



Superintendent's Corner

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Superintendent

May 19, 2017

School Committee Meeting

In case you missed Monday night's school committee meeting, here are some highlights:

- Cashman SEL Learning Presentation: Students and staff from CES presented to the school committee about the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) work they have been engaged in during this school year. In particular, the students highlighted some of the programs and activities that support SEL development, including learning yoga and meditation techniques. The students even demonstrated one of their yoga breathing techniques and the school committee members participated right along with them. One school committee member even commented that the committee could certainly benefit from practicing breathing and relaxation prior to the regular meetings!
- Lyn Jacques, Director of Teaching and Learning, provided an update of the work occurring through the curriculum office. She described the curriculum development work that the teachers across the district were completing, which actually dovetailed very well with the presentation from the Cashman students and staff. She also discussed the professional development opportunities that were provided this year for staff members. Additionally, she described briefly about the coordinate program review process that the district will be involved in this year and next year. Ms. Jacques is coordinating the civil rights portion of the review. This year, we are gathering documents to support our compliance with a series of indicators in special education, English language learning, and civil rights. Next spring, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Special Education will conduct a site visit where they will interview staff, parents, and community members; observe in classrooms; and identify the ways in which the documentation we provided is supported by interviews and classroom visits. In essence, they want to ensure that we have policies and procedures in place that comply with state and federal regulations and that staff members are aware of these policies and implement them with fidelity in the classrooms and schools. I will continue to update the community about this process as more information becomes available.
- New Policy: JJ – Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities – The school committee approved a new policy around the ways in which we hire, evaluate, and retain advisors for our extra-curricular programs. This policy will help to improve transparency about the process.
- The school committee also officially voted on the last day of school for the 2016-2017 school year. The last day for our students and paraprofessionals will be June 22 and the last day for teachers will be June 23. The student's last day will be a half day with the following dismissal times:
 - Elementary Schools – 11:30
 - Middle School – 10:50
 - High School – 10:50
- AEFI Grant acceptance – We are so fortunate to have the support of the Amesbury Education Foundation, Inc. (AEFI) in our community. Each year, AEFI provides our staff with a number of grants. These grants provide our staff with the opportunity to explore new and innovative educational opportunities, which might otherwise not be funded through the regular budget. Some are awarded at

the Evening of Giving in the fall, while others are awarded at the Hall of Honor celebration in the spring. This year, I am pleased to announce the following grant recipients for their spring awards (which were officially voted on by the School Committee to accept – per school committee policy):

- “Absolutely Normal Chaos” – Amesbury Middle School J. Pizzi and S. Blanchet--- \$1,765.75
- “Anchor Your Anxiety” – Amesbury Innovation High School, B. Noseworthy --- \$3,600.00
- “Creating More ‘AHA’ Moments with iPads” – Amesbury Elementary, N. Coughlin --- \$4,000.
- “Inspiring STEM Careers Through Drone Technology” – Amesbury Middle School, J. Firmes and J. Queenan --- \$5,516.00
- “Mindful Me, Pt. II” – Cashman Elementary, Leadership Team (K. Bissell) --- \$3,091.79
- “Weather Watchers” – Cashman Elementary, D. Hewey --- \$740.00
- “Maker Breaker Center: Developing a Mobile Creativity and Discovery Lab” – Amesbury Elementary, B. McBrien --- \$1,339.78

Excellence in Education

Each May, Amesbury Public Schools staff are offered the chance to nominate one of their colleagues for an Excellence in Education award. This award is especially meaningful to our staff members, as their colleagues are recognizing them for going above and beyond to make a difference in the lives of Amesbury students. The recipients, along with their nominator, are invited to a luncheon at Flatbread Pizza to receive their award. On Monday, this year’s excellence in education ceremony was held with twelve staff members receiving the recognition this year:

Amesbury Elementary: Geralyn Willett, Cara Ripley, Liz Morris, Sheila Harney

Cashman Elementary: Leslie Barnaby, Patricia Blanchard

Amesbury Middle School: Caitlyn Bailey, Kristin Fitzgerald

Amesbury High School: Kathy Morrill, Mary Beth Exner, Guillermo Sepulveda

Amesbury Innovation High School: Patrick Hamilton



Leadership Team Meeting

On Tuesday, the administrative leadership team met to discuss special education staffing, program changes, and to review policies and procedures. We meet on an ongoing basis to ensure that staff are both aware of the policies and are appropriately implementing them within the school setting.

AHS National Honor Society Induction

Tuesday evening, AHS students were inducted into the National Honor Society. This is always a special event as it recognizes students for the academic achievement, as well as their contributions to service in the community. Ms. Furlong, the NHS advisor always does a nice job working with the students to run the ceremony.

Things are Shaking at AMS

Wednesday afternoon, I had the chance to visit the classrooms of Gale Regis and Brian Smith. Students in those classes have been designing, building and testing out their seismographs and buildings that would withstand a 'great shake'. The students' designs are so different and the problem solving was amazing to watch. I applaud Mrs. Regis and Mr. Smith for bringing this project to the students and for igniting the creativity and critical thinking skills. The students were so actively engaged and having FUN with learning! I enjoyed talking with the students about their projects and was impressed with the ways that they incorporated scientific vocabulary.



