



Office of the Superintendent  
Arlington High School  
P. O. Box 167  
869 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02476-0002

Telephone  
(781) 316-3500  
Fax  
(781) 316-3509

News from March 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

It is very sad to have to start another newsletter with an acknowledgment of a tragedy that occurred. Eight people were senselessly murdered in Atlanta, seven of whom were women and six of whom were Asian. This incident is one of many violent acts against Asian Americans that have been rising since the start of the pandemic. While it is disheartening to see tragedies such as this and our country continue to struggle to respect people of color, APS will continue to expand our work against racism and integrate lessons that include different cultures and races.

There is no place for hate in our community, and it was wonderful to see AHS students step up to respond to the Georgia shooting. The Young Feminist Alliance joined the Asian American Club for a joint meeting to discuss this incident as well as related issues of racism, misogyny, fetishization, and hatred that was open to all. I commend the members of both groups for sponsoring this event and demonstrating their commitment to standing against violence to women and the Asian American community.

Thankfully, there are many kind and wonderful things happening in our district every day, as our schools find ways to remember the needs of others and build community. Here are just a few examples.

- Brackett families donated non-perishable foods and grocery store gift cards to Arlington EATS this month.
- The Dallin Girls for Greatness Club, started by a fifth-grade student, has made donations to [Kid's Meals](#) their first project so that young people impacted by the ice storm in Texas will have enough to eat.
- AHS Youth Feminist Alliance launched a fundraiser for [Dignity Matters](#) with guest speakers that spoke to the state of period poverty in Massachusetts and the efforts to make feminine hygiene products accessible to those who need them.
- Several elementary schools held Read-A-Thons this month. At Peirce, the event ran from March 15 until March 26, and students could keep track of how much they read in Reading Passports. All genres from graphic novels to non-fiction were encouraged, and Principal Andrew Ahmadi said that thousands of minutes were spent reading. The end was celebrated with a school-wide Zoom hosted by the second grade and everyone was invited to dress like their favorite book character.
- The Dallin school-wide book club held a Zoom book discussion with Sally Pla, an autistic author who advocates for neurodiversity and acceptance.
- Teachers at AHS were encouraged to send a handwritten note and picture of themselves to seniors since it won't be possible for them to sign yearbooks this year.
- The AHS Media Center and the Student Library Advisory Committee held a Catch Your Pet (traditional and stuffed or inanimate) Reading contest, encouraging students to send in photos for a chance to win.
- There has been a wonderful outpouring of support to help secure vaccination appointments across our school communities as parents helped teachers and teachers helped other teachers. I thank everyone who was involved in this tremendous effort to keep our educators safe as schools reopen in April.

I have good news to share about the INTERFACE mental health referral helpline that I reported on in my News from November-December. All Arlington residents can use the [William James INTERFACE Referral Service](#) to be matched with licensed mental health providers. From December 1 through March 2,

Arlington residents requested over 70 referrals—an amount that would be expected from a town in a year rather than in three months. The range of age among those looking for assistance is from preschool to senior citizen. The need for this service is obvious, and I am grateful that a grant made it possible for Arlington to become a participating community.

All of us are enjoying the progress of the new high school as construction continues. The steel frame of the Performing Arts and STEAM wings is expected to be completed in March. The AHS Building Project is releasing regular videos of construction progress and you can view the March video [here](#). Everything you want to know about the project can be found on the Project [website](#) where you may also [sign-up](#) for Construction Updates and Bulletins or email your questions. You will also want to read ***AHS Senior Signatures Leave Lasting Mark on New High School*** in the **Awards & Distinctions** section of this newsletter to learn about the way the new Performing Arts wing was “topped off”.

Anyone who missed the Arlington Reads Together moderated discussion with [Dr. Beverly Tatum](#), author of [Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?](#) on Sunday, March 21, may [view](#) it on ACMi. I want to thank the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) for providing the grant that enabled district staff to have a separate session with Dr. Tatum the following day. I am grateful for these opportunities to reflect on diversity issues and inform our teaching practices and cultural competence.

This pandemic often makes us feel as if we are standing still in time, but we are already moving forward with planning for 2021-2022. Below is a quick look at what is already happening.

- A teacher group has been created at AHS to help with planning. Focus groups for parents and students will help us understand what we have learned over the last year and determine what new strategies or techniques we may want to incorporate next year.
- Kindergarten registration is open. Children who will be five years old by August 31, 2021 are eligible to enter Kindergarten in September 2021. [Visit this webpage](#) where you will find the new student registration form for Fall 2021, a letter to Kindergarten families, and an FAQ section that covers everything you need to know to register.
- [Arlington Community Education](#) has opened registration for [SummerFun!](#) You may see the catalog of summer classes [here](#).

In closing, I want to remind everyone how important it is to continue COVID-19 testing of our students and staff as our schools open for more in-person learning. We are fortunate to be able to continue the pool testing program throughout the end of the year. If you have not considered signing your child up to be part of this program, I urge you to do so. The testing is easy and quick so very little learning time is lost, and the results provide the information we need to safeguard health. If your child is currently attending school in person, click on the appropriate link below to complete and sign the consent form for your child to participate in the program, if you have not already done so. If your child is already in the pool testing program, you do not need to take further action.

