

**Academic Magnet High School
School Improvement Council
Annual Report to Parents 2019-20**

Academic Magnet High School
5109-A West Enterprise Street
North Charleston, SC 29405
843-746-1300
ccsdschools.com/amhs

In our **Annual Report to Parents**, the AMHS School Improvement Council (SIC) celebrates another extraordinary year of student and school successes despite the extraordinary challenge of three months of school closure. Highlights include numerous academic achievements such as: 29 seniors (Class of 2020) were named National Merit Scholarship semifinalists and all 29 were NMSQT finalist scholarship winners; an average composite ACT score of 30.2 and SAT combined average score of 1369. In May 2020, 1446 AP exams were taken by 506 students with a 96.4% exam pass rate of 3 or higher despite the compacted content and new online assessment format

Students routinely compete in national academic competitions, are published in national journals, and participate in prestigious research grants. Many of these competitions and opportunities were cancelled or held virtually this past year. However, our Raptors continued the long tradition of AMHS science excellence. Then G11 student Ishraq Haque won the Bjorn von Euler Innovation in Water Scholarship Award by Xylem Inc. at the National Stockholm Junior Water Prize competition. He was awarded this for his work that promoted water sustainability, awareness about clean water, supporting the community, and spirit of creativity and innovation. This year at the South Carolina Junior Academy of Science the oral presentations were canceled but students still submitted their papers. Kevin Fan won his category with his paper "Extracellular Vesicles as Biomarkers for Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome." Ishraq Haque won the category of Environmental Science with his paper "A Novel Arsenic Filtration System for Low-Income Populations."

One of our 9th grade teams won the SC Academic World Quest competition. Briggs Murray (Team captain), Caroline Tiller, Paisley Hodges, and Jeffrey Song were named the champions based on their performance in a pre-match competition. When the state and national competitions were called off due to Covid 19 concerns, the organization decided to use the existing scores to determine the winner. This is AMHS' first foray into this fast paced academic competition that measures student understanding of political and historical competence of current events and geo-political processes worldwide. This win would have made the team eligible to advance to the national competition in Washington DC on April 24th. The local chapter of the World Affairs Council of Charleston graciously sponsored the competition.

2019 -2020 for sports Academic Magnet was successful in many areas. We started off with success during fall sports as the girls' swim team, girls' tennis, cross country and volleyball teams all made it to the playoffs with the volleyball team making it to the State semifinals.

During Winter sports our wrestling team made the playoffs. We had two wrestlers make it to Lower State Individual matches, Josh Moore and Jonathan Lemon. Johnathan finished his high school career with 100 wins and 3 loses and he was the runner-up for 3A wrestler of the year. We also celebrate our first female AMHS wrestler, Maysen Ronchetto. Both the boys and girls basketball teams were rebuilding last season after having lost so many seniors the previous year.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, our spring sport student athletes saw their season end before it started.

Two of our student athletes were awarded athletic scholarships: Denise Anne Nietert for volleyball at Dickinson College, and Riley Haas for soccer at the University of Richmond.

AMHS student athletes continue to excel at a high level both in the classrooms and in sports.

Our students have continued to log hundreds of hours of community service this year. Most notable is the revitalization of AMHS National Honor Society who welcomed over 90 new members in 2019-2020 and led our school in extraordinary service initiatives. These included regularly scheduled appreciation events for all of our support staff, and peer outreach to students in under-represented middle schools to encourage their consideration of AMHS for Grade 9 admission.

In 2018-19, AMHS began the **AP Capstone** program that replaced the junior and senior year coursework for thesis. In 2019-2020, all G11 and 12 students were respectively enrolled in the AP Seminar and AP Research courses to fully complete our AP Capstone program. Students get AP credit for thesis preparation, research, and presentation in AP Seminar (G11) and AP Research (G12) courses. AP Seminar achievement tops 99% 3 or higher for student scores, and the AP Research students performed commendably in this first year of assessment despite the pandemic challenges. Eight-seven students in the Class of 2020 received the prestigious AP Capstone diploma.

We were very pleased and proud that we were able to honor the 171 students in the Class of 2020 with both a virtual and socially-distanced in-person graduation ceremony. The outdoor ceremony in mid-June featured virtual addresses from US Senator Tim Scott and Charleston poet laureate Marcus Amaker, a timely and original poetry reading by student Taliyah Jenkins, and a rousing call to activism by valedictorian Robby Gourdie. All (100%) of our graduates were admitted to colleges and universities of their

choice and 100% received scholarships. University admissions include the University of South Carolina and Clemson, Georgetown, Georgia Tech, Johns Hopkins, NYU Shanghai, Fordham, Yale, University of Michigan, Duke, UCLA, and Dartmouth, among many others.

