

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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News from January 2019

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

I am happy to report that the new classrooms at Hardy are now occupied! Principal Kate Peretz says that teachers and custodians worked hard to make the transition go smoothly, and that the six rooms are beautiful and bright. The new wing holds the music room, a fifth grade class, and all four third grade classes. Other work that has been completed includes the removal of an old stage from the cafeteria to make room for tables and additional student seating and the new Lake Street playground. After everyone has had a chance to get settled in, the community will be invited to see the new spaces. Planning is currently underway for the Chandler Street playground renovation and the use of the vacated areas. We are grateful for the strong community support that is enabling the district to make the building changes required to accommodate our growing enrollment.

I am also happy to tell you that we are reaching the end of the Schematic Design phase in the Arlington High School Building Project. The AHS Building Committee has chosen a design concept and approximate project budget of \$291M to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority this month. The Committee is grateful for the collaborative process that has brought us to this stage. Please see ***Arlington High School Building Project Nears End of Schematic Design Phase*** in the **Department News** section of this newsletter, directly following the **Headline View**, for more information.

There is still time to complete the annual Town Survey. You have until March 1, 2019, to submit your input using this [link](#). This is an important way for Arlington residents to share their opinions on a variety of issues. Results help with goal setting and evaluation of Town programs. The survey takes about 29 minutes to complete.

Service projects are off to a good start in the new year. Bishop families supported the Arlington Food Pantry this month with non-perishable items, monetary donations, and gift cards. A wonderful example of an ongoing project that provides valuable learning and support to nonprofits is the Stratton School Store. Every Friday from 2:30 to 2:50 pm, shoppers can purchase small items that include erasers, pencils, and novelty items. Most selections cost \$1 or less. The fifth grade employees, who have developed a business plan and researched what to sell, do all the set-up and clean up and take turns rotating as cashiers, sales people and tally takers. All profits go to [Boston Children's Hospital](#) and the [MSPA Angell animal shelters](#).

Every month I am amazed by the number of wonderful stories I can share about what is happening in our schools. I hope you enjoy reading them.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Headline View

Department News

Arlington High School Building Project Nears End of Schematic Design Phase

In February, the [Arlington High School Building Committee](#) will submit a [design concept](#) and approximate [budget](#) of \$291M to the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#), and with a favorable vote from their Board of Directors and the subsequent approval of a debt exclusion, construction on the new high school can begin as early as July 2020. [Learn more>](#)

Kindergarten Registration Begins for 2019-2020 School Year

Whether you want to register your rising Kindergarten student online or visit the Central Registration Office at Arlington High School, you will find everything you need to understand and complete the process on the APS [School Registration webpage](#). [Read more>](#)

Active Green Teams Raise Awareness, Complete Projects, Support Trash Reduction

Whether they are recycling plastic film, assisting with lunchroom composting, learning about wastewater and storm drainage, educating their communities, understanding energy production and saving, or stratifying Butterfly weed seeds, the members of our school Green Teams are making a difference throughout the district. [Learn more>](#)

Safe & Supportive Schools

Peirce Students Understand the 4Cs through Interactive and Funny ImprovBoston Performance

Student and teacher participation added to the fun as [ImprovBoston](#) led the fourth and fifth grade audience through *Lessons of Improv: The 4Cs (Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical Thinking)*, an engaging social emotional program that took place this month. [Read more>](#)

2017 Survey Indicates Majority of AHS Students Not Using Vaping Products Regularly

I am happy to share the positive news that 92% of AHS students responding to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey report not having used vaping products in the last 30 days. [Learn more>](#)

Experts at Parent Forums Share Knowledge and Resources to Help Us Keep Children Safe

Offered free to the community, [Parent Forums](#) use panel discussions, movies, workshops and speakers to provide insight on topics ranging from talking to young children about gender diversity to mental health awareness, the impact of the digital age on teens, the dangers of vaping, and much more. [Read more>](#)

Awards & Distinctions

APS Sixth Grade Social Studies Thematic Curriculum Shared at Primary Source Workshop

The thematic curriculum shared at a [Primary Source](#) workshop this month was the result of honest, reflective, and critical conversations among our sixth grade educators about how to increase engagement, support student inquiry, promote collaboration, integrate civics, and provide choices that allow for stronger development of critical thinking, research skills, and verbal reasoning. [Read more>](#)

Academics & Enrichment

Young Writers Connect with the Community by Sharing Stories from Narrative Writing Unit

By placing their stories in different locations around town for us to read, our first and second grade writers gave us the opportunity to appreciate their work, understand how they are learning to express themselves, and discover how they think about their experiences. [Learn more>](#)

Students and Teachers from Tianjin, China Visit Stratton Fifth Grade Classrooms

The six young people and two teachers from the English school in Tianjin had ample time to observe instruction, interact with our students, notice the differences between Chinese and American classrooms, and practice their English during a two-day visit to Stratton. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Internship Program Takes Students Outside School Walls for Real World Experience

Whether they intern at the State House, Arlington High School, a bank, a non-profit, a town office, a media company, or another location, the participants in the AHS Internship Program contribute to their host organizations and learn valuable skills in communication, time management, and workplace professionalism that they will take with them after graduation. [Read more>](#)

Online Courses Broaden Curriculum and Enable AHS Students to Follow Their Passions

Online courses such as *Introduction to Forensic Science, American Sign Language, Russian, and Holocaust Studies* are a great way for independent, active learners to reach beyond what is offered in the Program of Studies and enrich their education. [Learn more>](#)

Social Studies Department Aims to Improve Educational Benefit of Research Papers

After examining their own opinions on the goals of research papers and reviewing the literature on this issue, members of our Social Studies Department have embarked on an effort to understand how to make the research paper assignment more meaningful to students, and one that will develop skills necessary for successful college and professional work. [Read more>](#)