- [K-5 and Gibbs Pool Testing Consent and Registration Link](#)
- [OMS Pool Testing Consent and Registration Link](#)
- [AHS Pool Testing Consent and Registration Link](#)

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Headline View**

### **Safe & Supportive Schools**

#### ***Stratton Teachers Work Together to Foster Connection and Community***

Reading and discussing a book, creating and distributing a playlist with songs that represent each class, celebrating Valentine’s Day and National Crayon Day, and holding the first-ever Minute-to-Win it

Olympiad are some of the ways four teacher-led committees at Stratton have brought their students, families, and staff members together. [Learn more>](#)

### **District News**

#### ***METCO Families Discuss Resources with Boston City Councilor At-Large Annissa Essaibi George***

Families of our Boston resident students were able to learn more about the youth opportunities open to them when they attended a Zoom meeting with Annissa Essaibi George, who has served as a Councilor At-Large since January 2016. [Read more>](#)

#### ***Elementary and Middle Schools Reopen for In-Person Learning in April***

The month of March was spent doing the necessary work to prepare our elementary and middle schools for the safe return of most students and staff in April for in-person learning five days a week. [Read more>](#)

#### ***MCAS Testing to be Held for Grades Three and Above***

MCAS testing has been mandated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and is currently expected to be completed within the window of May 10-June 11. [Learn more>](#)

### **Grants**

#### ***AEF Grants Support Creativity, Accessibility, and Inclusion***

The recent grants awarded by the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) support the creation of a joyful celebratory performance to end the fifth grade at Thompson, captions for the remaining Arlington High School Drama Department productions, and an expansion of the project that celebrates notable scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians to include all Arlington elementary schools. [Learn more>](#)

### **Awards & Distinctions**

#### ***Virtual Gallery of Student Artwork Created for Philharmonic Family Concert***

Over 25 young elementary artists submitted original artwork that was included in a virtual gallery accompanying the [Arlington Philharmonic Orchestra](#) family concert this month. [Read more>](#)

#### ***Gibbs Student Wins Honorable Mention in Massachusetts "Letters About Literature"***

In his [Letters About Literature](#) award-winning letter to author T. Neill Anderson, the sixth grade writer is able to clearly convey how the book *People of the Plague* moved him and led him to think about his family and how life should be lived. [Read more>](#)

#### ***Gibbs and Ottoson Math Teams Compete in Mathcounts, OMS Student Moves on to Nationals***

Several team members posted high scores and one OMS seventh grade student earned the chance to compete at the national level during [Mathcounts](#), the biggest middle school mathematics competition of them all. [Learn more>](#)

#### ***AHS Senior Signatures Leave Lasting Mark on New High School***

A special event enabled members of the Arlington High School Class of 2021 to sign one of the 30-foot beams being placed in the Performing Arts wing of the new high school. [Learn more>](#)

***AHS Instrumental Director Receives Alan McClennen Community Arts Award*** Congratulations to Sabato D'Agostino on being this year's recipient of the Alan McClennen Community Arts Award from the [Arlington Center for the Arts](#). [Read more>](#)

### **Academics & Enrichment**

#### ***Exploration Abounds in Virtual Hardy Science Fair***

Some students worked from prepared microorganism or motor kits and others came up with their own experiments during a science month at Hardy that ended with 20 young experimenters sharing their work through videos, posters, photos, or live presentations at the Virtual Hardy Science Fair. [Read more>](#)

### **Creative Highlights**

#### ***Cross Border High School Collaboration Enriches Musical Lives in Arlington and Lombardia, Italy***

A wonderful project between Arlington High School instrumentalists and those at the Liceo Musicale GB Grassi di Lecco in Lombardia, Italy, has enriched the musical experiences of over 300 students with joint concerts and masterclasses. [Learn more>](#)

#### **AHS Performing Arts Students Present Spring Concert, Devised Theatre Piece**

This month, a variety of musical styles helped usher in spring as singers, instrumentalists, and music technologists shared their talents in a concert, and seven actors presented a devised theater piece that considered change, storytelling, and our place in history. [Read more>](#)

### **Athletic Highlights**

#### ***Successful Winter Athletic Season Ends, Fall 2 is Here, and Spring is Coming!***

With flexibility, cooperation, and a strong desire to compete, our high school athletes finished a strong winter season and ushered in what is actually two seasons between now and the end of the school year—Fall 2 and Spring. [Learn more>](#)

### **Continue to read the full News from March 2021**

### **Safe & Supportive Schools**

#### ***Stratton Teachers Work Together to Foster Connection and Community***

Throughout this year I have been impressed by the way our school communities have worked to bring people together and promote a shared sense of purpose. It has been fun to start my newsletter with a few examples of the creativity and caring that has been happening throughout the district. Another example is how the teachers at Stratton are using four committees to foster connection.