Given all of these student activities and achievements, it is no surprise that Academic Magnet continues to be ranked #1 in South Carolina and we have been recognized as one of America's most challenging high schools by such prestigious publications as the US News and World Report, Washington Post, and Business Insider. **For 2020, US News and World Report ranked AMHS number 2 in the nation among 18,000 ranked schools.** All of these successes have been supported by the combined effort of students, teachers and staff, parents, and the community. The SIC, a state mandated council made up of each of these constituents, has worked closely all year with PIE (Partners in Education) and AMF (Academic Magnet Foundation) to address the needs of the school and support future initiatives to propel Magnet students to even greater heights. Below are some of the activities we have focused on this year.

Peer Mentoring Program: In an effort to ease the transition for incoming AMHS students, the Peer Mentoring Program was inaugurated in the 2018-2019 school year. Sponsored and supported by the SIC, in 2019-2020 the program recruited and trained over 30 sophomores, juniors, and seniors to work in small groups and one-on-one with entering 9th graders. The mentoring curriculum included topics like time and stress management, developing effective study skills, preparing for midterm and final exams, getting involved with sports and clubs, and finding a group of supportive friends. Peer mentors planned a few social events as well. The Peer Mentors are role models and leaders at AMHS and were committed to helping the Class of 2023 make the most of their high school years! In the summers of 2019 and 2020, Peer Educators from the College of Charleston partnered with AMHS Mentors to assist with training and planning and to provide the Peer Mentors with ongoing professional development.

Summer Scholars Program 2019 The Summer Scholars Program for 2019, with financial support from AMF, PIE and several community sponsors, was a four day program for incoming 9th grade students and included academic awareness sessions, team building activities, and summer fun as a first activity for the new students to begin to understand what it means to be a "high school" student and to make friends for the coming year. Incoming students are introduced to the Peer Mentoring program and engage in a variety of activities with their Mentors. The program has been very instrumental in reducing stresses associated with high school unknowns and in building confidence and new friendships.

In the spring of 2020, Academic Magnet High School was awarded a 2-year \$150,000 renewal grant from the **Jack Kent Cooke Foundation** to strengthen access and opportunity for high-achieving, low income students in consideration of admission to AMHS. This grant supports the ACE (Achieving Charleston Excellence) program which identifies gifted, low income students and their families for special information and

preparation events to encourage consideration of admission to Academic Magnet High School with its extraordinary opportunities for college admissions and scholarships. Fourteen ACE students are currently attending AMHS with a pipeline of over 90 middle school students in 2020.

Professional Development: In the summers of 2019 and 2020 AMHS, with financial assistance from AMF and PIE, AMHS provided extensive training to implement the new AP Capstone program realizing our goal of having a member of every department trained in the required courses. This training continues annually to ensure that all departments have representation and ownership in the research and thesis process, a cornerstone of AMHS success.

Fundraising Initiatives: Support for AMHS, its students and faculty, and support for the activities/events listed does require a commitment of dollars, and this year the coalition of parent groups worked together on two record-breaking fundraising activities. The most recent fundraiser in late winter was Celebrate Magnet at a private home in Mount Pleasant. An evening of silent and live auctions and socializing. It was well attended by parents, faculty and friends of AMHS. The International Dinner, traditionally held in November, was also a very well attended event featuring the cuisine of over 20 countries representing the ethnicity of our students. These evenings incorporate and celebrate the efforts of parents and the parent leadership groups. PIE/AMF fundraising provides teachers with funds for classroom supplies and curricular materials, provides support for student life activities like class celebrations and club funding, and enriches diversity efforts by providing matching funds in a national grant to identify, support, and enroll students from diverse communities and backgrounds. Donations to the Annual Fundraising Campaign are an important way for parents, families, and friends to advance the mission of AMHS for all students.

The AMHS School Improvement Council looks forward to even greater cohesiveness as all the parent groups work together to ensure that AMHS can continue to offer its students a high school experience of the highest quality. With the full realization of the challenges in connecting all of our AMHS stakeholders resulting from the effects of the pandemic in the 2019-2020 school year and beyond, the SIC and other parent support groups are creatively and vigorously reaching out to our community in new and exciting ways. The SIC has elections for parents, students, and community members in October and is always looking for interested individuals to join us in supporting the excellence that is Academic Magnet.



Catherine Spencer, Principal

Amy Hill, SIC Chair (Parent)