

Arlington Public Schools Opens for 2018-2019 School Year

Tuesday, September 4th was the first day of school in the Arlington Public Schools. From preschool through grade 12, the District looks forward to supporting all students in their growth this new school year.

Arlington Public Schools welcomed students to buildings ready to receive them. The summer has been busy for school personnel who prepare for the return of students and teachers. Custodial and Maintenance staff cleaned, repaired and made updates to schools. The Technology Department installed 1,300 computers and 400 peripheral devices throughout the district. Teachers have participated in professional development to improve their content knowledge, teaching skills, and ability to support students' social and emotional growth. Administrators have worked to ensure up-to-date curricula and materials, as well as to align and integrate learning through all school levels and across disciplines.

Enrollment

Student enrollment is higher than last year by over 300 students with more than 6,000 prK-12 students attending our schools. We have an incoming class of 599 Kindergarten students. Kindergarten enrollment has fluctuated between a low of 477 and a high of 552 over the last six years. For comparison, 313 students graduated from Arlington High School last year. The District has created six new elementary classrooms and has added additional positions at the secondary level to support the higher enrollment. We welcome all of our new students and families.

Safe and Supportive Schools

Our School District wants all students to feel safe and supported in positive and warm classrooms. Teachers nurture students' social-emotional growth in elementary schools while implementing programs such as Responsive Classroom and Open Circle. Our new sixth grade Gibbs School has adopted the Responsive Classroom model. Ottoson is piloting a new advisory initiative. Arlington High School's advisory program and collaborative problem solving approaches to discipline further our work to support social-emotional growth. The District is helping teachers grow in cultural competency through a variety of professional learning opportunities.

The District gave [The Power of Our Words](#) by Paula Denton and Lynn Bechtel to all new teachers this fall. This book on teacher language helps teachers establish their classrooms as supportive learning environments for all children. In partnership with the Arlington Education Foundation (AEF), almost 200 teachers and staff have been trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid, with an additional 100 to be trained this fall and more in the spring. We appreciate the generosity of AEF's donors for providing the funding for this impactful program.

New Facilities

For the first time in 29 years, we opened the school year with ten schools with the re-opening of the renovated Gibbs School as the academic home for all sixth grade students. Arlington Public Schools appreciates the support of the entire Town of Arlington to make this school a reality. A ceremony to commemorate the re-opening the school is being planned for this fall, as well as an open house for the community. The Gibbs School will prepare sixth grade students as they move from their neighborhood elementary schools to academics at the secondary level. In addition to helping students grow academically and in their social-emotional skills, Gibbs is offering project-based learning opportunities. Students will work on a project over an extended period of time that engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question.

And while the sixth grade enjoys its new home, Ottoson Middle School is now able to provide a more welcoming and spacious atmosphere for our seventh and eighth grade students. Work continues on the six-classroom expansion of Hardy School. This addition will be completed by the end of 2018. The school's Lake St. and Chandler St. playgrounds will also be upgraded.

New Principals

The Gibbs School Principal is Kristin DeFrancisco, who was formerly the principal of the Hardy School. The new Hardy School Principal is Kate Peretz, who we welcome from Franklin where she was the Principal at Oak Street Elementary School. We also welcome Brian Meringer as the new Principal of Ottoson Middle School, previously Assistant Principal at Dover-Sherborn Middle School.

Community Welcome

As we welcome our 2018-19 students, we also welcome the Arlington community to participate in district offerings and happenings this year. Please come to an athletic event to cheer on our Spy Ponders. Athletic schedules are on the Arlington High School website at <https://sites.google.com/a/arlington.k12.ma.us/aps-sports/departments-schedule>. Or, come appreciate high school drama and music performances in Lowe Auditorium. You can see the calendar at <http://performingarts96.wixsite.com/arlington>. Elementary schools, Gibbs and Ottoson also host concerts and dramatic performances. Throughout the year, student artists at all levels exhibit their work in schools and in other venues such as Town Hall. Finally, to continue your own learning, please check out Arlington Community Education's wide-ranging offerings at <http://www.arlingtoncommunityed.org/>.