

**Academic Magnet High School
School Improvement Council
Annual Report to Parents 2020-21**

Academic Magnet High School
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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 balancing virtual and in-person instruction, as well as ensuring all health and safety requirements due to the Covid-19 pandemic were vigilantly enforced. Highlights include numerous academic achievements such as: 24 seniors (Class of 2021) were named National Merit Scholarship semifinalists and 23 were NMSQT finalists; Class of 2020 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. In May 2021, 565 students will take 1579 AP exams, another school record!

Students routinely compete in regional and 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 AMHS students still garnered top honors in the arts and academics to date including:

Scholastic Art and Writing Awards (Visual Art and Writing)
Junior Science and Humanities Symposium
Lowcountry Science Fair
Scienc Olympiad
National History Day
SC and National Academic World Quest competition
SC High School Writing Contest
Southern Division MTNA (Music Teachers National Association) piano competition
South Carolina History Day competition state winners advance to nationals
DECA - 1st and 2nd place state winners and 3 students are progressing to international
Palmetto Cyber Defense Competition

The 2020-21 fall and winter sports seasons at Academic Magnet were successful in many areas:

AMHS Boys Cross Country finished 5th place in the 3A State Championship.

Twenty-eight swimmers qualified for State Championships. Boys' team was 3rd place and Girls' team 5th place.

Boys basketball placed 4th in the 3A region. Five of our boys ranked in the top 15 for scoring in the region.

Three wrestlers made the 3A Lower State Individual Championship.

Girls' Tennis finished the 2020 season coming in 3rd place in the 3A region.

Girls and Boys Lacrosse advanced to the first round of 4A playoffs.

Spring sports update:

Our Lacrosse teams finished the season strong facing several 5A teams competitively.

The girls' soccer team is second place in the region besting Oceanisde 2-0. The first round of the playoffs will take place on May 3rd. Boys' soccer finished their season with a spectacular win over Oceanside 3-1.

Softball and baseball are continuing regular season play.

Track and Field will participate in the region meet at Battery Creek on May 5th. Lower State Qualifying Meet on May 14-15 and the State Finals on May 18-22.

Boys' golf will participate in the Lower State Meet at Camden Country Club on May 10th.

Boys' tennis is heading to the state tournament awaiting brackets.

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 members in 2020-21 and led our school in extraordinary service initiatives. These included regularly scheduled appreciation events for all of our support staff, peer outreach to students in under-represented middle schools to encourage their consideration of AMHS for Grade 9 admission, and an extraordinary book drive which saw 1750 children's books collected for distribution to shelters and community centers.

In 2020-21, 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 the first year of assessment (2020) despite the pandemic challenges. Eighty-seven students in the Class of 2020 received the prestigious AP Capstone Diploma.

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, Newsweek, Washington Post, and Business Insider. For 2021, US News and World Report again ranked AMHS number 2 in the nation among nearly 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), AMF (Academic Magnet Foundation), and the Athletic Booster Club 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.

Parent Outreach: This school year, the SIC has been focused on how to support students as they transition to each grade level. Collaborating with Parents in Education (PIE), the school's Booster Club and active parents, the council developed an FAQ addressing questions most relevant for each high school year. In addition, a timeline tip sheet was created to highlight focus areas and resources for students and parents by grade level. These are made available on the school's website, on Facebook, and in the school's online newsletter, Raptor Report.

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 2020-21 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. The Peer Mentors are role models and leaders at AMHS, and were committed to helping the Class of 2024 make the most of their high school years! In the summers, Peer Educators from the College of Charleston partner with AMHS Mentors to assist with training and planning, and to provide the Peer Mentors with ongoing professional development.

Summer Scholars Program 2020 The Summer Scholars Program for 2020, with financial support from AM Foundation, was a four day virtual program for incoming 9th grade students and included academic awareness sessions and team building activities, 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 G7/8 middle school students in 2020.

Professional Development: In the summers with financial assistance from AMF and PIE, AMHS has 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, which we met for the 2020-21 school year.

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 a record-breaking Fall fundraising activity, Thanks for Giving. PIE/AMF/Athletic Booster Club fundraising provides teachers with funds for classroom supplies and curricular materials (focusing on enhanced technology this year), provides support for student life activities like class celebrations and club funding, enhances our athletic resources, and enriches diversity efforts by providing matching funds for 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 2020-21 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)