

IN THE NEWS AT ARMS

Volume 3, Number 2

September, 2011

From the Principal

It has been a pleasure welcoming back the returning 8th graders and getting to know the class of 2017 these two weeks. There are lots of exciting events going on in the middle school this month as staff and students are getting to know each other and prepare for another great year at ARMS.

With the start of school, there is always a tremendous amount of information that we are trying to get to you. We hope that you have been able to attend our Team Breakfasts and will be coming to Open House on October 13th. Here are some items that we are trying to make sure all families know about as we start school:

Online Grading – Logins and passwords were given to families at the Team Breakfasts so that they can check their child's grades online. If you have not gotten your login and password you can come to the office with a picture ID to receive it.

Forms – Please make sure you have returned all beginning of the year forms to your advisor. If you are not sure if you have please check in with your child's advisor.

FSP Fundraiser – The Family School Partnership raises money for our after school clubs and to bring in a few authors of books students are reading. We depend on the money the FSP raises to provide these enriching opportunities. Checks can be made out to ARMS and returned or mailed to the school. Please put "ARMS Family School Partnership" on the envelope. Anything you can do to help is appreciated.

Cell phones – We do not allow cell phones to be on during the day. If you need to contact your child, please do so through the main office.

MAP Testing – In October, we will do our first round of MAP testing in math and reading. These tests help us identify what skills students need more instruction/practice on to reach our goal of having all students working at grade level or above.

Newsletters - Our school newsletters go out monthly. We are aiming to send them out around the 15th of each month. In each newsletter, you will find short updates from team and departments. Additionally, there will be other pieces of information from staff members. We also will occasionally include information from community events.

Student/Family handbooks went out the first week of school. The first half of the handbook is specific to the Middle School and the second half is the district section. The handbook has lots of information about the school. We hope you will find it to be a useful tool.

You have probably already heard me say over and over that communication between family and school is critical at this age. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need to share information with us.

We hope the transition to school has been smooth for your family. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help!

Michael Hayes

Teams

Team Swift River

Welcome to a new school year! The teachers of Team Swift River would like to say hello, and to update you on some of the exciting things that have been happening so far this year. The students are getting accustomed to the pace and structure of Middle School, and we are enjoying getting to know them as individuals. It was also great meeting many parents at our team breakfast.

We have a few upcoming events of which you should be aware. Students are bringing home a fundraising packet this week; the team will be selling bulbs to raise funds for future trips and team activities.

Also, on Tuesday, September 20th, Team Swift River will be traveling to Mill River Park in Amherst for a day filled with fun activities. Please look for a permission slip coming home this week for this field trip. Parents are invited to join us at Mill River Park between 10:30 and 1:30.

Finally, Team Swift River will begin sending out a daily homework email to parents beginning next Monday, September 19th. Some parents signed up to receive these updates at the Team breakfast; if you did not have the opportunity to sign up and would like to be included on the homework email list, please send an email to Mr. Hunter at hunter@arps.org.

Thank You,

Mr. Hanson, Mr. Hunter, Ms. Keppler, Mr. L-R, Ms. Ryan, Mr. Venditti

Team Quabbin

Team Quabbin (formerly Team B) has had a wonderful beginning of the year. Our first impression is that we have a group of helpful and enthusiastic students with vibrant and divergent personalities. Academic classes are gearing up and settling in. In the first week of school, we did a number of team building activities including a people scavenger hunt, a human knot cooperative game, and an activity about respect. We hope your student has enjoyed the first days of school as much as we have. Please contact us with any concerns or questions. It was a pleasure to meet many of you at the Team Breakfast, and we look forward to seeing you at Mill River (Sept. 19th) or Open House on October 13th.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Oliver, Math Teacher

Richard Ferro, Science Teacher

Wilma Ortiz, ELL Teacher

Maura Stampa, Resource Teacher

Jennifer Jensen, Social Studies Teacher

Alfie Alschuler, English Teacher

Dorry Gardner, Resource Teacher

Tracy Westover, Reading Teacher

Team Metacomet

We are having a fantastic beginning of the year on Team Metacomet! Team Metacomet students are already showing themselves to be curious, enthusiastic, and interesting individuals! We are thrilled to be teaching this group.

Exciting things are afoot on Team Metacomet. We'll be selling bulbs as a fundraiser this fall; beautify your neighborhood while raising money for future team activities! Also, we'll be taking two September field trips. On the 22nd, we will be at Mill River for fun and team building—you're welcome to stop by and meet us while we're there from 10am -1pm. On the 27th, we'll have a Naturalist Field Journal walking field trip to the Emily Dickinson house, where we'll learn about the poet and write some garden-inspired poems of our own. Also that day, we'll venture to Amherst College's Beneski Museum of Natural History and explore the natural world through a scientific lens.

