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September 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

It is a pleasure to welcome our students, teachers and staff back for another school year, and to welcome the newcomers to our community. The incoming members of our faculty, staff and administrative teams span disciplines and grade levels. Our district is devoted to educating the whole child, and every year I am impressed by the variety of expertise among the groups of professionals who are joining us. This month we welcome 44 new teachers and specialists to address our need for elementary classroom teachers, middle and high school mathematics, language, English, social sciences and computer science teachers, social workers, math and literacy coaches and guidance counselors. Thirty individuals are joining us as Teaching Assistants, substitutes, and Math and Literacy tutors. Additionally, 21 aspiring teachers are present as interns, most for the fall semester, with a few remaining throughout the year. These individuals come from Lesley, BU, Brandeis, Simmons, Wheelock, and Boston College and their contributions will be felt in all our schools.

Additionally, we are fortunate to welcome nine new members of the administrative team. Only three of these individuals are filling new positions in the district, and these roles have been created in response to the increasing enrollment Arlington Public Schools has been experiencing. Paul McKnight has moved from teaching English at AHS to become the new Dean of Collumb House. Two individuals are joining us as half-time elementary assistant principals. Peggy Tsatsoulis, the new Assistant Principal at Hardy, previously served the district as a team chair in psychology for two schools. Samantha Karustis, Assistant Principal at Dallin, is a former teacher in the Seattle Public Schools who comes to us after completing her principal internship in the Weston Public Schools.

The other six administrators are filling positions that opened at the end of last year, or have been vacant for several years. These individuals include Guidance and Social Emotional Learning Director Sara Fernandes Burd, World Language Director Dawn Carney, K-12 Director of Performing Arts William Pappazisis, Elementary Special Education Coordinator Kristin Burke, Chief Financial Officer John Danizio and Assistant Superintendent Roderick MacNeal. Additionally, Dr. Eileen Woods continues to serve as Interim Principal at Ottoson. I thank all of these talented professionals for agreeing to accept these important roles in our district.

Even though it is early in the school year, our students, teachers and families are already thinking about the needs of others. When one of the first grade families at Peirce decided to collect and donate items such as toiletries, disposable diapers and items of underwear to victims of Hurricane Harvey, they spread the word to see if others would like to contribute. As you can see from the following picture, there was a warm and generous response, and the boxes were shipped by the middle of this month. Throughout the year, I look forward to sharing more examples of how our school community recognizes ways to be of service to others.



As you read the newsletter below, I think you will agree that we enter the new school year full of promise and excitement. You will find many articles that describe our efforts to provide all the elements needed to give every child the opportunity to achieve academic, emotional, social and vocational success in the global, ever-changing world. I am glad to be able to share how well our high school students performed on an international benchmarking test and highlight the numbers of students who achieved AP Scholar designation. We updated our technology, added a new middle school life skills curriculum and have introduced a dashboard that makes fiscal data available to the community. I hope you will enjoy learning about this.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Safe & Supportive Schools

AYHSC Campaign Shares Results from Town Wide Parent Survey on Substance Abuse

Results from the spring 2016 survey on parent norms around youth alcohol and drug use show that the majority of respondents are encouraging healthy decision-making and setting boundaries, and this information will be shared monthly in a new [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) campaign. [Learn more>](#)

Middlesex League Schools Join Forces on High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey

This spring's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, funded by Lahey Health and administered to students at 12 high schools, presents an individual and regional look at behavior in the six areas most often associated with youth illness and death. [Read more>](#)

Department News

District Goals Support Success through Academics, Staff Excellence, Infrastructure and Stakeholder Engagement

I urge you to review the [2017-2018 District Goals](#) and follow our progress toward providing the safe and supportive educational environment that empowers all students to achieve their maximum potential and become successful global citizens. [Read more>](#)

Renovated Stratton Opens, Other Building Projects Move Forward

As the renovation work on Stratton ends, attention turns to the ongoing infrastructure improvements at Thompson, Hardy, Gibbs and Arlington High School, where additions and renovations/rebuilds will enable the district to house our increasing enrollment. [Learn more>](#)

Technology Upgrades, Acquisitions and Professional Development Support Educational Vision

This summer we doubled our Internet bandwidth, acquired 1,400 devices and offered technical professional development to our teachers as we moved toward our vision of "...a school community of life

long learners, capable of defining problems, retrieving information with judgment, and solving problems creatively and flexibly." Read more>

District Dashboard Shares Financial and Achievement Data, Enables Comparisons

Arlington Public Schools has partnered with [ClearGov](#), a leading provider of transparency and benchmarking software, to make fiscal data available to the community on a new, infographic-based fiscal [dashboard](#) that makes it easy to compare financial information, student achievement and more with similar school districts. Learn more>

