randi Flynn were thrilled with the opportunity to launch a summer musical theater program. After two immersive weeks, students put on a full junior production of *The Little Mermaid*.

Whether they were coding, painting, making clay sculptures, writing graphic novels, playing chess, cooking, or learning about birds and their calls, the participants were engaged and excited to make new friends. Over 1,000 students took advantage of the 135 classes offered this summer.

This year, *SummerFun!* enhanced its Teen Counselor Program with more training sessions for teen counselors and additional paid positions. Thirty high school students were integral to all aspects of the program, performing functions that included assisting teachers in the classroom, co-leading field trips, and running recess and lunch periods.

I want to thank APS teachers Christine Capaldo and Christine Brayfield for serving as the on-site *SummerFun!* Co-Directors and providing the leadership of this great program. Thank you also to Arlington Community Education Director Jen Rothenberg and Youth & Teen Programs Manager, Andrea Loeb who, along with their hard-working staff, are currently completing registration for the fall session of *KidZone*, *TeenZone*, High School/College Prep and adult education classes. I would like to close with some words from one of the satisfied parents

"My children were excited to share what they learned each day. The classes did a great job of pushing my kids out of their comfort zones and teaching them it's ok to try new things . . . and keep trying."

## **Grants**

### ***Organizations Work Together to Fund Gibbs Media Wall to Support Learning and Community***

As you walk into the Gibbs School main lobby, your eyes quickly go to the four, 55-inch screens displaying videos of students. This media wall is a wonderful example of how regional businesses are able to partner with the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) and APS to enhance the learning experiences for our children. The [Belmont Savings Bank Foundation](#) has been an AEF Business Partner for the past five years. This year the financial organization expressed interest in developing a more strategic relationship that would enable them to support a specific Arlington Public Schools initiative. Working together, the Foundation, AEF and APS determined that the media wall would be the perfect project for the Foundation to support.

Each organization provided the finances required to make the media wall a reality. The Belmont Savings Bank Foundation contributed \$10,000 and the district supplied \$12,000. The Arlington Education Foundation is committing an additional \$10,000 for teacher professional development that supports Project Based Learning. This initiative is described in the article ***Gibbs Welcomes Sixth Grade Students into New, Larger Community*** in the **Department News** section of this newsletter. The media wall is a way to showcase students involved in the various phases of their Project Based Learning projects to the larger community.

The media wall will bring school work to life in a way that sixth grade students have not experienced before. Seeing their work on screen, shared with others, will be motivating and engaging. This will help the young people understand the value of their efforts. In Project Based Learning, students are asked to answer questions or solve problems, and communicate these results to others. The media wall is a new way for them to do this, helping them learn and refine essential, real-life communications skills.

The four touch screens can operate as one large screen or independently. This makes it possible to display and explore four different projects simultaneously, creating personalized experiences for users. Computer skills will be enhanced as the students learn how to program and manipulate the touch screen software for presentations to the public. Additionally, the ability to present school activities in a public space will enhance the Gibbs culture and the school's ties to the community.

I want to thank the Belmont Savings Bank Foundation and AEF for partnering with us in this wonderful investment in the educational environment at Gibbs.

### **Professional Development**

#### ***Summer Learning Opportunities Support Teacher Excellence and Continuous Improvement***

Many of our teachers spend the summer increasing their content and professional knowledge, studying to become better educators or coming together in ways that will enable them to hit the ground running on the first day of school. Some are working on advanced degrees, while others take part in programs or institutes that give them the knowledge to improve their teaching.

The Professional Development opportunities offered at Arlington Public Schools are critical to our desire to continually improve and offer our young people a rich, standards-based education. This is the time we introduce new resources, such as [Science](#) that is being phased in at the middle school level. There is a lot of work done on curriculum during the summer. Some examples from this year include the work done by seventh grade history, ninth grade Physical Science, and tenth grade Biology teachers to revise their curricula to align with the new Massachusetts Frameworks. AHS Visual Arts teachers worked on the curriculum for two new half-year courses--*Ceramic Pottery and Sculpture* and *Sculpture*. World Language teachers took the first steps to revise their curricula at several levels of Spanish, French 3, and Mandarin 3.