The One School, One Book committee has created the opportunity for the Stratton community to read together. The chosen book is [The Wild Robot](#), a creative and approachable book suitable for grades Kindergarten through five that can be read aloud or by oneself. The readers meet virtually every Thursday. Discussion flows thanks to the parent or student facilitators who lead small group breakout rooms using prompts provided by the school librarians. This is a great way to bring remote and hybrid students together, and the sense of unity across the grades is amplified by the presence of robot artwork all over the building.

Another group focuses on PRIDE, continuing a tradition of monthly meetings that have been standard at Stratton for many years. The meetings are led and recorded by each of the three fifth grade classrooms and can be watched by everyone in all-school meetings during March, April, and May. This committee also created a music playlist with the goal of instilling PRIDE (Perseverance, Respect and Responsibility, Independence, Dedication and Empowerment) through music. The first playlist focused on Perseverance. Students in both the hybrid and remote programs learned what the word means to them and their classroom communities. Then each class voted on a song they felt represented them and a playlist of 14 songs was created. The fifth grade classrooms will be taking a leadership role in this activity throughout the school year.

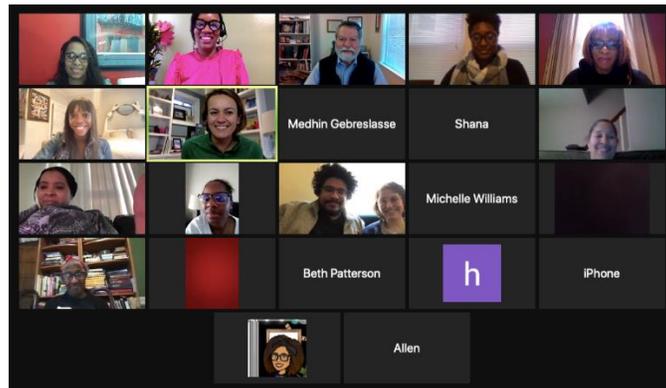
There are two Spirit groups, one focusing on keeping connections and relationships alive for students and one focused on adults. Last month, for example, Stratton student Spirit was celebrated by dressing in Valentine colors, doing Valentine activities, and showing love to the buddy classes. This event was captured in a wonderful newsletter that was distributed to families. To celebrate National Crayon Day on

March 31, classes were encouraged to dress like a box of crayons with each individual choosing a particular color. The result was a wonderful display of unified colors.

The first-ever Minute-to-Win-It Olympiad is an adult Spirit activity held this month. Teachers and staff cohorts were able to move through four different locations to play four different games between 2:30 and 3:30 pm.

Principal Michael Hanna has been delighted to see Stratton faculty members come forward to plan and execute creative ideas to foster connection. He believes that the positivity and energy on display has truly benefited the students and their families. I commend everyone who has been involved in these efforts and thank them for their dedication to the Stratton community.

### **District News**



### ***METCO Families Discuss Resources with Boston City Councilor At-Large Annissa Essaibi George***

Many families of our Boston resident students were able to participate in the Zoom METCO meeting held on March 14. Boston City Councilor At-Large [Annissa Essaibi George](#) was on hand to make sure that everyone was aware of the resources open to them, including community engagement youth opportunities, after-school and summer programming, and possible internships for ninth through twelfth grade students. Councilor Essaibi George has served in her position since January 2016 and announced her candidacy for mayor in January 2021.

The meeting was designed to be informational and provide another chance for Boston resident families to interact and get to know each other better. In addition to hearing from Councilor Essaibi George, the group was able to discuss the changes to the school year and their implementations, and what this may look like for the young people.

This session follows the wonderful *Bridging Two Communities Scavenger Hunt and Getting to Know Our Families Event* held on January 31 that I described in my News From February. I want to thank METCO Director Margaret Credle Thomas, METCO program Family Liaison Nikecia Gadson, and Social Work Intern Richelle Smith for planning and executing this event.

### ***Elementary and Middle Schools Reopen for In-Person Learning in April***

On March 9, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued guidance on students returning to school in-person five days per week: elementary schools on April 5 and middle schools on April 26. The date for high schools will be announced in April.

The District immediately began creating a plan for the return of students to full-time, in-person instruction by the dates required, which included the work and planning necessary to bring our students and staff

back safely. The DESE guidance also allows students who wish to continue to study remotely to do so through the end of the school year.

There were a lot of details to be considered as we ended hybrid learning and got ready to welcome the majority of our young people in-person five day per week. Here are some examples of the work that was required.

- All classrooms were measured to determine the capacity for desks to be placed at a minimum of three feet apart.
- All HVAC units were checked to make sure they are working well and at design capacity. Since filters had been recently changed, plans were put in place to replace filters again in April.
- Additional air purifiers were ordered to supplement the 160 already in place so that each elementary classroom has one. The middle schools' need for air purifiers were assessed and an order placed. Cleaning routines were adjusted at all schools.
- Schedules, furniture, lunch, and recess plans were developed, keeping in mind that students need to be six feet apart during mask breaks and while eating lunch or snacks.
- Tents were put up to facilitate the use of our outdoor spaces, and voice amplification sound systems for outdoor use were ordered for those schools requiring them.