AHS Spring Concert



The end of the year brings a number of activities for students at all schools. Wednesday evening, AHS students involved in band and chorus presented their spring concert. The students did a great job... we have some seriously talented students in our community! I want to thank Ms. Meyer and Mr. Fijalkowski for the great work they do with the students!

Rotary Club Luncheon

At Thursday's Rotary Club meeting, there was a celebration of small businesses. The guest speaker was Coleen McGowan, owner of 18 Friend St. Ms. McGowan shared the many benefits of small businesses to the community. I was most impressed and appreciative of the ways in which our local businesses support the school district and the various community service supports in Amesbury. Local businesses are always there to help out and donate items to support various fundraising activities. Most recently, I attended a fundraiser to support our middle school Destination Imagination team as they prepare for the National Competition. During

this event, there were so many baskets and items donated by our local businesses. It is a true testament to how the community of Amesbury bands together to help everyone!

NECC Meeting with Lane Glenn

Thursday afternoon, I visited Northern Essex Community College and had a nice conversation with President Lane Glenn. We talked about our current partnership for the Early College High School program here in Amesbury. This is a great program that provides students the opportunity to earn college credits, beginning in their sophomore year and to experience the rigor and challenge of a college level course. We discussed different ways to continue to sustain and grow this program for our students. I highly encourage students and their families to learn more about this unique opportunity and to learn how participation in this program helps lead to a college degree. Dr. Glenn shared a very interesting fact with me... students that complete a two year program in a community college have a greater success rate in completing a four year degree (according to data collected by the President of UMass Lowell regarding student persistence and success).

Soar to the Top

Friday, I had the pleasure of being a chaperone at AMS' Soar to the Top field trip. This trip is offered to students who have demonstrated various positive character traits during the course of the year. The student arrived at AMS at 6:30 this morning and boarded busses heading to Mount Major in Alton, New Hampshire. The weather was beautiful and students had the opportunity to hike up the mountain and experience the amazing views of Lake Winnepesaukee. It was quite a trek up the mountain, but once at the top, students (and adults) were rewarded with the beautiful views. Then, we had to walk down! Everyone got their exercise in for the day! At the bottom of Mt. Major, students were greeted by parents, school staff, and administration with a hamburger and hot dog lunch. A great time was had by all – I am appreciative of all the parents, teachers and AMS administrators for their support of this activity.

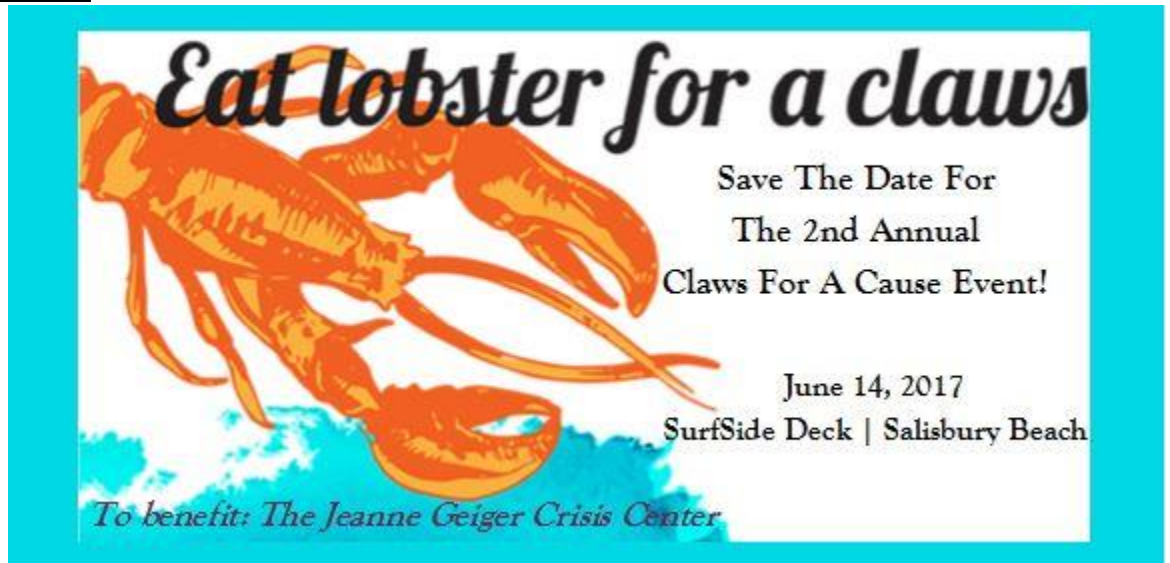


Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center

Looking for something fun to do on June 14 that also supports a wonderful local organization? Then join me at the 2nd Annual Claws for a Cause Event to benefit the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. Individuals can purchase tickets for the event and

there are also opportunities for sponsorship at this event. For more information, go to:

<http://jeannegeigercrisiscenter.org/>



Be well and have a great weekend!

Gary