Creative Highlights

Four Instrumental and Two Choral Groups Perform at First Gibbs Winter Concert

The audience was treated to a joyful concert when the six musical ensembles (collectively over half the Gibbs student body), took the stage for their first concert together. [Learn more>](#)

Artworks Demonstrate Elements of the Visual Art Program in OMS Second Quarter Art Show

At least one artwork completed by every Ottoson student who took art during the second quarter was on display in a beautiful show that exemplified the personalized learning, cross-discipline, and social emotional aspects of the program. [Read more>](#)

Opposite Ideas Come Together in Display of Large Puppets at AHS

Created by AHS students working in teams of three, the colorful large puppet on display in Old Hall each represent two opposite ideas embodied in one sculpture. [Learn more>](#)

AHS Performers Honor Shakespeare through Scenes, Music, Sonnets, and Monologues

A beautiful collaboration between vocalists and actors created a unique Twelfth Night celebration that was different from anything previously presented by the Performing Arts Department. [Read more>](#)

Portraits Investigating Personal Identities on Display at AHS

The student artists who created the empowered self-portraits on display in the glass case in the hallway near the AHS Lowe Auditorium were challenged to look beyond their external appearance and investigate their personal identities through different lenses. [Learn more>](#)

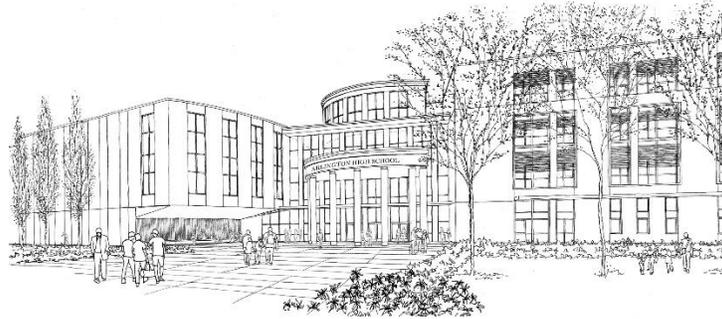
Athletics Highlights

New Football Coach Announced, Gymnastics Holds Clinic, and Runners Compete in Large Meets

This month we are welcoming Rob DiLoreto as the new football coach, the AHS Gymnastics Team held a clinic for young people aged 5-14, and our indoor track teams took part in major events held at Roxbury Community College. [Read more>](#)

Continue to read the full News from October 2017 Newsletter

Department News



Arlington High School Building Project Nears End of Schematic Design Phase

It is very exciting to be in the next stage of the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#) (MSBA) process toward rebuilding Arlington High School. As I reported in November, the AHS Building Committee chose a design concept after analyzing a town-wide survey returned by 1,442 respondents and reviewing all input received online and at community forums. Significant work was undertaken to refine this concept, one that incorporates a traditional exterior look and feel, improves community access, and preserves a majority of the green space in the front. Please click [here](#) to learn more about the design concept.

The AHS Building Committee has voted to submit an approximate project budget of \$291M and the Schematic Design to the MSBA this month. This number is reduced from the preliminary estimate of \$308M. I invite you to read [Arriving at the final project budget](#) on the Arlington High School Building Project website to understand how the Committee arrived at this number.

The next step in the MSBA process is a vote to approve the Schematic Design and Project Budget by the MSBA Board of Directors at their meeting in mid-April. If this vote is favorable, we will need to secure local funding for the project through a debt exclusion (a temporary increase in taxes to pay for the debt required to build the school) and a positive vote of Town Meeting to appropriate the funds for the new school. The town-wide debt exclusion vote is planned for June 11. If this vote is successful and Town Meeting approves the appropriation, construction could begin as early as July 2020 and the first sections of the building will open to students in 2022. Please see the [press release](#) for more details.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the work that has brought us to this stage in the process. The need for a new high school has been apparent for many years. The current outdated building is deteriorating, too small to handle our growing enrollment, and inadequate to meet the educational requirements of the 21st century. When the New England Association of Schools & Colleges placed the high school on warning for accreditation in 2013, it was clear that we needed to act. The design you see above is one that meets the [Educational Vision](#) the town has set forth. You will find all the documents you need to understand the process, the decisions, and the plans for moving forward on the Arlington High School Building Project [website](#).

Kindergarten Registration Begins for 2019-2020 School Year

Registration for fall 2019 Kindergarten opened this month. Parents and guardians are asked to complete the Online Registration Form that is accessible from the APS [School Registration webpage](#), or visit the Central Registration Office at Arlington High School. A letter explaining the process and the documents required to complete Registration can be found [here](#). This year we opened Registration earlier than in the past, giving parents and guardians the chance to enroll before After-School Program registration begins. The Registration office is open all year, so if you have missed the January early registration window you can still register online or visit the Registrar's office located in the high school. Appointments for registration are preferred.

Parents of registered students will be invited to attend an informational meeting at each elementary school at 8:30 am on May 22. This will be followed by a program for parents accompanied by their incoming Kindergarten students at 1:30 pm on May 28th, again at each elementary school. It is mandated by state and federal law that all children take part in a non-intensive scan of development skills. Speech-language, math, fine and gross motor skills, cognition, developmental history and a review of the child's general health are all part of this scan. The goal of the screen is to identify children who may require extra support in school or further evaluation. These screenings will be by appointment only on the last two full days of school in June.

It is always a joy to welcome new Kindergarten students and their families into the APS community. Additional information, including a useful Registration Checklist, can be found on the APS School Registration webpage referenced above.