It was important to understand early in the planning process how many students wished to remain in the Remote Academy and how many students in the Hybrid Program wanted to study remotely. Families who wished to make a program switch were asked to complete a survey so that we would understand the numbers of students we needed to accommodate in each program. There were approximately 80 students out of over 800 students at the elementary level who wished to switch from the Remote Academy to in-person. Given this number, we were able to accept most students into existing classrooms. Bishop was over-capacity by a few students due to the three-foot rule around desk spacing. These children were assigned to another school. An extra section of grade five was required at Hardy, which resulted in an additional teacher and adjustment to class sizes. With these changes we were able to leave all teachers and the remaining students in the Remote Academy in place.

The opening day of our elementary schools for five days of in-person learning was April 5. Dismissal time every Wednesday is just before lunch in order to accommodate afternoon staff planning and professional development meetings. The date for our middle school students to return in like manner is April 28. As of this writing, it is unclear when the state will require AHS to open for all students full-time. However, the high school will return to five-day, in-person instruction in May. Seniors begin full-time on May 7, ninth grade students on May 8 and all students on May 10.

The safety of our staff and students was enhanced when educators were added to the list of those eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine this month. We will continue pool testing weekly for both students and staff throughout this school year.

I want to thank everyone who has participated in the efforts to bring children who wish to return back into the classroom. I appreciate the flexibility of both students and families as schedules have been adjusted, some rooms had to be switched, and in a few cases, students had to attend another school or leave a current classroom and enter another. We will continue to face challenges as we progress, but with all of us working together, these new and future challenges will be overcome.

### ***MCAS Testing to be Held for Grades Three and Above***

On March 5, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education declared that MCAS testing is required for grades 3-11. As of this writing, all testing for grades three through five will occur within the window of May 10-June 11 and testing for grades six through 8 within the window of May 17-June 11.

A session sampling approach will be taken for grades three through eight. This means each student will only take a portion of each MCAS assessment in each subject, reducing the testing time for students. Students will all be scheduled for one testing session each in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Fifth and eighth grade students will each have one testing session in Science, Technology, and Engineering. It is currently expected that both in-person and remote students will be tested on the same day. Remote administration will be provided for those students who are not attending school in-person.

As of this writing, only AHS has established dates for testing, but we recognize that any scheduled dates could be adjusted if DESE changes its guidance. Sophomores and juniors (who were unable to take the test last year and want to opt-in for scholarship opportunities) are currently scheduled to take English Language Arts May 19 and 20. Math testing for these students is set for June 7 and 8. Juniors who do not wish to take the test may meet their competency determination through an equivalent course. They may also wait until the fall when make-up testing is offered. Freshmen will take Science, Technology, and Engineering on June 9. Testing must be done in-person.

## Grants

### **AEF Grants Support Creativity, Accessibility, and Inclusion**

The [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) continued its generosity this month by awarding two Innovations in Education Grants and one Development and Expansion [Grant](#).

- *Our Time Here: The 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Physical Theater Project* enables Thompson to partner with the [Broken Box Mime Theater](#) in a three-stage process to create an end-of-year pre-recorded virtual multi-disciplinary and multimodal performance. Fifth grade students will reflect on their entire elementary school journey, process big feelings around experiences during this unprecedented year, and end with a joyful celebratory project that marks the end of their elementary careers.
- *Captioning for Live Performance* provides for the engagement of a professional captioner to craft accurate captions for the AHS March play and April musical. This enables the staff and students to become familiar with arts accessibility methodology and best practices, creates opportunities to engage a more diverse cross-section of the community into conversation with the performing arts in our schools, and facilitates a conversation around I.D.E.A. (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) work that is currently at the forefront of the humanities and culture sectors.
- *Colors of STEM: Expanding the Reach* takes the previously approved *The Colors of STEM* project beyond its initial focus at the Brackett School by creating reproductions of the six existing posters for the other six Arlington elementary schools. The portraits will be prominently displayed at each school this spring. You may learn more about *The Colors of STEM* project in **Sixth "The Colors of STEM" Poster Unveiled at Brackett** in the [Safe & Supportive](#) section of my News From February.

I want to thank AEF for the ongoing support they provide our teachers, families, and students as they strive to implement innovative and enriching ideas. I also want to thank Arlington parents Atwood Cheung and Nancy Chew whose leadership of the initial *The Colors of STEM* project will continue into *Colors of STEM: Expanding the Reach*.

## Awards & Distinctions



### **Virtual Gallery of Student Artwork Created for Philharmonic Family Concert**

In my News from January, I reported on the call for student artwork to accompany a virtual [Arlington Philharmonic Orchestra](#) family concert to be held in March. Former AHS Performing Arts Director and composer Pasquale Tassone wrote a piece of music for the concert that tells the traditional Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse) story of [How the Bear Lost its Tail](#). To inspire our elementary artists, local illustrator Abby Cali, who received a grant to create illustrations for the piece, produced a video about creating art that our students were able to watch. She also held a virtual “visiting artist workshop” that included Ms. Cali and Dallin Visual Art teacher Stacie Greenland giving a lesson on how to draw animals in an outdoor setting.

