



Cobra Quarterly



October 2018

Principal's Message

Dear AMS Families,

We are off to another great school year at AMS! I hope that your children are transitioning well. The new year always brings a lot of adjusting and by now we see many students settling into their new grade level. Please reach out to us if this is not the case for your child and extra support is required.

I am going to focus this letter on our new dress code. Dress code is often a loaded topic with many strong opinions. Ultimately as parents, you determine what your child may or may not wear based on your own perspectives and values. At AMS, we had to look closely at what our role and responsibility as a school is related to dress code and what values we are communicating to our students with this dress code.

We need it to hold clear lines related to safety. Thus, clothing associated with things like drugs, alcohol, violence, hate speech, profanity, or sexually explicit content is disallowed. Like all other AMS school policies, student safety on a social-emotional level is of utmost importance.

That said, most traditional dress codes target female-identifying students. It sends a message to students that the female body is a distraction that must be managed to benefit boys. We need to be careful about the messages we are sending to both our girls and boys about whose responsibility it is

to make appropriate choices. Girls are not responsible for the focus of male students. Our new dress code was designed with the intent of providing equity among genders and no longer disproportionately targeting the female body. We do not want to give girls the message that they should be ashamed of their bodies, that their skin is a source of discipline, or that the education of their male counterparts is being prioritized over them when they are pulled from class to wear something that covers more skin.

I know that many of us were raised to see this differently. And I know that many of us wish that society and clothing companies weren't set up to draw girls towards skimpier clothing. That is a bigger issue that is worth helping our students to understand and examine. However, we feel that our role here is to support a safe a positive education, and an inch of midriff does not prevent learning. We trust that you as parents and guardians will use your own values to guide your children's clothing choices.

Please feel free to reach out if you would like to further engage in this conversation.

Sincerely,

Deb Brill, Principal



Club CornerCobra Connectors

Are you looking for new friends? Tired of the same old lunch routine? Mr. Mohan (Counselor) and Mr. Peters (P.E.) are continuing the Cobra Connectors club. Last year, this concept was brought to AMS to help students integrate into our community. Talk to Mr. Mohan or Mr. Peters to find out how you can be connected with a new, friendly face around campus. Everyone is welcome!

Best Buddies

In its 4th year, Best Buddies helps to create an inclusive school culture for all students by pairing students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) in relationships with students without IDD. Students meet every Friday and share experiences that help foster friendships. The past three years, AMS' chapter has been recognized as the outstanding middle school chapter of Northern California. This club is run by Karen Bonini, Camille Fisher and Sam Haller with support of our para-educators and teachers.

Gender & Sexuality Alliance

GSA is a club for students interested in supporting the LGBTQ community here at AMS, both as members and allies. The club meets on Mondays at lunch and has worked to planned campus-wide events such as Mix It Up at Lunch Day, Diversity Door Decorating Contest, and Transgender Awareness Week. See Ms. Leslie-Hayes with questions.

Restorative Practices @ AMS

Restorative practices are a set of tools that help foster a community built on healthy relationships. Rooted in the ethics of community, love and healing, when harm is caused, these practices address the needs of both the person(s) causing and receiving harm by asking:

1. Who was harmed?
2. What are the needs/responsibilities of all?
3. How is harm addressed and repaired?

Working to repair harm can heal relationships between individuals and within a community as it builds empathy and understanding. It requires that the person who caused the harm take responsibility for their actions. The use of restorative practices presupposes that behavior is changed through education, not punishment or exclusion.

AMS is in its 5th year of using restorative practices. The Restorative Justice committee worked during the 15-16 school year to craft a vision for restorative practices at AMS and craft a new behavior matrix (available on our website). This committee, combined with four years of staff trainings, has laid the groundwork for our staff to use restorative practices to respond to student behaviors that leaves students and staff feeling heard, valued, and connected to their school community.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you'd like to learn more about our practices.

-David Hauptert
Vice Principal