In team classes, we are jumping into our first units of the year. In English 7, this means delving into poetry. We'll connect to Science class by using poetic tools to write about the nature around us, and we'll explore how different (and alike) are the ways scientists and poets see the world. We are starting Science 7 with a unit on the Nature of Science in which we will be developing our observation skills in our Naturalist Field Journals and then developing our lab skills by designing experiments. Social Studies begins the year with an exploration of the Five Themes of Geography- a unit where we'll also look at our own area using these themes. Math 7 is starting this year by learning about factors and multiples. Here is something cool about factors - *"Take, for instance, the pair of numbers 220 and 284. It turns out that all the factors of 220, that is those less than itself, add up to 284. And, surprisingly, the factors of 284 add up to 220."* We're

getting to know our students, too, through Academic Study, where students are orienting themselves to the assignment book, getting to explore their varied learning styles, and thinking about the skills we all need to succeed as students.

We're developing team spirit here on Team Metacomet in a number of ways. In addition to our upcoming field trips, we'll be meeting together as a team to celebrate birthdays and, as we develop a common team-wide definition of respect, our school wide theme, we'll be recognizing Metacomet students who are really impressing their teachers and peers with their kindness and respect. Again, we are delighted to be working with these students!

Team Amethyst

Team Amethyst (Brook) is off to a great start! As our students are learning, Amethyst means many things: a great group of students; a form of quartz, a cool purple color, a piezoelectric material (WOW!); a local conservation area with a bubbling brook which is often noted in the Amherst Bulletin because it is a popular place for many people to recreate—runners, hikers, dog owners, cross-country skiers, people who fish.

We have met as a full team of students twice to do team-building activities. We are also launching our academic study classes, during which we will be utilizing a Renzulli program to help our students engage in appropriately challenging topics.

Our team of teachers, Ms. Herbert, Mr. Isler, Mr. Malone, Ms. O'Donovan, Ms. Olson, Ms. Stevens, and Ms. Welborn are currently planning areas of integration and collaboration. We enjoyed seeing former parents and meeting new parents at the Team Breakfast, and we look forward to seeing you at the ARMS Open House. Thank you to parent(s)/guardian(s) for sending us such motivated, curious and respectful students. We are thoroughly enjoying working with them.

Team Wyola

We are thoroughly enjoying getting to know our Team Wyola (formerly Team Y) students, and exploring together both the opportunities and the challenges of being the middle school's only extra large team. It is a great group of kids, and we have high expectations for them for this year!

Hopefully by now all of our parents have received (and signed) a copy of the team's "Non-Negotiables" sheet that was passed out last week, as well as the Team Wyola "Refrigerator Sheet" with teacher contact information and other helpful details. You will be hearing from us soon regarding plans for team fund-raising activities as well as any upcoming field trips.

We would like to remind you of the ways we can be in touch as we try to develop our family-school communication. We expect all of our students to effectively use their assignment books, and we hope you will ask to see the books on a regular basis to help support your child with their homework. In addition, you will soon be able to log onto Powerschool and view your child's records, such as grades and work completion. We will also be posting online the weekly Academic Outlook to help both you and your child plan ahead and keep up. And, of course, feel free to drop an e-mail to your child's advisor or classroom teacher if you have any questions and/or concerns.

We are looking forward to a great year of working together with you and your children!

Subjects

Math

In our **Math 7** classrooms, students have started in Chapter 2 with a review of number concepts such as factoring, multiples, and prime numbers. The students will then turn to Chapter 1 which includes units on mathematical expressions, factoring and expanding with the ever-popular and always useful distributive property, and the techniques of flow charts and backtracking when dealing with single-variable equations.

Math 8 is starting the year with a unit on data and data graphing. Students will be considering the most appropriate and effective ways to display certain types of data, and how different measures of central tendency can influence how we see or present one set of data. Hopefully students will develop a healthy skepticism and a willingness to carefully scrutinize when they are presented with displays of data in the future. The next unit, which should begin in early October, will encompass linear relationships and the concepts of slope and y-intercept.

Algebra 1 has started the year with some quick review work on pre-algebra concepts and material. They will then be exploring axioms and properties, solving, and literal equations before beginning a unit on linear relationships and functions. Students will become intimately familiar with the ways that linear relationships can be represented and recognized, including the famous slope-intercept form, $y = mx + b$.

