

AMHS Parent Newsletter – October 2011

Jay Hurder, Principal

Well, another Abingdon Homecoming has come and gone and I was very impressed with not only the behavior and attitude of the students, but with all the work the staff and students put into it. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the efforts of our High School Student Council and their sponsor, Mrs. Arthur. They did a fantastic job!

Now that the dust has settled on a new school year, I can't believe we find ourselves only 3 weeks away from the end of our first quarter! I would like to acknowledge the students for responding and adjusting quite nicely to the enforcement of rules and procedures that have been in the handbook for years, as well as a few other procedural tweaks we have made. This was viewed as a priority to help provide a school climate that nurtures both teaching and learning, and I believe we have made some real progress in that area.

Being close to the end of the quarter would be a good time to mention a sensitive subject; student grades. Every student will struggle with a class now and then, maybe even failing it at one point or another. Effort and communication with the teacher usually alleviates that poor grade. However, we have 15% of our 6-12th grade student body failing two or more classes. This is an alarming number that we cannot ignore. I believe that a large part of this statistic is the "won't vs. can't" syndrome. As mentioned, if a student is truly putting forth effort in a class, those efforts will eventually pay off with better cognitive understanding, which then leads to better test scores and academic performance. However, if it is due to a lack of effort, we cannot control that. We can manage our school climate, our curriculum, our instructional strategies, and our staff. However, we must have help on how serious the student takes his or her education, and how well they use their time outside of school in preparation. Again, if we work as a team, we can see great strides in the next couple of years.

We are also starting to revise the Student Handbook to help make our policies and procedures more clear, concise, consistent, and easy to follow. We hope to have a revision ready for Board approval in March or April. Again, any ideas or suggestions would be welcomed. In addition, we are revising our School Improvement Plan to help identify indicators of low academic achievement, and plans of action to address our low AYP scores. There is no magic wand for fixing this issue, but through proper assessment, good planning, and diligent implementation, all with a commitment to hard work from everyone, we should be able to make some very positive steps towards improvement.

We have several clubs available for the students to get involved with after school, including Art, Chess, Spanish, FFA, FPA, HomeEc, GSA, Music, Key Club, and Yearbook. We encourage your student to explore some enrichment activities after school if they are not involved in sports. Taking part in extracurricular activities is a great way to stay motivated about school! You can check out our school web page for more information on the club offerings.

I am still open to a Principal/Parent Monthly meeting if the interest is there. Otherwise, you can always make arrangements to see me or a teacher by making an appointment at least 24 hours in advance. You can call 462-2338 or email me at jhurder@abingdon.k12.il.us. Also, please check in with Skyward often. It is a great communication tool!

As always, thanks for all you mean to the students of AMHS.