Pilot Test of Online Registration for Returning Students Underway Now

This month we are asking for your help in testing an online application that we hope will make returning student registration easier in the future. Learn more>

SummerFun! Delivers another Season of Enrichment and Engagement

Over 1,000 students participated in the 126 classes offered in the seventh year of [Arlington Community Education's SummerFun!](#) as educators created and taught innovative courses that ranged from crafts to games, computer skills, history day trips, theater skills and an 11-day outdoor adventure. Read more>

Professional Development

District Leaders Explore Social Identity, Bias, and Justice in Summer Workshops

The desire to improve the cultural competence in our district led Administrative team members to come together in a 3-day, immersive training session to explore issues, challenges and opportunities related to social identity, social bias and social justice. Learn more>

Summer Opportunities Support Teacher Learning and Leadership

This summer many of our teachers learned new skills, deepened their understanding of curriculum, and got ready to hit the ground running on the first day of school by taking part in the Professional Development offered through Arlington Public Schools, Learn more>

Grants

Recent Grant Supports Ottoson Implementation of New Substance Use Prevention Curriculum

Implementation of the research-based [Botvin LifeSkills® Training](#) curriculum, designed to build personal self-management, general social and drug resistance skills, has begun in sixth grade FACS classes, thanks to a grant from the [Symmes Medical Use Nonprofit Corporation](#). Read more>

Awards & Distinctions

AHS Students Earn AP Scholar Distinctions

Thirty-seven per cent of students from the classes of 2017 and 2018 who took Advanced Placement exams achieved special recognition as [AP Scholars](#). Read more>

AHS Students Exhibit Exceptional Performance on "OECD Test for Schools"

The random cross-section of 69 AHS sophomore students who voluntarily took the [OECD Test for Schools](#) last March performed exceptionally well in Reading, Mathematics and Science as compared to local, national and global schools. Learn more>

"Boston Globe" Article Focuses on AHS Girls Field Hockey Life Lessons, Resilience and Strength

The role of sports in bringing people together during times of difficulty and pain is the focus of a touching [article](#) about the AHS girls field hockey team and their Co-coach Melissa Dlugolecki. Learn more>

Hockey Coach among "Influencers" in "New England Hockey Journal"

Congratulations to boys hockey coach John Messuri who is among the ["Prep/High School Coaches 2017 Influencers"](#) highlighted in this month's *New England Hockey Journal*. Learn more>

Athletic Highlights

Positive Messages and Strong Performances Kick-off the Fall Season

Athletic Director Melissa Dlugolecki used Athletic Night to honor past achievements, introduce our partnership with the [Positive Coaching Alliance](#), and emphasize the life lessons that our athletes learn through their participation in the growing AHS program that values leadership, service, health and community. Learn more>

Continue to read the full September 2017 Newsletter

Safe & Supportive Schools



AYHSC Campaign Shares Results from Town Wide Parent Survey on Substance Abuse

In spring 2016, the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) conducted a town wide survey to understand parent awareness, attitudes and understanding of youth substance abuse. There were 587 responses from parents of school-age children across Arlington, with the majority coming from Ottoson and AHS families.

I am happy to report that the results indicate that the vast majority of parents who responded are encouraging their children to make healthy decisions and are setting clear boundaries and expectations for behavior around alcohol and drugs. AYHSC will be highlighting these results monthly in a campaign to share the positive news, and encourage parents to keep up the good work as well as make improvements in certain areas. The graphic shown above is the September statement.

This high level of understanding and positive action among Arlington parents around substance abuse is heartening, and I thank AYHSC for conducting this survey. Arlington Public Schools is committed to working along with AYHSC in providing education and support to help our young people make healthy choices and stay safe. In the [Grants](#) section of this newsletter, you will find an article about the new substance use prevention curriculum being implemented at Ottoson. I will include the latest parent survey statement in my newsletters throughout the year. I encourage you to look for these and to visit <http://www.drugfree.org> for more information.

Middlesex League Schools Join Forces on High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Many of you know that Arlington has given a Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to our middle and high school students periodically. Most states in the US administer this type of survey as part of a cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control. This year, the Middlesex League, which consists of Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Lexington, Melrose, Stoneham, Reading, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester and Woburn, chose to collaborate on a high school YRBS. This enabled us to receive an individual report as well as understand how our district compares to the region. The effort was supported by a grant from Lahey Health, and was managed and analyzed by [John Snow, Inc.](#)

The survey is 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.

