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News from October 2019

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

It was uplifting to come to work during the latter days of October and see the American flags flying on the front lawn of the high school. Every year the Arlington Rotary Club asks community members to purchase a flag in memory of those who have made a difference in their lives. The students in the AHS Workplace Alternative Program assist Club members in placing the flags that remain in place through Veteran's Day. [Flags for Heroes](#) is a beautiful and strong visual statement that gives us all a chance to stop for a moment and remember those who are important to us and our community.

We continue to respond to incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti that has shown up in boy's bathrooms at Ottoson this month. Principal Brian Meringer was forced to close one of the bathrooms for a time and monitor bathroom usage. While this created some inconveniences for both students and staff, it enabled conversations with students about the topic that may not have occurred otherwise. Ottoson also engaged in an activity that had been used at the Chenery Middle School in Belmont when they faced a similar incident. An ASPIRE period was extended so that all students could respond to and discuss three questions: What impact does having a swastika drawn in school have on you? What would you say to anyone that saw the swastika? What message would you want to send to the student who drew the swastika? These conversations are critical to making sure that our young people understand how damaging it is to display hateful symbols and that this behavior will not be tolerated.

Many of you saw the article in *The Boston Globe* in October that shared concerns from Arlington parents about lunchtimes. Some parents believe that their children are not able to complete their lunch in the allotted time. As I indicated in my October 11 letter to families, the district does not want any child to be hungry. This is why we encourage families to send snacks with their children for consumption in the morning or later in the day. Children can take advantage of our partnership with [Arlington EATS](#) and obtain a snack at school. Every school has snacks available to all children all day, every day. A specific snack time is scheduled for those students who have an early lunch. We will continue to work together with families and schools to make sure no students are hungry during the day. Additionally, we will review lunch practices that could add more time for actually eating lunch.

Arlington EATS makes many other valuable contributions to food insecurity in our community, and many of our students and families volunteer there on a regular basis. This year two AHS students have discovered that one of their academic skills corresponds well with one of the needs of this organization. Arlington EATS program Manager Susan Dorson sent word early this year that she could use individuals able to interact with the organization's Chinese clients. She reports that about 40% of those shopping at the Market/Food Pantry primarily speak Chinese, and it is sometimes difficult to understand what they need and help them learn what is available to them.

Juniors Talia Fein and Madalyn Williams, who study Mandarin Chinese with AHS World Language teacher Xiaohui Cao, answered the call. On the days they volunteer at the Market, they are able to get to know some of the people who arrive early. This provides time for a two-way exchange, with the clients explaining some new Mandarin words to the young women, and Talia and Maddie providing English words that the shoppers do not know. When it is time to start the food distribution, the students help explain each food category that is available to them based on the number of people in their household or

whether they are new—categories such as vegetables (蔬菜), side dishes (配菜), and macaroni and cheese boxes (通心粉和奶酪).

Talia reports that she enjoys interacting with people of all different ages and has been developing deep personal connections and forming friendships with the Mandarin speakers. In addition to helping them understand how the Market works and what they can get, she is glad that she can help them feel at home and be more comfortable in there. Maddie has lived in China and finds it very interesting to learn about which provinces the clients come from and why they came to Arlington. The other day she passed one of the women she met at Arlington EATS in town and they exchanged greetings in Mandarin. The chance meeting led her to appreciate how her language skills and volunteering has enabled her to get to know people she otherwise would not have been able to speak with before. Both students find working at the Market very worthwhile and plan to keep volunteering. Talia will be leaving to study abroad in China in February, another experience that I know will be very meaningful to her.

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

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Headline View**

#### **Safe & Supportive Schools**

##### ***Movement Break on the Brackett Sensory Path Helps Kindergarten Students Focus on Learning***

Students needing to work off excess energy in order to focus on what is going on in the classroom now have a safe, active, structured, and contained way to “take a break” so that they can return refreshed and ready to learn. Read more>

##### ***Gibbs Students Wear Blue to Emphasize the Need to Stomp Out Bullying***

The Gibbs community dressed in blue on the [World Day of Bullying Prevention](#), standing with students across the globe in the fight against bullying, cyberbullying, cruelty, hatred, racism, homophobia, and LGBTQ discrimination. Read more>

##### ***OMS QSA Promotes Solidarity with LGBTQ Classmates During Ally Week***

The Ottoson [Queer \(Questioning\) Straight Alliance \(QSA\)](#) kicked-off October with Ally Week, an observance designed to educate students on what it means to be and act as an LGBTQ ally. Learn more>

##### ***Chris Herren Speaks to AHS Students on Substance Abuse and Wellness***

On October 1, Massachusetts native and former NBA player [Chris Herren](#) shared his personal story about substance abuse, and the community was invited to hear his messages by viewing the film, [The First Day](#). Read more>

##### ***Youth Risk Behavior Survey Provides Information for Action***

The 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey that shares high and middle school responses to questions in six areas most often associated with illness and death helps us determine the prevalence of risky health behaviors, assess trends in these behaviors over time, and compare ourselves to the surrounding community and the nation. Learn more>

### **Department News**

#### ***The LOOK Act and ELPAC Formation Discussed as Families Connect at “ELL Family Café”***

English Language Learners Director Carla Bruzzese invited parents and guardians to become members of the new English Learner Parent Advisory Committee (ELPAC) being formed in Arlington as part of the implementation of the 2017 [LOOK Act](#) at a “Café” meeting where English Learner families were also able to make connections. [Read more>](#)

### ***Design Phase of AHS Building Project Moves Forward, with Enabling to Begin in February***

Attendees to the October 30 Community Forum received a complete review of the Arlington High School Building Project and the Design Phase progress that has been made over the summer so that the Enabling Pre-Construction Phase can begin in February 2020. [Learn more>](#)

## **Grants**

### ***Latest AEF Grant Supports Continued Progress in Creating Safe & Supportive Schools***

We are grateful to the [Arlington Education Foundation \(AEF\)](#) for their latest award of \$43,000 toward behavioral health, supporting our goal to create an educational environment where every student can learn. [Read more>](#)

### ***State Grant Supports Implementation of Self-Assessment Recommendations***

We are grateful to also have strong support for our Safe & Supportive Schools initiative from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education who has just awarded the district a \$7,500 Year 2019-2020(FY20) [Safe and Supportive Schools Competitive Fund Code 335 grant](#). [Learn more>](#)

### ***AEF Continuing Scholar Awards Enable Educational Enrichment Experiences***

Thanks to [Continuing Scholar Awards](#) from the [Arlington Education Foundation](#), several teachers and Occupational Therapists will be able to attend courses, workshops, and conferences that will impact their professional practices and their students. [Read more>](#)

