



Superintendent's Corner

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Interim Superintendent

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Although this was a short week due to the celebration/acknowledgement of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Day on Monday, it was certainly a busy week! Below, I've captured some highlights of my work this week.

High School Principal Search Update

We received over 40 applications for this position, candidates with a wide range of experiences and skills. Through an initial screening process completed by central office administrative staff, we identified candidates that:

- hold a current, valid administrative license in Massachusetts
- have prior administrative/leadership experience working with students, staff and parents at the high school level
- have prior educational experience working with students at the high school level

We further reviewed candidate resumes and supporting documents through the lens of our current needs at the high school, using data from the parent/community, staff, and student surveys that had been completed to date. We received about 150 responses to the survey thus far (65 responses from parents/community members, 55 responses from students, and 30 responses from AHS staff members). We will continue to make those surveys available for completion through Monday, January 25th and will use the information as the interview committee considers the candidates.

Five candidates were selected to be interviewed this upcoming week. The interview committee will then select candidates to be considered as 'finalists'. We will complete site visits at the schools of those candidates. We will also schedule student/parent/community and teacher forums during the week of February 8-12 with those finalists. This will provide everyone an opportunity to meet the finalists; learn about their values, vision, and experience; and provide feedback to me as I complete the final selection of the successful candidate. I will provide more information about those forums as the process progresses.

Members of the interview committee include:

Morgan Holmes	Student Representative	Debra LaValley	School Committee
Linda Lynch	Parent	Tom McGee	School Committee
Daniel O'Neill	Parent	Lyn Jacques	Central Office Admin
Jessica Regis	AHS Staff Member	M. Louise Charette	Elementary Principal
Jean Brockmyre	AHS Staff Member	Ellen Oliver	Community Rep
		Gary Reese	Superintendent

Director of Student Services Opening Update

We will go through a very similar process for the selection of a new Director of Student Services. As with the high school principal selection process, the underlying theme of this selection process will be both transparency and inclusive. There will be a survey that is posted early next week for students, staff members, parents and community members to complete – this will help guide us through the screening process, interview question development, and in selecting finalists for the position. There will also be an opportunity for everyone to meet the finalists through public forums which will be scheduled once we go through initial candidate interviews. It is anticipated that these forums will be held during the week of February 22 – February 26.

Meeting with School Committee Member

This week, I had the opportunity to meet with new school committee member, Gretchen Maranopoulos. We had a great conversation about my entry findings report and what she sees as critical challenges to move the district forward. One area of focus for Ms. Maranopoulos is special education. She is clearly an advocate for students with special needs and brings with her unique experiences and a skill set that will support the continued development and refinement of our special education programs and services. She also expressed an interest in working towards re-establishing our Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPED PAC). This parent run group helps to provide support for families that are navigating the special education process. If you are interested in helping to rejuvenate this council, please be sure to connect with Ms. Maranopoulos – she can be emailed at sc.maranopoulos@amesburyma.gov

In case you missed this week's school committee meeting, here are some topics you missed...

- Carey Creps, from the Amesbury Middle School Parent Advisory Group, spoke to the School Committee about the various ways that the PAG supports students and staff members. She also discussed fundraising activities. It was a great opportunity to learn about the ways in which parent groups work to benefit our schools. At the next school committee meeting, representatives from the elementary PTO will be present to highlight the work done at the elementary level.
- I presented my report of entry findings. This document represents a culmination of what I have heard, observed, and read over my first four months in Amesbury. It identifies areas of strength and challenges in four core areas: Teaching and Learning, Fiscal and Asset Management, Community Engagement and Communication, and Professional Culture. I welcome any feedback regarding the report and if it accurately captures the current state of our school district. Please feel free to email me at reeseg@amesburyma.gov with any feedback. The full report and presentation are available online at: <http://schools.amesburyma.gov/amesburypublic.cfm?subpage=1453076>
- As we continue to engage the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) regarding a building project for Amesbury Elementary School, I provided the school committee with a presentation about the MSBA process, with a focus on what would be our next step in the process if MSBA votes at their January board meeting to invite us into the next stage. This stage is called eligibility and it involves a lot of initial legwork to identify enrollment projections, a facilities maintenance plan, and secure support from the school committee and city council to continue in the process (through the next phase, which is called feasibility).

Amesbury Education Foundation, Inc. (AEFI)

Wednesday evening, I attended the AEFI board meeting where the focus of the meeting was on the initial stages of strategic planning for the organization. As you know, AEFI provides extensive support of our schools, particularly through significant grant awards that enable our teachers to engage in innovative practices. Another activity supported through AEFI is the 'Wall of Honor' which recognizes the accomplishments of a former student, a former staff member, and a community member. The organization is currently seeking nominations for this year's Wall of Honor. For more information about this award and how to nominate someone, please go to: <http://www.aefionline.com/awards/> Nominations are due to the Amesbury Public Schools central office no later than Friday, February 5, 2016 at 4:00 pm. What a great way to recognize someone who has made a significant contribution to the schools and community!

Student Evening Programs

Also on Wednesday evening, our middle school students held their winter chorus concert. While I was not able to attend due to my involvement with AEFI that evening, I heard that it was well attended and, more importantly, that the students did an incredible job! I was able to attend a high school program, Night of the Arts Gala, on Thursday evening. This event, coordinated entirely by our high school students, incorporated an art display, along with a musical and theatrical showcase. I continue to be extremely impressed with the talents of our students. This evening culminated with the AHS cast of Shrek: The Musical performing a song (Freak Flag) from their upcoming presentation. They will present this musical to the Amesbury community in early April – be sure to check it out as it is a performance not to be missed! Congratulations to all of our students for their hard work and dedication to the visual and performing arts.

School committee vacancy

There is a seat open on the current school committee, due to the resignation of Mr. Christian Scorzoni. Mr. Scorzoni was elected to the city council and is not able to perform both functions in the city. The process for filling this vacancy involves a joint school committee and city council, where they will interview potential candidates and take a vote to select the individual. If you are interested in finding out more about the process and potentially submitting an application to fill the seat, Applications or letters of Interest with Resume should be filed with the City Clerk's Office no later than February 4, 2016 at 4:00 pm. Applications can be obtained in the City Clerk's Office. The applicants must be a registered voter and a resident of the City of Amesbury. A Joint Hearing of the School Committee and Amesbury City Council will be held on February 9th to fill the vacancy.

New Superintendent's Induction Program

As you know, I have been participating this year in the New Superintendent's Induction Program (NSIP) provided through the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents. This program supports my continued development as a district leader and provides a clear direction of the types of activities typically undertaken by a superintendent during his/her first year in a new community. This month's meeting focused on visioning strategies and root cause analysis protocols. The vision strategies discussion was very timely, as I just recently presented my report of entry findings to the school committee and identified the development of a clear vision and core values as the next steps in the strategic planning process. I will be able to use these strategies as I engage students, parents, school staff, and the community in this process. The other focus topic for this month's meeting, root cause analysis, was also very timely. We had the opportunity to practice this protocol which truly helps to get

at the underlying root cause of an issue. By going through this process, you gain a better understanding of a problem and have a clearer direction to address the true issue. An example of how this process might be used is to examine student performance on state mandated and other summative assessments and to develop a plan to improve performance.

Be well and have a great weekend!

Gary