This April, 906 students took the YRBS online at Arlington High School. Our overall results are quite consistent with those from the other schools in the Middlesex League. All communities are very low in terms of their percentage of illegal drug use. Arlington High School shows lower rates of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana usage than League, state and national averages. The following gives you a taste of what we have learned from the YRBS.

- *Personal Safety & Violence*

Thirteen percent or fewer respondents report behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence, such as riding in a car with someone who has been drinking or engaging in a physical fight. Ten percent report they have been bullied electronically, and 4% report ever having experienced sexual dating violence.

- *Social & Emotional Health*

School and other demands are having an effect on our young people, as evidenced by the 48% of respondents reporting feeling that they are under too much stress "most of the time or always." This shows an increase over 41% reported in 2016 and 36% reported in 2013.

- *Suicide*

Fourteen percent of students report having seriously considered attempting suicide within the past 12 months, with 3% reporting having made an attempt to end their life.

- *Substance Use*

We are seeing a rate of decline in tobacco and alcohol usage since 2013, with 89% of respondents reporting to have never tried a cigarette and 72% reporting not having had a drink of alcohol within the last 30 days. The vast majority of respondents (96%), are not misusing prescription drugs, and have never used heroin (99%) or cocaine (97%). Marijuana use, (80% not recently using) appears to be consistent with previous years.

- *Sexuality*

The percentage of students reporting having never experienced sexual intercourse or sexual touching against their will is 93%, which has improved since 2013 and 2016. However, sexting (62% of respondents report not having engaged in sexting) remains a concern.

- *Physical Fitness & Nutrition*

Over 50% of respondents take part in a school-sponsored athletic team, but squeezing breakfast into a busy schedule can be a challenge, as 84% report not have eaten this meal at least one day in the previous seven.

These results demonstrate that the many efforts going on in our schools to educate our students on the dangers of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drug use are positively affecting behavior. This work will continue and you can read about the new curriculum we are introducing at Ottoson in the [Grants](#) section of this newsletter. We continue to explore ways to educate and support our students' personal safety and social and emotional health, including special programs on dating violence and suicide, Wellness Days and in-school support groups. The addition of Guidance and Social Emotional Learning Director Sara Fernandes

Burd to our team will help us build on these efforts. The district is fortunate to be part of the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) in this work.

A summary of results along with the full YRBS report will soon be posted on the Arlington Public Schools website. For more information, please contact AYHSC Director Ivy Schmalzried at ILaPlante@town.arlington.ma.us or APS Director of Wellness Cindy Bouvier at cbouvier@arlington.k12.ma.us.

Department News

District Goals Support Success through Academics, Staff Excellence, Infrastructure and Stakeholder Engagement

The Arlington Public Schools mission is to educate our students holistically so that every child has the opportunity to achieve academic, emotional, social and vocational success in an ever-changing world. The [2017-2018 District Goals](#) 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.

Throughout the year, I will be sharing many examples of how we are working toward these goals, and there are several in this newsletter. The [Professional Development](#) section features an article about the 18 hours of cultural proficiency training attended by all our administrators this summer, and describes some of the educational and planning sessions attended by our teachers. An article in [Grants](#) describes the research-validated substance use prevention program that is being implemented throughout Ottoson thanks to an award from the [Symmes Medical Use Nonprofit Corporation](#). Within this section, you can read an update on our building projects and learn about the new dashboard that makes it easy for the community to access fiscal and academic data.

I am grateful to the School Committee and the citizens and administrators of Arlington for their commitment to assist the district in creating a safe and supportive environment that addresses today's complex requirements for the long-term success of every child. I urge you to review the District Goals and learn more about the projects that support them.

Renovated Stratton Opens, Other Building Projects Move Forward

I am delighted to report that the Stratton faculty and staff welcomed students into the newly renovated building this month. For many years, Stratton served the community by housing displaced students when the other elementary schools were being renovated or rebuilt. Efforts to understand the mechanical, electrical and infrastructure needs at Stratton, as well as the positive and negative aspects of the building, began three years ago. With the full support of the town, the renovation work to bring Stratton to parity with the other elementary schools began in June 2016 and continued throughout the school year. During this time, the rich Stratton educational environment continued as usual in a modular building right beside the old school. I want to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this project.

As one building project ends, others continue. Construction to add six classrooms to the Thompson Elementary School is underway. The plans to add six classrooms at Hardy are progressing, and we are hopeful that construction can begin in March 2018. Adding to the Hardy presents problems that we have not encountered at our other schools, since there is very little unused space around the building. Principal Kristin DeFrancisco is seeking parent input on how to approach outdoor playground space, as well as other aspects of this project. She is looking to the Hardy School Council to serve in an advisory capacity as the project moves forward.

