



ARHS Parent Center Newsletter



Volume 8 Issue 2

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Update From the ARHS Parent Center

At our November meeting (minutes for which are available on our web site), we reviewed the Safe Homes Initiative set up by Adrienne Levine, and we had an excellent presentation by Jane Baer Leighton (Chair) and Sarah Barber Just (faculty member) on the history, development and application of the present English Department curriculum. The presentation was detailed and the questions of parents received a careful and helpful response. It was felt by all that such a presentation, not only by the English Department, but by all departments and programs, should be made available to a larger audience than that in attendance at the Parent Center monthly meeting. Principal Mark Jackson supported the idea of seeking a broader and more inclusive forum at various points throughout the calendar year. Linked to this suggestion was the repeated request that each trimester afford parents the opportunity to meet with teachers and departments with more time for exchanges and information sharing than is afforded by the present one time forum at the beginning of the academic year.

Also covered were issues raised by Nathan Mondschein, the student representative to the Parent Center, with respect to the new policy on 18 year old students writing their own releases from class without having to obtain a parent's agreement. This issue invites additional dialogue, and parents are urged to have their voices heard as well. The articles in the student newspaper, the Graphic, may help to inform parents about some views being expressed by students. In addition, the efforts at reaching out to students with more opportunities for after school support and tutorials were summarized by Mary Jo Maffei, who has taken the lead on this initiative. As Mary Jo has succinctly put it, "Too often students choose the easier route and leave the school for the day. Our principal, Mark

Next Parent Center Meeting December 12, 2007

The next meeting of the Amherst Regional High School Parent Center will be on Wednesday, December 12, 2007 in Room 13 at the High School from 7:00 to 8:30pm.

Next RaDAR Group Meeting December 19, 2007

The next meeting of the RaDAR Group will be on Wednesday, December 19, 2007 in Room 13 at the High School from 7:00 to 8:30pm. See more about RaDAR on page 3

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Jackson, has asked the Parent Center to investigate how to make it easier and more comfortable for students to ask for academic help. A student may be close to failing a course and need a lot of help or may be doing well, but unclear about a specific concept. Both students would benefit from asking their teachers for help. Yet, while we have dedicated teachers who are regularly available after school to help students, their services, with a few exceptions, are underutilized.

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The mission of the Parent Center is primarily to be a helpful link between parents and ARHS.

Please contact us with your questions or concerns:

www.arhsparentcenter.org/contact

We are looking at ways to encourage students to seek academic help when they need it. To do this we are looking at literature and trying to find other schools that have dealt with this issue. We also need to understand what is the culture around asking for help at the Amherst High School. Why do students not seek help when they need it? What can we do to make it easier to ask for help? We would like your input. If you are a parent, student, teacher, or administrator and you have any insight or suggestions that would help us please contact Mary Jo at mjmaf@aol.com or 259-1263." Volunteering is the way in which the Parent Center has been able to advocate successfully for parents. Please volunteer for this initiative!

Finally, the meeting touched on the present anticipated budgetary shortfall. In spite of the fact that the actual funds made available to the Regional School District were more than the budget had projected, those funds were used to make up for needs not met by the previous year's shortfall. Principal Mark Jackson expressed his serious concern that another year of cuts would begin to affect the quality of instruction, as class size has been forced to increase and will continue to increase under the pressure of doing more with fewer resources.

The next RaDAR meeting will be held at the Parent Center room on Wednesday, November 28, from 7-8:30 p.m. The discussion will focus on the disciplinary report and will also include an update on the Norma Jean Anderson Civil Rights and Academic Achievement Award.

Fund raising has begun with a successful initial infusion of funds from many generous parents, who contributed \$945 in October and November. We gratefully acknowledge these contributions and will look forward to continued support from all of our parents in sponsoring activities that will assist all students. It is expected that the after school initiative being led by Mary Jo Maffei will be given direct funding support by the Parent Center. Other initiatives are welcomed, including funding of small grants for teachers seeking to pursue innovative projects that require supplemental funding outside the regular school budget.

