



## **AMHS School Improvement Council | Annual Report to Parents, 2024-25**

### **Background**

Mandated by the state, a School Improvement Council (SIC) serves as a vehicle for teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community representatives to collaborate and help schools across South Carolina reach the goals identified in their five-year school improvement plans (SIPs).

Academic Magnet High School's [2024-25 SIC](#) was built on the strong foundation of previous SICs and worked in conjunction with other AMHS parent support organizations to address the school's needs and support school initiatives to propel Magnet students to even greater heights. Recent AMHS SIC successes include Juniors Take Flight, a one-day college application planning workshop that takes place each spring, and the establishment of a fall writing workshop to support seniors in preparing college admission and scholarship essays.

### **2024-2025 AMHS Leaders and Council Focus**

In our Annual Report to Parents, the AMHS School Improvement Council (SIC) would like to acknowledge and celebrate 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.

Academic highlights include: 13 National Merit Scholars, 100% EOC exams passage rate, and an average ACT score of 29.9 and a SAT combined score of over 1340. Students routinely compete in national academic competitions, are published in national journals, and participate in prestigious research grants.

In athletics, through the end of fall and winter sports, AMHS has celebrated the following team awards: 2 region championships (women's tennis & men's XC), 1 SCHSL Lower-State championship (women's tennis), 3 SCHSL Runner-Ups (AAA men's swim, AA women's XC, & AA men's XC) and 1 SCHSL State Champion (women's tennis). Additionally, AMHS has celebrated the following individual accolades: 17 Region VI-AA All-Region selections, 2 North-South selections (women's golf & women's tennis), and 21 All-State selections. We are excited about what's in store for our spring teams in the immediate future as the 2024-25 school year begins to wind down.

Finally, our students have logged over 16,000 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.

**Review of key SIC issues and actions for 2024 – 2025:** The current year for AMHS SIC has been productive and included the work of volunteers, community members, students, parents, and teachers. The year's primary focus has been a continuation of work undertaken in prior years to enhance the college preparation and application experience and the freshman year experience. In addition to this focus, the SIC added the goals of enhancing the sense of belonging among students at AMHS and improving outreach to potential applicants to AMHS.

**NOTE: All recommendations will be taken into consideration in an effort to help AMHS continue to operate as a premier high school in our city, state, and nation.** The development and execution of these programs are contingent upon schedules, interests, and other factors that SIC may/may not have been privy to at the time of the plan creation.

### **College Prep Enhancement Sub-Committee**

School Profile: SIC updated the 2024-25 School Profile, ensuring it was on the school website in September 2024. SIC recommends (1) transferring ownership of the profile to AMHS School Counseling and (2) completing annual updates by September 1 of each year. by September 1 annually.

Secondary Handbook: SIC updated the 2024-25 Secondary Planning Handbook. SIC recommends (1) transferring ownership of the handbook to AMHS School Counseling; (2) updating it annually; (3) requesting funding from AMHS Foundation on a bi-annual basis to have the handbook reviewed by a private college counselor to ensure its accuracy.

Writing Workshop / College Application Day: SIC supported the first fall writing workshop for seniors and worked with AMHS administration and faculty to staff the workshop. SIC supported School Counseling's first college application day and provided feedback on ways in which to improve that event.

Juniors Take Flight Programming: In 2022, we planned Juniors Take Flight (JTF), a day-long symposium for AMHS Juniors taking place before summer break. This program will help students prepare for the College Application process, covering topics including essay writing, resume creation, and asking for recommendations. This year, SIC worked with Foundation and School Counseling to identify a new outside provider of services and programming for Juniors Take Flight and worked to move the date of JTF to earlier in the spring of the junior year.

### **School Climate - Freshman Experience**

New programming this year, developed and recommended by SIC, was the finalization of the Freshman Experience: "Study Smarter" 5-part curriculum for mentors to use in supporting freshmen in the fall. This is an expansion and adjustment of the successful Peer Mentoring Program. The curriculum was developed by students with input from teachers and parents and was a two-year process shepherded by Mr. Carl Garris.

### **AMHS Relationship and Community Building**

During the 2024-2025 school year, the Community-Building/Belonging SIC subcommittee interviewed 16 individuals (students, staff, and faculty) to better understand (a) the positive factors contributing to their sense of belonging at Academic Magnet High School, (b) growth opportunities, and (c) recommendations for increasing the sense of belonging for all members of AMHS. Additionally, five members of the subcommittee attended a regional area private school's *Art of Belonging* Summit.

