

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Dear Parents/Guardians and Community Members,

This is the week when we pause every year to reflect on all the blessings in our lives. I know that I speak for every administrator, teacher, and staff member in the Arlington Public Schools about the profound gratitude we feel for the support of the community. The passage of the override in June allowed the District to maintain the programming and class sizes that we had last year, while also adding an additional elementary teacher and reinstating a second class of K-3 physical education per week. We were also able to hire teaching assistants to support large elementary class sizes. While we continue to have some large class sizes at both the elementary and secondary levels, no classes exceed thirty students at the elementary level.

Thanks to the funding from the override, elective offerings at the secondary level have been restored or expanded. ACE, which had only been offered in the sixth grade last year, was expanded to the seventh and eighth grades this year. In the high school, additional sections of Spanish and History were added to address enrollment increases. A part time World Language Director was hired to oversee our language program. With additional teacher support, we were also able to expand the Senior Capstone Program. We also hired an additional Traffic Supervisor to address safety concerns with the Thompson relocation. Additionally, athletic fees at the high school were reduced.

The start of this school year has been smooth and very positive. Mary Villano, Arlington High School Interim Principal, was proud to announce that AHS is one of fewer than 400 public school districts in the nation being honored by the College Board again this year with a place on the Second Annual AP[®] Honor Roll for simultaneously increasing access to Advanced Placement coursework while maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP exams. Achieving both of these goals is the ideal scenario for a district's Advanced Placement program, because it indicates that the district is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are likely to benefit most from AP coursework.

The District is supporting a number of initiatives that we believe will improve teaching and learning and the social-emotional climate in our schools. Some examples include:

- The Lucy Calkins writing program has expanded to fourth and fifth grades. The program was implemented last year in Grade 3.
- The *Tools of the Mind* Kindergarten program is being piloted in three elementary schools. This program focuses on students learning executive functioning skills, including self-regulation.
- A pilot math support program has been implemented at the middle school. In this pilot, some students who need extra support have three additional blocks with their math teacher every class cycle.

- The Mandarin Chinese language program at the high school has been expanded due to the addition of a teacher from China through the *Teachers of Critical Languages Program*, sponsored through the U.S. Department of State.
- With support from the Arlington Education Foundation, the Principal, teachers and staff at Ottoson Middle School (OMS) have begun a multi-year School Improvement Grant process, beginning with a planning grant this year.
- Engineering units have been added to the first and second grade science curriculum (Gr. 1 – weather; Gr. 2 – bridges).
- Common assessments are used in all departments and at all levels to ensure consistency of curriculum and to improve student learning.

2011 MCAS Highlights:

The results of the 2011 MCAS again demonstrate that the Arlington Public Schools are a high-achieving and generally high-growth school district. Dr. Raemer's MCAS summary PowerPoint can be viewed on our website, as well as the NCLB report cards for each school. Included in the PowerPoint are the 2011-2012 initiatives implemented for English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics and science. Some of the highlights from last year's results include:

- Arlington students consistently score well above the state average on all measures of achievement. **The vast majority of district grade level scores are in the top 20% in the state.**
- ELA highlights (these results reflect the quality and effectiveness of our reading program):
 - Stratton ranked 11th in the state in Grade 3
 - Dallin ranked 5th in the state in Grade 5
 - Brackett ranked 14th in the state in Grade 5
 - OMS ranked 17th in the state in Grade 7
 - Number of students scoring "Advanced" has grown significantly over the last five years at all tested grade levels
- Mathematics highlights:
 - AHS – 72% of students scored "Advanced"
 - AHS – notable gains in Advanced and Proficient (A&P) scores
 - Brackett ranked in the top 5% in Grade 4
 - Stratton ranked in the top 5% in Grade 5
- Science highlights:
 - Strong elementary performance in Grade 5
 - Brackett ranked 6th in state
 - Bishop ranked 12th in state
 - Hardy ranked in the top 4% in state
 - Dallin ranked in the top 5% in state
 - Peirce ranked in the top 7% in state
 - Stratton ranked in the top 9% in state
 - OMS – ranked in the top 7% in state in Grade 8
 - AHS – Grade 10 improvement in A&P and Advanced scores
- All AHS students passed MCAS in 2011

- The achievement gap in ELA and mathematics for high needs students (special education, English language learners, minority, low-income) significantly decreases as students move from grade to grade, most notably from middle school through high school.
- The District made Adequate Yearly Progress in ELA and mathematics for the aggregate and all subgroups in 2011.

Thompson and Stratton Construction:

The Thompson Elementary project continues to remain on schedule. The old school is being prepared for demolition that will begin around December 15. Many members of the community have asked to have brick souvenirs. A schedule of the dates and times when the gates will be opened for community members to retrieve bricks will be posted before demolition begins. Project updates are posted on the town website. There also is a link to that site from the school district website.

Stratton Elementary School's classroom wing was upgraded with new windows, heating system and electrical/IT wiring this summer. Jackie Daley, Lead Teacher, commented on the effect of the upgrade, "The renovations which occurred during this past summer at Stratton School improved our physical environment immensely. The addition of the updated windows has given the classrooms and hallways a welcoming, brighter, more open feeling. The new heating system allows for controlled heat in each individual room which contributes to a more comfortable working environment for faculty and children. The classrooms have even been described as "more modern"! The health office has also seen a marked improvement with its larger space, accessible bathroom and a comfortable area for those needing a little privacy or medical attention."

Wishing for all of you the joy of family and friends this Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools