

IN THE NEWS AT ARMS

Volume 3, Number 4

December, 2011

From the Principal

The “Halloween Storm” certainly created a different fall than usual with a sudden week off. The students and wider school community once again showed its resiliency to change as students and teachers got back to teaching and learning. Even rescheduling 150 parent/guardian meetings was done within a couple of weeks. The storm gave me another chance to reflect on how lucky I am to work with such a professional dedicated staff, great student body, and supportive community.

Students completed their first Exploratory class and have shifted into Quarter 2 with the next Exploratory class in their schedule on November 21. Also, Term 1 ended on December 1. Term 1 report cards were distributed to the students at the end of the school day Friday, December 16.

Although there have been several delays, the new window installations are beginning today. Throughout this process there will be minimal interruptions; each classroom and office will take a day to complete. The majority of the work is done from the outside of the building. Any affected classes will be relocated to another room for the period during which the windows are being changed. Please see the New Windows at ARMS Letter sent out on December 1st at: <http://arms.arps.org/files/Windows.pdf>. The window installation is a major project that will bring immediate benefits to our school. We appreciate the hours and hours of work the Facilities and Business Office Departments have put into making the project a reality.

The School Committee voted at the last meeting on how to make up the snow days this year. The five days from November have been added to the end of the year making our current end date June 25th. Any snow days we have from here will be made up during the April break, starting with the Friday. If we have more than four snow days for the rest of the year, those days will be added on at the end of the year.

The School Committee is also currently looking at changing the start times of the schools. Some possibilities are that the Middle and High School will start at either 8:15 or 9:00. Stay tuned for public forums in late January and February for opportunities to learn more and give input.

At the last principal’s coffee parents were asking about the health curriculum at the middle school. After talking with them, it was clear I needed to communicate with everyone about our current plan for teaching the health standards. The health curriculum is currently taught by three departments: Guidance, Science, and Physical Education.

- The Guidance Counselors teach on Mondays to students taking Drama. During that time, they essential teach the social components of the health standards – peer relationships, communication, and decision making.
- In 7th grade science, students learn about the reproduction system.
- This year, we are splitting up students by gender for swimming. Ms. Carey will be teaching first the boys, then the girls our swimming curriculum. During that time, Mr. Holt will be teaching the girls, then the boys their parts of the health curriculum. For 7th and 8th grade this will include Nutrition and Physical Wellness. In 8th grade, they will also be learning about the reproductive system and sexuality. The girls start the curriculum January 3rd and the boys will start it after the February break.

My best wishes to you and yours during the holiday season.

Michael Hayes

Teams

Team Swift River

The Team Swift River first off would like to say it has been a great year so far. On Friday, report cards went home with your students. If you have any questions about grades, please feel free to contact the teachers, email is best. We would also like to take this opportunity to encourage you to check PowerSchool regularly with your student. Afterschool help is offered with team teachers on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday every week; please encourage your student to stay after.

Students have started new academic study groups. Students had the option of choosing between debate, cooperative games and math support. In debate, students are learning the difference between arguing and debating. In cooperative games, students are working together to solve problems. These groups will be together for a short time and will change again after break.

In social studies, students have started a new unit looking at how environment affects individual world views. The students will focus on West Africa for this unit.

We would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday and look forward to seeing all the students back after break.

Thanks,

Team Swift River Teachers

Team Quabbin

What is a subordinating conjunction and why do we call them fragment makers?

Is a vacuole a trained mole that removes debris from your carpet?

Hydroelectric power is good because it doesn't create greenhouse gasses, right?

If it snowed at 1 inch per hour for 6 hours on a driveway that is 25 ft. by 40 ft. and you shoveled at a rate of 333 cubic ft. per hour, how long would it take you to shovel the driveway?

If you're having trouble answering any of these questions, ask your 7th grader. They should be able to help you out.

Team Quabbin won the penny wars and, in so doing, raised the most money for the Amherst Survival Center. We will be celebrating with a hot chocolate and cookie party soon. Thank you to all who participated and thanks to the Leo Club for sponsoring the event.

