



To: Parents and Students

From: Donna F. Brunette, Principal

Date: 10/5/2016

RE: October Newsletter

We are off and running. I have said many times in the past week that we have “great kids” at MTA and it is truly a pleasure to work with them as they have settled into a new year. It has been a positive start in the midst of many changes to schedules as we have worked to balance class numbers and ensure students have the courses they need. If you do have questions about your child’s schedule, please contact his/her school counselor.

There are many new faces at MTA as a result of retirements and others leaving for personal or professional reasons. The good news is that we have hired amazing people who are hard at work. We have one position left to hire, a Response to Intervention English Teacher; we have interviewed and expect to complete this hiring process next week. Here is the list of new MTA hires for the 2016-2017 school year:

Robert Messier – Math Teacher
Eric Bosarge – English Teacher
Paul Sasso – Science Teacher
Wendy Ambrose – Science Teacher
Julie Petrie – Health and Physical Education Teacher
Neal Goldberg – Alternative Education Teacher – Grades 7-10
Kay Kessler - Special Ed Teacher
Jennifer Green - Administrative Secretary
Corrie Calderwood – Learning Commons Ed Tech
Carol Minnehan – Special Services Ed Tech
Amy Pandya – Nurse Practitioner, School Based Health Center
Lynn Sirois – Data Manager, School Based Health Center
Michelle Selby – Sweetser Counselor, School Based Health Center

With this newsletter you are receiving your child’s progress report. Please contact your child’s teacher if you have questions or concerns. Changes have been made in our grading practices as part of the transition to a proficiency-based system of learning. Teachers score work habits and academic performance separately in each course. We have a school-wide rubric for Habits of Work (HoW rubric) that is reviewed with all students and HoW are scored at each marking period. HoW will be considered when determining honor roll, eligibility for honors passes, and, for seniors, eligibility for senior privileges (delayed start or early release). HoW will not be used to calculate a student’s academic grade. Parents and students, please note that Infinite Campus is the current

system used for teacher gradebooks and there are many limitations to this program that may create confusion when parents or students reflect on HoW scores in the gradebook. For academic grades we still use a percentage based system but for HoW we use a 4 point rubric to score student performance. Because Infinite Campus is a gradebook it wants to calculate percentages for the HoW and those percentages create confusion. Please try to ignore the percentages you see online in the gradebook for work habits, the percentages do not match the 4 point scale used to score work habits. For example, if a student has a score of 3 for work habits they are meeting the standard but the percentage score (3 out of a possible 4) might be recorded as 75% - this percentage score does not have any value in our system but parents and students can see it when they are looking at HoW scores in the portal. I apologize for the confusion or concern this can cause for parents and/or students and want you to know that we continue to work with our technical staff to change this. Unfortunately, grading programs like percentages and we have been challenged to find a way to remove the percentage for HoW in the gradebook.

School pictures were taken the first day of school and retakes are scheduled for October 21st. Because our newsletter is sent electronically to a majority of families we are concerned that many parents may not have ordered photos because they did not get the envelope from Geskus that is typically sent with the newsletter. School photos can be ordered online, but we are mailing this newsletter to ensure that you have the photo ordering envelop and a couple of other notices for programs that generate funds to support special events or opportunities for students at MTA.

The parent-teacher conference day is scheduled for October 25th. Enclosed is information that will help you schedule time with teachers to discuss your child's academic progress and work habits. We schedule parent conferences in the fall, but any parent who has concerns about your child's academic progress should contact your child's teacher, advisor, or counselor to share concerns and seek support at any point during the school year.

MTA Vision and Code of Cooperation

Our school vision, “**E**mpowering **A**ll to **G**row **L**earn, **E**xplore, and **S**oar” was adopted at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year after gathering feedback from students, parents, teachers, and other members of our MTA community. A school-wide Code of Cooperation was also adopted to ensure members of our community understand how we plan to interact as we maintain a focus is on learning. We promote good work habits and social behaviors that support learning at high levels. Our Code of Cooperation is as follows:

- Engage in Learning
- Demonstrate Effort and Perseverance
- Take Responsibility for Your Own Learning
- Be Respectful of Self and Others
- Be Safe

Please know that we want parents/guardians to be partners as well and encourage you to discuss the Vision and the Code of Cooperation with your child.

Recognitions

MTA Field Hockey team lead by coach Krista Chase, raised more than \$10,150 for the Maine Children's Cancer Program.