Active Green Teams Raise Awareness, Complete Projects, Support Trash Reduction

With the help of Arlington's School Sustainability Coordinator Rachel Oliveri, many dedicated parents, school staff, and excited and interested children, our Green Teams are taking the lead on environmental education and action. There is tremendous progress being made throughout the district to keep recyclables out of the trash stream. With the addition of Hardy in October, all ten schools are doing lunchroom composting. [Black Earth Compost](#) collects all the food waste from the elementary schools and Gibbs once a week and from Ottoson and AHS twice a week. All schools are using compostable trays, and thanks to a successful *This is the Last Straw* campaign launched by Thompson students last spring, single-use plastic straws are no longer in school lunchrooms

Textile recycling is going strong at eight participating schools, with Hardy expected to be able to accept a collection bin this spring. By the end of last December, 96,885 pounds of textiles had been collected since the start of this program in January 2017. These are accepted by our partner [Bay State Textiles](#) for reuse or recycling. This amazing effort has netted the district close to \$5,000.

Every year Trex®, a manufacturer of composite decking, launches a [plastic film recycling challenge](#) that begins on America Recycles Day, November 15, and lasts until April 15. I am happy to report that Stratton has decided to enter the competition and is having such a great response that the collection bins are full in just over a week! After a little more than a month of offering the program, 125 pounds of plastic film was collected. Green Team members weigh and drop off the film every two weeks. Stratton is competing against other schools in the Northeast Region, and it will be fun to learn the final tally.

The Stratton Green Team has also been encouraging their community to recycle at home, and members made a presentation to the whole school at the January PRIDE meeting. This included a short video that explained why recycling and waste reduction is important.

At Peirce, the Green Team started the year with a three-part interactive series on stormwater led by Marian Miller, the Education Program Manager of the [Mystic River Watershed Association](#). The group will focus on learning how the stormwater systems in Arlington work and what we can do to keep our local water bodies clean and protected. The Bishop Green Team has also been learning about storm drainage. Additionally, this group sponsored a craft fair table where they made and sold reusable snack bags and hand sewn monster ornaments along with green cleaners that they created from natural ingredients.

Town Energy Manager Ken Pruitt took Dallin students on a tour of their boiler room and shared information about how the school makes, uses, and saves energy. The Green Team has also done a two-part program on astronomy and has been continuing its explorations of seed and plant growth, annuals and perennials, and native and non-native plants. Members set up a few hundred Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) seeds to “cold stratify” over the winter, and they will sow them in the spring.

Thompson students are working on a Zero Waste Campaign that includes fifth grade students creating podcasts, fourth grade students writing persuasive essays about single-use plastic, and second grade students singing songs about not littering. The *Bash the Trash* program involves the entire school and musical instruments are being created out of reusable materials that have been collected.

Brackett Green Team members made posters containing energy and waste reducing tips that they posted around school. They also wrote postcards about environmental topics they feel strongly about for state and national politicians. Hardy Green Team members have a lot of activities planned, including celebrations of Earth Day in April, recycling projects that include button batteries and oral care recycling through [Terracycle](#), and project collaboration with the Hardy After School program.

Ottoson's Garden Club/Green Team will be giving all students a better understanding of why it's important to participate in the lunchroom composting program with a video that will be shown during ASPIRE. A group of students have been volunteering as lunchroom leaders for the program, helping everyone learn how to sort their food waste. Food Services is supporting the program by giving the volunteers coupons for a free snack bar.

The AHS SAVE Club created a composting presentation to encourage participation in their lunchroom program that was shown during Advisory this month. Community Service hours are awarded to the students who volunteer to work the sorting stations. A group of students is also participating in a Zero Waste Advisory Group that shares ideas on waste reduction for the high school and district with Ms. Oliveri and the Town Recycling Coordinator Charlotte Milan.

Many of the Green Teams are starting work on their Trashformations projects that will be displayed during EcoFest. This year students are encouraged to create a model of a town building, outdoor space, or mode of transportation with an eye toward including eco-friendly features. Green Team members will also staff a table featuring a Wind Energy Challenge where visitors will be creating and testing blades on mini turbines and using a voltmeter to measure the energy that is produced. [EcoFest](#) will take place at Town Hall on Sunday, March 3, from 1:00-5:00 pm.

It is exciting to be able to share the wonderful Green Team activities with you. I am very proud of our students for taking on the projects that mean so much to our district and our environment. Thank you to all the parents and teachers who sponsor these groups.

Safe & Supportive Schools

Peirce Students Understand the 4Cs through Interactive and Funny ImprovBoston Performance

When Peirce parent Julie Goff contacted teachers to learn what kind of enrichment they would like to see the PTO support this year, their desire was overwhelmingly clear. The teachers wanted social-emotional learning programs geared toward positive interactions and behavior, particularly for the older students who find themselves navigating new and different social situations. This led Ms. Goff to invite

[ImprovBoston](#) to deliver *Lessons of Improv: The 4Cs (Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical Thinking)* to an enthusiastic fourth and fifth grade audience this month.

The performers worked with the attendees to set up different scenarios that required one of the 4Cs in order to make the action work. For example, Collaboration was illustrated by an Olympic competition. Audience input led to the choice of the “sport”—dishwashing! Two teams, each consisting of an ImprovBoston performer and a student, acted out an intense dishwashing race. No talking was allowed, so everyone had to take non-verbal cues on how to react and work together. The competitors also had to listen to the commentators (another ImprovBoston member and a Peirce teacher) and react to what was being said about the teams’ performances.

The audience suggested a pudding museum as the site for the Creativity sketch. This required students to come to the stage and create “exhibits” by clumping into poses. An ImprovBoston performer then took the audience on a tour of the museum highlights, coming up with creative explanations for the “sculptures” and scenes on display.