At this point in the year, all students have been placed in their appropriate math classrooms. Much of this process was successfully undertaken back in June as well as over the summer, although some placement work was still ongoing as we started the year. If you have concerns about your child's placement, please be in touch with their math teacher.

English

English 7 -Seventh grade English students are currently exploring poetry and wedding their emerging skills as observant scientists with their poetic souls. We will spend a lot of time outside, weather permitting, observing the natural world around us and then writing poetry about our world. Students are currently studying the "tools" of effective poets. Feel free to ask them about the poetry tools we are using in class. On the horizon, our next unit will be Character and Environment, in which we will explore the constant interactions (positive and negative) between individuals and their cultural and physical environments.

English 8 - What is injustice? How can people most effectively speak out? How can people most effectively speak out? ELA 8 Students have begun seeking answers to these questions, and more, in our Speaking Out unit. Over the next few weeks students will read and discuss Harper Lee's classic: *To Kill A Mockingbird*; engage in research about important issues, and hone their rhetorical skills as they prepare and deliver persuasive speeches in class. Be wary of 8th graders wielding arguments, they're headed your way!

Science

Science 7 – Seventh grade science students are working the Nature of Science Unit which will build skills and will be reinforced throughout this year and next year. We have been working on developing our powers of observation by examining cool Crayfish and making field journal entries outside around the school grounds and in our greenhouse. We are also developing our laboratory skills by making sure we have safe lab habits and know how to design controlled-variable experiments.

Science 8 - First off, thank you to parent(s)/guardian(s) for raising kind and thoughtful students. We knew our students were kind last year when we watched how they interacted with living things. We were not so sure they would be so kind to nonliving things, particularly white, plastic beads. One of the first activities we asked students to do was to take home some mystery beads and find out what makes them so special. We asked the students to expose the beads to various conditions (test various independent variables) and notice the effect of those conditions (dependent variables) on the beads. The beads made it back safely without duress even though some endured either hot or cold water, little oxygen, vigorous shaking, loud music, interested cats and occasional neglect. There were no casualties, however! None were lost, broken, melted entirely, or otherwise destroyed.

As an introduction to 8th grade science, the science teachers started the year literally with fireworks. During the first few days, we showed students some basic principles of physical science, through demonstrations that were purposefully chosen to spark interest and enthusiasm. One of the demonstrations involved colorful flames (fireworks in a beaker) and another exemplified the law of inertia. Yes, you can pull a table cloth out from under a set of dishes (with practice) and no, the science teachers do not do this every evening when they "clear the table."

Students then moved on to a review of science safety rules before embarking on a year of hands-on chemistry and physics labs and projects which highlight basic physical science concepts. The first inquiry lab will involve the mystery beads. We will be asking our 8th graders to apply what they learned last year about controlled experiments as they design and test their own experiments with the beads. Ask your middle school student what makes the beads special and what experiment they are planning to do with the beads.

Social Studies

Social Studies 7 - Global Studies teachers Matt Venditti (Swift River), Jennifer Jensen (Quabbin) and Kate Burke (Metacomet) have begun to introduce their students to the five themes of geography (Location, Place, Movement, Human/Environment Interaction and Region). Students will be applying their geography skills to a local town in the "Five Themes" project over the next several weeks. Team field trips to Mill River Recreation Area this month will include social studies-focused work including identifying human and physical characteristics of place for teams Swift River, Quabbin and Team Metacomet.

Social Studies 8 - US History teachers Robin Clifford, Terry McSweeney (Wyola) and Mike Malone (Amethyst Brook) have begun to introduce their students to the types, advantages and disadvantages and usefulness of historical evidence, as part of the opening Inquiry Unit. Both teams opened the unit by asking students to share and discuss the wide range of sources of evidence we rely on to construct an understanding of past events, including the events on September 11th. Students will then practice using the evidence of "historical archaeology" (artifacts and documents) to make inferences about historical events. Our culminating project will focus on analyzing and synthesizing historical evidence from the founding of the Jamestown, Virginia colony or from the cultures of the First Peoples.

