

# IN THE NEWS AT ARMS

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Volume 3, Number 1

August, 2011

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## From the Principal

Dear Parents/Guardians;

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year! We have been busily planning for the year and are very excited to welcome the students back to school on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

There are a few exciting changes at ARMS for this coming year. Our classrooms have had a technology face lift over the summer. Each classroom now has an interactive whiteboard, document camera and LCD projector. These upgrades will support teachers in their planning and implementation of engaging lessons. Our wireless hubs have also been upgraded which will speed up the laptops and other mobile devices we use in the classroom. In addition to these hardware changes, we are going to be using several online programs to strengthen our efforts of supporting and challenging every child. The first program is called MAP and is an online assessment system which the district is using K-10. Students will be assessed three times a year in math and reading. The results come back to us immediately and will allow us to adjust our curriculum and instruction based on individual and class needs. The second program is Renzulli which is a program whose goal is to provide gifted and talented curriculum and instruction to all students. Through this program, we will be able to assess students' individual profile and guide them on a variety of engaging projects.

Last year, in the spring, we piloted having our front door locked once school started. Starting this fall, all schools in the district will be instituting this policy. The goal is to increase school safety while still allowing easy access to the building for those that should be in it. To enter the building, you will need to use the buzzer next to the far left door at our front entrance. Thank you for understanding as we continue this important policy.

Enclosed with this newsletter is your child's team placement and the teacher/classroom of each class they are taking. A few of you will notice that we needed to put you in your second language choice instead of your first. This has allowed us to balance class sizes in language classes. On the back of your schedule is a map of the upstairs of the building. You can use it to figure out where each of your classes are located. Students are welcome to come to the building before school starts to find their classrooms. We ask that a parent/guardian comes along (friends can come together). Please check into the main office when you come.

An ongoing priority for ARMS is to build a strong family-school partnership. Middle school age children are working hard to be independent. Most parent/guardians find that their middle school child is suddenly demanding greater independence. Despite these demands that middle school students make, we know that students at this age need their parent/guardians more than ever as they are faced with new challenges. The reality is that their brains are not developed enough to make the level of academic and social decisions they would like to. It is for this reason that we urge you to be involved. Check in on your child's academic progress routinely, participate in school events, and call us when you have a question or concern.

Over the first month of school, we have a variety of ways to help parents/guardians get involved. Please mark your calendars and try to attend as many of them as possible.

- On August 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, we have an orientation for new parent/guardians. If you came to the orientation last spring, you are still welcome to come but please know that we will be going over the same information.
- The town-wide First Day Welcome Party will be held on the Common on Thursday, September 1 from 5:30-7:00.
- On the first day of school, we will hold an informal gathering for parent/guardians in the cafeteria from 7:30 – 9:30 am. This will be an opportunity to meet other parent/guardians and the administration.
- In addition, during the first two weeks of school, we will be holding team breakfasts for students and their parent/guardians.
- In the beginning of the month of October, we have our Open House - October 13<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 p.m.

We hope that you enjoy the last two weeks of summer and are looking forward, as much as we are, to another great year at Amherst Middle School!

Mike Hayes  
Principal

Betsy Dinger  
Assistant Principal

## **OPENING OF SCHOOL**

### **Tuesday, September 6:**

All students, grades 7 and 8, will report to school on the first day. However, they will do so on a **staggered** schedule for which separate bus runs (pick-ups) will be provided. Please see your Amherst Bulletin for updated school bus pickup schedules. To search the ARMS bus routes on the web, go to:

<http://www.arps.org/hss/BusRoutes.jsp>

If the database server is not available, a text version can be viewed at: <http://www.arps.org/node/80>

Seventh graders and eighth graders NEW to the Amherst Middle School should be waiting at bus stops for pick-up at the times listed in the published bus schedules. Their school day will begin at 7:45 a.m.

Eighth graders will be picked up at bus stops approximately two hours after the published times so they will be in advisory at 9:45 a.m.