There was plenty of laughter and engagement as the students watched their friends and teachers take part. Improvisation requires all 4Cs to work, so it proved to be a wonderful way to illustrate how communication involves body-language, attentive listening, and actions as well as words, and how to use creative thinking skills to react to situations. Ms. Goff reports that when her fifth-grade son got home, he told her how funny the program was, and was eagerly sharing the overarching concepts of the 4Cs. Many students really enjoyed seeing their teachers laugh and take part. One fifth grade teacher reports that, “The students really loved it and I enjoyed how the actors always linked the four C’s back to school and the students’ own lives.” Another thanked the PTO and shared, “This was a wonderful program and we all LOVED it!”

I want to thank Ms. Goff and the Peirce PTO for finding and supporting such a unique way to illustrate the important concepts of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. ImprovBoston is one of many groups who offer programs through [Young Audiences of Massachusetts](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to youth development and education through the arts. We are fortunate to have access to so many creative ways to enrich the educational lives of our students.



2017 Survey Indicates Majority of AHS Students Not Using Vaping Products Regularly

I would like to share another positive result from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) this month. In my News from September, I reported that 78% of the Arlington High School students who responded to the survey indicated that they had never tried smoking an electronic cigarette, vape or Juul. Another question in the YRBS takes this topic further by asking about the regularity of such use. Happily, 92% of the respondents indicated that they had not used vaping products in the last 30 days. Over 900 students took the YRBS online.

The prevalence of vaping advertisements in social media and pop culture and an increase in vaping violations in school suggest that more youth may have become involved in this activity over the last few years. We will have a clearer picture of the current situation after the next YRBS is administered to our middle and high school students this spring. The data from this survey should be available in June or shortly thereafter. It is important to remember that even if an increase in vape use becomes apparent *most* Arlington young people do not vape regularly or use vaping products.

Arlington Public Schools and the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) continue to work hard to make sure that our young people understand that using these products may have serious consequences. The aerosols produced by e-cigarettes and vape pens contain addictive and dangerous substances, and your children are learning about these risks in our tobacco education programming. Vaping was a topic covered by one of the APS Parent Forums this month as well.

The vaping industry continues to normalize and promote its products. In order to keep our children safe, we must all be aware of the dangers of vaping and be able to communicate this knowledge to our young people. Karen Koretsky, AYHSC Director, reports that the vaping epidemic is receiving more and more state and national attention. The Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health authored [How to Talk to Your Kids About Vaping](#) this month and the [Today Show](#) and [CBS This Morning](#) both had stories focusing on vaping.

Ms. Koretsky also wants the community to know that the [Truth Initiative](#) has just launched the [first-of-its-kind free e-cigarette quit program now available to young vapers looking for help](#). The program is tailored by age group to give appropriate recommendations about quitting and serves as a resource for parents looking to help their children who now vape. This is being integrated into two other successful Truth Initiative digital cessation programs, [This is Quitting](#) and [BecomeAnEx®](#).

Experts at Parent Forums Share Knowledge and Resources to Help Keep Children Safe

The District understands that keeping our children safe goes beyond what our staff can do during school hours. It also means providing parents and community members with the resources they need to assist in this effort, and with the opportunity to learn more about topics of concern. That is why we sponsor and support a series of Parent Forums throughout the school year, and we are fortunate to have dedicated professionals to lead and participate in this effort.

Director of Wellness Cindy Bouvier and K-6 Health Educator Carlene Newell are the Parent Forum Co-chairs. They work with a planning committee that includes parents, school staff representatives, [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) Director Karen Koretsky, and [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#) Executive Director Colleen Legere. The group reviews possible topics--suggesting some themselves, evaluating others that are submitted by parents and community members, and by reviewing the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) that are taken by Arlington middle and high school students.

Speakers are also researched and chosen by the Committee, using their own knowledge, evaluating recommendations from parents, and reviewing the information that they receive from professionals who are willing to share their expertise. Funding to support the Forums comes from a variety of sources including contributions from school PTOs, Arlington Public Schools (particularly for space and custodial support for the events), the [Sanborn Foundation](#), and from various grants. Sometimes a speaker will offer their services without charge.

The first forum of the school year held on September 25 addressed how to speak to elementary children about gender diversity and sexual orientation. This was followed by events focusing on the importance of eating right, mental health awareness, how to raise ethical and thoughtful children, and the dangers of intoxication and vaping for teens. Movies with panel discussions tackled the impact of the digital age on children ([Screenagers](#)) and how to cope with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder ([UNSTUCK: an OCD kids movie](#)). Two workshops offering hypnosis and behavior modification for smokers and vapers who want to quit have been held. The fall session of the parenting series *Guiding Good Choices* was over in October, the first winter series is ending, and a second begins on February 25. Please use this [link](#) to learn more

about these events and see what is to come in February and March. All Forums are open to the entire community, although some may require pre-registration or limit the number of participants due to the workshop nature of the session.

In addition to the Forums offered by the district, many school PTOs schedule educational sessions on topics that are of interest to parents and community members. One example of this was sponsored by the Thompson Diversity and Inclusion Group this month. *Having Courageous Conversations About Race with Our Children* was led by [Dr. Liza Talusan](#), an educator skilled in conducting "...conversations about diversity, racism, unconscious bias, privilege, and power."

We are fortunate to be able to offer so many opportunities for our families to explore important and often difficult topics together. I am grateful to our school PTOs for the work they do in this area and I thank Ms. Bouvier, Ms. Newell, and the members of their Committee for creating and executing the APS Parent Forums. These enable the community to hear from talented professionals who help us understand the ways we can all work together to keep our children safe.