## **Awards & Distinctions**

### ***Dallin Fifth Grade Student Chosen for Scholastic Kids Press***

Congratulations to Claire Olivia Handler on the publication of her first article, [He's Got Game](#), after being chosen as a Kid Reporter for the worldwide program [Scholastic Kids Press](#). [Read more>](#)

***Blog Article by Bishop Visual Art Teacher Follows Convention Presentation, Highlights Research***  
[What Motivates Our Students to Create? How Can We Use the Studio Habits of Mind to Assess Student Art?](#) published on the Studio Thinking blog last month follows from the [National Art Education Association Convention \(NAEA\)](#) presentation she participated in last March that described her research into Assessing Student Motivation in the Art Classroom. [Learn more>](#)

## **Academics & Enrichment**

### ***New Elementary Schedule Increases Visual Art Programming for Grades K-3***

Our K-3 students will have an additional Visual Art class each week for one quarter of the year on a rotating basis, enabling the teachers to engage the students in a variety of expanded opportunities. [Learn more>](#)

### ***Author Visits Introduce New Titles, Highlight Diversity, and Talk About Craft at Thompson, OMS***

Visits from authors get young people excited about books, reading, and writing, and we were fortunate to have four writers visit with our young people this month, each presenting different types and styles for consideration. [Read more>](#)

### ***Parent Involvement in Math, Engineering, and Computer Science Activities Enrich Learning***

Examples from Bishop, Brackett, Dallin, Stratton, and Gibbs/Ottoson illustrate how parents and families step forward to participate in and lead activities that offer STEAM enrichment for our young people. [Read more>](#)

## Creative Highlights

### ***Ottoson Drama Season Off to a Great Start with Performances of Fall Plays***

After performing two fall plays, [Door to Door](#) and [Small Actors](#), the thespians at OMS have been auditioning and getting ready to begin rehearsals for [Legally Blonde, The Musical](#) to be presented in May. Learn more>

### ***Community Invited to School Visual Art Exhibits Planned Throughout the Year***

Please click [here](#) to see the current schedule of the Visual Art exhibits and events scheduled for this year so that you don't miss the opportunity to understand the curriculum and see what our talented young artists are creating. Learn more>

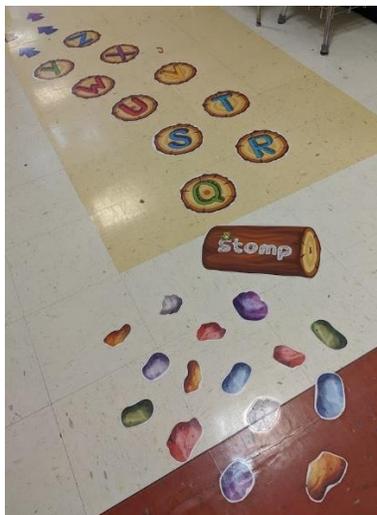
## Athletic Highlights

### ***Fall Spy Ponder Season Ends with Teams and Athletes Moving on to Postseason Competition***

With the winter competition just around the corner, seven fall teams moved on to tournament, divisional, or sectional play, as John Bowler, our new Athletic Director, completed his first season at Arlington High School. Read more>

[Continue to read the full News from October 2019 Newsletter](#)

## Safe & Supportive Schools



### ***Movement Break on the Brackett Sensory Path Helps Kindergarten Students Focus on Learning***

Creating a way for one or more students to “take a break” when it is clear that they need to discharge some energy was something Brackett Kindergarten teachers had been thinking about for a while. In the past they have had an adult take a walk around the school with a fidgety child or sent the child on an errand to another classroom. Upon returning, the children were ready to focus on the teaching and learning that was happening. After doing some research, the teachers believed that a Sensory Path would provide a structured, contained space to accomplish this goal.

The Sensory Path that Custodian Ruben Velasco installed over the summer runs almost the entire length of the Kindergarten hallway. As they follow the arrows, students encounter “rocks” they can step on, over, or around, logs that ask them to clap or spin around, water to be “splashed through” or jumped over, numbers to count, and alphabet letters to sound off. Walking the path is a safe, active, and healthy way to

work off excess energy. It is also a way for students to practice literacy skills, taking turns, and to work on gross motor skills.

The teachers have been using the Sensory Path frequently as a whole class activity as well as a way for small groups or individual students to take a movement break. By incorporating letter and number identification into the use of the path, skills taught in the classroom are reinforced. The Path came with a list of possible activities such as “follow the letters up to K”. As the students advance in literary proficiency, they can be asked to step on the letters needed to spell a word. Older students enjoy walking the Path as they pass through the hall on their way to music or art. Enjoyment is so strong that if the class is running late on the way to a special course, the Path has to be “closed” so the students can get to their destination in time!

Julia Coelho, one of the four Kindergarten teachers, believes that the cost-effective Path delivers a tremendous amount of value for the entire Brackett community. Initial set-up took about four hours, and everyone is very grateful to Mr. Velasco who applied multiple coats of wax to extend the life of the decals. I want to thank the Kindergarten team for rallying around this idea and determining the best fit for Brackett, the PTO for funding it, and Mr. Velasco for putting it in place. This is a safe, healthy, and supportive enhancement to the learning environment.



### ***Gibbs Students Wear Blue to Emphasize the Need to Stomp Out Bullying***

On October 7 the Gibbs community was asked to honor [Stomp Out Bullying's World Day of Bullying Prevention](#). By wearing blue on the first Monday in October, young people at schools across the globe stand together in solidarity against bullying, cyberbullying, cruelty, hatred, racism, homophobia, and LGBTQ discrimination. The anti-bullying message was further emphasized by Principal Kristin DeFrancisco in her remarks at the all-school assembly that began the day. Additional reminders included posted signs denoting #BlueUp 2019 showing the date and a tagline about bullying prevention.

Other signs in the building reminded students that October is [National Bullying Prevention Month](#). A week of Advisory lessons offered under the theme *All About Respect* focused on the importance of treating others with respect and kindness.

School Counselors Ron Colosi and Emily Vincent, initiators and coordinators of #BlueUp, were pleased to see that approximately 75% of Gibbs students were wearing blue on October 7—a particularly good turn out for a Monday! They also note that two elements of life at Gibbs provide many opportunities to visit and revisit themes such as anti-bullying throughout the year. The first is the implementation of [Responsive Classroom](#) which helps teachers build caring and engaged communities. Here the messages of respect and kindness are delivered through relationship building, teacher and peer modeling, and continued reinforcement of the Gibbs' Core Values of Understanding, Unified, and Unstoppable. The second is Advisory, where lessons and discussions can be tailored to directly address different topics. I thank Mr. Colosi and Ms. Vincent for spearheading the effort to get anti-bullying activities off to a great start at Gibbs this year.