We continue to enjoy our time with the energetic and earnest students that make up Team Quabbin. Several other adults have joined us in supporting your students' education. Ms. Belle has been volunteering in our classrooms and is planning to be with us for the rest of the year. Mr. Kubicek is a student-teacher from UMass that has been doing his pre-practicum in Mr. Alschuler's room and will continue in the spring with his Practicum. The Team Quabbin teachers feel fortunate to have so many capable and dedicated people working to support your children.

We are looking forward to 2012 on Team Quabbin!

Team Metacomet

Metacomet students are shining this December. Students are exploring cells, virtually visiting Africa, studying two-dimensional geometry, and honing their cooperation and discussion skills in our classrooms.

We are really proud of our fundraising Metacomet students, who earned over \$1000 for our team in the Bulb Sale! This will help fund team activities like our birthday celebrations, team pencils (coming soon), and field trips (stay tuned for ice skating in January). We thank you for your support and hope you can thank us in the spring when your neighborhood is full of spring flowers. Our fabulous super-sellers were awarded sweet prizes and our super-duper sellers received gift

certificates from Cinemark, Bart's, or Antonio's. Thanks to these local businesses for their support! We recently had our first Team Metacomet birthday celebration during Advisory, celebrating Metacomet students (and staff) with birthdays in September, October, November, and December. We celebrated with cider and cider donuts from Atkins, singing, and gifts. Fun was had by all, and we can't wait to celebrate the winter and early spring birthdays in a few months.

Team Metacomet is well into its first fun session for Academic Study. Students are spending two classes a week from now until winter break in one of these fun Academic Study classes: Watercolor Painting, Political Cartoons, Cookies for a Cause, Cooperative Competitions, and Brainteasers. Right before break we'll get together for a celebration to enjoy the artwork (and cookies!) created by Team Metacomet.

We were happy to meet with so many Metacomet families for our rescheduled parent conferences. It was great for us to learn so much about our students from those who know them best: you! So many students and families are checking on grades and work in PowerSchool, which is in many ways a great thing. We worry about some students checking their grades very often and the fluctuation of a grade from an A to an A- possibly causing them anxiety. We encourage students to check grades weekly. Additionally, we'd like to help students and families by clarifying what to do when you believe there is an error or have a question about a grade. First, if there is a zero listed for a grade, you can assume that when the teacher collected the assignment from the class, the assignment in question was not turned in. If a student believes he or she did the assignment and turned it in, a good place to look is the "no name" pile (or ask the teacher where to look for these). If the assignment was turned in late and after a week the assignment is still listed as a zero, it's appropriate to ask the teacher about it. We encourage students to speak with teachers about this themselves, either via email or in person before or after class, or before or after school. Middle school requires a great deal of organization, and organizing backpacks, binders, and homework folders weekly can really help our students succeed. Thanks for your help!

Team Amethyst

With Thanksgiving right behind us, Team Amethyst teachers want to share what we are thankful for:

- ◆ All of our parents for raising really nice adolescents! You may not be seeing this at home, but we see it at school and appreciate it a lot!
- ◆ All of our parents for their continued support in the education of our students;
- ◆ All of our students for continuing to work hard and for their positive attitude and kindness towards adults and other students;
- ◆ The parents who showed much patience in receiving the spring bulbs they ordered later than expected and, in some cases, waiting additional time for specific bulbs to arrive;
- ◆ Ms. Fabrizi for organizing our very successful first birthday breakfast;
- ◆ Mr. Landeryou for telling us how to spell SNAFU because we have been encountering quite of a few of them this year;
- ◆ Ms. LaLecheur for volunteering her time and expertise in the STEMRAYS after-school science club;
- ◆ Parents who have donated tissues (keep them coming!)