Awards & Distinctions

APS Sixth Grade Social Studies Thematic Curriculum Shared at Primary Source Workshop

It is not often that you are requested to deliver a presentation when you have come to a [Primary Source](#) workshop as an attendee, but that is what happened to Gibbs Social Studies teacher Kristin Wachtelhausen this month. On her first day, she was asked if Arlington would like to deliver a presentation on the third. Ms. Wachtelhausen and Alison Sancinito, formerly a Social Studies teacher at Ottoson and now an Assistant Principal in Groton-Dunstable, had shared information on the APS sixth grade thematic curriculum that they helped to create at a previous workshop, and they were happy to do so again.

Our sixth grade teachers worked with Social Studies Director Denny Conklin to create the new curriculum in response to many factors. It was becoming clear that presenting content on ancient civilizations in a linear way was not relevant to student lives and ignored learner variability. There was a desire to implement the [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL), an approach that minimizes barriers and maximizes learning for all students. The UDL framework recognizes that a curriculum should include multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. This flexibility is necessary in order to stimulate motivation, support understanding by students with different learning styles and abilities, and allow students to demonstrate their learning in various ways. While implementing UDL within the current linear curriculum allowed for the removal of barriers, the scope and sequence lessened UDL's effectiveness.

Our teachers realized that the linear curriculum was limiting them as educators and creating gaps in their students' overall understanding of the content. Many felt it was possible to create a curriculum where skills, higher order thinking, and UDL could guide their content study. Presenting one civilization at a time made it difficult to envision them as overlapping, interacting, and influencing one another. The interconnectedness between people was being lost.

This thinking led to the development of a thematic curriculum, one that leads with questions around a theme and looks for answers across civilizations. For example, let's consider the theme of the development of culture. Questions to explore within this theme include: What is culture? What is civilization? How are practices of the ancient world similar and different? How can knowledge of ancient cultures inform our understanding of our modern culture? What role did religion play in the ancient world? Thematic units, therefore, allow students to fully immerse themselves in history, and open choices beyond one civilization or historical moment.

Thematic units also lend themselves to the integration of civics, an essential skill that students need to learn and practice. Lessons can be designed to encourage dialogue across differences, foster respectful

collaboration, and create opportunities for students to work on projects that aim to promote a public good beyond the classroom.

About 25-30 teachers joined Ms. Wachtelhausen and Ms. Sancinito for their Primary Source presentation *Rethinking Rigor: Using a Thematic and UDL Lens in the Social Studies Classroom*. The two leaders shared how the honest, reflective and critical conversations about our lessons led our teachers to ask and answer questions about the skills we wanted our students to have when they left class, what we wanted them to be able to do well, and whether our instructional approach is *for* the students or *with* students. They spent significant time participating in and facilitating small group discussions about what the attendees were currently doing, whether they believe the thematic and UDL-focused model would work for them, and what it would take to make the transition. There was also time to interact with the resources and samples that our teachers brought.

Ms. Wachtelhausen and Ms. Sancinito received a lot of positive feedback on their presentation and they have already been contacted by many teachers from other districts looking for more information and suggestions for next steps. Our sixth grade teachers are getting positive feedback from their students as well. One slide from the presentation listed answers to the question “In this class, you could walk in on any given day and see kids taking many different routes to achieve the same goal. What do you like about this?” The responses included: “I really like this because everyone has a different way of achieving something and it is nice to see everybody’s strengths and weaknesses”, and “Rather than being confused about what to do, I have many paths to take to achieve what I want to, rather than being restricted to one.”

We are proud that Ms. Wachtelhausen and Ms. Sancinito have been able to share our sixth grade curriculum with other educators. I thank them, Mr. Conklin, and the other sixth grade Social Studies teachers who recognized that change was needed and worked hard to develop the new curriculum.

Academics & Enrichment



Young Writers Connect with the Community by Sharing Stories from Narrative Writing Unit

As our elementary students complete Writing Workshop units, teachers are encouraged to celebrate the work that has been accomplished. The initial writing unit for first and second grade is the Narrative Unit that lasts about six weeks. The students are asked to write a story from their personal lives, focusing on a small part of the day and stretching out the moment with a lot of detail.

This year, Literacy Coach Alessandra Magalhaes contacted teachers with an idea to celebrate the young authors and their work in a new, very special way. She suggested that the narrative writing be shared with the community by making it available to people in libraries and businesses around town. In her words, “We really wanted the students to feel like they were writing, not just for the teachers, not just for their parents, but for a wider audience. I wanted the whole town to celebrate because these young writers are really working hard. I wanted the whole town to know what our district is doing in writing and how amazing it is.”

Twelve teachers decided to join the project, and Dr. Magalhaes lined up the locations. The young authors were told to choose one story they had already written and do some editing, add a cover, and include some colored pictures. Each location had a display station that presented the stories to the community and encouraged patrons to enjoy the wonderful work. The following chart lists the locations, schools, and teachers that participated.

School	Location	Teacher
Stratton	Not Your Average Joes	Jillian Hurley
Stratton	Fox Library	Laura Forse
Hardy	Fox Library	Jaime Jaehnig
Bishop	Café Nero	Susan Ferguson and Justine Viveiros
Bishop	Kickstand Café	Dorothy Schuette
Thompson	D'Agostino's	Alison O'Mahony and Lynne Dichter
Peirce	Robbins Library	Elena Haro, Marybeth Wall, and Daniela Hurley
Peirce	Kickstand Café	Alicia Coletti

As you can see from the pictures above, the students were very excited about being able to share their work. I want to thank Dr. Magalhaes and the participating teachers for giving us the chance to read some of the wonderful stories that our first and second graders are writing and appreciate the work of our young authors. The stories ranged from happy times (the holidays) to difficult times (a bad day on the soccer field), and gave each reader a glimpse into the life of the author. This project allowed the community to see how our young people are learning to express themselves, and it was wonderful to be able to read their thoughts and reflections and understand how they think about their experiences.