### **OMS QSA Promotes Solidarity with LGBTQ Classmates During Ally Week**

The first week in October was designated as Ally Week at Ottoson Middle School. The observance, led by the [Queer \(Questioning\) Straight Alliance](#) (QSA), began during ASPIRE, where all students watched a [video](#) that shared five tips on how to be an ally. Group members set up a table in the lobby during lunch where they were available to talk with their classmates about what being an ally means.

During the last two days of the week, students had the opportunity to record the different ways they can be allies and share them with the OMS community. The words filling the display board, such as “stand up for other people”, “sign emails with pronouns”, “be respectful of all students,” and “support and be vocal” demonstrate that the authors were understanding that an ally is someone who supports LGBTQ individuals and equality both publicly and privately.

This month, two QSA members attended the [Massachusetts Gender and Sexuality Alliance Leadership Council](#) meeting, sponsored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These half-day sessions are part of the [Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students](#). I thank School Counselor Nanci Siegel and Mathematics teacher Noreen Mitchell for their leadership of the OMS QSA. Thanks also go to the students who attended the Council meeting and those who took part in helping their classmates embrace the ally concept. Understanding what it means to be and act as an LGBTQ ally is an important part of fostering a culture of kindness and respect towards all Ottoson students.



### **Chris Herren Speaks to AHS Students on Substance Abuse and Wellness**

*See, everybody thinks this talk is about drugs and alcohol. This assembly is about struggle. This assembly is about you, not me.....I want you to forget my story and think about yours.*—Chris Herren, from *The First Day* trailer, his film about prevention, addiction, and recovery

On October 1, Arlington High School students gathered in the Toz gym to hear from [Chris Herren](#),

a Massachusetts native whose basketball career was cut short due to substance abuse. His experiences led him to dedicate his life to speaking to young people and their communities, using his personal story to challenge them to accept the harsh realities of what it means to go down a path like his. He talks about struggle—the struggle to not abuse drugs and alcohol in the first place, the struggle to stop once you have started, and the struggle to be who you truly are and remain clean. His message is one of prevention. Too often we focus on the bad outcomes and endings rather than the beginning of addiction. Every story of addiction has a beginning, and he believes that young people need to understand how the story starts rather than how it ends.

Mr. Herren has come to AHS before, and his presentations are powerful, emotionally evocative, and direct. Prior to the event, Advisory time was dedicated to making sure that the students understood the nature of what they were about to see and hear. The [trailer](#) for Mr. Herren's film [The First Day](#) was shown, and the students were asked to silently reflect on a time when they, or someone they knew, had struggled. What helped them get through that time? Then they were asked to talk in general terms about the top challenges and stressors in students' lives and how they can cope.

Parents, guardians, community members, and teens grades 8-12 were invited to a forum the evening of October 1 to see the film and take part in a discussion. Understanding that students may have been heavily affected by the presentation, time for follow-up conversations was provided in Advisory after the visit. At this time, students stood in a circle and reflected silently on the experience, then formed small groups of two or three to debrief. They were asked to consider the one thing they took away from the experience, the one misconception about addiction that had changed for them after hearing Mr. Herren, and why they think the speaker asks them to focus on the beginning (the first day) rather than the end.

Planning for Mr. Herren's visit to AHS began a year ago and was a partnership between the AHS administration and the [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) which provided the funding. A Communities Talk Grant: Town Hall Meetings to Prevent Underage Drinking, from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) of the US Department of Health & Human Services, provided the funding for the evening meeting.

All of us in the community have a responsibility to assist in keeping our children safe by supporting them in the struggles presented by substance abuse. Please take a few minutes to view the [ACMi news story](#) on the AHS meeting and hear from Mr. Herren. Prevention and recovery resources can be accessed by reaching out to teachers, staff, coaches, School Counselors, school Social Workers, the School Resource Officer, and the AYHSC. I am grateful that we were able to bring Mr. Herren and his messages to our young people and their families this month.

### ***Youth Risk Behavior Survey Provides Information for Action***

Many of you know that Arlington has given a Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to our middle and high school students periodically. Most states administer this type of survey as part of a cooperative agreement with the [Centers for Disease Control](#). Arlington Public Schools has been collaborating with other districts in the Middlesex League in the creation and execution of the Survey since 2017. This enables us to add questions of particular interest to our community, receive an individual report, and understand how our district compares to the region as well as to the nation. Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Lexington, Melrose, Stoneham, Reading, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn are this year's participating districts. The effort was supported by a [Beth Israel Lahey Health grant](#) 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.

A total of 907 high school students responded to the survey, as did 1,146 middle school students. When compared to responses from the Middlesex League (ML) schools as a whole, Arlington responses were

comparable or more favorable across all categories. Here are some examples of high school results that deviate slightly from the Middlesex League responses.

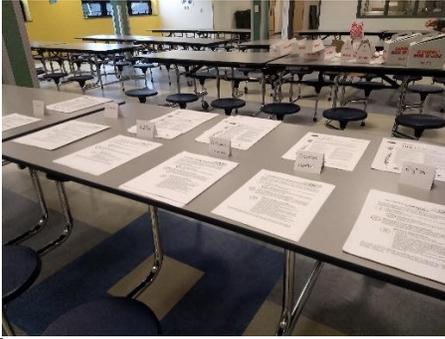
- Unintentional injury and violence
  - Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol one or more times during the 30 days before the survey—AHS 12.2%, ML 11.9%
- Mental Health
  - Felt like they were under overwhelming stress during the past 12 months—AHS 82.6%, ML 79.2%
  - Wanted to do something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning yourself on purpose at least once in the past 12 months—AHS 15.3%, ML 13.6%
- Alcohol and Drugs
  - Ever drank alcohol, at least one drink, on at least 1 day during their life-AHS 58%, ML 55.9%
  - Had their first drink of alcohol before age 13 years, other than a few sips—AHS 9.0%, ML 7.7%
  - Ever used marijuana—AHS 35%, ML 33.4%
  - Were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the 12 months before the survey—AHS 17.2%, ML 13.6%
- Sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS
  - Among sexually active students, did not use a condom during last sexual intercourse—AHS 37.1%, ML 35.3% (Although higher percentages at AHS report that they have been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school and how to use condoms, and also talk with their parents and other adults about ways to prevent HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy than ML schools overall.)
- Other Health-related topics
  - Takes medicine or receiving treatment from a doctor or other health professional for any type of behavioral health, mental health condition or emotional problem—AHS 19.7%, ML 17.2% (Higher percentages of AHS respondents report that there is at least one teacher or other adult in the school they can talk to if they have a problem than ML overall.)