On September 20th, 9 students joined Mr. Don Gray, Officer Randy Cook, and Social Worker Sarah Furman in a program called the One Life Project. The Maine Principals' Association co-sponsored a conference in Bangor designed to bring together students from every high school in Maine to have their voices heard in an effort to learn from students how to effectively address concerns about use of heroin and opioids by youth. The other

sponsors for this event include the United States Attorney's Office in Portland, The Maine Attorney General's Office, and the Bangor Daily News (BDN). Students who participated include:

Mark Abreu
Isabella Blessington
Bailey Charron
Jake Head
Junie Nelson
Orion Sargent
Isabella Slocum
Zoe Stilphen
Meriwether Stockford

Calendar Dates

October 19	PSAT / Senior Symposium at SMCC & Freshman Summit at Camp Ketcha
October 20 & 21	School Based Health Center Dental Clinic
October 21	Picture Retake Day
October 25	Parent Teacher Conferences
October 25	MTA Financial Aid Information Session for Senior Parents 5:00 - 6:00pm
November 2	Fall Sports Awards
November 4	End Date for First Quarter

PSAT/Senior Symposium/Freshman Summit

On October 19th, all 10th and 11th grade students will be taking the PSAT, the Preliminary SAT. Approximately 3.4 million sophomores and juniors take this test nationally. The PSAT is a trial run for the real thing, the SAT, and when students receive the test results, typically around the beginning of January, it offers the opportunity for students to consider areas of focus for additional study as they prepare for the SAT. Though the PSAT will not count for college admissions, some students with the highest scores have the opportunity to be recognized as a National Merit Scholar with the potential of winning scholarship money.

Seniors and Freshman will be off site October 19th when we administer the PSAT:

Seniors will be bused to the Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) Brunswick campus and spend the day in various activities and presentations focused on graduation and post-secondary planning. Ellen Messier, Senior Class Advisor, has organized the program for the day and all seniors are expected to attend. Seniors will leave the high school with their Advisory Teachers at about 9:00am and return to school at about 1:45pm that day. If you would like more information about this event please contact Ms. Messier, messiere@link75.org.

Freshman will travel to Camp Ketcha, located in Scarborough, in order to participate in an adventure challenge program. We are excited to provide this opportunity to students who, under the supervision of a professional staff, will engage in low ropes and team building activities, which promote problem solving, communication, cooperation and respect. A permission slip, medical questionnaire and gear list will be sent home with students on Tuesday, October 11th. Please ensure your student returns the requested forms to his/her Advisory Teacher by Friday, October 14th, 2016. Please note there are no other activities planned for 9th grade students on October 19th. Students should dress for the weather as this is a rain or shine event. If you would like to learn more about Camp Ketcha, please visit www.campketcha.org or contact Don Gray at 729-2951.

Senior Parents

Annually, we host a Financial Aid Information Session for senior parents on Parent-Teacher Conference night from 5:00 to 6:00pm in the Chorus Room (Room 136). Senior parents, this session offers an opportunity to learn about post-secondary financial aid options and how to begin the process. Steve Joyce, a financial aid advisor, will be giving a presentation followed by a question and answer session. A new simplified approach is now in place,

and the sooner families begin the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) process, the better. Did you know you can complete the FAFSA now? Help in creating the FSA ID will be provided, (as will refreshments). We will also be offering opportunities for parents to meet one on one with Steve Joyce later in the fall to work on the FAFSA process. Watch for a postcard with the dates. Sign up will be with Mrs. Anderson in the guidance office.

Senior Pictures

Below is the link for Seniors to upload yearbook portraits. Deadline for submissions for Senior portraits and Senior Reflections has been set for November 10th, 2016. Deadline for Baby Photo Ads has been set for December 1st, 2016. All guidelines and specifications can be found on Josten's webpage. We are working on getting the yearbook section on the school website updated as soon as the new website is finished being constructed. On the MTA website you will be able to find additional links to senior reflections, superlatives, yearbook ordering information and baby photo ads. Please make this information available to your Seniors.

Here is the link:

<https://images.jostens.com/40643592>

If you have any questions, please contact mtayearbook@link75.org or call 207-729-2951 ext. 250

Interact

October will be a very busy month for the Interact Club. Sponsored by the Brunswick Rotary, Interact students follow their lead by doing good work for our community. On October 15, we will be participating in the Alzheimer's Walk, helping to organize, walk and distribute prizes. On October 25, parent teacher conference night, the proceeds from our annual bake sale will go to help out our Functional Life Skills program. October 27, Interact will be supporting our President, Cam Loeschner's Capstone Project. Cam will be selling movie tickets at Smitty's, proceeds to go to the Parkinson's Association. October 28, club members will be out at FHC in Bowdoin, helping with their Halloween Extravaganza!