I invite the community to keep up-to-date on the progress of the Gibbs renovation by following the monthly construction notices that you can access from the [Gibbs Renovation](#) page on the APS website.

This page also includes the pertinent project documents that you are able to review. I encourage you to read the August 2017 notice to understand what is currently underway to prepare the Gibbs to house our sixth grade students in September 2018.

The Massachusetts School building Authority (MSBA) has approved the choice of [Skanska SA Building, Inc.](#) as the Owner's Project Manager for the renovation/rebuild of Arlington High School. This completes an important milestone in the process. After an architect is selected, we will be in the position to collect input from the community. An additional 18-24 months will be required to complete the Feasibility Study and Schematic Design. Our goal is to begin renovation/rebuild construction during the 2019-2020 school year, with completion between 2022 and 2024. The School Committee has approved the launch of a new website, [ahsbuilding.org](#), which contains both background and up-to-date information on the project. The site also includes a [Connect With Us](#) section and we welcome interested individuals to sign up to receive regular bulletin updates and submit questions. When the time comes, we will announce the days and times for community input forums on this website, as well as through newsletters and other sources.

These infrastructure projects are part of our efforts to satisfy Goal Three of the [2017-2018 District Goals](#) to "...provide students and staff the resources, materials and infrastructure required for optimum teaching and learning in a safe and healthy environment." We appreciate the tremendous support of the Arlington Community for these efforts to house the growing number of students in our district. I hope you will follow our progress and participate in opportunities to provide input.

Technology Upgrades, Acquisitions and Professional Development Support Educational Vision

"In order to successfully educate students in the Information Age to become members of our networked global society, we envision a school community of life long learners, in which students are capable of defining problems, retrieving information with judgment, and solving problems creatively and flexibly. The learning process has progressed from the need to master topics and recall information to learning that is self directed and collaborative, and technology is key to this evolution."

As the above quote taken from the Technology Department page of the APS website indicates, equitable access to technology across our schools is no longer optional. Technology is integral to learning, and this summer we continued to upgrade our capacity to provide our educators and young people the infrastructure and tools they require. After doubling our bandwidth by upgrading both of the Internet circuits that service our nine schools, our capacity is comparable to a medium to large enterprise. We now have 2 GB total to and from the Internet.

We acquired 1,400 devices this summer, which have been allocated across all the schools in the district. Distribution at the elementary level includes the following for use by staff:

<i>School</i>	<i>Chromebooks</i>	<i>iPads</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Chromebooks</i>	<i>iPads</i>
Bishop	30	30	Dallin	28	28
Hardy	22	22	Peirce	26	26

Six elementary schools received Chromebooks that are distributed across carts for use by students in grades four and five.

<i>School(s)</i>	<i>Chromebooks</i>	<i>Carts</i>
Bishop, Brackett, Dallin	90	3
Hardy	75	3
Peirce	50	2
Thompson	100	4

Stratton received a combination of iPads for Kindergarten through third grade students and Chromebooks for grades four and five. We now have two elementary schools, Thompson and Stratton, with 1-1 device capability. The remaining devices were allocated between Ottoson and Arlington High School.

I am also pleased to report that we continue to provide professional education opportunities for our teachers so that they will be prepared to integrate these devices into their classrooms. Thirty individuals attended the Educational Technology Professional Development Day this August. The two sessions covered the following topics:

Session 1	Session 2
Using Google Apps	Formative Assessments
Chromebook for Teacher and Students: It's More Than Google Apps	Using IO Education for Teacher Evaluations
Google Classroom	PowerTeacher Pro (OMS, AHS)

In addition, we are launching the APS Digital Learning website for our teachers and staff. This site will be updated throughout the year with links to resources, documents and videos. Susan Bisson, our Instructional Technology Specialist, reports that a Digital learning newsletter will be published each month as well. The September issue includes how to get technical support and links to free applications and resources.

I am grateful to the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) and the Town of Arlington for all of the support they have provided over the last few years as we integrate technology into the educational vision for our students.



District Dashboard Shares Financial and Achievement Data, Enables Comparisons

Arlington Public Schools is committed to sharing district performance information with the community, and that is why we have partnered with [ClearGov](#) to launch a new infographic-based fiscal dashboard. When you open our [ClearGov Insights™ platform](#), you will be able to see how Arlington compares to similar school districts in terms of finances, student demographics, staffing, test performance, state aid and more. The information is sourced from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education publically available data. The new dashboard is one of our efforts under District "Goal Four, Operations, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement", and satisfies Goal 4-2, "Expand the dashboard of district metrics to provide the community with a quick overview of key metrics of the Arlington Public Schools."