Mental health issues are of particular concern. According to a Centers for Disease Control report released this summer, the suicide rate in Massachusetts has "...increased by 35.3% between 1999 and 2016." Our district takes this issue very seriously, offering the [SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program](#) to all seventh grade students and the annual Wellness Day to all students at AHS. Outside speakers are often brought in to address high school students on this topic.

As mentioned below in ***Latest AEF Grant Supports Continued Progress in Creating Safe & Supportive Schools*** in the **Grants** section of this newsletter, three hundred faculty and staff are trained and have achieved certification in [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#), and an additional 30 APS and community leaders have become trainers. The trained staff have reported a high level of comfort with the topic and a high level of confidence that they could take the next steps to support students.

The district is fortunate to be able to collaborate with both the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) and the [Arlington Youth Counseling Center](#) in educational and therapeutic efforts to keep our children safe. These resources are critical as we work as a community to recognize at-risk youth and help them access the necessary treatments. Please click [here](#) to read the full 2019 Arlington YRBS report.

## **Department News**



### ***The LOOK Act and ELPAC Formation Discussed as Families Connect at “ELL Family Café”***

On Friday, October 18, families of K-12 English learner students (ELs) were invited to an *ELL Family Cafe* held at Gibbs. The purpose of the event was to share information about the [LOOK Act](#) and to discuss the formation of an English Learner Parent Advisory Committee (ELPAC) in Arlington. The LOOK Act, signed by Governor Charles Baker in 2017, aims to provide districts with more flexibility as to the language acquisition programs they choose in order to meet the needs of English learners while maintaining accountability for timely and effective English language acquisition. It also requires that school districts or charter schools with 100 or more ELs or in which ELs comprise 5% of the student body (whichever is less) establish ELPACs. Membership in an ELPAC is voluntary and open to all EL parents and Carla Bruzzese, English Language Learners (ELL) Director, invited attendees to take part.

Gibbs ELL teacher and Family Liaison Heather Smith reports that over 25 parents and guardians enjoyed coffee and refreshments and shared feedback about parent involvement via a questionnaire. The attendees really appreciated the opportunity to connect with other EL students' families and have an interest in being offered more opportunities to learn about what is happening in the ELL classrooms and in the school system as a whole.

Another event is tentatively scheduled for February 2020. I want to thank Ms. Smith and Ms. Bruzzese for their leadership of the event, and ELL teachers Jessica Nguy (OMS) and Hannah Dingman (Hardy) for taking part. To get more information about the LOOK Act or the Arlington ELL program, you may contact Ms. Bruzzese at 781-316-3662 or [cbuzzese@arlington.k12.ma.us](mailto:cbuzzese@arlington.k12.ma.us). Click [here](#) to download ELPAC Information for Parents in the language of your choice.



### ***Design Phase of AHS Building Project Moves Forward, with Enabling to Begin in February***

Members of the community were able to hear a complete review of the Arlington High School Building Project at the Forum held on October 30. The session was opened by Building Committee Chair Jeff

Thielman who reviewed the reasons behind the decision to rebuild AHS, the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#) process, and what has been accomplished thus far. We are currently in the Design Phase of the project where the elements and costs are being refined.

Over the next month the Building Committee will be engaged in *value engineering* which is the process of comparing alternatives and their associated costs and making choices to keep the project within budget without sacrificing educational priorities. It is an exercise that all construction projects use, and it is required by the MSBA for all projects no matter how the project cost estimate compares to the budget. Mr. Thielman stressed that cost analyses will be done on a regular basis throughout the construction process. Building Committee meetings are open to the public

The attendees then heard from the [HMFH](#) architect on the project who reviewed the current thinking on the design, showing renderings that reflected the progress that had been made over the summer. Then the group heard from two managers from [Consigli Construction](#), the town's choice to manage the construction phase of the school rebuild. Time was allotted for audience questions during each segment. Some key takeaways included:

- The new high school has two main entrances, Massachusetts Avenue and from the athletic fields, as well as an entrance for the preschool
- Significant green space is present, in front where 11 of the existing trees are being preserved and in secure courtyards that can be used for learning throughout the day
- There are very few spaces within the school without natural light, and the school is well embraced by the open space around it
- The new school uses a very connected interior design making it safer and easier to supervise and navigate
- Zero carbon emissions is the goal, so there will be photovoltaic cells on the roof and geothermal heating
- Safety during construction is a major concern, and there will be barriers between the construction and academic sites, perimeters, acoustic buffers, daily air quality monitoring, clear signage inside and outside of school, daily noise tests inside the classroom areas, and strategic off-hours work to minimize disruption
- Construction workers will have a designated parking area so that surrounding streets are not impacted
- Rodent control during construction is being addressed, and an Industrial Hygienist will be present to help with safe and lawful removal of contaminants during demolition

The current timeline is as follows:

- Phase 1, Enabling—begins February 2020, involves creation of geothermal wells and relocation of utilities
- Phase 1, Construction Start—begins October 2020, construction of the Performing Arts and STEAM wings, with students remaining in the existing facility
- Phase 2, Construction—begins January 2022, spine, lobby, cafeteria, media center, humanities wing, and preschool and district administration offices area, with students moving into the new Performing Arts and STEAM wings
- Phase 3, Construction—begins August 2023, gymnasium wing, with students occupying all of the new school except this area
- Phase 4, Building Complete, Site Work—begins July 2024, finish site work with students moving into the new school

This timeline has the school completed in five years and one month, with all work ending in August 2025. I encourage everyone to visit the Arlington High School Building Project [website](#) which contains information about all stages of the project. You may want to view the *ACMI* [video of the October 30 Forum](#) and hear directly from the speakers and look through the [presentation](#) that was delivered. This is a very exciting time for our community, and I urge everyone to keep informed on the high school progress.

The date of the next Community Forum will be announced some time in December and all questions relating to the project can be submitted by email at [ahsbuilding@arlington.k12.ma.us](mailto:ahsbuilding@arlington.k12.ma.us).