Other items of note: We will be going ice-skating on December 23. Part of the trip will involve science related activities and part of the trip will be recreational. Owen Wright was the third student to rise to the challenge of trying to make fudge that is more dense than Grandma Welborn's Super Dense Fudge. Owen succeeded by making fudge with a density of 1.7 g/cm³. He will not divulge the recipe but a piece was dissected to make sure it did not include lead sinkers. In January, we will have a Hillside Pizza fundraiser. If you have any questions about our fundraising projects, please contact Mr. Malone.

Finally, did we mention that we'd greatly appreciate boxes of tissues for our classroom? We have a lot of runny noses and team teachers are in need of a constant supply of tissues. If you are able, please send a box in with your student and/or drop off donations of tissues in the main office. Thank you!

Team Wyola

Team Wyola has some special activities for the month of December. Students have an opportunity to sell and purchase attractive *Amherst* water bottles to raise money for our Winter and Spring team activities. The bottles are \$12; choose from red, black, blue or green. Our student recognition *Respect Awards* are being presented to students on the last day of school before the break along with *Speech Awards* for students who showed exemplary execution of rhetorical and persuasive techniques in their recent presentations.

As the weather begins to accurately reflect the winter season, we could use any donations of tissues and for our classrooms. Students can bring donated boxes of tissues to their advisory, and we will keep those noses clean.

Subjects

Math

Math 7 - we have begun our work in a Geometry unit, found in chapter 5 in the textbook. We have explored area and perimeter of different two-dimensional shapes and will begin working with volume and surface area for various three-dimensional objects. One of our favorite activities, the "Rice Container Project", will be used as one of our assessments in this unit. Students doing the honors level work will be using familiar formulas and procedures but will explore figures with dimensions given as variable expressions. In the process, they will be generating expressions as well as equations which they are expected to solve through algebraic steps.

Math 8 - we are halfway through our linearity unit. The focus ahead will be looking at the connection between the equations and the graphs of linear situations, and how both relate back to the story. Students will work on the concepts of slope and y-intercept of linear graphs. The most important questions you could ask your child at home, if helping them with their math work in this unit, are "What does this mean (in the story)?" Or "What did you just find?"

Algebra Honors - students are moving into a unit on solving simultaneous equations. Students will utilize the graphing method, the linear combination method (a.k.a. elimination), and the substitution method for finding these solutions. Most important is that students understand not just how to find the solutions, but to conceptually understand what the solutions mean.

English

English 7 - Seventh grade ELA students are working on finishing up our first Literature Circle—the Character and Environment unit. Students are currently working on literature circles or engaged in "Arts and Crafts Week"—during which they are completing arts projects that visually analyze the characteristics of the protagonists of the books that they read through symbolism, and are completing maps that analyze the importance of the setting in the books that they read. These projects will be followed up by a short in-class analytical essay test, in which, students analyze the dynamic relationship between the character and the environment in their books.

Up next, we will read Judith Ortiz Cofer's brilliant book, *An Island Like You*—a short book consisting of vignettes that students will read to help them consider the big idea that, "Discovering your identity is a healthy, positive, and necessary part of the journey to adulthood." Throughout the unit, students will be asked to consider the following questions: How do relationships shape your identity? What does it mean to be accepted? What choices do people make to be accepted? How does your identity change in different settings?

English 8 - 8th grade students of English Language Arts successfully completed the final assessment of our *Speaking Out* unit. Many presentations were passionate and persuasive, while all participants required diligent research and devoted time and effort into this language arts/social studies cross curricular activity.

Our next unit, *Transformations*, will guide students through the analysis of literature that explores the inevitable and constant changes that can combine to create personal transformation. Students will meet in literature circles to analyze their novels while they practice conducting dynamic discussions with the use of their active reading (sticky) notes. In their final assessment, they will write an analytical essay using their knowledge gained through reading, discussions, and pre-writing activities.

