



Superintendent's Corner

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Superintendent

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The past couple of weeks have been very busy in the Amesbury Public Schools, as we begin the final stretch of the 2016-2017 school year. There have been a number of end-of-year celebrations and activities that have kept both our students and staff engaged.

Baccalaureate

Tuesday, May 30th was the Baccalaureate for our seniors. At this event, seniors are recognized with different awards from our various departments. This is always a great evening for students and their families, as the students are not aware that they will be receiving any award. It is an opportunity to recognize students for their various academic talents and to acknowledge the effort students put into their education.

Sporting Events

Although the year was winding down for our seniors, many of the students were still engaged in sporting competitions. On Thursday, June 1st, I had the opportunity to attend a tennis playoff match for our girls' team. It was a great match, a lot of back and forth between Amesbury and North Reading. Over the past couple of years, I've had a chance to watch many sporting events for our students... but there was something different about the girls' tennis matches that I haven't necessarily seen with other sports – the mutual respect that the athletes from both teams have for one another. It was very noticeable during a match that Abby Sartori had with one of the North Reading players. Abby dominated through the match, but not once did I see her gloat. In fact, she was often heard complimenting the other player on a particular play or a strong serve. At the end of the match, when shaking hands with the other player, I heard her wishing the student well next year at college.

I'm not sure if this difference is something unique to girls' tennis, or if is something unique to our tennis team... either way, I was very proud of our ladies and how they present themselves in competitive matches.

Our track team also competed during the past couple of weeks...

And, of course, there is our girls' softball team. Over the past two weeks, they had four playoff matches, winning the first two rather easily. Their third game was against Whittier... they had lost to Whittier the last time they played them, so our girls were looking for redemption. The pitching on both sides was incredible, which kept the score low. At the end of seven innings (which is the typical number of innings for softball), the score was 3-3... into extra innings they went! The eighth inning passed with no change in the score, then the ninth inning came and went. Finally, in the tenth inning our ladies made their move and finished off the Whittier team 4-3. It was a well-played match for both teams. This past Thursday, the ladies headed to Lynn for a game against Boston Latin Academy. As with the game against Whittier, this was a true test of the pitchers from both team. Each alternating striking out players, resulting in the game progressing with no score. Our field players also did their jobs, with a couple of amazing catches from some of our outfielders. It was the bottom of the seventh, score still 0-0, with two outs when a Boston Latin player found the right spot on her bat and hit a ball that landed in the outfield and a Boston Latin player was able to make it home, ending the game. The girls should be very proud of themselves and of the strong season they had!

Senior Dinner Dance

Another tradition for the senior is the annual dinner dance held the evening before graduation. This event is much more relaxed than the prom... students still get dressed up, but in much less formal clothes than they may have worn for the prom. During this evening, seniors have an opportunity to sign each other's yearbooks, dance, and receive prizes purchased by the senior class officers. It is a nice way to lead into their graduation the following day.

Class of 2017 Graduation

June 2 was the graduation for the Amesbury High School Class of 2017. The weather was a little questionable, but the decision was made to hold the graduation outside and we were able to get through graduation without any rain (although the clouds did roll in and cause a slight level of concern). All the students did a wonderful job with their speeches, sending positive messages to the graduating class about setting goals as they look ahead.

School Committee Happenings

Personnel Subcommittee – Monday evening, the personnel subcommittee met. The agenda for this meeting included staffing updates, superintendent's end of cycle evaluation, and an update on contract negotiations with the teachers' bargaining unit. The staffing update provided the committee with information about upcoming openings for the 2017-2018 school year. In terms of my evaluation, I provided the committee with two documents, along with supporting evidence, which identified how I have been working towards my goals for the year, as well as ways in which I have demonstrated proficiency in meeting eight particular elements the school committee identified for me to focus on during the 2016-2017 school year. This documentation will be made available for public review on my page on the website.

School Committee Meeting – Also on Monday evening, the regular school committee meeting was held. Of particular note from this meeting were the presentations by two of our middle school educators, Gale Regis and Kristen Dore. Ms. Regis shared information about a project that students had been working on in her class and Mr. Smith's class. This project involved the students building a structure that would be able to determine the direction of an earthquake and, in many cases, some indication of the intensity of the quakes. I had the chance to visit the classes when the students were working on this project. I was very impressed by the ways in which the students employed critical thinking skills, as well as their ability to communicate 'scientifically' about their structures. Ms. Dore spoke about the blanching turtles that she and Mr. Bent's class were raising. This project involved math, science and writing. Equally important, Ms. Dore pointed out that the project fit very well into the work that the district is engaged in for social emotional learning. In particular, the students were developing their social awareness and responsible decision making skills.

AES School Building Committee Meeting – The school building committee for the Amesbury Elementary project met on Wednesday for our initial meeting. The meeting focused on a review of the overall components for the building project, as well as a more detailed discussion of our current phase in the project, feasibility. The committee identified five members to serve as the subcommittee that will review applications for an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and will make recommendations to the full committee for final selection. A webpage has been created to keep the community informed of our meetings, which are open to the public.

Joint Education Committee – Also meeting on Wednesday was the joint education committee. As a reminder, this committee is comprised of members of the city council and members of the school committee. The goal of these joint meetings is to facilitate positive communication between the school committee and city council. At this meeting, we discussed the proposed FY18 school budget, the strategic plan, Landry Stadium and the school's capital improvement requests through the FY8 budget process. The discussion is always meaningful and I believe it provides a good opportunity to clarify any topics.

Chief Ouellet's Retirement

Thursday afternoon, I attended a luncheon to celebrate Chief Kevin Ouellet. Chief Ouellet is retiring this June, after serving in the Amesbury Police Department for 37 years, with the last four years being as the Chief of Police. I have appreciated the many ways in which the chief has supported our schools. There is a strong relationship between the schools and the police department, which I am sure will continue as the department transitions.

AHS Awards Ceremony

Thursday evening, Principal Elizabeth McAndrews facilitated the underclass awards ceremony. During this event, underclassmen receive awards and recognition.

Youth At Risk Conference

Friday, Mary Houde, Ami Henderson, and I attended the 17th Annual Youth at Risk Conference. This conference focuses on ways in which schools can continue to identify, engage and support students that are most at risk in our school community. The keynotes were very motivational and the breakout sessions were very informative. We each learned strategies that we can bring back to staff in the schools.

AIHS Graduation

Friday evening, I attended the graduation ceremony for students from the Amesbury Innovation High School. This year, there were nine students graduating. This ceremony is very intimate, and Principal Eryn Maguire does a great job speaking about each of the students and how they have grown during the time that they have attended AIHS. It is a very emotional evening for students, parents and school staff alike. There is such a strong connection between the students and the staff members who have supported the students through some very challenging situations.

Be well and have a great weekend!

Gary