Homework, Academic Help What to do? Where to go?

School has started and your child seems to be doing fine. However, six weeks into the semester your child comes to you asking for help with science homework. You would love to help, but you don't understand the material either. In another case your child comes home saying that she failed her history quiz. What should you do? It is important to act soon and not wait until problems progress further. The following are steps that you can take to help your child academically.

Communicate with the teacher

The first step is to email or leave a voice mail for your child's teacher. Teachers will respond within 48 hours. Often just voicing your concerns and providing information on how your child learns best will make a difference. The school administrators encourage parents to communicate with their child's teacher. Teachers stay after school until at least 3 pm each day and are usually available to help students. However, since teachers sometimes have staff meetings or other commitments it is best to check ahead.

Encourage your child to setup a study group with other students

Ask teachers about the possibility of using class time for setting up study groups so that students can exchange contact information and determine a time to meet. Some teachers encourage study groups and give extra credit to students that participate in them.

Contact your child's guidance counselor

This is especially important if your child is in danger of failing, having trouble in more than one course or not "clicking" with or understanding a particular teacher. The guidance counselor can set up a case conference with you, the teacher, and your child and facilitate a discussion to address the particular learning style of your child. The counselor can also direct you to other academic support resources. If your child is on an IEP, your child's liaison should be contacted instead of the counselor.

Use extra help resources available through the school

Math/ Science and English Study Center This resource is available during the day in Rooms 133 and 135 and is staffed by a paraprofessional and student tutors. Students can get a pass to go to these centers for help during study halls and lunches.

After School Study Center Tutor A tutor is available to the library Monday through Thursday until 4 PM to help students.

College Student Tutors On Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, students from UMass and Amherst College are in the library after school until 4 pm to provide help with most subjects. High School students do not need an appointment, but can just drop in and ask for help.

Tutor Book The guidance department maintains a book of available tutors by subject area. Each tutor submits a resume and passes a CORI check. These tutors charge a fee and must be contacted directly.

Prep Academy This program is for 9th graders that have been identified as needing extra support. Contact your child's guidance counselor for more information.

Project Challenge This mentoring program is for sophomores and juniors who are interested in challenging themselves by taking more rigorous course work. Participating students meet one period a day all year with their mentor and a small group of peers to work on class assignments and developing strategies and skills for achieving academic success. Students enroll in this program for the next year. Contact your guidance counselor for more information

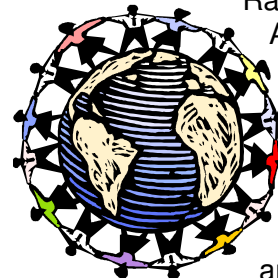
A late bus is available on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday at approximately 3:45 p.m. to take students home. It services all of the towns in the regional school district.

Senior Graduation Party First Organizing Meeting January 15 at 7 pm

The annual Senior Party takes place following graduation on Friday, June 6th from 10 pm to 6 am with entertainment, food, and activities all night. This is a non-school sponsored event organized by parent volunteers for all graduating seniors and their guests. Any senior parent/guardian interested in helping to organize the 2008 Senior Graduation Party is invited to the first meeting on Tuesday, January 15 at 7:00 pm in Room 13 at the High School. Organizers from last year will be present to answer questions and hand over materials from previous years' parties.

Interested in joining the committee to plan the Senior '08 graduation party? Please contact Linda Mondschein at Lshine5@comcast.net so we can arrange a date/time to meet that is convenient for all.

RaDAR (Race and Discipline, Action, Rights)



RaDAR is a joint project of the ARHS PARENT CENTER and STUDY CIRCLES. It was organized in the spring, 2005 to address concerns raised by ALANA (African, African-American, Latino, Asian and Asian-American and Native American) parents/guardians regarding issues of discipline, social justice and equity in education at ARHS.