Science

Science 7 - Our unit on Cells is moving faster than a Euglena's dash toward a light source. Candy cells and swimming microbes helped us to understand that cells have parts and these parts function together to result in dynamic unicellular organisms. The various cell processes: osmosis, diffusion, cellular respiration, photosynthesis and reproduction were investigated through hands-on laboratory experiences. For example, through observing and handling bloated balloon sized and then shriveled eggs, during the Egg-cell-ent Lab, students learned firsthand how osmosis and diffusion affect how materials get into and out of cells. Through labs, students also gained an understanding about the interdependency of plants and animals through the actions of photosynthesis and cellular respiration. The cell unit will end at the end of

December and the the new year will bring a focus on whole organisms. Students will plant F1 generation of *Brassica rapa* seeds (Fast Plants). These plants grow so quickly that students will be cross pollinating their plants in January. The F2 generation will help students gain an understanding of Mendelian traits. Our next unit on energy and the human body systems will build on our understanding of cells and lay the foundation for the upcoming genetics unit.

Science 8 - What are three different ways to make popcorn and roast marshmallows? How and why do the Earth's plates move? How do we get frost, dew, and fog on mirrors and bus windows? Why does an M & M melt in your mouth, not in your hand? How does an alcohol thermometer work? How can you make an indoor hot air balloon? Why does sweating cool you off? How does a thermostat work? Does the Eiffel Tower really extend by 6 centimeters on the side facing the sun? What do bridges, railroad tracks and fillings in teeth have in common? If a jar with a metal lid is difficult to open, why does running it under hot water help to loosen the lid? As we begin our final unit on physical properties of matter, we will be studying the particle motion theory, states of matter, change of state, and the effect of heat on matter. We will be learning about the concept of temperature, and we will be using the Celsius scale. We will be differentiating between thermal energy, heat and temperature and exploring ways that heat is transferred. We will also explore ways that transfer of heat can be reduced in people and buildings! This is a very exciting unit filled with many everyday examples that students commonly experience. It will culminate in the much anticipated liquid nitrogen lab wherein students will experience many of the concepts taught in the unit in just one class period! There will be shrinking balloons, crystallized flowers, frost in the classroom, oxygen condensing on containers, banana hammers and instant ice cream. It is a very cool lab! Pun intended.

Our mini-unit on measuring physical properties of matter ended recently with a study of density. In our last newsletter contribution, we noted that it had been determined that Barbie was more dense than marshmallow fluff but less dense than water. Now that we are studying states of matter and change of state, we have also determined that Barbie is more vaporous than sublime...

Social Studies

Social Studies 7 - Seventh grade Social Studies continues its focus on the Environment in the region of West Africa, where students will identify major biomes, investigate ways people modify,

adapt, and depend on the environment to meet their needs, and investigate ways the environment affects people. Our culminating project for the unit, beginning in early January, will ask students to research the causes, effects, and solutions (local and global) of one environmental issue affecting West Africans.

Understanding the benefit of primary sources, Team Quabbin has invited members of our community to share their expertise and experiences. Parents and community members are welcome to attend. We ask that you check into the main office before proceeding to the auditorium.

The West Africa Speakers Series Includes:

12/8, 10:03-10:56, Eliot Moss, Professor of Computer Science at UMass, will speak about his recent experiences in Ghana. His focus will be on hydroelectricity and technology in schools. - Auditorium

12/16, 11:30-12:30, Leonce Ndkimuna, Professor of Economics at UMass, will speak about poverty in Africa (cause, effect, and local and global solutions to poverty) - Auditorium

12/20, 9:06-9:59, Dean Cycon, CEO of Dean's Beans, will speak about his company's mission to participate in socially just and environmentally responsible trade. We are lucky to have a distinguished group of presenters who will enhance the teaching and learning of West Africa through their knowledge and valuable experiences. Team Quabbin expresses its appreciation to each of the presenters for taking the time from their busy schedules to speak to the 7th grade class, parents, and members of the community.

Note: Geography Bee pretests have just been administered. Top scoring students from Teams Swift River, Metacomet, and Quabbin will represent the 7th grade in the ARMS Geo Bee on Jan 12 in the Auditorium from 2:30-3:30. Families are invited to attend. Please sign into the office on your way in.