## **Grants**

### ***Latest AEF Grant Supports Continued Progress in Creating Safe & Supportive Schools***

I want to thank the [Arlington Education Foundation \(AEF\)](#) for their latest award to the Safe & Supportive Schools (SASS) initiative begun in 2017. That year, AEF committed to honor our district with a total of \$200,000 toward behavioral health, supporting our goal to create an educational environment where every student, from preschool to high school, is able to learn. An initial grant of \$100,485 was made at that time. The 2019-2020 grant of \$43,000 enables us to continue and build upon the work that has been accomplished so far. We will be focusing on:

- Continued training of district staff in [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#)—Training will be offered at a variety of times to accommodate new faculty and staff, transportation and food services/lunch staff, coaches, librarians, and school -based clerical staff.
- Safe & Supportive Schools Leadership Team meetings at both the school and district-level—We will continue the work on individual school initiatives, refine the district vision by engaging with key stakeholder groups, establish parent and student advisory councils, and complete a second District Capacity Assessment that will enable prioritization of future work.
- Professional development for school leadership on the tools aligned with our district focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, and social emotional learning
- Increased visibility and awareness of the importance and impact of the SASS work to the wider community to increase understanding and generate excitement that will include a Family/Parent Academy public event
- Site visits to other schools and districts building SASS communities to increase our knowledge base and mini grants of up to \$500 to individual school leadership teams to support their concrete action steps that require additional financing

I am grateful to AEF for recognizing the importance of our work in this area and providing the funds necessary to take additional steps to strengthen the health and safety of our community. We have come a long way since the initial grant was awarded:

- Three hundred faculty and staff are trained and have achieved certification in Youth Mental Health First Aid, and an additional 30 APS and community leaders have become trainers
- Trained staff have reported a high level of comfort with the topic and a high level of confidence that they could take the next steps to support students
- Schools have implemented initiatives and/or further refined their action plans for effective implementation of SASS plans

Thanks to the SASS work that we have accomplished up to this point, we enter 2019 with:

- A shared district and community understanding of how to build the capacity of adults and systems to best meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and growing student body
- A shared understanding within APS of how to identify and support all students' social emotional health and well-being and a common approach on how to support them
- A growing number of staff who are trained in the response flow chart for the district, ensuring that unsafe students can access care in a timely fashion, and those that are safe can remain in school

Our schools are on their way to being safer and more supportive spaces for our students, and we welcome the opportunity to use the recent AEF funds to continue our work and grow as a district.

### **State Grant Supports Implementation of Self-Assessment Recommendations**

I am pleased to report that the district has been awarded a \$7,500 Year 2019-2020 (FY20) [Safe and Supportive Schools Competitive Fund Code 335 grant](#) from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. The grant is designed to assist with the implementation of action plans that resulted from completion of the Behavioral Health and Public Schools Self-Assessment Tool. At this point, approximately 78% of the 23 recommendations which resulted from Arlington Public Schools' use of the tool are either complete or in progress. This grant will assist in addressing the remaining 22% and position the district to be able to revisit the self-assessment tool at a later date.

Activities that the district hopes to address with these grant funds include:

- Family outreach campaign in partnership with the Diversity and Inclusion Groups at each school and the Visual Art Department
- District Leadership team attendance at the [New England Positive Behavior Support Forum](#) where they will train in tier 1 teaming processes
- Two pilot programs regarding the use of student data to improve supports and outcomes

We are fortunate that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts recognizes the importance of creating safe and supportive schools and provides grant funds to support this work.

### **AEF Continuing Scholar Awards Enable Educational Enrichment Experiences**

Once again the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) has honored our educators with [Continuing Scholar Awards](#). These grants enable our teachers and staff to have personal and professional enrichment experiences that impact their professional practice and their students. The recent awards are as follows:

- Peirce Grade 1 teacher Elena Haro will attend the [Responding to Misbehavior](#) course offered through [Responsive Classroom](#) in Waltham in February. Ms. Haro believes that learning more about the Responsive Classroom approach to teaching has helped her refine some of her teaching practices, and she is looking forward to getting a deeper understanding of how it relates to the emotional needs and misbehaviors of her students.
- Occupational Therapists Marianne Condon, Deb Bermudes, Cindy Fijux, Cybil Ransom-Joyce, and Helen Bassett will attend the [American Occupational Therapy Association 2020 Annual Conference & Expo](#) in Boston in March. The attendees are looking forward to meeting with OT's from around the world, sharing ideas and goals, attending presentations and workshops that connect current research to practice, learning about programs and curricula relevant to their positions, and finding different or new ways to treat students and patients.
- Dallin teachers Ruby Liu, Lianne Dusek, and Michelle Crowley will attend the [2020 Winter SEAL Teacher Retreat](#) in Essex in February. The three attendees will experience a teaching approach that integrates the arts into Social Emotional Artistic Learning and explore strategies and techniques that they can integrate into what they do with students to promote their well-being and build social emotional competencies.
- Seven science teachers from across the district will attend the [National Science Teaching Association \(NSTA\) Annual Conference](#) in Boston in April. NSTA is the premier organization for gathering the most current curricula, resources, and pedagogical strategies for delivering science content and skills to students across the U.S. These teachers are looking forward to attending workshops, institutes, lectures, and resource demonstrations that will benefit their teaching practices.
- AHS World Language teachers Katia Marticorena and Christina Toro will attend the [Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages](#) in New York in February. In addition to attending workshops and sharing ideas with their colleagues, the two teachers are presenters. Ms. Marticorena will present *Creating Classrooms for Equity and Social Justice*, and she will be joined by Ms. Toro for a joint presentation of *Reading Strategies to Improve Language and Cultural Proficiency*.

Thank you, AEF, for supporting our educators in their personal and professional growth.

## **Awards & Distinctions**

### ***Dallin Fifth Grade Student Chosen for Scholastic Kids Press***

I want to congratulate Dallin student Claire Olivia Handler on being chosen as one of 50 [Scholastic Kids Press](#) Kid Reporters. This worldwide program has been providing journalism experience to young people between 10 and 14 years of age since 2000. All of their original stories appear on the Scholastic Kids Press website as well as in some print issues of Scholastic Classroom Magazines. I think the best way for us to understand more about the program and what it means for Claire is to hear from her directly, and I am pleased that she agreed to share her thoughts with us.

**Question:** How did you find out about the program? Did you have to apply? What was the process?

**Claire:** *I found out about the program from my friend Max, who was finishing up his last year as a Kid Reporter the year I met him. I had to submit an application and send in sample articles. I sent the application in the spring and didn't find out that I got in until late August. And THEN I had to wait to announce it on September 26th. I was so excited, and still am!*

**Question:** What appealed to you about being a Kid Reporter?

**Claire:** *I love to write, and I'm interested in learning about other people. This is also a great way to get other people to read my stuff!*

**Question:** Did you choose the topic of your first article, [He's Got Game](#), yourself?

**Claire:** *I did choose this topic myself, because I love playing games, and I wanted to know about how the games are designed.*

**Question:** How did you get an interview with Mr. Jason Schneider? What was it like to learn about him and his company?