The subcommittee used findings from the interviews and their experiences at the *Art of Belonging* Summit to craft three short-term goals for the 2025-2026 school year and two to three longer-term goals for the next couple of years, all aimed at increasing students' sense of belonging at Academic Magnet High School.

### **Short-term Goals:**

In 2025-2026, the subcommittee recommends:

1. Providing more regular multicultural lunchtime discussions, such as those led by faculty leaders. This will necessitate the recruitment and professional development of 2-3 additional teachers interested in hosting lunch meetings.
2. Recruiting student, faculty, and administrative ambassadors from a variety of clubs and organizations to participate in a student-led Student-Faculty Community-Building Coalition, a group that oversees (a) opportunities related to belonging at AMHS (see long-term goals) and (b) regular cultural celebrations.
3. Opening up more opportunities for creative expression and exploration at Academic Magnet High School by hosting (a) diverse lunchtime guests quarterly who can speak to cultural/ethnic diversity and diverse thinking styles and ways of learning and (b) a *voluntary* faculty lunch and learn on ways to diversify your curriculum from a local expert; and
4. Providing one additional field-day-like opportunity (such as Powder Puff) that allows students the opportunity to interact with learners they ordinarily would not interact with on a fun, non-academic endeavor.

### **Long-term Goals:**

In the next 2-3 years, the subcommittee recommends:

1. Creating a Student-Faculty Community-Building Coalition to identify and provide opportunities for increased belonging at AMHS for both students and faculty;
2. Exploring opportunities and funding for faculty/staff professional development related to restorative talks and “how-to” sessions on facilitating beneficial discussions when it comes to hard-to-discuss topics; and
3. Hosting its own full or half-day “Art of Belonging” type seminar for AMHS students.

### **AMHS Outreach / Awareness**

Expiration of the Jack Cooke Kent Grant: 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 supported 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. The grant expired and was not renewed.

SIC recognizes the value of the ACE programming and recommends that administration and parent groups work to identify alternate sources of funding to bring back all or parts of the ACE programming.

Raptor Guides: To continue the goals of the ACE program, SIC began working on an outreach and awareness program targeting middle schools from which 10 or fewer students matriculate to AMHS. The concept would be to connect 8th graders to students at AMHS who attended the same elementary or middle schools as the 8th graders. The vehicle for the awareness would be the Raptor Guides program, which reimagines the current school tour program and shadow day programming offered at AMHS.

SIC recommends AMHS continue developing this program with the insight of the student leaders working on the program and identify ownership of the development of a website through which to manage the program and resources for its maintenance and growth.

**Tutoring:** AMHS has a longstanding tradition of community service through individual students, student clubs, and their advisors. SIC recognizes that the connection between elementary and middle school and AMHS students is an excellent way to educate the wider Charleston County community about: 1) the opportunities at AMHS and 2) the welcoming, supportive environment to be found at AMHS.

SIC recommends that AMHS administration work to identify the current tutoring relationships that exist across both the AMHS community and the elementary schools feeding into middle school underrepresented at AMHS.

## **Parent Group Fundraising Initiatives**

Support for AMHS, its students, and faculty, and support for the activities/events listed does require a commitment of dollars to support the three parent groups: [Partners in Education \(PIE\)](#), [AMHS Foundation](#), and the [AMHS Booster Club](#). Donations to each parent group's annual fundraising campaigns are an important way for parents, families, and friends to advance the mission of AMHS for all students.

AMHS Partners in Education's (PIE) mission is to enrich the high school experience for all students, engage our parents and families, and show our teachers the appreciation they deserve. PIE relies on the generosity of our Academic Magnet families through annual memberships and sponsorships to make all of what we do possible.

The Academic Magnet Foundation provides extra opportunities for students that enhance the Magnet experience and prepare them for college. SIC worked closely with the Foundation to develop and improve programming offered to AMHS students. Thanks to a successful "Thanks for Giving" campaign funded by Magnet families, the Foundation this year provided:

- ACT/SAT prep classes: 10-week Princeton Review class so every student, regardless of their ability to pay, has access to high-quality, private test preparation
- Juniors Take Flight: a hands-on workshop with college admission specialists that helps juniors start their college applications, essays, and resumes
- Professional development opportunities for teachers and faculty
- Summer Scholars orientation for all freshmen and transfer students

The AMHS Booster Club is committed to supporting student-athletes, coaches, and athletic programs both on and off the fields. Our main fundraiser is our annual Raptor Golf Tournament, which raised over \$20,000 this year.

The [AMHS SIC](#) has elections for parents, students, and community members in May and is always looking for interested individuals to join us in supporting the excellence that is Academic Magnet.

Jake Perlmutter  
Principal

Meg Manuel, SIC Chair  
Community Member