Social Studies 8 – The eighth grade Social Studies classes are in the thick of the lead-up to the Revolutionary War. Students are creating their own colonial characters, and writing from their perspective as events move from the high point of the French and Indian War victory through the divisions caused by Stamp Act, Townshend Acts, Tea Act and the Intolerable Acts. We will conclude the first part of our Political Change unit with a mock Continental

Congress. Looking forward, we will examine the Revolutionary War, the writing of the Constitution and precedent-setting Supreme Court cases in January.

Note: Geography Bee pretests have just been administered. Top scoring students from Teams Amethyst and Wyola will represent the 8th grade in the ARMS Geo Bee on Jan 12 in the Auditorium from 2:30-3:30. Families are invited to attend. Please sign into the office on your way in.

World Language

French - Madame Coby and Madame Dorrie's French Novice IA classes have just completed a unit on the family. They can describe their family members, including names, relationships, ages and where they are from. Students in Ms. Dorrie's classes are currently presenting family projects. Some have created family albums, while others have organized their information in family trees. Students are also working on telling the day and date in French. Madame Coby's Novice IA classes are performing skits based on all the material they have been working on this year. All the Novice IA classes will soon begin the unit on going to a café, in which, they will learn the names of common foods and beverages and will be able to order in a café or restaurant.

Students in the French Novice IB classes are completing a unit on describing people and things. They have learned many adjectives and know how to accurately describe masculine and feminine nouns and where to place the adjectives in a sentence. The Novice IB students will soon be starting unit 6 in which they will learn how to describe the town in which they live, including municipal buildings and where they are located. After December break, Mme Coby's class will be creating a town complete with a variety of buildings that they have constructed out of cardboard. The students will also learn how to give and understand directions, so that they can push a toy car through the town as a fellow student gives directions.

Students are also working on challenge projects this trimester. Past projects have included creating maps, travel brochures to a French speaking area, alphabet

booklets, collages, culinary creations and models of Parisian monuments. We have enjoyed experiencing Francophone culture through these wonderful projects. Please feel free to email Madame Coby (cobyk@arps.org) or Madame Dorrie (dorriea@arps.org) for a detailed project description. Each student has received the necessary information and should be ready to choose a project. Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!

Chorus

The 7th and 8th Grade Choruses performed well during the months of November and December. They worked on such concepts as: ensemble sound, performance focus, volume, and simple sight reading skills. Students are able to sight read musical lines that contain stepwise motion. We will now be moving onto intervals of 3rds, 5ths, and octaves.

The MS Choruses sold Pierce Bros. Roasters coffee, tea, and hot chocolate as well as a handsome 15oz. travel mug. We have extra fogbuster coffee and mugs. The coffee and mugs are both \$12.00 each. If you are interested, contact David Ranen at ranend@arps.org

The combined Grade 8 Chorus will be singing the National Anthem at an upcoming Springfield Falcons Game at the MassMutual Center. The Falcons are part of the American Hockey League. This is the 6th year in a row that the Chorus has been asked to sing at a game.

Mr. Ranen is looking for a place for the Grade 7 Chorus to do a similar activity as the above mentioned one.

After vacation, the Chorus would like to sell cups of hot chocolate in the lobby before school as students get off of the bus. We would sell cups of hot chocolate on Mon. Wed., and Fri. mornings through the end of February from 7:15 a.m. – 7:35 a.m. If there are any parents that would be willing to help with this, please contact Dave Ranen at ranend@arps.org

Stay tuned for news about this year's Grade 8 Chorus "*Night On Broadway*" show.

Other Important Details

ARMS YEARBOOK PRE-ORDER SALE

Yearbook Pre-Order Forms went home with students on Monday, December 5th. The yearbook pre-order period will end on Friday, December 23rd. The 2011-2012 pre-order price for the ARMS Yearbook is \$20. Students may reserve a yearbook by filling out a pre-order form and returning it to their advisor within the pre-order period.

There is also a box on the form that can be checked if students do not want a yearbook. It is important for all students to return the pre-order forms with the appropriate boxes checked, so that we can have an accurate count of how many yearbooks to order from our publisher.