For the first few days of school, please ensure that your students are at bus stops at least ten minutes prior to the published pickup times.

On Wednesday, September 7, students will follow the regular school day schedule.

## **SCHOOL LUNCHES/BREAKFAST**

The price of school lunches for the 2011-2012 school year is \$2.50 (Reduced Lunches are 40 cents). Students who received free lunch last year will be able to do so this year (until September 30) while they are completing the necessary paperwork. New applications for free/reduced lunch will be sent home with your child during the first weeks of school.

School Breakfast is available, every day for \$1.00 and 30 cents for reduced lunch students. Breakfast is available 7:30-7:40 am.

## **STUDENT INFORMATION**

Your child will bring home emergency contact information cards and other important material on the first day of school. Please fill these out immediately and return them to us at the school. It is critical that we have this information available so that we can take the best possible care of your child.

## **ATTENDANCE**

On a day that your child will be absent from school, please call and leave a message with your child's name, grade and team. Please make the call before 8:30 a.m. The **Student Absentee Phone line is 362-1984.**

Starting at 9:00 a.m., an automated system will call the home of students that are listed as absent with no message left on the above phone line.

## **ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER DELIVERY**

We ask families to receive their newsletters by email rather than by regular mail. It helps us cut down on the cost of postage and enables you to receive the newsletter on the day the paper newsletters are mailed. Also, parents that are on this email list will receive periodic reminders regarding team events, school wide events, notices, reminders, etc. If you are willing to receive future newsletters electronically and have not already signed up for it, please email Judi DellaMarco at [dellamarcoj@arps.org](mailto:dellamarcoj@arps.org).

## **STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN POWERSCHOOL PORTAL**

Students will be able to access the PowerSchool Portal (<http://www.arps.org/portal>). On this portal, students can access class grades, assignments, attendance and more. We hope that you encourage your student to take ownership of their own progress and use this tool wisely to nurture their independence and maturity here at ARMS. Students will be given a username and password at school.

To increase the communication between home and school, there is also a Parent/Guardian Portal. Parents/guardians will have access to the portal, thus making it possible for parents to see not only what their child sees but also grade history, attendance and email notification information. We will let you know the procedure for getting access soon.

## **STUDENT SCHEDULES**

Seventh and eighth grade students will receive their daily schedules in advisory on the first day of school. Seventh graders and all new eighth graders will be welcomed in the auditorium when they first arrive at school. From there, they will go with their assigned advisor to their classrooms to begin the day. Returning eighth graders will report directly to their advisor's classroom. Their advisor's name and room number will be posted in the main lobby.

## **WELCOME NIGHT FOR PARENTS OF NEW INCOMING STUDENTS**

On **Thursday evening, August 25, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.**, parents and guardians of all new to the Middle School students are invited to a meeting in the library conducted by Principal Michael Hayes and Assistant Principal Betsy Dinger. Seventh grade parents/guardians who did not attend the spring parent/guardian meetings are encouraged

to come with their questions about the opening of school, orientation, support programs for new students, classes, and any other questions about our programs and organization. The schedule for the first day and week of school will be described. Parents will also learn about ways they can become involved in ARMS.

We look forward to the opportunity to meet with parents/guardians new to the middle school.

### **OPEN HOUSE**

We will conduct our annual Open House on **Thursday, October 13, beginning at 7:00 p.m.** The evening will include a chance to meet your child's teachers and experience a condensed version of his/her day. While the time in each class will be brief, it will allow you to hear about the curriculum and course expectations. You will also have an opportunity to meet other parents and learn about many activities and programs available to your children and to you at our school.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN CONFERENCES**

In the fall, all seventh grade parents/guardians will have an individual conference with a team teacher.

Additionally, we will be having individual conferences with 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents/guardians. These conferences will be held in January or February as 8<sup>th</sup> graders start planning for 9<sup>th</sup> grade registration.