Our students rose to the challenge and sent their submissions to Ms. Greenland. The result is a wonderful virtual gallery including over 25 illustrations. I am delighted that the Orchestra found such a creative way for our young people to take part in this spring’s family concert and thank Ms. Cali and Ms. Greenfield for their participation. I congratulate all the young artists on producing such beautiful illustrations to accompany the concert.

### ***Gibbs Student Wins Honorable Mention in Massachusetts “Letters About Literature”***

“I read your book *People Of The Plague* for my history project. This Book Is great! This book changed my perspective on the coronavirus pandemic and the meaning of life. I can’t believe that Harriet lost all her family. A few years ago, my grandfather passed away and I was so devastated. I can’t imagine losing all of my family. This changed the way I looked on how life should be lived. It should be lived with family, friends and a lot of reading.”—Gibbs student Harrison Yan

Sixth grade student Harrison Yan began his entry to the [Letters About Literature](#) writing initiative with the quote above. The initiative is sponsored by the [Massachusetts Center for the Book](#) and it invites fourth through twelfth grade students to reflect on books they have read that made an impact on their lives. I am delighted to share the news that Harrison’s letter to author T. Neill Anderson was awarded an Honorable Mention. Harrison’s letter was chosen after, as described by the judges, “Letters went through three rounds of screening to create sets of finalists, 20 letters in each of the three age-level categories. Judges then identified, from among the finalists, 5 Honors and 5 Honorable Mention letters.”

Gibbs English Language Arts teacher Liz Bransford had the opportunity to ask Harrison why he thought the judges selected his letter. Mr. Anderson’s novel is about the 1918 influenza epidemic. Harrison’s mother is a pharmacist at Boston Children’s Hospital and reading the book made the young man feel strongly connected to her role in the COVID-19 pandemic. He reports that he felt a lot of emotions while reading it, so much so that when one of the characters has a bad dream, Harrison had trouble sleeping. In his letter to the author, Harrison was able to convey how he felt as he read the book and realized the important role his mother plays in saving lives. He believes the connection and relevance to real life was what led the judges to honor his entry.

Ms. Bransford reports that she and some other teachers at Gibbs had students participate in writing letters to authors as a classroom assignment but submitting the letter to the contest was optional. Harrison shared that writing the letter was really fun once he “got in the zone.” He admits that he doesn’t always believe in his abilities and was surprised by the Honorable Mention. He can be caught off guard by his successes and how much he can accomplish. This is a significant achievement and Ms. Bransford is right in being “...super proud of him.”

Congratulations Harrison, and we are all glad that you made the decision to submit your letter.

### ***Gibbs and Ottoson Math Teams Compete in Mathcounts, OMS Student Moves on to Nationals***

As 2021 started, the Gibbs and Ottoson Math Teams began to focus on [Mathcounts](#), the biggest middle school mathematics contest of them all. This year three rounds of official online practice contests determined the top fifteen students, the maximum allowed from each school, who then took part in their Chapter Contest. The top 20% of scorers in the Chapter Contest automatically qualified for the Chapter Invitational.

Arlington is in the Metronorth Chapter, the most difficult of the seven Massachusetts chapters. It is not unusual for teams from Lexington, Belmont, Winchester, and Newton to take the top places in the Chapter Competition, and this can lead to exceptionally high cutoff scores to determine who moves forward. This year was no exception, and the qualifying cutoff was an unusually high 43 out of a perfect 46. The average participant typically scores between 25 and 30.

The only Arlington student making it into the top 20% and thus eligible to move forward was Ottoson seventh grade team member Jiahe Liu, who scored a perfect 46. Two other Ottoson seventh grade students, Yaxin Zhang and Xitiz Shakya, just missed qualifying with outstanding scores of 42 each. Five OMS team members had excellent scores in the mid-to-upper 30s: Jin Choi, Evan Zhu, John Archibald, Saisha Shukla, and You-Yan Wang.

There were no Gibbs Math team members who reached the top 20%, but the top-scorer from each school automatically advances. So, Lupin Yu, with 32 points, was able to move forward. Other Gibbs students who received top scores in either the four practice rounds or the contest include Joshua Zhang, Harry Liu, Jake Ma, John Tyler Pajeroski, Owen Morgan-Zawilski, Cole Morgan-Zawilski and Spencer Carman.

As the competition advanced, Jiahe Liu continued his excellent performance. He scored 41 out of 46 points at the Chapter Invitational, placing him fourth in the Chapter and enabling him to advance to the State Championship. Members of the Metronorth Chapter snagged a whopping nine of the eleven state-wide wildcard spots, which meant that 14 of the 46 state contest competitors were from Metronorth—one each from Arlington, Somerville, Medford, and Newton, and ten from Lexington.