Upcoming local events:

Sunday, September 18 at 2:00 in Amherst's West Cemetery, Bob Romer, author of Slavery in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts, will lead a recognition of African-Americans from Amherst who served and died in the Civil War <http://ns.gazettenet.com/2011/08/19/september-event-to-honor-black-civil-war-soldiers-0>

Friday, October 14 at 5:30, noted historian Eric Foner will be speaking on the causes and consequences of the Civil War at UMass' Mahar Auditorium <http://www.5clir.org/v2010/documents/Flyer%20announcing%20program.pdf>

World Language

BONJOUR! ¡BUENOS DÍAS! SALVETE!
Greetings from the Foreign Language classes at the Middle School. Our first year students are already actively engaged in learning how to greet each other and adults in culturally appropriate ways.

In Mme Coby's French classes, the students are having fun with performing exercise commands in French – "Touchez la tête" - touch your head, "Asseyez-vous" - sit down, "Va au tableau et trace un cercle" – go to the board and draw a circle, etc. Mme Dorrie's and Mme Coby's students will be working on short conversations when meeting someone for the first time. During the month of September, they will also be learning the numbers to 1000 and beyond! This will also help us with telling time in French. The enthusiasm of your children is infectious!

In the second year French classes, we will spend most of September laying the foundation for the year. We will review the key material from last year before beginning work on Unit 5 the theme of which is people and possessions. We will focus on talking about our room and the objects in it as well as describing people.

On y va! Let's go!

Latin Students should look for announcements about the Latin Club, which will be starting up soon!

Chorus

The first week and a half of Chorus has been spent on learning about the voice, vocal health, and testing voices. Students are now being placed into vocal parts and will begin working on songs for the 1st concert. Parents should be receiving a copy of 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.

Mr. Ranen is very excited about the upcoming year. Highlights of the year besides the regularly scheduled concerts will be:

Gr. 7 Chorus: Singing at the "Lighting of the Merry Maple" in December and either a nursing home or senior center.

Gr. 8 Chorus: Singing the National Anthem at a Springfield Falcons hockey game in January and beginning a new tradition with the first "A Night at Broadway" in March.

The Chorus will also be doing its annual fundraiser of Pierce Brothers Coffee & Tea, and a Travel Mug. Look for more information in October.

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.

ELE

A warm welcome to all the new and returning English language learners and their families to our ELE community at ARMS. We hope that everyone had a relaxing, enjoyable summer and are ready to begin a new academic year with enthusiasm, curiosity and positive energy. Settling into the new academic year may require a little extra organization while we establish routines that work for all of us. It is our goal to work together to create an atmosphere of collaboration and support.

Teachers

This year, the ELL team is composed of Marirene Reyes, 8th grade Team Wyola (Y) in room C-4A, Floris Wilma Ortiz, 7th grade Team Quabbin (B) in room C-12. Dr. Ortiz has completed a special year as the 2011 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. The ELL teachers as part of Teams B and Y, will work in close collaboration with team teachers and students in providing support and differentiated instruction so that our work is informed by best practices.

Program

The ELE program at ARMS includes inclusion classes in both 7th and 8th grade for students who are at both the intermediate and transitional levels of ELL and 7/8 pull-out classes in English, Social Studies and Oral Communications for students who are at the beginning or early intermediate stages of their language learning. In addition, we are monitoring English language learners who have exited the program in order to fulfill the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) requirements. New English language learners will take the MEPA test in the fall. Dates to be announced soon!

Stay tuned for further information on the after school ELE Homework Club!

WISH LIST:

Tissue box

Snacks (for example: healthy beverages (no glass containers), crackers, dried fruits, cookies, cereal bars, etc.)

Pencils, pens, coloring pencils and/or any other writing tools

Post-It Notes

Lined papers

Pocket Folders

Contact Information

Mrs. Reyes: reyesm@arps.org (413) 362-1942

Mrs. Ortiz: ortizw@arps.org (413) 362-1912

Exploratories

Greetings from the Exploratory Department!!!

New this year- All A.R.M.S. students will be taking all 4 exploratory classes (Art, Computer, Drama, and Technology Education) for one quarter each.

We hope to see you at Open house on October 13th to learn more about our programs.

2011 - 2012 Quarterly Schedule for Exploratory Classes

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
7 th	Drama/ Computers	Art/ Computers	Tech Ed/ Drama	Tech Ed/ Art
8 th	Art/ Tech Ed	Drama/ Tech Ed	Art/ Computers	Drama/ Computers

Other Important Details

Dates to Remember:

Friday, October 7 – FSP Coffee with the Principal – MS Cafeteria starting at 7:30 a.m.