The big event involving several clubs and classes at school is the annual pumpkin carving to support Camp Sunshine. We will carve 300 pumpkins on October 20 and take them to L.L. Bean for their annual Pumpkin Fest!

If this sounds like the kind of activities you would like to be a part of, please call or email Deb Ludwig to learn more!

Proficiency- Based Learning

The Class of 2021 (current 8th grade students) will be expected to graduate with a proficiency-based diploma. The District Proficiency-Based Steering Committee which includes parents, teachers, administrators, school board representation, and post secondary representatives has been at work for the past three years helping to steer MSAD #75's toward a proficiency-based system. It has been a pleasure working with members of our community as we plan for changes. Members of the Proficiency-Based Steering Committee have spent a significant amount of time developing an understanding of proficiency-based learning and the following tenets were established:

- All students will be better prepared for college, career, and civic readiness
- All students will connect to, engage in, and develop a passion for learning
- All students can learn and show what they know in a variety of ways and paces (multiple pathways)
- Students, teachers, and families have a clear understanding of where a student's learning is, and where it is headed

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Proficiency--based Steering Committee invested time reading and discussing the book "Rethinking Grading," by Cathie Vatterott. The goal was to create a philosophy of grading

for our district's proficiency-based system. After gathering feedback on a draft at a public forum last spring the group made revisions and the following six statements will be used to guide work associated grading as we with develop a proficiency-based system:

1. The purpose of grading is to accurately and consistently communicate student learning progress and achievement.
2. Grades should show what students know and what they can do.
3. Grades should be understandable, based on concise and clearly articulated standards and performance criteria.
4. Behaviors (e.g., attendance, on task behavior, time management, working with peers) should be reported separately from academic performance.
5. Grading practices should be consistent across teachers, grades, schools.
6. Grades reflect proficiency at a given point in time, rather than an average of scores.

Mt. Ararat High School faculty and staff will be working on several projects this year as we prepare to welcome the first group of students who will need to graduate with a proficiency-based diploma system. Students currently enrolled at MTA will graduate based on the current system of credits and successful completion of specific coursework, but they will experience some changes during their time with us as we research and implement best practices reflective of a proficiency-based system. Three years ago, the MTA faculty worked on separating academic grades from work habits. Two years ago the School Board adopted a set of graduation standards to support building this system and the MTA faculty has been working with our middle school colleagues to create clear learning goals so students will understand what they will need to know and be able to do to receive a diploma from our high school. The goals for this year as we continue to develop a proficiency-based educational system will be focused on developing a reporting system that clearly outlines our graduation standards and our system for tracking student progress. The learning goals in each content area are organized in a sequence for grades 6-12 referred to as a learning progressions and this year teachers will develop scoring scales that outline the knowledge and skills students will need to master to demonstrate proficiency on each learning goal. In a proficiency based system, the clarity of the learning goals empowers students to actively engaged as partners in the learning process and reflect on their individual growth as they learn new content. The district has also invested in a proficiency-based grading program called Empower which is designed to organize the learning goals by grade level and/or course to help us track student learning as they move through the system. Teachers will be involved in Empower training as we prepare to implement this system next year for our incoming 9th graders.

If you have questions about the work we are currently engaged in focused on developing the MSAD #75 proficiency-based system of learning, please contact me. I understand that changes can create concerns or questions and that proficiency-based learning is a foreign concept to many people since our personal experience with school, what might be referred to as a traditional educational system, is what we understand. I have been an educator for more than 20 years and what I would note is that a proficiency-based system places the emphasis on learning by establishing and communicating clear learning goals and actively engages students as partners in the learning process.

From the Learning Commons

New Website Unveiled:

All schools and the district offices in MSAD 75 now have new websites up and running. All important information has been transferred and can be found under the same menu options as before. We will update and add more exciting content throughout the year at: mta.link75.org

Laptop Care and Use:

In September all students at Mt. Ararat High School were issued brand new Apple MacBook Air laptops.