**Claire:** *Jason is my dad's friend and colleague, and I was very excited to learn more about [Gamewright](#). There's so much that goes into designing a game, and it was extremely cool to find out about it. My favorite part about meeting with Jason was learning the interesting story behind "Sleeping Queens" because it was designed by a kid.*

**Question:** What is the process you used to get the article printed? Did you send it in to Kids Press for editing?

**Claire:** *I have to pitch the idea to my editor to get it approved. I also have to send sample questions that I might ask. Then I write my article and send it in, and my Scholastic editor edits it and publishes it. I will be assigned articles, too.*

**Question:** How often do you expect to write an article for the [website](#)?

**Claire:** *I hope to do at least one every 3 weeks.*

**Question:** How long will you be a Kid Reporter?

**Claire:** *The age limit of being a kid reporter is 14 years old, so 14!*

**Question:** Is there anything you want to tell other young people about being a Kid Reporter?

**Claire:** *I'd like to tell kids that being a Kid Reporter is a fun and great experience to learn about other people.*

Great job on your first article, Claire, and we look forward to your next one!

### ***Blog Article by Bishop Visual Art Teacher Follows Convention Presentation, Highlights Research***

I want to share the news that Bishop Visual Art teacher Samantha Kasle had an article published on the Studio Thinking blog last month. [What Motivates Our Students to Create? How Can We Use the Studio Habits of Mind to Assess Student Art?](#) recounts her presentation at the [National Art Education Association Convention \(NAEA\)](#) held in Boston last March. This was her first experience as a speaker at an NAEA Convention, and the opportunity arose out of her research involvement into Assessing Student Motivation in the art classroom.

Ms. Kasle is one of the art teachers mentioned in [Studio Thinking from the Start: The K-8 Art Educator's Handbook](#) by researchers Jillian Hogan, Lois Hetland, Diane Jaquith, and Ellen Winner, published last September. Last fall, Ms. Hogan and Ms. Jaquith brought Ms. Kasle and several of the other Massachusetts teachers that were featured in the book together to begin research toward expanding Chapter 5. This chapter focuses on Assessment, which can be tricky and seem daunting to a new art teacher. Ms. Kasle found that taking the time to really dig into this topic and discuss the different methods of Assessment used by the teachers in the group was very valuable. This was the foundation for the NAEA Convention presentation, which had Ms. Kasle and five other elementary teachers sharing their data and ideas with art educators from around the world.

Ms. Kasle's research centered on finding out whether students were more engaged when they created art projects that had personal significance than when they were doing projects that were skill-based and focused on developing craft. She explored this topic with her fourth grade classes at Bishop and Peirce. All three classes participated in two art projects and she collected data using student Self-Assessment Rubrics at the end. *Studio Habits of Mind* was the basis for both the art projects and the reflection worksheets that followed. Created by Harvard's [Project Zero](#), [Studio Habits of Mind](#) is a series of eight dispositions to explain the different ways an arts education can benefit other areas as well.

The NAEA presentation had a large audience, and Ms. Kasle reports that in spite of being interrupted by the fire alarms going off at the Hynes Convention Center, it went really well. Ms. Hogan subsequently asked her to write the recent blog article.

Ms. Kasle believes that the NAEA conferences are wonderful professional development events. She reports that she always learns a lot and returns to the classroom reinvigorated about her teaching. She is grateful that our district has been able to fund admission tickets for Visual Art Department members over the past few years. One highlight of Ms. Kasle's participation this year was meeting world famous education theorist Howard Gardner, developer of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, a favorite of hers. I am glad Ms. Kasle has found ways to participate in research, share her results with others, and contribute to the greater understanding of arts education.

### **Academics & Enrichment**

#### ***New Elementary Schedule Increases Visual Art Programming for Grades K-3***

In last month's newsletter I talked about the new elementary schedule and how it is providing more flexibility to enlarge offerings and try new things. One example of this is an increase in Visual Art programming. For the first time this year, all students in grades K-3 will have an extra art class each week for one quarter of the year on a rotating basis, providing our youngest students with additional educational experiences. Art teachers are using this time to:

- Offer additional art history and contemporary art information

- Offer students extra time in the art room “studio stations” where deeper exploration in certain preferred materials and techniques is possible
- Increase collaborative hands-on projects
- Offer students experiences with materials and techniques not offered during the regular schedule
- Increase literacy connections which includes having students develop written artist statements about the artwork that they create during their regular art lesson
- Create more opportunities for students to share their artwork with the class. An added advantage to this is that students practice their public speaking skills as they explain their displayed work to everyone.
- To introduce STEAM learning to students (science, technology, engineering, art, and math). Students are able to explore scientific art careers and incorporate more technology into their work.

It is gratifying to see how the additional time is being used to find new ways for our young people to explore their personal creativity. I thank the Visual Art teachers for the efforts they have put forward to increase opportunities for their students.



### ***Author Visits Introduce New Titles, Highlight Diversity, and Talk About Craft at Thompson, OMS***

This has been an exciting month for author visits at two of our schools, with writers sharing different types of books and different styles for our young people to consider. I want to describe each of them here so you will get a sense of how enriching it is for the students to meet and hear from authors. Thank you to the teachers at Thompson and Ottoson who arranged and facilitated these visits.

#### **Saadia Faruqi, Thompson, All Grades**

The first author to visit Thompson was [Saadia Faruqi](#), author of the [Yasmin series](#). This year APS funded grades 1-5 classroom libraries to support the Reading Units of Study curriculum. Literacy Coach Alessandra Magalhaes ordered Ms. Faruqi’s Yasmin books with an eye towards bringing in volumes with more diverse characters. When she saw a Tweet indicating that the author was coming to Boston and had an opening for a school visit, she informed the schools and Principal Karen Donato responded quickly. Ms. Magalhaes worked with The Book Rack so that families were able to order a Yasmin book, and have it signed by the author.

Ms. Faruqi spoke to students at two assemblies, one for grades K-2 and one for 3-5. Second grade teacher Lynne Dichter reports that Ms. Faruqi talked to the younger students about Pakistan, her heritage country, and highlighted some differences and similarities with the U.S. She spoke of how her characters

are influenced by her own family members, solicited student input as to what characteristics they thought Yasmin possessed, and asked them to consider whether they shared any of those. Ms. Dichter says the talk was pertinent, age appropriate, and engaging. Since many of Thompson's students are multilingual, they were very excited when Ms. Faruqi mentioned that she speaks several languages. It is notable that while the book series features characters that are diverse, the stories themselves do not focus on that. Instead, Yasmin's characteristics could be those of any second grade student in the world.

#### Rachel Vail, Thompson, Second Grade

The second grade at Thompson was treated to a visit from [Rachel Vail](#), author of the [A is for Elizabeth series](#). She was able to meet with two classes at a time, and Thompson second grade teacher Lynne Dichter says the session was very intimate—like having a casual chat. The author's presentation was quite humorous, and she was so delighted that many of the students had read the first book in the series that she quickly moved on to questions. In her answers, she talked about her inspiration for the characters and the stories. The students learned that it takes a long time to write a book because authors spend a lot of time making improvements and throwing parts of stories away—a good message for young writers. It was surprising to hear that after several years of writing, Ms. Vail has never met the illustrator. At the end she told the children that she has a dream job because she can use her imagination all the time and she almost never needs to wear shoes!