Jiahe Liu went on score an impressive 42 out of 46 at the Massachusetts State Championship on March 25, placing him first overall in the state of Massachusetts and qualifying him for the national competition in May! In the national Mathcounts contest, the top four students from each state will be competing for scholarships and other prizes. The final, head-to-head “countdown” is typically televised on ESPN3. This year the competition will be online and Jiahe is joining students from Sharon, Acton, and Sudbury to form the Massachusetts team. Jonathan McIntyre, coach of the Gibbs and Ottoson Math Team, will coach the group.

I want to offer my congratulation to Jiahe on his remarkable performances during the Mathcounts competitions to date and wish him the best of luck in May. Congratulations to all the Gibbs and Ottoson Math Club members who have challenged themselves in these competitions and others throughout this very unusual year. I am grateful to Mr. McIntyre for his leadership of our middle school mathematics teams, a role he has played for several years, and am delighted to learn that he will be coaching Jiahe and the other students on the Massachusetts team as they move forward.

As the year winds down, The Math Teams will open practices to fifth grade students on Wednesday, May 12 and Thursday, May 13 at 6:30 pm. Fifth grade students planning to attend Gibbs and their parents (if they wish) are invited to the Zoom call listed in the [Math Team calendar](#).



***AHS Senior Signatures Leave Lasting Mark on New High School***

“Our signatures will forever be placed on this beam and be a symbol of strength because we were still able to create a strong foundation for our future through these tough times.”—AHS senior Vivian Ruiz

February 24 and 25 were very special days for the Arlington High School Class of 2021. Not only were many of them seeing each other for the first time in a year, they were coming together safely to sign a construction beam--one of the last 30 foot steel beams placed in the new Performing Arts wing of the high school.

The event was organized by the AHS Building Committee and high school staff members. Progress on the new school is right on schedule and budget, and it is very exciting to see the Performing Arts and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) wings taking shape. These two wings will open in February 2022. I am pleased that our seniors had the opportunity to leave something behind as part of the new school. Click [here](#) and [here](#) to learn more and read additional remarks from students who participated. This [video](#) of the event was captured by ACMI's high school production team.

### ***AHS Instrumental Director Receives Alan McClennen Community Arts Award***

It is always gratifying when one of our teachers is honored by the community, and I am pleased to share the news that AHS Instrumental Music Director Sabato D'Agostino has been awarded the 2021 Alan McClennen Community Arts Award from the [Arlington Center for the Arts](#) (ACA). The Center states that the award recognizes "...the passion and commitment he has shown in his role as director of the high school's jazz and concert bands as well as the honors and symphonic orchestras that have so proudly served students, families, and all the citizens of Arlington for more than two decades."

Alan McClennen, former Arlington Town Planner, was a driving force behind the creation of the ACA, and the Community Arts Award honors local citizens who use arts to "...transform lives and build community...". Mr. D'Agostino receives the award on April 10 during the ACA's annual gala, the Blue Jean Ball, that will be held virtually this year. Congratulations and thank you Mr. D'Agostino for all you do to bring music to our students and our community.

### **Academics & Enrichment**



### ***Exploration Abounds in Virtual Hardy Science Fair***

I think it is fair to say that February was Science Fair Month at Hardy, as students, families, and mentors accepted the challenge of exploring through experimentation. There were two ways to participate: pick-up and work from a prepared kit or design and execute an experiment of your choice. Students in Kindergarten through second grade who chose to work from a kit focused on microorganisms. This kit came with an introduction to the topic, safety notes, instructions on how to swab the agar plates, and suggestions for experiments. The kit for students in grades three through five enabled them to learn about

motors. Their kit included a topic introduction, safety notes, and materials and instructions for building basic, spiral, or butterfly motors.

Science mentors were available to assist students who wanted to explore other topics. Fourteen members of the Hardy community created a video, audio, or written introduction to their area of expertise and described how they might help a student scientist. The mentors included an associate professor of Biological Sciences at UMass Lowell, an architect, physicists, a biochemist, an evolutionary and computational biologist, a chemistry professor, a software engineer, data scientists, and more.

During the week of February 22-26, all the student scientists who wished to participate were invited to submit photos of their work, a descriptive poster, or a video to become part of the Virtual Hardy Science Fair on Saturday, February 27. Twenty students took advantage of this opportunity, and an additional number came forward on the day of the fair and presented live. As many as 65 families attended the Fair to watch, listen, or submit questions to presenters via the chat function.

The experiments submitted covered a wide variety of STEM areas and the following list reported in the March issue of the Hardy newsletter gives you an idea of the range of interests among the young scientists.

- Microorganisms were grown from human and cat mouths, human armpits, hands, foreheads and feet, doorknobs, plants, tide pool inhabitants, toilets. and iPads.
- Electromagnetic motors were spun.
- Toothpick and marshmallow bridges of different configurations were tested for strength.
- Supernovas were modeled with balloons and bike pumps.
- Chemical elements and reactions were explained using Legos and small children.
- Capillary action was explained using water, food dye, and paper towels.
- Hydrogen generated by mixing vinegar and baking soda was used to blow up a balloon.
- Insulation effectiveness was modeled using pots and hot water.
- COVID-19 transmission was modeled using an infection simulator.
- Batteries made from lemons and copper plates were used to run a digital clock.