### **SCHOOL PICTURES**

Photographers will take school pictures on **Wednesday, September 14**. Product and price information will be provided prior to that date. Every student will have his/her picture taken. The photos will be used for school IDs regardless of additional pictures you may order.

### **TEAM BREAKFASTS**

We will hold our now traditional family/advisory breakfasts on the mornings listed in September. Please join your children and their teachers for this casual opportunity to get acquainted and learn a bit about your child's new school year. All breakfasts begin at 7:45 but feel free to join us as early as 7:30 in the middle school cafeteria.

Team A	Thursday, September 8
Team B	Friday, September 9
Team C	Monday, September 12
Team X	Wednesday, September 14
Team Y	Friday, September 16

### **LATE START DAYS**

The dates listed below will be "late start" dates for students in the middle school. On late start days, students will be arriving at school approximately two hours and 10 minutes later than usual. Teachers use this

time to do collective professional development work. Students should plan to be at their bus stops 2 hours and 10 minutes later than usual. Buses will begin arriving at the secondary schools at 9:45 a.m. and the school day will officially begin at 9:55 a.m.

Thursday, September 15  
Thursday, October 13  
Thursday, November 10  
Thursday, December 15  
Thursday, January 12  
Thursday, February 9  
Thursday, March 8  
Thursday, April 12  
Thursday, May 10

### **SCHOOL HEALTH NEWS**

An urgent reminder to all parent/guardians: Students' health records, including updated immunization documents and a physical examination, must be on file in the school health office in order for your child to attend public school. To abide by the laws of the Commonwealth and to protect the health of all our students and staff, we are required to exclude students from attending school unless documentation of immunizations is complete. All students entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade must have documentation updated. Please contact your health care provider to insure that all immunizations are compliant. If your child has a medical or religious exemption, a written statement must be sent to the nurse or building administrator annually. Please forward updated health records to the nurse via mail, via fax 549-9897, drop off in main office, or call 362-1974 if you are unsure of your child's health record status. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

*Mary O'Brien and Dani Pers Faytell, ARMS nurses*

### **PLEASE HELP US: FAMILY DROP OFF AND PICK UP**

Families who bring their children to school or need to pick them up at the end of the day are asked to use the **South Parking Lot**. The school is served by 33 school buses both in the morning and in the afternoon and, for safety reasons, it is important that the front drive be left open for their use.

### **Chorus**

#### **Music Department**

The ARMS Music Department would like to welcome all of our 7<sup>th</sup> Grade musicians to our program. We know that these students have made the choice to be in an ensemble and are ready for a fun year of music making filled with hard work.

All of our ensembles will soon be busily preparing material for the first round of concerts. Instruction will focus on such musical elements as: timing, tone and pitch, varying dynamic levels, as well as learning the process of proper ensemble participation. Each discipline; Band, Chorus, and Orchestra will send home course descriptions that deal with everything from expected classroom behavior to concert dress and concert dates. Feel free to contact your child's ensemble teacher with any questions that you might have.

### Chorus Notes

The first week and a half of Chorus will be spent learning about the voice, vocal health, and testing voices. Students will then be placed into vocal parts and will then begin working on songs for the 1<sup>st</sup> concert. Parents will receive a copy of the class expectations and the Concert Calendar for the 2011 – 2012 school year. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Ranen at 362-1961 or [ranend@arps.org](mailto:ranend@arps.org)

#### CHORUS 7

Dec. 2 Merry Maple - Town Hall - 4:00P.M.(call time)  
Dec. 7 Concert - MS Aud. - 7:00 P.M. (call time)  
Dec. 10 Possible Concert – TBA - 1:00 P.M. (call time)  
March 14 Concert - MS Aud - 7:00 P.M. (call time)  
June 6 MS Choruses Concert - MS Aud. - 6:30 P.M.  
(call time)  
June 12 Boston Field Trip - TBA

#### CHORUS 8

Nov. 16 Concert - MS Aud. - 7:00 P.M. (call time)  
Jan. Singing the National Anthem at A Springfield Falcons hockey game.