#### Lauren Tarshis, Thompson, Third and Fourth Grades

Rachel Vail's visit, described above, was the first of two to Thompson that came about thanks to a connection between fourth grade teacher Sarah Marie Jette and a bookseller at Belmont books. Ms. Jette is notified when a children's book is being released for the first time or when it is being released in paperback. In these cases, publishers promote the books through school visits and there is no charge to the school. The second visit was from author [Lauren Tarshis](#), author of the [I Survived](#) historical fiction series. Her visit to Boston was to introduce *#19: I Survived The Great Molasses Flood, 1919* which took place here.

Ms. Jette reports that the book series is very popular among third and fourth grade students, and Ms. Tarshis presented to each one. The author is a good speaker who seems attuned to children. In her engaging sessions she talked about craft and tied her remarks into the upcoming historical fiction unit being taught in the classroom. Immigration was another tie-in to classroom teaching. This topic is studied in the fourth grade, and the protagonist in the book is an Italian immigrant. Thompson students had been learning about leads, the way a book begins, and Ms. Tarshis uses flashbacks. The overlap between what the author had to say about this writing strategy and what was being discussed in the classroom was powerful. The author also talked about the revision process and how she wrote several books before her first one was published.

#### Jennifer Nielsen, Ottoson, Seventh and Eighth Grades

Another visit associated with Belmont Books was that of [Jennifer Nielsen](#), author of fantasy and historical fiction, who addressed seventh and eighth grade students in the OMS Wood Gym this month. She presented her latest book, [Words on Fire](#), which is set in Lithuania in 1893. At this time, the Cossacks are sent by the Czar of Russia to make sure people speak only Russian and that they give up any books or artifacts of the Lithuanian language or culture. The main character, Andra, is given a package of books and when she leaves to deliver them, her parents are arrested. She believes that joining the underground movement is the only way to free them, illustrating that in times of oppression, people are pushed toward activism.

This message was driven home again when Ms. Nielsen delivered a powerful history of the Berlin Wall as she discussed another of her books, [A Night Divided](#). The author described how people tried to escape and how the wall was dismantled two years after President Reagan called for Russia to "Tear down this wall." OMS Librarian and Media Assistant Edith Moisand reports that Ms. Nielsen's visit was well received, with many students coming up to tell her how much they enjoyed her talk. Ms. Moisand also

notes that all the library copies of Ms. Nielsen's books, both fantasy and historical fiction, were gone by the time she returned to the library after the presentation and there is a waiting list for the new title. Students were able to pre-order and pay for the book prior to the visit and pick it up at Ottoson if they desired.

### ***Parent Involvement in Math, Engineering, and Computer Science Activities Enrich Learning***

I am grateful for the many ways our families and community members step forward to participate in and lead activities that enrich the educational experience for our young people. Parental involvement is very strong in our district and I want to present some examples of this involvement in the areas of mathematics, engineering, and computer science. I am grateful to all the teachers, parents, and community members who participate in these different groups and activities.

#### **Bishop Math-Ins**

Bishop Mathematics Coach Carolyn Gaffey presented the idea of holding Math-Ins in September 2018 in order to strengthen the home-school connection around mathematics. At a Math-In, parent and families of students in a single grade are invited to engage in mathematics with their child in the classroom setting. Ms. Gaffey gets things started at 8:30 am with a 15 minute presentation that explains the philosophy of the math program, gives a brief overview of the current content that students are working on, and the mathematical progression of the content. This is a time when she can also address any misconceptions that sometimes crop-up around mathematics instruction. After the presentation, the attendees transition into the classroom. In most cases, families get the chance to see an authentic 60-minute math block. Parents are welcome to stay the entire time if they can.

Ms. Gaffey wants each Math-In to be authentic, so no special content is planned. She works with teachers ahead of time so that she understands where they are in the unit and which lesson will fall on Math-In day. The event gives attendees a better understanding of what an actual mathematics block looks and sounds like and allows them to catch a glimpse of their children and their classmates making sense of mathematical ideas. Feedback has been very positive with parents expressing their appreciation for the opportunity. Ms. Gaffey tries to accommodate all classrooms in a grade on one day but ran into a scheduling conflict with one fifth grade classroom this month. So, she held an event for two of the three classrooms in October that was attended by 38 individuals and the Math-In for the third classroom is taking place in early November.



#### **Brackett Bottle Rocket Launch and Math Mornings**

If you were in Robbins Farm Park between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm on October 6 you would have seen around 50 families gathered to take part in the annual Bottle Rocket Launch. Participants are invited to make their own rocket ahead of time or bring the supplies and make it on site. (Illustrated instructions are available). Leader Sanjay Vakil, an 11-year veteran of heading the event, reports that this has been a favorite Brackett activity for at least 15 years.

Fourth Grade Math Morning is an extracurricular, supplemental math program run by a team of parents on behalf of the Brackett STEM Committee. The goal is to inspire and energize students about interesting mathematics topics such as Venn Diagrams, Patterns and Sequences, the Pythagorean Theorem, Decimals, and Algebra—an Introduction. Each session includes a brief slide presentation on the topic of the morning, followed by worksheets with fun exercises. Math games and Jeopardy-style contests are sometimes included. Team members Jeremy Gregory, Tracy Kruger, Jen Prior, Bérangère Sauvagnat, and Scott Uebelhart invite and encourage parents to stay and assist their child. Fourth Grade Math Morning meets at 7:30 am. Math Mornings are also held for third and fifth grade students all year. Contact Mr. Uebelhart at [scott.uebelhart@gmail.com](mailto:scott.uebelhart@gmail.com) for information.

### Dallin Math Olympiad Club

Ekaterina Zagriadskaia is the Math Olympiad Club Coordinator at Dallin, which is open to all students in grades four and five. The [Math Olympiad](#) (MOEMS) Program offers problem solving contests for students in grades 4-8 for school teams of up to 35 students. The website reports that “Last year nearly 170,000 students from about 6,000 teams in six countries participated.” The contests are a great way for students to explore mathematics problem solving.

The Dallin Club meets in the library every other week from 7:30-8:30 am to prepare to take one or more of the five contests that will be posted on the Math Olympiad website. Practice consists of working through challenges from previous years. Dallin fields two teams, one for each grade. When a contest is posted, Principal Thad Dingman decides on the best date to administer the test, which he gives during the school day. Ms. Zagriadskaia grades the challenges and enters the scores on the Math Olympiad website. At the end of the year students who placed in the top 50<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, or 10<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally receive badges and /or certificates from MOEMS. Participation varies, and Ms. Zagriadskaia reports that 45 students took the first contest last year, but only nine fifth grade students and seven fourth grade students completed all five challenges.