These state of the art machines retail at \$900 and are a vital tool for each student's education in the 21st century classroom. We ask that you remind your student to take good care of their laptop using the following basic care:

1. Always carry the laptop in it's case, with the case latched closed. When out of the case: use 2 hands.
2. Do not eat or drink around the laptop, as spills can cause irreparable damage
3. Do not let pets or small children play with the laptop, or its charger and cord
4. Always keep the laptop indoors in a locker, especially during sports and afterschool activities

Laptop Coverage, if the family has elected it, helps to cover damage that may occur. However, liquid damage or other damage due to negligence is not covered under Laptop Coverage, and could result in paying the full replacement cost of the student's laptop. Prevention and good care is the key!

School Based Health Clinic " Eagle's Nest"

Don't miss the chance to get a free flu shot for the whole family! Community Flu Clinics are scheduled for Saturday, October 22nd from 9 am-12 pm and Tuesday, November 29th from 3:30 am-6 pm at Mount Ararat Middle School. The clinics are sponsored by CHANS and are open to the public. Immunizations are administered free of charge, but donations are accepted.

Parents, please turn in the following forms if you have not yet done so! All forms are available on the Health Office webpage or by request. Thank you!

- Permission to Administer Medication Form: Any medication taken during school hours (both prescription and over-the-counter) must be in its original bottle and accompanied by a current permission form. All medication needs to be kept in the health office unless your child has medical permission on file to carry an Epi-Pen or inhaler.
- Emergency Care Plan: Any child with a potentially life-threatening condition (anaphylaxis, asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, etc.) needs a current Emergency Care Plan, reviewed annually by the child's primary care provider. Please also provide an adequate supply of all necessary medication or testing materials to the nurse unless your child has been cleared by his/her PCP to self-carry emergency medication.
- Immunization Exemption Form: Any child who is not compliant with the state-mandated vaccines will not be able to attend school unless an updated Immunization Exemption Form is completed annually.



Mt. Ararat High School Construction Project - Press Release - Public Forums Scheduled

The MSAD #75 School Board is seeking community feedback on the Building Committee's recent recommendations regarding unfunded aspects of the MTA Building Project. You will also be able to hear a presentation about the latest design of the new high school.

Community Forums will be held:

- October 11 - Bowdoinham School, 6:30 - 8:00
- October 17 - Topsham, Mt. Ararat Commons, 6:30 - 8:00
- October 18 - Bowdoin Central School, 6:30 - 8:00
- October 19 - Harpswell Community School, 6:30 - 8:00

Unfunded aspects are those spaces or features that have been recommended by the Building Committee that will not receive financial support from the Maine Department of Education. These unfunded features would either be paid for by adding to local taxes or through fundraising efforts and donations.

Unfunded items recommended by the Building Committee are categorized into three areas: PE/Athletics, High Performance Building, and Academics/Classroom space. Some of the PE/Athletics recommendations include additional gymnasium, synthetic turf competition field, dugouts and scoreboards and concessions. Among the items recommended for High Performance Building are heating and cooling with geothermal source, additional wall and roof insulation, and additional structural support for the roof to enable future installation of solar power (photovoltaic). Additional features from the Academic area include eight (8) additional classrooms, an additional science room, additional seats to the forum, and digital street sign and displays in the building.

These, and other features recommended, were explained to the MSAD No. 75 School Board in two recent meetings, and will be explained at each of the forums. Community members will be able to show whether or not they support including these items in the project, and if so, whether they should be funded with local taxes or fundraising.

The project is nearing final design, which will then lead to the second Straw Vote later this fall. If it appears the project has community support, the project will be proposed to the State Board of Education in anticipation of a Referendum late winter/early spring.

Forums will provide the same information at each town, and residents are welcome to attend whichever forum is most convenient.

Comments from Brad Smith, Superintendent:

The Building Committee has worked since the beginning of this project to involve community members in committee work, and to be transparent about any and all items under consideration. This is a second opportunity for the public to learn about and provide input regarding the unfunded components of the school.

“The members of the subcommittees have spent months developing their recommendations, which were recently prioritized by the Building Committee. These priorities were presented to the School Board on September 22nd and 29th.

“I see this as a tremendous opportunity for our four towns and school system, and as an investment in the education of our students for years to come! We recognize “both sides of the coin” when considering unfunded features to the new school. On one side is the fact that now is the time to build the school, build it right, and plan for the future. The other side of the coin is that unfunded features require additional taxes. These forums will give us an opportunity to hear from our citizens about both sides of the coin.

We truly hope for a strong turnout so we can accurately gauge the level of support that exists for these important decisions. Additional information about the project is available on the district website, which can be accessed through any of the schools as well. The direct link is: <https://sites.google.com/a/link75.org/construction/home>