

**Academic Magnet High School  
School Improvement Council  
Annual Report to Parents 2018-19**

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. Since April of last year, we have seen so many accomplishments across academics, community involvement, and sports that it is impossible to list them all. Highlights include numerous academic achievements such as: 26 seniors (Class of 2018) named National Merit Scholarship semifinalists and 7 finalists, 100% of students passing EOC exams, an average composite ACT score of 30.0 and SAT combined average score of 1395. In May 2018, 1348 AP exams were administered to 438 students with a 96.4% pass rate of 3 or higher. This year, another record will be set with 1384 exams taken by 449 students in May 2019.

Students routinely compete in national academic competitions, are published in national journals, and participate in prestigious research grants. Sophomore Ishraq Haque's project to bring clean water to his parents' hometown in Bangladesh won first place at the SC Department of Defense Junior Science and Humanities Symposium in Columbia, and he won third place in the international competition held in New Mexico. The AMHS Robotics Team won the regional Nanoline competition with an underwater rover developed after seeing first-hand the devastating floods caused by Hurricane Florence in 2018. The team will advance to the national Sea Perch competition at the University of Maryland in May 2019. The Science Olympiad team won the 2019 state finals and teacher Katy Roop was awarded Outstanding Coach. AMHS students also achieve recognition in the arts. Senior Adriana Carter's poem, "Self-Portrait of a Dying Canary," won a National Gold Medal in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and it was selected as a commended poem in the 2018 Foyle Young Poets of the Year awards. In addition, 11 AMHS students qualified for the National History Day competition. AMHS placed first in Level III Quest and AMHS won the CCSD Academic Bowl.

AMHS students compete in 3A boys' and girls' varsity athletics throughout the fall, winter, and spring including football, cross-country, swimming, tennis, track, soccer, lacrosse, baseball, golf, basketball, volleyball, and competitive cheer. AMHS teams routinely compete at the highest levels and student-athletes are named to all-state and all-region teams in their respective sports. To date, the wrestling team is the Region champion. At least 8 AMHS students have committed to play sports in college, including the University of Vermont, Harvard, and the University of South Carolina. Two of our student athletes (Colin Baker and Rion Coleman) were named Gatorade SC

Players of the Year. And finally, our students have logged over thousands of hours of community service this year; we have students involved in running charitable foundations and students raising money for and visiting children and schools both locally and overseas to address literacy and poverty, including countries such as Uganda and Guatemala.

In 2018-19, AMHS began the **AP Capstone** program that replaces the junior and senior year coursework for thesis. All G11 students are enrolled in the AP Seminar course and will continue with AP Research in their senior year. Students will now get AP credit for thesis preparation, research, and presentation in AP Seminar (G11) and AP Research (G12) courses. All students will prepare and present a thesis under AP guidelines and timelines with both an AMHS teacher advisor, mentor, and the external evaluation of College Board. Students and faculty report a very positive experience with the AP Capstone program, and we are certain that AMHS students will be highly successful and even more prepared for university.

Given all 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 2019, US News and World Report ranked AMHS number 1 in the nation among 17,000 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 created. Under the leadership of Kristen Odel and the 2018 SIC, the program recruited and trained 28 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 are committed to helping the Class of 2022 and beyond make the most of their high school years! In 2019, Peer Educators from the College of Charleston will partner with AMHS Mentors to assist with training and planning and to provide the Peer Mentors with ongoing professional development.

**Summer Scholars Program 2018** The Summer Scholars Program for 2018, with financial support from AMF, PIE and several community sponsors, was a four day program for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> 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. This program will be held again this summer during the first full week of August.

In the spring of 2018, Academic Magnet High School was one of four schools nationwide to receive a 2-year \$100,000 grant from the **Jack Kent Cooke Foundation** to strengthen access and opportunity for high-achieving, low income students in consideration of admission to AMHS. Known as the **ACE Scholars**, nearly 30 students in grades 7 and 8 were targeted for intense support and socialization. Ten of thirteen Grade 8 students qualified for admission to AMHS in 2019, and transition support will be ongoing for their success.

**Professional Development:** This year AMHS, with financial assistance from AMF and PIE, again sent teachers to national conferences to learn and share best practices in the areas of science, math, social studies, and English. In addition, teachers received extensive training to implement the new AP Capstone program. 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 fundraising activities. The most recent fundraiser was Celebrate Magnet at The School House in West Ashley, 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 background. 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. The SIC has elections for parents, students, and community members in October and is always looking for interested individuals.

Catherine Spencer, Principal

Lynne E. Ford, SIC Chair (Parent)