Students and Teachers from Tianjin, China Visit Stratton Fifth Grade Classrooms

This month six students and two teachers from the English school in Tianjin, China had the opportunity to observe fifth grade classes, have lunch, play at recess, and share stories during a two-day visit to Stratton. This is the second such visit facilitated by Stratton alum parent Tong Chen, President of the [New England Chinese Language Teachers Association](#).

Principal Michael Hanna reports that the third through sixth grade visitors had plenty of opportunities to use their English, and that our young people were very excited to spend time and talk with them. The Chinese students had been chosen for the trip based upon their level of English proficiency and whether family members were able to accompany them to the United States. The group will do some traveling and sightseeing in addition to making school visits.

At Stratton, the group learned a lot by spending time in classrooms and witnessing instruction. Our classrooms exhibit more flexibility than the visitors are used to, with students working and solving problems together as well as working independently. The group was surprised by the openness, level of spontaneity, and the number of shifts in a typical day. The difference in physical education training was noted. In China, children's PE classes center on calisthenics. Here they observed children learning skills and getting involved in a sport right away. The Chinese teachers were able to spend time talking about education with the Stratton teachers.

By the second day, interaction between the Chinese and American young people was very high, with everyone talking away. Hosting visitors such as those from Tianjin helps our schools grow in cultural proficiency. Meeting and talking with visitors from another country is a wonderful way for our children to learn to appreciate different cultures and languages and practice tolerance and understanding. I thank Mr. Tong for bringing these students and their teachers to our community, and I appreciate the warm welcome they received from the Stratton faculty and students. A beautiful calligraphy wall calendar and other gifts from the group will serve as lasting reminders of the visit.



AHS Internship Program Takes Students Outside School Walls for Real World Experience

"Reflecting back on the first day at work, I can see where I grew, what I improved on and how I made my weaknesses become strengths. I remember the first day I was shy and lacked confidence in the work I was doing. Later, I gained confidence in my work. ...I got the most out of my experience as I improved on my communication and problem solving skills..."—State House Intern

"I learned how to communicate with my peers and advisors efficiently and effectively and made spur-of-the moment decisions as needed."—[Arlington Eats](#) intern

I learned "Interpersonal and communication skills and the importance of cooperation and patience in the workplace."—[Brightview Senior Living](#) intern

I learned "How to carry myself in a professional environment."—[Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#) intern

I learned "How I could apply my skills within the industry and how to communicate and have a good relationship with a superior."—[Massinvestor](#) intern

These quotes come from some of the 59 students taking part in the Arlington High School Internship Program this year. Since 2013, the Program has been offering students the chance to follow their passions outside school walls and experience what it means to be part of the workplace. As an "employee", each intern must work at least five hours per week, dress in business casual or more formal attire, and demonstrate motivation and responsibility when handling assigned duties. Each one completes a project of value to the host organization. At the end of their assignments, participating students deliver presentations to parents, hosts, and administrators about their experience. They also publicize the program through 10th and 11th grade Advisory sessions to make sure that eligible students are aware of this opportunity. Both semester and full-year options are available, and Honors level credit is awarded.

Every September, Program Coordinator and AHS Social Studies teacher Melanie Konstandakis holds an interactive orientation session to get the new interns ready to enter their workplaces. Over a three-day period, the students learn about on-site problem solving, how to communicate with supervisors, customers and clients, and time management. This year's orientation featured a panel of community members (shown above) who work in different areas: Neil Berdiev from [DNB Advisory](#), APS Assistant Superintendent Rod MacNeal, AHS Guidance Counselor Linda Buckley, software engineer Brooks Harrelson, data analytics specialist Yawa Degobe, and the Director of the Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition Karen Koretsky. The panelists shared information about their career paths and surprises in work and education.

Student interns chose from a wide range of host organizations that range from non-profits, state and local governments, banks, healthcare, retail, and media. Several students worked within Arlington Public Schools this year, interning with teachers, LABBB, the IT Department, Arlington Community Education, and the Athletic Department. In every case, the interns learned how to present themselves, and behave and work in a professional setting--skills that they will take with them as leave AHS.

The AHS Internship Program provides a valuable hands-on personalized learning experience and I thank Ms. Konstandakis for her leadership. Thank you to the organizations who accept our students, and the hosts who provide guidance and support. Anyone who wants to offer a workplace opportunity to AHS students may contact Ms. Konstandakis at mkonstandakis@arlington.k12.ma.us. Sites in the medical and engineering fields are especially needed. Two information sessions for rising 10th and 11th grade students have been held, and another is planned for February 27.

Online Courses Broaden Curriculum and Enable AHS Students to Follow Their Passions

Our District strives to create life-long learners, and we provide many opportunities for our students to take charge of their education. The online courses available at AHS are a great example of this. Ideas for elective classes beyond those offered in the program of studies can come from teachers or students. An on-site faculty member oversees each course, routinely meeting with the students, answering questions, helping set schedules, and reviewing lesson topics and quizzes. This year, students have been participating in courses offered by [Coursera](#), [Brigham and Young University Independent Study](#) (BYU), and the International Virtual Learning Academy's [Edmentum Curriculum](#). Those offered thus far are shown in the chart below.

Course Name	Source
<i>Science of Well-Being</i>	Coursera
<i>Introduction to Forensic Science</i>	Coursera
<i>Love as a Force for Social Justice</i>	Coursera
<i>Positive Psychology</i>	Coursera
<i>Arabic 1</i>	BYU
<i>American Sign Language 1 & 2</i>	BYU
<i>German</i>	BYU
<i>Japanese</i>	BYU
<i>Korean</i>	BYU
<i>Russian 1 and 2</i>	BYU
<i>Holocaust Studies</i>	Edmentum
<i>Introduction to Astronomy</i>	Edmentum

These courses are completely student-driven and are well suited to those who are independent and active learners. They are also useful for continuing education for students who may not be able to access the building on a regular basis. Participation typically ranges from 20 to 100 students. Some, such as the language courses, require a fee.