ClearGov is a leading provider of transparency and benchmarking software, and the information is presented in a highly visible format, making it easy to understand. I thank the School Committee for supporting this effort to increase the level of information we are able to share with Arlington residents and taxpayers. The District Dashboard is easy to access by going to the [APS website](#) and clicking on the graphic you see above, located on the left side of the home page. I urge you to take a few minutes and review the dashboard. I think you will be impressed with the level of information that now available.

Pilot Test of Online Registration for Returning Students Underway Now

This fall, our Data Specialists are piloting a new application designed to simplify and streamline returning student data collection. This application allows parents or guardians to go online through the Parent Portal and update Addresses, Phone Numbers, Emails and Emergency contacts, Military information, and to sign off on Permissions, Handbooks, Military Exclusion and the Technology Acceptable Use Policy. The data will then be uploaded into PowerSchool, saving the manual entry step in the current paper-to-computer process. Having parents go directly to the computer rather than fill out forms that can be lost or misplaced is easier for our families and our staff. This new process should save both time and money, and protect the integrity of the data being collected.

Since we are in the pilot phase, we are asking parents and guardians of returning students to complete both the paper forms and enter the data online. Our hope is that we will find the online method superior, and that it will be used instead of paper in the future. As of September 30, 1,450 individuals have responded to our requests to enter their children's information online, and we hope others will follow before the October 15 deadline. After this date, please be on the lookout for additional information about how to make future changes. Our goal is to make it possible for families to make online changes throughout the year.

It is critical that all families update the important information that enables us to keep them informed and keep their children safe. Additionally, I want you to know that I really enjoy highlighting student achievements and publishing the pictures of our young people in my newsletter. I hope you will consider updating the media permissions to allow me to do this when you go online to complete the returning student information. We will never use names or pictures without parental consent.

If you are the parent or guardian of a returning student and you no longer have your Parent Portal Access information, please contact your school secretary. We appreciate your understanding with the duplication of effort this fall, and we hope to be able to offer only one method for updating returning student information in the future.



SummerFun! Delivers another Season of Enrichment and Engagement

"We love that there is still a place for imagination and creativity for middle-schoolers," comments one parent.

This is just one example of the enthusiastic responses we get to [Arlington Community Education's SummerFun!](#) Now in its seventh year, this self-sustaining Arlington Public Schools program provides educational and recreational opportunities throughout the summer for children entering first through ninth grades. Creativity abounds since professional educators, most from APS, design and lead their own classes. The result is excited instructors that provide a schedule of innovative and fun classes. This year's offerings included:

- **Insider's Guide to Ottoson**--This workshop, led by Ottoson staff, introduced rising sixth graders to the middle school experience through team-building, tours, projects and games
- **Mad Science**--Peirce teacher Crystal Power guided her young students in many hands-on experiments
- **History Day Trippers**--With OMS teacher Chris Mahoney as their guide, students explored Minuteman National Park and the [International Museum of WWII](#) in Natick for a tour of one of the largest private collections of WWII artifacts in the world
- **Mr. Zierk's Amazing Maine Adventure**--This 11-day journey included a canoe trip, sea kayaking, camping and hiking
- **Musical Theater Workshop**--OMS teachers Cori Smith, Jenna Fernandes and Randi Flynn introduced students to costume and set design, music, choreography, lines, and blocking. The week ended with a show for parents and friends.

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 1000 students took advantage of the 126 classes offered this summer.

I want to thank on-site *SummerFun!* Director and OMS History and Social Sciences teacher Alison Sancinito for 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, have been conducting registration for the fall session of KidZone, TeenZone, RoLa Languages and adult education classes. I would like to close with some words from another satisfied parent:

"The classes were self-confidence building, providing an opportunity to work on a skill without pressure to be perfect."



Professional Development

District Leaders Explore Social Identity, Bias, and Justice in Summer Workshops

Cultural Competence: The will and ability to form authentic and effective relationships (make connections) across our differences. --Gary Howard, REACH Center for Multicultural Education

In order to ensure the success of all students, it is necessary to provide a safe and supportive learning environment where everyone feels valued and understood. Cultural competence, which includes knowledge, attitudes and skills that support caring for people equally, regardless of perceived differences, is an important element of such an environment. Our school community must foster equity and access for all, regardless of cultural, ethnic and racial background.