Parent and PTO member Alham Saadat reports that feedback from families, teachers, and Principal Kate Peretz has been very positive. Several people indicated how much they enjoyed the Fair either in person or on Hardy's Facebook page. One parent sums it up this way: "I loved seeing all the kids' work and how engaged the community was in the event. I can't imagine a better outcome".

Ms. Saadat said that putting the kits together took significant effort, but it helped to lower the threshold for families to participate. The kits and instructional material were designed to keep things simple and allow everyone to have success with the specific hands-on experience and learn the basics about the materials being discussed. About 180 of the microorganism kits and about 150 motor kits were distributed.

I want to congratulate all the students who participated in experiments and those who came forward to share their work at the Fair. Special thanks go to the PTO members who planned and executed this amazing event: Doris Pfaffinger, Matt Clarke-Lauer, Patsy O'Brien, and Ms. Saadat. I also want to thank parents Kezia and Tom Simister and Christian Pfluegl for helping with science kit assembly and Alex Radosevich for helping with the science kit instructions. Thank you to the mentors who were available to support the young scientists: Jim Swan, Ms. Saadat, Matt Clarke-Lauer, Cathy Slesnick, Francis O'Donovan, Alex Radosevich, Rake Wu, Jessica Garb, Thomas Simister, Alex Lancaster, Jessica Mondia, Rick Wehr, Jurre Kamphorst, and Christian Pfluegl. This event is a terrific demonstration of how creativity and commitment can bring a school community together for a great educational experience—even during a pandemic!

## Creative Highlights



### ***Cross Border High School Collaboration Enriches Musical Lives in Arlington and Lombardia, Italy***

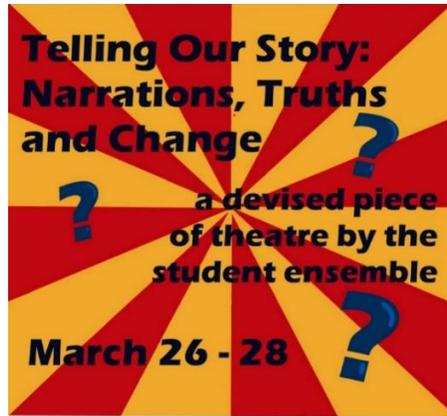
Our high school musicians derive a great deal of pleasure from making music together, so not being able to gather and play in-person this year has been especially challenging. With creativity and persistence, these young people have been able to bring us some wonderful concerts, even though the music was being created at individual homes. They have also been able to share in a remarkable collaboration with a high school in Italy.

In September 2020, AHS Instrumental Music Director Sabato D'Agostino reached out to the Italian Consul General of New England who put him in touch with the Liceo Musicale GB Grassi di Lecco in Lombardia, Italy. Mr. D'Agostino and the GB Grassi Director of the Performing Arts, Maurizio Fasoli, created a project that involves concerts and classes. The first of two Zoom concerts took place at 3:00 pm on February 26. Students in Arlington and Italy each played a variety of music—classical, pop, rock, jazz, and more—live from their homes.

The two schools have been working on the next virtual concert for the last two months. In an effort that involves close to 300 students and eight different ensembles, video recordings of five pieces are being produced. The resulting concert airs on May 29 at 12:00 pm.

Additionally, the 12 music teachers from the GB Grassi high school and Mr. D'Agostino have agreed on a teaching exchange. The Italian instructors will present masterclasses/lectures to AHS students and Mr. D'Agostino will do the same for theirs. Maestra Silvia Tuja presented the first one in January, and on April 22, Mr. D'Agostino will deliver *Improvisation* for all the Italian students.

Mr. D'Agostino describes the impact of the project this way: "This collaboration with the Italian school has been a true blessing, especially during this pandemic. In fact, my students and I have learned a great deal from this phenomenal experience." I am delighted that these two schools have been able to come together and learn from each other during these difficult times. This project is a wonderful example that with creativity, determination, desire, and of course technology, sharing and learning across borders is always possible. I thank Mr. D'Agostino and Mr. Fasoli for coming together to provide this experience to their students and for creating concerts that all of us can enjoy.



### **AHS Performing Arts Students Present Spring Concert, Devised Theatre Piece**

There were two special offerings from the AHS Performing Arts Department this month—a concert and a play. The Spring Collaborative Concert on March 19 included wonderful performances from music technology students and members of various choral and instrumental ensembles. The wide variety of musical styles that our students enjoy singing and playing was on display as they performed jazz, classical, musical theater, Gaelic, rock, and popular selections. Stunning visual displays of cities, landscapes, and even belted Galloway cows accompanied some of the music technology offerings. Solo performances included voice, harp, trombone, French horn, violin, and piano. Ensembles, recorded both inside student homes and outside in backyards, treated the audience to jazz arranged by Wynton Marsalis and Weather Report. The concert was a wonderful way for our young people to share their talents with us even though we can't be together physically.