**Time and date to be announced. It will be either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday afternoon..**

March 7 Concert - MS Aud. - 7:00 P.M. (call time)

**“A Night at Broadway” is a fundraiser done by Chorus 8.**

**Parent volunteers will be needed for this event.**

**Information will be sent home in January.**

March 27 Chorus 8 Rehearsal - MS Aud. - 2:30 P.M.

March 29 A Night at Broadway Dress Reh. –  
MS Auditorium - 6:30 P.M.

March 30 A Night at Broadway - MS Aud. - 5:30 P.M.

June 6 MS Choruses - MS Aud. - 6:30 P.M. (call time)

June 12 Boston Field Trip - TBA

**Needed: The Chorus is always in need of tissues. If you are able to donate one or two boxes, we should be set for the year.**

Chorus class sizes are usually quite large. That is what makes Chorus so much fun. To come together and sing, learn about the voice, and perform is our goal. Respect and Trust is the means to our goal. The atmosphere in the Chorus rehearsal room is built on those two words. I ask that all parents and guardians work together with me and your children to once again achieve that goal.

Welcome to the Middle School Choral Program  
David Ranen

### NEW ROTATION FOR THE EXPLORATORY CLASSES!

This year 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will take all four Exploratory classes. For any student, the sequence of the four classes will vary according to your grade and your first assigned Exploratory class.

Exploratory classes include Art, Drama, Computers, and Technology Education. Every student will participate in all four of these courses. The school year is divided into four equal sections (Quarters). At the end of each quarter, the students will begin the next Exploratory their schedule. (i.e. if the student has Drama during Q1, they will attend Drama starting on the first day of school then at the end of Q1 move to Computers (Q2), at the end of Q2 move to Technology Education (Q3), at the end of Q3 move to Art (Q4) for the last quarter of the year).

We are looking forward to seeing students from both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in our classes this year.

Your Exploratory teachers,

Tara Farley, Art

Margarita Bonifaz, Drama

Tom Fanning, Computer Applications

Nick Harrison, Technology Education

## Other Important Details

### Important School Phone Numbers

Principal's Office - 362-1800

Health Office - 362-1974

Middle School Library - 362-1900

Attendance Line (for absences) - 362-1984

School Closing Line - 362-1898

Sports Cancellation Line - 362-1798

Superintendent's Office - 362-1810

### Fall Sports Registration

Fall sports registration for both middle school and high school students will meet on Monday, August 22nd from 5:00 to 7:00 pm in the auditorium at the high school. New required concussion information presentations will be held for parents and athletes during this time. Parents and athletes will have the opportunity to meet with coaches about tryouts, practices and expectations for their sports. Registration forms can be picked up at the high school or accessed at <http://www.arps.org/hs/Sports/Registration/>.

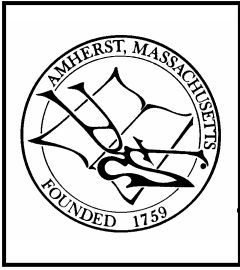
**Volleyball** tryouts for both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade will be the first day of school Wednesday, September 6 at 2:30 p.m. in the MS Gym. Remember to bring knee pads and a water bottle.

### August Library News

The goal of our middle school library is to empower students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information. With this objective in mind, ARMS students, teachers and librarian work collaboratively using a wealth of print and online resources.