There are two main options for reserving a yearbook: with **payment in full** or with **a non-refundable \$10 deposit and a balance of \$10 due upon receipt of the yearbook in June**. Thanks to the generosity of our greater community, we are able to offer students participating in the Free/Reduced Lunch Program a 50% discount off the pre-order price, which can also be submitted as **payment in full** or as **a non-refundable \$5 deposit with a balance of \$5 due upon receipt of the yearbook in June**. Students who want a yearbook but cannot afford either the regular or discounted price are encouraged to return their forms and check the **gift** option. We have several fund-raisers which allow us to give a number of yearbooks as gifts to students who could not otherwise afford one. **Please consider donating to our gift fund through the attached Yearbook Sponsorship form. You may also use this form to buy a book as a gift for a particular student.**

There may be a limited supply of unreserved yearbooks available in June, price TBA.

Coming this Spring! ARMS School Play!

The school play has been on hiatus for a few years, but is coming back with gusto this year. In April, ARMS will present a stage production of “Charlotte’s Web.” We’ve already begun working on the show with a group of students who form “Theater Tech Club.” These students have read the play and are formulating the lights, sound effects, props and costumes needed. They’ve already trained on the lighting and sound systems in the Auditorium. Next up are our auditions which will be held January 9 and 10 after school and before the late bus. All students are welcome to audition! This is a school wide event. The audition will not require any preparation, students will be asked to read from the play in groups and do some simple improvisation. The sign-up for the audition will be posted in the lobby the first week of January. There will be parts for at least 20, and possibly more. If cast, students can expect to have rehearsals after school and before the late bus, at least once a week, and possibly more depending on the size of their part and proximity to production. All students participating will be given the clear specifics of what the rehearsal expectations are, and to think ahead of any conflicts they might have before committing to the production. It takes a village to raise a theater, so we are also looking for parents to be involved! Needed, in particular, are people interested in creating some of the costume elements for the show, and anyone handy with carpentry or lights. We will also need volunteers for running the “House” on performance nights. So stay tuned! Any questions, please contact the director of this project: Sarah Wilson, wilsons@arps.org

Dates to Remember:

Friday, December 16 – Report Cards were distributed.

Friday, December 23 – Full Day of School

Monday, December 26 through Monday, January 2 – School is Closed for Vacation

Tuesday, January 3 – First Day of back to School

Thursday, January 12 – Late Start Thursday

Sunday, January 15 – Chorus 8 performs the National Anthem – Falcons Game – Mass Mutual Center

Monday, January 16 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day – School is Closed

!Attention : Amherst Regional Middle School Community!

December 2011

The ARMS Yearbook staff is once again hard at work organizing fundraisers and soliciting donations for the 2011-2012 ARMS Yearbook.

At this sharing time of year, we ask the members of our community for donations of any amount, to help offset yearbook costs (both partially and completely) for students whose families have financial hardships.

Each year our goal is to provide a yearbook for every student who wants one, regardless of their economic status. **We need your help to succeed!**

Please consider becoming a **Yearbook Sponsor** by completing the form below and returning it to the Middle School Main Office with your donation. You may also use the form to buy a yearbook as a gift for a specific student.

Mail to: *ARMS YEARBOOK* 170 Chestnut St. Amherst MA 01002.



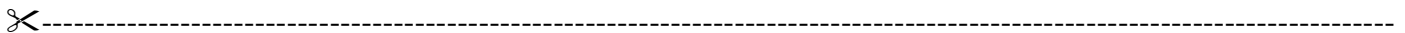
* Sponsors are acknowledged with a special dedication in the yearbook. *



With many thanks for your good will and your support,



Happy Holidays!



Yes! I would love to sponsor the 11-12 *ARMS* Yearbook!

Sponsor's Name

ARMS Staff

Student

Parent/Guardian

Community Member

Phone /E-mail (optional)

\$ _____
Amount of Donation

(Please make check payable to *ARMS* Yearbook, yearbook gifts are \$20.
Please include students name below)

Gift for _____
(Name of *ARMS* Student)