This is why our administrative leaders took part in an immersive, 3-day training session this summer to explore the issues, challenges and opportunities related to social identity, social bias and social justice. The experience was designed to foster a sense of common ground in terms of fundamental understandings and common purpose around improving the cultural proficiency in our district.

We were led by Dr. Carlos Hoyt Jr., an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Wheelock College and author of [The Arc of a Bad Idea: Understanding and Transcending Race](#). Through exercises and small group discussions, we strove to understand our personal identities, and how this thinking factors into interpersonal dynamics. Each of us explored our hidden biases using Internal Association Tests (IATs) offered by Harvard's [Project Implicit®](#). We used our new knowledge to create personal goals and ideas on how to transfer our learnings to others in the district. All attendees left the training energized to continue this important work.

It is clear that providing optimal educational experiences for all our students requires us to be attentive to issues related to social identity, bias and justice. Those of you who wish to learn more about your personal hidden biases can do so by using the Project Implicit link above and choosing to take one or more of the available IAT's. I will keep you updated throughout the year as we develop district-wide goals and plans to strengthen the cultural competence of our leaders, teachers and staff.

Summer Opportunities Support Teacher Learning and Leadership

As always, many of our teachers spent time over the summer increasing their base knowledge, studying to become better educators and getting ready to hit the ground running on the first day of school. Some were working on advanced degrees, while others took part in programs or institutes that deepened their subject matter expertise.

Arlington Public Schools offered a wide variety of Professional Development opportunities over the summer. These ranged from sessions that centered on curriculum revisions like that for fifth grade Social Studies, literacy planning days, a four-day course on the [Investigations](#) mathematics curriculum, Level I and II training on the [Wilson Reading System®](#) and how to get the most out of Google Classroom.

I am grateful that our teachers take advantage of these opportunities, and that so many come forward to take leadership positions in different areas. 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 [2017-2018 District Goals](#).

Grants

Recent Grant Supports Ottoson Implementation of New Substance Use Prevention Curriculum

Education in our district includes promoting academic excellence, empowering students to achieve their maximum potential and preparing them to participate in an ever-changing world. Teaching the skills required to enable our students to make informed, healthy decisions is an important part of this mission. Research shows that implementing an evidence-based substance use prevention curriculum in middle school can give young people the know-how they need to avoid the early onset of substance abuse disorder. I am happy to tell you that this work has been in practice at Ottoson, and will expand thanks to a \$19,000 grant from the [Symmes Medical Use Nonprofit Corporation](#).

District Family and Consumer Science (FACS) lead teacher Tricia Bellahrossi is currently managing the coordination of teacher training and implementation of the [Botvin LifeSkills® Training](#) (LST) curriculum. Building personal self-management, general social and drug resistance skills are the three objectives of the program. Activities are designed to help young people resist peer pressures and cope with anxiety as well as increase their knowledge around the consequences associated with alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or prescription drug abuse.

Since the grant was awarded in August, Ms. Bellahrossi, sixth grade FACS teachers and [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) Director, Ivy Schmalzried, had to move quickly in order to introduce the curriculum this fall. Teachers were trained on September 13 and 14, and delivery began on September 23. The curriculum will be phased in--seventh grade added in 2018, eighth in 2019--so that

today's sixth grade students will have had three years of this important program by the time they leave Ottoson.

The LST implementation will replace lessons previously covered with the Great Body Shop curriculum in sixth grade FACS classes, and transitions the department to cover substance use prevention education along with the Physical Education department for seventh and eighth grade students. FACS teachers are trained and licensed health educators who focus on teaching a broad range of life skills including media literacy, nutrition, healthy habits, self-esteem, healthy relationships and financial, social and emotional health. Integrating LST into FACS enables us to raise the level of substance use prevention and offer a stronger three-year curriculum.

The results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and AYHSC Parent Norm Survey, both discussed in the [Safe & Supportive Schools](#) section, illustrate the importance of providing effective substance use prevention training. Misconceptions around the harm of binge drinking or marijuana still exist among students and parents. Additionally, as true for many Massachusetts communities, Arlington has been affected by the opioid epidemic. We have experienced rapid increases in opioid overdoses since 2013, and Arlington Police Department data from 2016 reports that thirteen town residents have died of a heroin overdose in the past four years.

We are grateful to be partnering with AYHSC in the implementation of the F.W. Symmes grant, and to have the full support of the Arlington Police Department in our efforts to address substance use prevention. The LST curriculum presents content, skills, and strategies that are crucial in assisting students to deal with life's many challenges. We believe that this program will enable our young people to set goals and make decisions that lead to a healthier and higher quality of life now and in the future.

