



Cobra Monthly



January 2018

Principal's Message

Dear Albany Middle School Families,

Happy 2018! As we settle into the new year one of the topics that has been on all of our minds is the construction of the AMS Annex. First, we appreciate everyone's patience with all of the construction going on at the AMS Annex. We know how difficult drop off and pick up have been, and we appreciate those of you who are able to drop your students off on Key Route or Masonic. To encourage other means of transportation, we had an additional student bike rack installed in partnership with Albany Strollers and Rollers. We also installed an additional adult bike rack by the main office.

Construction of the Annex is on schedule and is anticipated to be completed by January, 2019. At this point, it is not yet determined how the site will be used immediately given the other construction projects scheduled throughout the district. The long-term plan is to remove all of the portables on the AMS campus and relocate our Computer, Drama, 6th grade Choir, and our 7th and 8th grade English/History classrooms into the Annex. This will have so many benefits, including each teacher having their own classroom. Teachers will no longer be running from one classroom to another, which will maximize preparation and teaching time as well as increase their ability to do hands-on projects with students. Students will also be able to find each teacher easily.

However, there are some questions about the timeline of when the Annex will be used solely by the middle school. Marin and

Ocean View schools both need to be rebuilt and it is possible that the AMS Annex, among other sites, might be used to house students during construction. I know that many of you learned about this possibility at the November 14th board meeting. Please know that nothing has yet been settled and site/district leaders are working together to brainstorm possible solutions that makes sense for all the students in Albany and create a proposal to bring forward to collect staff and community input. Please reach out to me if you want to discuss this further.

Warmly,

Deborah Brill, Principal

Club Corner: Science Clubs

Science Bowl meets twice a week and focuses on practicing for the Science Bowl competition by studying math and science. The competition will be January 27th with the winner going to the national competition. Students are also preparing for a wind turbine competition on February 10th. Mr. Gottheiner is the faculty advisor for this club.

The Earth Team meets Tuesdays during lunch and focuses on having a positive environmental impact *locally* (improving recycling at school and raising awareness about endangered animals) and *globally* (by raising money to help climate change victims). Ms. Fordyce and Ms. Hernandez are the faculty advisors for this club.



AMS Spotlight: Science Department

The science department at AMS provides engaging, hands-on learning experiences for all students that push them to question and understand our world while also developing essential skills and knowledge. In 2013, new science standards, known as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) were developed and given to teachers to implement. You can read more about these standards [here](#). The idea is to move away from memorizing lists of facts and towards a deeper understanding of the concepts and processes of science. The other big change will be to integrate life, earth, and physical sciences at each grade level. For example, in 8th grade we teach traditional physics, waves and digital signaling, earth and space systems, as well as genetics and evolution. Real science doesn't happen in separate boxes, so learning how concepts connect will help students understand the bigger picture of how our world works.

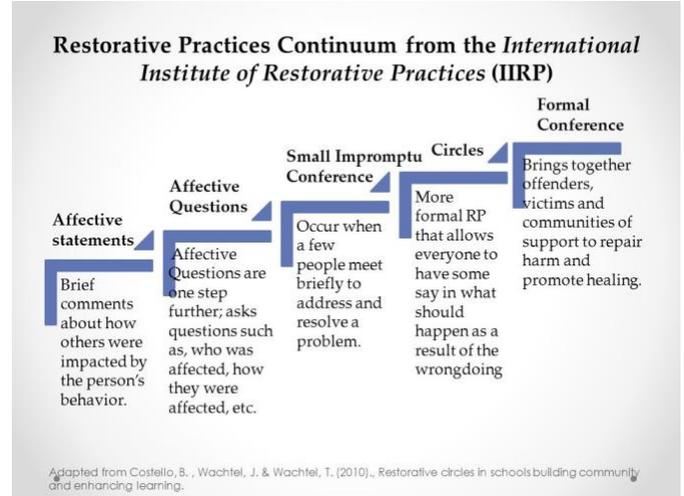
The gradual switch to NGSS has been a great opportunity to explore ways to include more engineering practices in our curriculum. This year, the 6th graders built solar cookers and are designing barometers, the 7th graders designed and built earthquake safe houses and foil boats, and the 8th graders have built machines that prove Newton's 2nd Law and built a cardboard scooter to explore potential and kinetic energy transfer.

Please feel free to contact your student's science teacher if you have any questions about the transition; we'd be happy to discuss it with you.

- The AMS Science Team

Restorative Practices @ AMS

Restorative practices exist along a continuum of simple to complex interventions seeking to hold students accountable and repair harm caused:



Each school community must determine their vision for restorative justice and how that fits into their culture and systems. In the 2015-2016, a committee comprised of teachers, staff, students, and parents created a vision for restorative practices at AMS. We determined that our practices will:

- Be based on empathy. Students and staff will work to understand each other's perspectives via dialogue.
- Create a space where students can express responsibility for their actions and harm done.
- Provide students with the opportunities to reflect, learn, and be forgiven.
- Recognize that we are an interdependent community committed to healthy relationships.
- Create spaces and opportunities for students to have a stake in the school