Thursday, October 13 – Late Start Thursday

Thursday, October 13 – ARMS Open House

After-School at ARMS

Hello! I am pleased to extend a warm welcome to all of you as a new school year begins. I would like to introduce myself. My name is Dan Freije, and I will be working as an AmeriCorps Member at ARMS for the coming year through the RISE Program (Resources Invested in Student Excellence). In this role, I will invite community members and organizations to help address unmet needs and enhance educational programming, and encourage students to give back to the community that supports them. I will also be coordinating assemblies, after-school clubs, activities, and other events throughout the year.

After-school at ARMS will present our students with a wealth of opportunities and resources. Late buses began on Monday, September 12th. Students who stay after school (to work with a teacher or, as the year progresses, to participate in after-school clubs or the Vela Program) will be able to take the late bus on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays at 4:00pm. This is a great opportunity for students to get that little bit of help they might need to complete an assignment or be given the chance to push their skills even further.

I am also excited to announce that planning and organizing of After-School Clubs has begun. We are currently determining which clubs will be offered and are seeking input from students on any interests they may have in forming

new clubs: to that end, students will fill out a club survey next week in advisory. We will hold a Club Fair during lunch on Tuesday, September 27th and will circulate the Club Brochure and sign-up information at the same time in advisory that day. I strongly encourage anyone with an idea for a club or an activity to contact me as soon as possible.

Clubs will begin on Monday, October 3rd, and will run from 2:30 to about 3:30pm on Monday, Tuesdays, and Thursdays to coincide with the late bus schedule. Once clubs end students will wait for late buses in the cafeteria with adult supervision.

In addition to after-school clubs, the Vela Scholars after-school support program started this week—on Thursday, September 15th—for returning 8th Graders. Over the course of the next month or so, new students will be integrated into the program until it is fully up and running in the first week of October. We will be reaching out to teachers and parents/guardians to identify students that would benefit from increased academic support.

I am looking forward to a great year! Please contact me with any questions or ideas you have regarding after-school clubs or programming.

Dan Freije, RISE Coordinator
Amherst Regional Middle School
freijed@arps.org
(413) 362-1861

Library News

Our Book Fair is Coming!

The whole school is excited about our upcoming book fair taking place Tuesday, October 11 through Friday, October 14. An amazing selection of books is headed our way! At the book fair, you will find many of the latest and finest titles for middle school students, as well as books of interest to parents. Some featured titles include *Torn*, the fourth book of the *The Missing* series by Margaret Peterson Haddix, *Beautiful Darkness*, the haunting sequel to Kami Garcia's *Beautiful Creatures*, and Lincoln Peirce's *Big Nate on a Roll*, perfect for fans of *Dairy of a Wimpy Kid*. Mark your calendar for Open House on Thursday, October 13 during which the book fair will be open for business. The book fair is a great way to get everyone excited about reading. Check out our book fair homepage at <http://bookfairs.scholastic.com/homepage/amherstms>. See you there!

Your Middle School Librarian,

Peter Riedel

ARMS After School Clubs

The Family School Partnership is happy to support the ARMS After School Clubs. Later this fall, your student will be provided the opportunity to continue learning, explore a new interest, develop a skill, work with a mentor, and establish friendships across different teams and grades.

Last year, **120 students** participated in **16 After School Clubs**. These clubs exposed the kids to a variety of experiences in foreign language, the arts, math and science, social connection/identity, and indoor and outdoor pursuits. **All students benefit** from having these club possibilities.

The clubs operate **free of charge** with funding from the Family School Partnership. This allows a greater diversity of students the chance to participate. (There are even After school buses on club days – Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.)

In order to operate 16 After School Clubs this year, **we need your help to raise \$10,000.** The funds will ensure that we can continue this valuable opportunity for our middle school students.

Some families will be able to give more, others less, but **we hope that everyone will do their best to help the Family School Partnership** work with the middle school to enrich the experience for all of our students.

Please give as generously as you can to support our After School Clubs. Checks can be made out to ARMS and returned to school or mailed in the enclosed envelope to ARMS Family School Partnership, 170 Chestnut Street, Amherst, MA 01002

THANK YOU in advance for your generous support!

Sincerely,
Becky Demling and Jen Veshia
ARMS Family School Partnership

* More information about After School Clubs is available under the “Students” tab on the ARMS web page at www.arps.org. Additional details will be sent home with your student in the coming weeks.



**AMHERST HIGH BOYS SOCCER
ANNUAL CAR WASH-BAKE SALE
FUNDRAISER**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH
(APPLE HARVEST ON THE COMMON)
REN'S MOBILE STATION
NORTH PLEASANT STREET
10:00-3:00PM

GO CANES !!!