Awards & Distinctions

AHS Students Earn AP Scholar Distinctions

I am proud to share the news that 148 AHS students from the classes of 2017 and 2018 have achieved the status of [AP Scholars](#) this year. The breakdown of awards is as follows:

- 55 AP Scholars, each receiving scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams
- 27 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
- 63 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
- 2 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
- 1 AP International Diploma, achieved by one of our international students who scored a 3 or higher on 5 or more AP exams

Arlington High School had 396 students taking Advanced Placement exams last year, with 882 scores reported. Congratulations to each of the AP Scholar students, and to their teachers, for the hard work that leads to these achievements.

AHS Students Exhibit Exceptional Performance on "OECD Test for Schools"

Last March, 69 randomly selected AHS sophomore students took the [OECD Test for Schools](#), a global evaluation developed by the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD). This test is based upon the Programme for International Students Assessment, or PISA, exam, and our participation enables us to measure our students' performance in the skills that are valued in the global economy: higher-order skills in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. Unlike other examinations, the *OECD Test for Schools* delivers school-level information as opposed to individual student scores. This makes it possible to compare our school with others in the state, the nation and the world. In addition to the two-hour subject test, participants complete a 30-minute questionnaire that collects data about the teaching and learning environment. The results, therefore, provide useful information for benchmarking

and school improvement. Our voluntary participation places APS in a consortium of school districts domestically and abroad that has access to resources, professional development and conferences through educational organizations focused on innovation, best practices and high-quality instruction.

I am pleased to tell you that our students performed exceptionally well in Reading, Mathematics and Science as compared to local, national and global schools. Results are reported along six levels of performance. For example, in Reading, Levels 4, 5, and 6 are equivalent to Honors or Advanced Placement level, while Levels 2 and 3 are equivalent to Proficient in MCAS. Out of the 16 schools in Massachusetts that took the Reading exam in 2017, AHS students placed third, and we had the highest percentage of students scoring at Levels 4, 5 and 6. We also significantly exceeded the scores achieved by Canadian and Singaporean students, two global benchmarks of high achievement. Like other Massachusetts schools, our performance was well above the US national average.

Our students exhibited similar or better performance in Mathematics and Science. Test scores in Mathematics exceeded all schools in Massachusetts, with the highest percentage of students at Levels 4, 5, and 6. Our scores placed us fourth in the state in Science, but more of our students achieved Level 6 than any others. As in Reading, our students outperformed Singapore and Canada, as well as the US national average, in both subjects.

The results from the questions that provide insight on the teaching and learning environment were equally positive, with answers reporting a climate that is significantly above the national average. One very interesting finding is that our young people report that most are deep and highly restricted readers, as opposed to wide readers. This suggests that their academic requirements coupled with their activity levels don't leave much time for pleasure reading.

We believe that the strong results exhibited by our students in the OECD test can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the strength of the elementary and middle school programs and the importance of district-wide K-12 alignment. We work hard to identify and target students who need additional assistance, place significant focus on school climate and culture and have highly dedicated and professional teachers and staff at all levels that receive the support necessary to allow them to focus on content.

The students who took part in the OECD test participated voluntarily and had no particular incentive to perform well. They were a cross-section of AHS, coming from different socio-economic and academic performance levels. It is very affirming to see the hard work that our administrators, teachers, staff and students do every day reflected in the results of this test. We will be studying and discussing all the findings as we strive to continually improve our academic, social and emotional environment in support of all our students. I want to thank Principal Matthew Janger and Collumb House Dean Paul McKnight for leading the OECD effort at Arlington High School. To see some of the results that I have talked about here, please view the [slides](#) they presented to the School Committee and APS Administrators.

"Boston Globe" Article Focuses on AHS Girls Field Hockey Life Lessons, Resilience and Strength

I encourage you to take a few minutes and read the wonderful [article](#) in *The Boston Globe* that reviews the growth of our young field hockey athletes and their Co-coach Melissa Dlugolecki over the last two years. Many of you know that the team lost its captain, Catherine Malatesta, to cancer in August 2015. Today's seniors were rising sophomores at the time. The article explores how the team experienced support and comfort through their sport, both among themselves and from their opponents.