This summer, new and existing staff were able to attend [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) training, and the training offered in Instructional Technology included *Creating with Chromebooks*, [PowerTeacher Pro Gradebook](#), and [Noodle Tools for Digital Research](#). Teachers were able to work together on planning, the ELL team continued to update and add to the Model Curriculum Units required by the state, and the Performing Arts teachers worked on developing a standards-based course outline template.

Our administrators began their study of Zaretta Hammond's book [Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain](#), over the summer. Their discussions will be ongoing, continuing the work begun in 2017 to improve cultural competence and nurture an environment that fosters equity and access for all, regardless of cultural, ethnic and racial background.

These few examples give you a taste of the range of topics covered and the types of important work that was done during this summer. I am grateful that our teachers take advantage of these opportunities. We are fortunate to be able to offer the types of instruction that supports continuous personal and

instructional improvement. Our commitment to high quality Professional Development is described in Goal Two of our [2018-2019 District Goals](#).

### **Awards & Distinctions**

#### ***AHS Students Earn National Merit Scholarship and AP Scholar Distinctions***

I am proud to share the news that 17 young men and women of the Class of 2018 were named National Merit Commended Students in the 2018 [National Merit Scholarship Program](#). This distinction places them in the top 3% of the approximately 1.6 million U.S. high school students who participated in the 2017 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). Within this group, four were named Semifinalists and then Finalists. Only about 15,000 students achieve this latter honor. Two of the Finalists won scholarships. Members of the Class of 2019 also took the 2017 PSAT/NMSQT exam, and these results will be announced shortly.

Last spring, 401 students took Advanced Placement exams, resulting in 906 reported scores and the following [AP Scholar Awards](#):

- 67 AP Scholars, each receiving scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams
- 38 AP Scholars with Honor, each receiving an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams
- 62 AP Scholars with Distinction, each averaging a score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams
- 7 National AP Scholars, each receiving an average score of at least 4 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams
- 3 AP International Diplomas, each receiving scores of 3 or higher on five or more AP exams in three or more subject areas

These are wonderful achievements and I congratulate each of these students. I also want to extend my thanks their teachers whose hard work supports them in their quest for academic excellence.



#### ***U.S. Department of Education Presents Arlington Public Schools with Sustainability Award***

I was honored to represent Arlington in Washington, D.C. this month and accept the [U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools District Sustainability Award](#). We were one of only six districts across the country to receive this award. We were eligible for consideration after being designated a [2018 Massachusetts Green Ribbon School](#) district this spring.

This honor recognizes three areas of excellence: reduction of greenhouse gases, efforts to address the nutrition, fitness, mindfulness, and overall health of students and staff, and the incorporation of curricula that addresses environmental topics at all school levels. We are very proud of our work in recycling and composting, improving heating and lighting efficiencies, and water conservation. Programs such as Fit Girls, mindfulness and Open Circle, the presence of a diabetic care coordinator, the provision of Heart

Rate Monitors for ninth grade physical education students, and the collaboration with Arlington Eats for daily snacks are among the many ways the district works to keep our students and staff healthy and safe. Environmental topics are addressed in science classes and AHS electives. Rachel Oliveri, our School Sustainability Coordinator, is a tremendous resource for our school Green Teams as they pursue environmental learning and action.

This award is also a reflection of the commitment to sustainability that is shared by our students, staff and families. I want to thank everyone whose concern for our environment and willingness to act upon that concern has helped us to earn this recognition. As you can see from the picture above, I was proud to be able to share the award with Ms. Oliveri, Arlington's Energy and Project Manager Ken Pruitt, and the community at the [Paint the Town Green](#) event on September 23. Please see our [press release](#) for more information.

### ***Recognition by Incoming UChicago Freshman Results in Honor for AHS English Teacher***

Every year, the University of Chicago offers incoming students the opportunity to reflect on the teachers that have touched their lives up to this point. The young people are asked to "...nominate an educator who has influenced them, challenged them or helped them along the path toward intellectual growth." UChicago reports that more than a third of the freshman class takes advantage of this chance to honor someone who has left a lasting impression on their lives.

I am happy to report that a former high school student wrote a nominating letter for AHS English teacher Megan Kisling, and that she has been recognized with a [University of Chicago Outstanding Educator Award](#). I am so pleased that one of our alumni took the time to remember and recognize Ms. Kisling in this very meaningful way. Congratulations Ms. Kisling and thank you for the work you do with your students every day.