### Stratton Coding Club

This is the fifth year for the parent-run Stratton Coding Club which meets Wednesday mornings from 7:30-8:00 am. Two sections run simultaneously, one for grades K-2 and one for 3-5. Participation is limited to 20 students in each. This year there are 18 students taking part in the younger section and because 26 older children expressed interest, a lottery was held to get the number down to 20. Kindergarten participants are required to have a parent along to assist.

The group is a fun, casual environment that allows the young people to learn coding and computer science concepts using tools such as [code.org](#), [Scratch Jr](#), [Hopscotch](#), and [Scratch](#). Seven parents are involved in running the Club this year: Aron Atkins, Barbara Atkins, Chi-Yun Lau, Matthew Bargar, Patrick Harrington, Sue Boland, and Zach Gendron.

### Gibbs/Ottoson Math Team and Ottoson Math Club

This year there are two opportunities for middle school students to challenge themselves with mathematics: Math Team and Math Club. Math Team focuses on preparing for and taking competitions and is open to both Gibbs and Ottoson students. Both schools will field a [Mathcounts@](#) team this year and offer the [AMC 8](#), a 25-question, 40-minute multiple choice examination. The Team is coached by Jonathan McIntyre, math tutor and Arlington parent, and he reports that he is supplementing basic facts and techniques of problem solving by expanding upon the higher-level strategy training that he started last year. He says that the harder problems require good strategy to solve, such as transforming the problem into one which is easier to calculate, or has fewer restrictions, making it easier to work with. Team members will also talk a lot more about using visualization than in past years and learn to manipulate pictures instead of symbols. These lessons will help students learn mathematics and science in high school and college, where understanding works better than memorization.

To enable more students to participate, Mr. McIntyre meets with Math Team students each Sunday at 2:30 pm at Robbins Library, and goes over the same material the following Thursday at 6:45 pm in AHS Room 330. He is grateful to Mathematics Director Matthew Coleman for securing access to the AHS room for him, and to AHS Mathematics teacher Joanna Begin for letting the group use it. See the Gibbs/Ottoson [Math Team webpage](#) for more information.

Math Club meets only at Ottoson. OMS Mathematics teacher Shukti Fischl and parent volunteer Chris Sofio lead the Club. This group is for those who are not interested in competition but are looking for some extra challenging and fun math-related activities. The Club focuses on mathematics games and puzzles often collected from Mathcounts and meets before school at 7:15 am on Thursdays in OMS Room 217.

### **Creative Highlights**



### ***Ottoson Drama Season Off to a Great Start with Performances of Fall Plays***

October 25 was the date for the performances of the fall plays at Ottoson, and English teacher and Director Jenna Fernandes reports that the two shows, [Door to Door](#) and [Small Actors](#), were “phenomenal”. She is really proud of what the 29 actors were able to accomplish in only five weeks, and both shows received a standing ovation. Many people commented on the “Cliff Notes” version of *Romeo and Juliet* that happens in *Small Actors*, which centers on a high school girl who doesn’t get the part of Juliet in her school’s production.

Ottoson has been offering One Act plays in the fall since 2014, and it is part of the thriving drama program at the school. Ms. Fernandes says that over 10% of the student body is connected to the program in some way. There are opportunities to hang flyers, fold and distribute programs, and sell tickets and concessions for those who audition and don’t receive a part. Everyone is welcome to attend the monthly after school Drama Club events as well. This month’s activity was a drama workshop and an information session for the upcoming spring show, [Legally Blonde, The Musical](#), and 90 students attended.

Auditions for *Legally Blonde* have begun and rehearsals for the May 1 and 2 performances begin in January. Gibbs sixth grade students are eligible to participate in the musical as well as the Student-Directed One Act Festival at the end of the year. The Club is planning the annual trip to New York City and this spring the group will see *West Side Story*. I want to congratulate all the cast and crew members that took part in the fall plays and thank Director Jenna Fernandes and Assistant Director OMS Special Education teacher Randi Flynn for providing such a wonderful experience for our middle school students

### ***Community Invited to School Visual Art Exhibits Planned Throughout the Year***

We will have many opportunities to view the wonderful work our students are doing in their Visual Art classes this year. David Ardito, K-12 Art Director, wants the community to know that all schools will have at least one major art exhibit. Ottoson Middle School has four end-of-quarter exhibits and Gibbs has three end-of-the-trimester shows that present all current students’ work. There are also special outside exhibits that our young artists will be involved in.

Please click [here](#) to see the current schedule of the exhibits and events currently scheduled. There are still a few dates to be determined, and those will be added shortly. I hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to attend these wonderful demonstrations of the Visual Art curriculum and the talent of our students.

## **Athletic Highlights**

### ***Fall Spy Ponder Season Ends with Teams and Athletes Moving on to Postseason Competition***

Under the direction of our new Athletic Director John Bowler, the Spy Ponder athletes have finished their regular fall season competition with several teams moving on to post-season play. The Girls Soccer team finished with a 12-2-4 record and qualified for the state tournament for the ninth straight year. They host Woburn High School in the first round. The Boys Soccer team finished the regular season at 9-5-3 and qualified for the state tournament for the sixth straight year. They play their first round game at Belmont High School.

Field Hockey made the tournament for the first time since 2009 and finished the regular season with a 10-7-1 record. They lost to Lexington High School in the first round of the tournament 3-2 in overtime. The Golf Team made the state tournament for the first time since 2015. Congratulations to Senior Patrick Masci who was named to the league All Star team.

The Boys Cross Country team recently finished second at the Middlesex League meet and will be competing in the Eastern Divisionals with the possibility of the State Championships after that. The Girls Cross Country team finished fourth in the Middlesex League meet. They are also competing in the Eastern Divisionals with the possibility of the State Championships.

The Girls Swim Team finished fifth at the Middlesex League meet and is swimming at the sectional and state competitions in the next couple of weeks. The Football team is coming off a big win over Peabody and plays Boston Latin the first week in November in a Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association non-playoff game. Additionally, they will play at Waltham High School on Thanksgivings Day.

Girls Volleyball finished their season at the Middlesex League play day event at Melrose High School. The Cheering team is getting ready for their Middlesex League Competition the second week in November.

I suspect it is hard for Mr. Bowler to believe that he has finished his first season as Athletic Director at Arlington High School! [Winter registration](#) is now open, and we will soon be turning our attention to basketball, ice hockey, indoor track, boys swimming, wrestling, and gymnastics. Thank you, Mr. Bowler, for getting the athletic year off to a great start. I salute our hard-working athletes and coaches on their strong fall season. Good luck to those participating in post-season play!