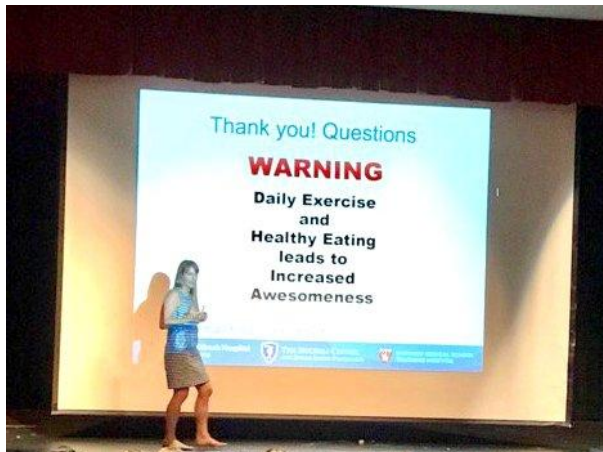
What you may not know, is that Ms. Dlugolecki, lost her infant daughter, Leyden, in June 2014. Ms. Dlugolecki played field hockey in college, and last year she decided to add coaching to her role as AHS Athletic Director. In the article, she explains how this has helped her deal with the grief of losing her child.

Both Ms. Dlugolecki and several of the field hockey team members are quoted in this touching article that illustrates how sports can bring people together during times of pain. I am grateful to *The Boston Globe* for sharing their stories.

Hockey Coach among "Influencers" in "New England Hockey Journal"

Congratulations to boys hockey coach John Messuri on his inclusion in this month's issue of the *New England Hockey Journal*. Mr. Messuri is included among the ["Prep/High School Coaches 2017 Influencers"](#), where he is cited for his leadership of the team that captured Arlington High School's first [Super 8 title](#) last season. Arlington defeated Central Catholic in overtime to end the game at 2-1. This is a well-deserved accolade for this talented coach who joined his team in representing Arlington with dedication and pride last winter.

Athletic Highlights



Positive Messages and Strong Performances Kick-off the Fall Season

The growth of the Athletic Program at Arlington High School continues, with Athletic Director Melissa Dlugolecki and her coaches (which total 36 for the full year) welcoming almost 500 participants this fall. These dedicated athletes will take part in 277 regular events this season and the teams are off to a great start! As of September 26, the collective record was 23 wins, 10 losses and 3 ties. It will be so exciting to follow the progress of our fall athletes and I encourage you to check the [Athletic News Feed](#) for updates and great pictures. Over the course of the year, there will be at least 800 sports events!

Athletic Night, held on September 6, was a terrific kick-off and a chance for everyone who participates in the program to come together. During the evening, Ms Dlugolecki welcomed the attendees and introduced the coaches and staff. The championship banner recognitions for last year's achievements were an early highlight. Banners will soon be added to the Toz Gym that recognize the Division 2 North Sectional Championship won by girls soccer, the elite Super 8 state championship won by boys hockey in the TD Garden, and the State Championships in the one and two mile races and the National title in the 5K event won by Ryan Oosting, who was a sophomore last year.

During her remarks, Ms. Dlugolecki focused on the central mission of our Athletic program, which is to provide opportunities for student athletes to cultivate skills that will serve them in varying capacities throughout their lives. It is important to build competitive teams, but it is the life lessons that are imparted through sports competition that are carried beyond the halls of AHS. These include time management, leadership skills, accountability, how to defer gratification, flexibility, how to handle adversity, the skill of being a good teammate, and the ability to make full commitments. Ms. Dlugolecki is proud that the athletic programming at AHS offers a way to develop stronger individuals who understand how to maintain health, have fun, build relationships and unite our community.

Before the attendees dispersed to attend one of four breakout sessions, they heard from Joe Terrasi, a presenter from the [Positive Coaching Alliance](#). This year we are partnering with this national group of

professional, Olympic and collegiate coaches and athletes who are dedicated to creating positive sports experiences that develop "...better athletes, better people through resources for youth and high school sports coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes." I am happy to tell you that you may view the main Athletic Night presentations and see the banner ceremony in the [video](#) created by [ACMi](#).

Throughout the year, there will be many opportunities for our athletes to learn more about staying healthy while improving performance. An example of this is the [presentation](#) offered by Dr. Laura Moretti of Boston Children's Hospital this month. In her remarks, Dr. Moretti stressed the importance of proactive nourishment to improve performance and support better sleep habits.

Community service is an important part of our Athletic program, and I will be reporting on many of the activities our athletes take part in over the course of the year. You may have met members of our football team scooping slush at their Town Day tent, representatives from girls soccer hosting at the cupcake-decorating table or some of the other athletes supporting a variety of AHS groups that day. I also want to let you know that the annual 5K race normally held in October has been moved to spring. This fun event supports the All Sports Boosters, who are seeking to improve the indoor and outdoor storage options for our teams and supplement or replace items in the fitness room and on the training cart. You will hear more about this after the winter holidays.