The fourth offering from our AHS thespians this year was a devised theatre piece called *Telling Our Story: Narratives, Truth, and Change*, presented March 26-28. Seven cast members came together under the direction of Aaron Aptaker, AHS alum ('09) and graduate of DePaul University ('13), to reflect on change and storytelling. The thoughtful piece used a variety of techniques to share ideas on topics that included what it felt like to be in a pandemic, the power of stories and the effects of erasure when certain things are emphasized and others left out, the power of symbols, our place in the history of COVID-19, the importance of change, and what we would be willing to sacrifice in order for change to happen.

This production brought two new experiences to the audience. One was the opportunity to take part in a post-show discussion. Additionally, this was the first AHS production that included closed captions. This was suggested by Mr. Aptaker who has done a lot of advocacy work to make theatre more accessible. AHS Drama teacher Michael Byrne was awarded an [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) Grant and an AHS Inclusion and Diversity Grant that provided the funding to hire a professional captioner for this performance and the upcoming musical. In addition to increasing performance accessibility and inclusion, working with a professional theatrical captioner enabled our students to experience current best practices and be connected to the national arts conversation on these issues.

You can read more about the AEF grant in the [Grants](#) section of this newsletter. The AHS Inclusion and Diversity Grant is awarded by the AHS Inclusion and Diversity Committee, a student group founded in fall 2019. The Committee is made up of representatives from AHS groups that share a focus on creating a more equitable school. The initial money for the grant was a gift from the AHS Class of 2018.

I want to commend all the students who took part in the concert and play this month, and thank the dedicated AHS Performing Arts teachers who support them—Instrumental Music Director Sabato D'Agostino, Choral Director Mara Walker, Drama teacher Michael Byrne, and Music Technology teacher John Ditomaso. It has taken a lot of work from students, teachers, and the support of families to bring us these virtual performances. I also thank ACMi for their support and community media access. We are all grateful that we have been able to enjoy our students playing, singing, and performing this year.

## **Athletic Highlights**

### ***Successful Winter Athletic Season Ends, Fall 2 is Here, and Spring is Coming!***

The winter athletic season is over, and we are beginning what is actually two seasons between now and the end of the school year—Fall 2 and Spring. Clearly it has been challenging for our athletes and their families to continue to participate, and Athletic Director John Bowler is very proud of everyone's willingness to be flexible and follow the safety protocols. He notes that our students really want to compete and be with their friends, and this has driven both their participation and their cooperation with wearing masks and playing without spectators. In his words they are doing a "great job".

This winter AHS fielded Girls and Boys Hockey, Girls and Boys Basketball, Skiing, and Gymnastics teams. The hockey and basketball teams participated in a 10-game season, and their weekly schedule included three days of practice and a game. Spectators were only present for the final home game when the parents of seniors were invited to take part.

Both the Girls Basketball and Girls Hockey teams won the Middlesex League Liberty Division Championship and moved on to the Middlesex tournament. This was the first league championship for Girls Basketball, and the third straight win for Girls Hockey. Both teams made it all the way to the tournament finals, falling in the last game—basketball by only three points! It was a very exciting season for both teams.

Boys Basketball had a strong season, finishing second in the Middlesex League with a record of 9-3. They ended with a loss in the second round of the tournament. Boys Hockey finished the regular season 5-4 with one tie and also fell in the second round of tournament play.

Gymnastics season included six Middlesex League meets. One male athlete joined the Gymnastics team as a competitor on a couple of events this year—a first for the team. Mr. Bowler reports that the team members did an outstanding job responding to the required changes this year, winning one meet, coming in close in the others, and improving throughout the season. Since most of the team were underclassmen, we can expect to see some strong competition next year.

This was the first year that Skiing moved from a club sport to full AHS sponsorship. These athletes also had to be flexible since leaving the state for meets was not possible. All the practices and meets took place at the Blue Hills ski area in Canton. Mr. Bowler reports that the team had a great time, especially since the practices included a ski pass that could be used to ski for fun after practice ended. He believes that the season worked out very well, and with many of freshmen on the team, we can expect to see some strong competition on a variety of slopes next winter.

As of this writing, we are in the Fall 2 season which runs until April 25. Girls Volleyball, Boys and Girls Swimming, Boys and Girls Indoor Track (held outside), Football, and Cheering are all taking place now. With the exception of Swimming, two spectators per athlete are allowed at home games. As in the winter, the season includes 10 games and three practice days for varsity teams.

On April 26 we will enter the Spring season, which runs until July 3, enabling the tournaments to be held after school gets out. Right now, Baseball, Softball, Tennis, Boys and Girls Outdoor Track, Boys Volleyball, and Boys and Girls Lacrosse are planned. Wrestling is still under consideration with a final decision to come.

Interest in Fall 2 was high, and approximately 255 athletes are taking part. Spring registration opens April 5, and Mr. Bowler expects a similar interest level. Mandatory pool testing is taking place for our athletes every week, and this year's "unusual" schedule has made it possible for some athletes to compete in four sports. I want to thank Mr. Bowler and all the coaches for their willingness to step up to create a dynamic year for our young people and congratulate all the athletes on their flexibility, dedication, and spirit.