On-going Projects

RaDAR has made recommendations for policies in the ARHS Student Handbook to better ensure respectful, fair and equitable treatment regarding discipline and related matters. RaDAR has supported students and their parents who sought remedies for unequal treatment in selection to Honor Society, in staffing for cheer leading squads, and in offenses meted out for discipline. RaDAR is launching a dialogue focused on the data compiled by the school staff

regarding internal and external suspensions. RaDAR has also created the Norma Jean Anderson Civil Rights and Academic Achievement Award to honor and applaud a current ARHS teacher, administrator or staff member who promotes the ideals of a just and respectful community built on compassionate relationships.

In all of these efforts, the VISION of RaDAR is to work in a collaborative effort of students, teachers, staff and administrators toward a school free of racism, prejudice and discrimination that promotes personal safety, personal growth and academic achievement. We envision learning communities that nurture the ideals of a just and a respectful community where students in Amherst can obtain excellent education and achieve the highest academic success in an environment free of systematic privilege based on race.

Contacts

RaDAR welcomes new participants who share the Mission and Vision (as stated above). For further information about meeting date, time and place, contact Annie Leonard, Asst Principle, ARHS; Kathleen Anderson, School Committee Member; or Jackie Wolf, Community Member (549-2958).

SAFE HOMES Update

We are pleased to announce that many families have signed up for the SAFE HOMES Program and that the SAFE HOMES Directory will be mailed sometime in January to those families who have signed on.

For information on SAFE HOMES go to :
www.arhsparentcenter.org/Safe-Homes-Program

Thanks again to all of you who have joined the program.

Adrienne Levine

aclevine@comcast.net

Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPACs) are a requirement of the Massachusetts Special Education Regulations. Each school district is required to have a Parent Advisory Council on Special Education. We are a system-wide organization of Amherst, Pelham, and

Amherst Regional parents/guardians of school aged children (preschool -grade 12) with disabilities and other interested individuals. We work in partnership with our schools and administration to promote an innovative educational environment where children with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities and that our schools are safe, nurturing, challenging learning environments for ALL children.

We assist schools and families in reducing the frustrations that parents can experience when they first stumble into special education, by providing informational handouts, educational workshops, and informal discussion meetings to focus on continually improving educational opportunities to our children. As a SEPAC, we can network resources and provide assistance to other parents in accessing information about the special education process.

For more information Check out our website at: www.arps.org/sepac/ To receive our E-Newsletter, Highlights in Special Education, send us an email to arpssepac@arps.org

Amherst Education Foundation

The Amherst Education Foundation, Inc. is an independent, non-profit education fund, whose purpose is to stimulate excellence, promote equity, enhance diversity, and mobilize broad community support for the public schools of Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, and Shutesbury.

To learn more:

www.amhersteducationfoundation.org

FAQ



Can students do community service instead of a study hall?

Yes. This year, we have about 200 students performing a variety of services for the school. Students may act as peer tutors, library aides, office aides, or contribute a special skill, such as assisting with the school web site. They should contact the Guidance Office for information about community service.

For more FAQ:

<http://www.arps.org/hs/FAQ/>

ARHS Information

Don't forget to check the ARHS school web site, which has lots of information on it, including announcements, directory and calendar:

www.arps.org/hs/

Link to daily announcements:

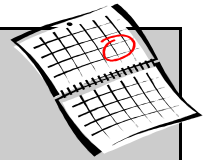
www.arps.org/hs/News/announcements.html

Amherst Regional High School
21 Mattoon Street
Amherst, MA 01002

Main: (413) 362-1700
Fax: (413) 549-9704
CEEB/ACT Code: 220-015
School Cancellation Line: 362-1898
Athletic Events Cancellation Line: 362-1798

Amherst Regional School System:
www.arps.org/

Mark Your Calendar



Parent Center Meeting
Wednesday, December 12

Term 1 Report Cards Issued
Late Arrival Day
Thursday, December 13

RaDAR Group Meeting
Wednesday, December 19

No School
Monday, December 24 – Tuesday, January 1

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Late Arrival Day
Thursday, January 10

Martin Luther King Day – No School
Monday, January 21

Curriculum Day – No School
Monday, January 28

Please check the ARHS online calendar for the latest information.

Link to the ARHS online calendar:
<http://www.arps.org/HS/Calendar/>