

Principal's Report

Amherst School District

October 19, 2017

Porter Dodge, Principal

Elementary &
Middle School
Excellence

- **Open House** for grades 5 and 6 was held on Tuesday, October 10th. AMS continues to model our grade 5 evening after the Clark Wilkins School where students attended with parents, provided a student-led tour of the building, and discussed their current work. This helped to make a much smoother transition to AMS.
- **Open House** for grades 7 and 8 will be held on Wednesday, October 18th in the traditional format where most parents meet with their child in either a student-led conference or follow a student schedule for the evening.
- The **JR. National Honor Society** is readying to begin our 2017-18 AMS Chapter. On October 17th, Maggie Kim, AMS Guidance Counselor and official advisor, and NJHS officers will hold its first meeting, followed by the first community service work session cleaning up the AMS grounds on October 25th. A staff advisory committee consisting of five anonymous teachers make up the adult leadership of this worthwhile organization that is a point of pride for the AMS community. We would like to remind everyone that parents or administrators may not serve.
- **Cross County Champions:** The Amherst Eagles Girls and Boys Cross Country Teams are the Tri-County League Champions, defeating eleven other schools at Nashua North on Saturday, October 14th
- **Volleyball and Swings:** Thanks to a generous \$5000 donation from the Amherst PTA, and support from the Amherst taxpayers and School Board, our new regulation Beach Volleyball Court and swing sets installed last week are in full use. We are reminding the children that they must use the crosswalk when exiting the play area because cars park in front of the school throughout the day.
- Principal Dodge sent home a message to parents to address a growing traffic problem at the morning drop-off here at AMS. At the start of school last month, we averaged 170 cars dropping off children between 7am and 7:35am. That number continues to increase, with almost 200 cars dropping off daily, and it is causing a major traffic backup all the way down Cross Road. Unfortunately, the backup is making more and more students late for school since students must be **in their classroom when the bell rings for attendance at 7:30**. Parents are asked to please allow plenty of time to maneuver through the traffic jam.
- **Red Ribbon Week:** Each year we celebrate a drug-free environment. This year's Red Ribbon Week is October 23-31 and the theme is ***Your Future is Key So Stay Drug-Free.***

Diligent Fiscal
Oversight

- Projections were for 596 students. Our current enrollment is **637**, broken down into Grade 5: 132, Grade 6: 141. Grade 7: 174 (28 MV), Grade 8: 188(32 MV)
- **FY 19 Budget:** The AMS Instructional Leadership Team began the Budget process last spring and completed the proposed FY19 Budget. Curriculum coordinators worked

closely with teachers and administration to present a budget based on need, not on wants, and we are very pleased with their efforts.

- Roger Langley, AMS Facilities Manager, John Robichaud, Director of Facilities, and I met to discuss the completed projects from last year, the current projects for FY 19 and the items to present for the FY 17 budget assumptions.

Inspirational & Effective Teaching

- **Competency-Based learning:** Dean of Instruction, Dr. Bethany Bernasconi, Dean of Students, Dr. Lisa Femia-Hou, and Principal Porter Dodge were invited to present at the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEAS&C) **Commission on Public Schools Showcase of Model School Programs and Promising Practices Conference** on October 13th in Westford, MA. Our topic was *Implications of Developing Successful Competency-Based Learning*. The conference was the first attempt by both organizations to combine and highlight some New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) Spotlight Schools with secondary schools throughout New England. Our presentation received accolades, and Executive Director, Jerry Frew invited us to present our work at the NELMS Annual Conference next spring.
- **Nature's Classroom:** Grade 6 returned from another worthwhile and excellent week at Camp Jewel in Colebrook, Connecticut from September 18-22.
- **Grade 8 Ferry Beach Ecology School:** Both weeks at the FBES went well, with beautiful summer-like weather, and students enjoyed the benefit of hands-on learning, collaboration, and cooperation. Principal Dodge spent a day at the FBES, and observed programming and met with administration about plans for the school to move to a new location nearby two years from now.

Innovative Technology Integration

- **Maker Space:** Brad Freeman, Steve Opre continue to work with Amherst Recreation Director Craig Fraley to improve the *Maker Space* program in our **Innovation and Design Lab** in the STEM wing. Technology Integrators Elena Sheldon, and Jessica Oltman, along with Art teacher Brandie Pettus have been pushing in to assist Steve Opre as a second adult in this large area of supervision. On October 19th, the MakerSpace is holding its first **Repair Café**. This is a once a month event where makers offer to fix items free of charge for the community.

SAU #39 Strategic Planning

- **Mastery Based Learning and Grading:** A series of Community Forums presented by Christine Landwerhle and Dr. Bernasconi, to educate and inform the public about this topic are scheduled. The first, on Thursday, November 2nd at the Middle School will conveniently be offered at 6pm and 7 pm to accommodate working parents.
- The **SAU 39 Strategic Plan** directs schools to innovation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. To that end, we continue to offer co-curricular activities with a focus on STEM. Our Technology Coordinator and Integrator, Elena Sheldon, Technology Integrator Jessica Oltman, Network Administrator Brad Freeman, and STEM teacher Steve Opre are working with Bruce Chakrin, Bethany Bernasconi, to make the Middle School lead the region in STEM development.

Summary of Upcoming Events

October 17: Theater Club Auditions, 2:30-8pm, 7th/8th grades
October 18: Open House, grades 7 and 8, 6pm-8pm
October 19: Theater Club Auditions, 2:30-8pm, 5th/6th grades and 7th/8th call backs
October 19: Trimester 1 Progress Reports Issued to Students

October 24: Theater Club Kick off Meeting, 6pm
October 24: PTA Meeting/Internet Safety Presentation by SRO Knox, at Wilkins School, 7pm
October 26: Sports Banquet: Volleyball and Cross Country, 6pm
October 30: Sports Banquet: Soccer and Field Hockey, 6pm
November 2 and 3: Parent conferences
November 3: AMS Veteran Walk-a-Thon (rain date is Nov. 9)
November 3: **Early release day**, school dismisses at 11am
November 6: PTA Meeting/Internet Safety Presentation by SRO Knox at AMS, 6:30pm
November 14: **Late Start** day, school begins at 9:25am
November 17: School dance, grades 6-8, 7pm