I am pleased that we can offer these personalized learning opportunities that enrich the education of our high school students. I thank the instructors who serve as the on-site mediators.

Social Studies Department Aims to Improve Educational Benefit of Research Papers

“...one college freshman participating in a study that examined students’ research paper practices described the research paper as “dumb busy work” because “it’s coming from some book and all [you’re] doing is regurgitating information that the teacher already knows”

“...several students revealed that they view the research paper...as an exercise in information gathering, not an act of discovery;”

These quotes come from [The Research Paper: A “Rhetoric of Doing” or a “Rhetoric of the Finished Word”?](#), by Jennie Nelson, professor of English Composition and Rhetoric at the University of Idaho. In her article she quotes several authors who articulate the reasons to assign students the task of writing a research paper. Educators believe that this activity helps students develop “...higher-order thinking skills that will color the way they receive, process, formulate and communicate ideas the rest of their lives.” It leads students to “...become better investigators, conceptualizers, critics, writers,...better thinkers and communicators”, and is a “vehicle” for “...fostering independent thinking and responsible writing...”.

The student quotes that open this article, however, suggest that the research paper assignment may not be achieving these goals.

APS K-12 Social Studies Director Denny Conklin reports that his department has been looking at this issue and has set a goal to revamp the research paper process over the next two years. Teachers hope to create a more meaningful, authentic experience for students, and to give them more opportunities to practice research skills at multiple times throughout the school year. The Social Studies team has examined their own views and opinions on historical research and reviewed the literature on the issue. The next step is to survey all 6-12 grade students about their views on the topic. The team will use all the information they collect to begin making changes in the curriculum.

Mr. Conklin has been testing some ideas in a class that he is teaching this year. Rather than just completing a research paper, students embarked upon a research project. They identified a problem, researched it, identified an audience who would do something about the problem, developed a format to reach that audience, proposed a solution, and then “went live” by following through on their project. This approach resulted in articles, op-eds, letters to representatives, websites, podcasts, and more. One student published his paper on a freelance journalism website.

Mr. Conklin received some very positive responses from the students who participated in the research project, and I would like to share some of them here.

- “The value of doing a project like this is not just about researching and reporting. We had to use the information to come up with a solution. This requires more creative thinking than writing a traditional paper.”
- “This research project was fantastic. It is one of the only projects I can remember doing for school, and especially for history class, that felt like it had real world ramifications. This made it more exciting and motivated me to do a good job.”
- “I feel like I developed a lot of writing skills and not just for history class, I think I can use this information in any form of writing.”
- “I learned that research papers have the ability to make a change through this assignment. I learned that a lot of government reform needs to happen through my research, specifically in healthcare. Additionally, it lead [sic] me to understand that research papers are a good way to find something that you are personally passionate about.”

It was clear to Mr. Conklin that his students were researching and writing not only for their teacher but for a wider, authentic audience. He believes that this approach made the assignment much more meaningful for his students and improved the quality of the work. I applaud the efforts of our Social Studies faculty to ensure that the research papers completed by our students are relevant to them and prepare them for college work and beyond.

Creative Highlights

Four Instrumental and Two Choral Groups Perform at First Gibbs Winter Concert

The interest in Performing Arts at Gibbs was evident on January 30, when almost 250 (over half the student body) shared what they had been doing in Orchestra, Chorus, and Band during their first Winter Concert. String teacher Jing-Huey Wei, Band teacher Paula Demetrio, and Chorus Director and Music teacher James Ham led six groups through a beautiful program that delighted the audience.

The evening began with the Gibbs Chamber Orchestra, approximately 20 members strong, presenting three folk-inspired dances by Bartok. The larger Orchestra, with over 50 members, took the stage next. Their three-number set began with a piece by Handel and ended with *Carpathia*, a contemporary work that memorializes the journey of the RMS Carpathia as it rushed to the aid of the sinking Titanic.

The vocalists came next, beginning with Ignition, a group of around 30 members. This ensemble delivered Leonard Cohen's beautiful *Hallelujah*, accompanied by guitar. It was then time for the Chorus, and what a treat it was to see and hear over 130 young people delivering a spiritual, an Irish blessing, and the delightful hymn to song, *Sing, Sing, Everybody Sing*.

The 60 members of the Concert Band presented the South African freedom song *Siyahamba* and followed this with *Call of the Champions*, written by John Williams for the Salt Lake City Olympics. Special guest bassist Mr. Ham helped the final group, the 14 member Gibbs Jazz Workshop, bring it home with Randy Newman's *You've Got a Friend in Me*.

All six groups performed with joy and enthusiasm, leaving the audience pleased and impressed. It is wonderful to see so many sixth grade students coming forward to play and sing. I congratulate all the young vocalists and instrumentalists who took part, and thank Ms. Wei, Ms. Demetrio and Mr. Ham for their hard work and dedication to providing performance opportunities for our children.



Artworks Demonstrate Elements of the Visual Art Program in OMS Second Quarter Art Show

There was a wonderful turnout of parents and students at the Ottoson Visual Art Department's evening reception for the artists on January 24. At least one of the artworks completed by every student who took art during the second quarter was on display. The exhibit exemplified everything that a strong and beneficial art program for middle school students should include--personalized learning, cross-discipline instruction, and social emotional learning.

It is always wonderful to read the artist's statements that accompany almost every work. These give powerful insight into what the students feel strongly about and how they use their art to communicate this. I commend OMS Visual Art teachers Polly Ford and Kayla McKenna for the fine work they do to encourage their students to express themselves in such beautiful ways. Congratulations to all the student artists who participated in this extraordinary and important exhibit. To see more examples of what was on display, please copy and post this link in your browser:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Puni47Tasgi_xRcm1aghwEUw28NaDmE2?usp=sharing

The next quarterly exhibit will be held on the second floor of Ottoson on April 11 from 5:00-7:00 pm.