Two new resources for this school year are **Gizmos** ("the world's largest library of interactive online simulations for math and science education in grades 3-12"), and **BrainPOP** ("animated, curriculum-based content that engages students, supports educators, and bolsters achievement"). Learn more about these exciting new teaching and learning tools by visiting our library's web site at <http://armslibrary.wikispaces.com/> and clicking on the appropriate links. While you're at the library's web site, take a moment to check out some (or all!) of the useful links located there. You can even see the covers of some of our new books displayed on the library's homepage. Remember – our library has some of the latest and greatest books available so stop in and check some out, or ask our librarian, Mr. Riedel, for some recommendations. Here are a few examples to whet your appetite:

- Did you like reading *The Hunger Games* trilogy? Try *Enclave* by Ann Aguirre or *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner.
- Can't get enough of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series? Read *The Lost Hero*, book one in *The Heroes of Olympus* series.
- Are you a fan of Jeff Smith's *Bone* series of graphic novels? You'll want to read his newest adventure *Quest for the Spark*.



## THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

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OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES  
INTERVENTIONS AND ELE  
170 CHESTNUT STREET  
AMHERST, MA 01002

413-362-1871 (PHONE)  
413-549-9834 (FAX)

August, 2011

Dear parents/guardians:

We hope you and your children are well. The Amherst-Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools are committed to the safety, well being and academic achievement of all of our students and design all of our guidelines with this in mind. Before the start of the 2011-2012 school year, we wanted to share some of the highlights of our districts' attendance guidelines to make sure all families understand our expectations and how they can partner with the schools to support their children.

Regular and punctual attendance to school is essential for the success of students in schools. Students who attend school every day, on time, learn more and are more successful than students who do not. Students who are absent to school miss out on carefully, well planned units of instruction, active learning experiences and class participation. Students who are absent frequently are more likely to fall behind and more likely to drop out of school, after their elementary school years.

Because attendance patterns are formed early in a child's educational life, we need to help all children develop good attendance habits. Massachusetts state law dictates that children between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school regularly and name parents/guardians as responsible to ensure it happens. It is essential that families teach their children, in a developmentally appropriate way, the importance of school attendance. Because there are very few reasons for an absence to be "excusable" in our district and state (illness, religious, court mandate, serious family crisis such as an accident or death), we expect all children to be in school everyday, on time.

We are committed to providing a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community has a sense of belonging and safety in their school buildings. Our school staff will work hard to ensure all families and students understand the attendance policies and guidelines in the district. We have established what we believe is an effective and efficient system of communication to provide information, advice and support to families in all matters of attendance. With this in mind, families:

- Will receive the school handbook (s) of the school (s) their children are enrolled in during the first weeks of school, where all attendance guidelines are explained.
- Must understand that the superintendent or his/her designee (usually the school principal) is the only person that can legally excuse an absence. Parents/guardians must report absences of their children to school, but it is up to the school to decide if the reason given for the absence is "excusable" or not.
- Should know that students may be excused temporarily from school by the superintendent or his/her designee for the following reasons: Personal illness or quarantine, Family emergency such as a death or serious illness, Religious observance or obligation, mandated court appearance.
- Must call to report absences on the same day and no later than the start of school (8:40 for elementary and 7:40 for MS and HS) to report every absence.
- Tardiness will not be excused. All students arriving to school after the start of school must report to the main office before proceeding to their classroom.
- Will have to send a note to school upon the students' return to school, if they did not report an absence as outlined.

- If you do not report an absence, you will be contacted by the school and the absence will be recorded as “unexcused”.
- Must send a note, explaining the reason for the absence, upon the students’ return to school after being out three days or more.
- Should feel free to ask questions/clarification about any of the attendance guidelines. Each school will identify the person who can field these inquiries. When in doubt, inquire in the main office.

We have partnered with the Prevention Office of the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office to provide a continuum of services and support to families pertaining to issues of school attendance. Their “School Is Where It’s At” (SIWIA) program works with district staff, children and families in the process of understanding the importance of attendance to school and provide support whenever issues of truancy (excessive absences or tardiness) occur.

Our district is committed to the academic achievement of “every student, every day” and we expect that every student will come to school every day and on time to take advantage of the educational experiences our teachers plan to challenge and motivate all learners. Our mission is to provide the best education possible for your children and we look forward to working with you to make this possible. Have a wonderful school year!

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Marta Guevara