

AMHS Parent Newsletter – August 2011

Jay Hurder, Principal

Now that another school year is well underway, I would like to thank the students, staff, and parents for making it a smooth start. I look forward to what this year will bring. I understand well the scrutiny a new Principal is under when coming to a new building and/or district, but please understand that whatever matriculates in this building, whether rules/policy, procedures, or academic expectations, they are all intended to create the best school academic and social environment possible for your students. Will we all always agree? No, but that, in and of itself, is a valuable life lesson for the students.

I will be writing a newsletter at least once a month that will be posted on our school webpage, as well as being printed in the Argus; many thanks to them for their assistance in getting this newsletter out to you.

As in any school environment, there are always many issues that need to be addressed and clarified, especially as the year starts and new people come in. There are a couple of these “hot topics” that I would like to get right out on the table. First and foremost, the following expectations are not my creation. They are established School Board Policy, not meant to create any unnecessary angst, and are not unique to Abingdon. One is the adherence to the dress code. In simple terms, here is what is expected. Shorts are to be below the finger tips when arms are at rest at one’s side. Necklines should be no lower than if you placed your fist in front of your chest and touch your chin with that thumb. Straps should be 3 fingers wide. No tank tops with torn or large cut-out sides. Pants and shorts are not to be sagging or torn above the knee. For other specifications, refer to the handbook. If we adhere to these simple parameters, we won’t have any issues. Think conservative and we’ll be fine. Another issue is cell phones. We can keep this simple here as well. We know they come to school, but here is what we expect. Once the students enter the building, the phones are to be turned OFF, and put away. We don’t see them or hear them. Once the kids leave the building at the end of the day, they can use them again. If parents need to get a hold of their children during the day, we still accept phone calls in the office and that message will be relayed to the student. If a student needs to call home for an emergency issue (I don’t consider forgetting lunch money or PE clothes an emergency), they can make a call from the office. This procedure has worked for a very long time now, and still does. PLEASE.....help us with these issues. We do not wish to become the dress code and cell phone police at school. We have much better issues to concentrate on. I understand other districts are revising their cell phone policies, and we will look into that for next year. We will be making Student Handbook revision proposals to the School Board in early spring, so if there is something you think needs changing, please discuss it with me. Ignoring the rule isn’t the way to do it. Violations of the aforementioned concerns will prompt us to address them through the discipline code, which could include various consequences and temporary confiscation. However, continued violations to the dress code may result in my recommendation to the School Board for a school uniform policy which is, again, not uncommon in other districts. This is a team effort, and I appreciate your attention to these concerns. Let’s work together and not force extreme measures.

I have, in the past, made myself informally available to parents at school at least once a month in the evening. I know this was tried here in the past and was not well attended. If you, as parents, would like a forum established, please email me or call so I can get a “feel” for the level of interest in it. If the response is good, I will establish a monthly forum. If not, my office is always open to you to stop in and discuss issues individually. All I ask is that you make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance. You can call 462-2338 or email me at jhurder@abingdon.k12.il.us.

Thank you for all you do for Abingdon Middle/High School and its students. Here’s wishing for a great year together!