Opposite Ideas Come Together in Display of Large Puppets at AHS

Old Hall has been the site of a wonderful display of huge puppets created by the students in AHS Visual Art teacher Annie Rebola-Thompson's Mixed Media class. The young artists collaborated in teams of three to create powerful puppet heads that each represent two opposite ideas embodied in one sculpture. This year's themes included: Growth/Decay, Perception/Reality, Order/Chaos, Childhood/Adulthood, Expressive/Reserved, Artificial/Natural and Wet/Dry. After they were completed the students took photographs of themselves wearing the heads in different environments.

Please copy and paste this link in your browser to see all seven puppet heads

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zJLCD6SnHMSFjzoliNmpmHcfCJkKcjOU?usp=sharing>

This wonderful project is an annual collaboration between Ms. Rebola-Thompson and MakerSpace teacher Nathan Muehleisen. I want to thank both teachers for providing the support and inspiration that led to these colorful puppets and I congratulate all the artists on their creativity and expression.

AHS Performers Honor Shakespeare through Scenes, Music, Sonnets, and Monologues

On January 10, the Arlington High School Performing Arts Department celebrated Shakespeare through many mediums. *Madrigals, Monologues, Sonnets, and Songs* was a beautiful collaboration between vocalists and actors that included the Madrigal Singers and students from AHS Drama classes. Chorale teacher Madalyn Kitchen and Drama teacher Michael Byrne took an idea from Performing Arts Director William Pappazisis and worked with their students to create a unique experience that was different from other events that have been presented at the high school.

Ms. Kitchen and Mr. Byrne chose the performance date to be close to Twelfth Night (Epiphany) so that the event could include some traditional elements. Historical Twelfth Night celebrations included food and the crowning of a "king" or "queen" based upon finding a bean or pea in a piece of cake. This was incorporated into the evening by serving everyone cupcakes and cider, creating a cozy atmosphere. The person who discovered a chocolate truffle in their cupcake became the monarch of the night and had to get the performance going. The recipient could either choose to read the sonnet they were given or give it to someone else to read. In this case, the monarch's son was a member of the Madrigal Singers, and the honor of reading the sonnet was passed to him.

The musical selections included Paul Ayres' *The Isle is Full of Noises* from *The Tempest*, Felix Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Quick, Quick, Away, Dispatch* by Michael East, and David C. Dickau's *If Music Be the Food of Love*. Monologues and scenes were taken from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream, Henry V, Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night, Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure, The Tempest, and Hamlet*. Five sonnets were also presented.

Ms. Kitchen says that she and Mr. Byrne received very positive feedback from parents and community members as well as the students who participated. Several people indicated that an event like this is something that should happen more often. I thank Ms. Kitchen, Mr. Byrne, and all the students who took part in creating such a fun, successful evening.

Portraits Investigating Personal Identities on Display at AHS

I would encourage you to visit the hallway near the AHS Lowe Auditorium and see the extraordinary self-portraits on display in the glass case. The students in Visual Art teacher Nikki McCulloch's Painting I class were challenged to investigate their personal identities through different lenses including history, race, and culture and the resulting pictures are stunning. The paintings are accompanied by an explanation of what it means to create an empowered self-portrait. Please copy and paste this link in your browser to read the explanation and see some of the remarkable paintings

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1U-EugfiXWJpso8GPQrH9Opa5iDlbWnZa?usp=sharing>

AHS Social Studies teacher Kevin Toro and MakerSpace teacher Nathan Muehleisen collaborated with Ms. McCulloch and her students in this remarkable project. I thank the three teachers for their leadership and commend the student artists who challenged themselves to go beyond their external presentation to express their identities.

Athletic Highlights

New Football Coach Announced, Gymnastics Holds Clinic, and Runners Compete in Large Meets

It is hard to believe that the winter sports will be wrapping up next month, and I will be reporting on the season in my February newsletter. In this issue, I want to mention a few items of interest to the community.

This month Athletic Director Stanley Vieira named Rob DiLoreto as the new Head Football coach, replacing Ryan Gendron who stepped down to be able to spend more time with his 10-month old son. Mr. DiLoreto is well known to the AHS community where he serves as the Fusco House Dean. This marks a return to AHS sports for him, as he previously served as the football coach and Athletic Director. Mr. DiLoreto shares his thoughts on football and his new position in an [ACMi interview](#) recorded this month.

The girls of the Arlington High School Gymnastics team hosted a clinic for children ages 5-14 on Martin Luther King Day. Participants were able to learn some gymnastics while having fun. This outreach to the community is a wonderful way for our student-athletes to share the love of their sport with others and let them explore whether it is something they would like to pursue.

The Boys and Girls Indoor Track teams participated in the [MSTCA Coaches' Invitational Large Schools](#) (Massachusetts State Track Coaches Association) meet the morning of January 26. Athletes from 71 Massachusetts schools competed in this exciting event, and there were many strong AHS performances. Isabella Laspina placed 14th in the Girls 300 meter dash, Roger Buckley came in 11th in the Boys 600 meter run, Jeff Cannell was sixth in the Boys 1000 meter run, and Miles Harrison took second place in the 2 mile run. Congratulations to everyone who participated.

In the afternoon of January 26, senior Ryan Oosting participated in two individual races that were part of the [New Balance Grand Prix](#). This event hosts both masters and junior runners from a variety of locations. I am pleased to report that Ryan came in third in the Boys En-route 1500 meter and fourth in the Boys Junior Mile race. In both races, Ryan was competing against runners from all over the United States. Congratulations Ryan!