

PTSO News

December/January 2005
Volume 19
Number 4



Newsletter of the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools Parent-Teacher-Student Organization

RPTSO Web Site: <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/>

FROM THE CHAIRS:

Beth Petr – ABRHS Co-Chair

Jan Couch – RJGJH Co-Chair

At the November PTSO Forum, checks were presented to the Principals from PTSO dues: \$1,000 to the Junior High and \$450 for the JH student newspaper, the AB Blueprint, and \$2000 to the High School and \$590 for the HS student paper, the AB Spectrum. Thank you to everyone who paid their \$25 PTSO dues this year! Additional donations will be given to the Principals in the Spring.

Superintendent Bill Ryan was our speaker for the November Forum. He shared the 2005-2006 School Systems' Profile with us, hot off the press! This document can also be found on the school website at <http://ab.mec.edu>.

Superintendent Ryan noted that there are currently over 500 students in our 7th and 9th grades, and Acton and AB have some of the highest classroom teacher-pupil ratios in the state. As a result, our per pupil costs are lower than most school systems we compare ourselves to. He thanked the Friends of Leary Field organization and all who contributed to this \$900,000 project that resulted in our beautiful new field. This was the largest gift in our schools' history. Mr. Ryan said that the Danny's Place Committee is hard at work renovating part of the old Merriam building cafeteria area to create an exciting new space for our young people to relax and socialize in this winter. "We are glad to be their partner," he said.

Challenges for this year include:

Significant Changes in Key Leadership

Two key administrative positions will be filled this year. Director of Pupil Services, Nancy Kolb and Deputy Superintendent, George Frost are both retiring at the end of this year after many years of service. As many older employees retire, younger ones are hired at lower rates so there is some cost savings. There is a concern that the special "school cultures" that exist in each of our buildings not be lost as so many new hires join us.

Capital Needs of Some of our Older Buildings

This applies particularly to the roofs and heating systems at Conant, Douglas, Gates and the Administration Building. A

new roof costs approximately \$400,000 – \$500,000 and lasts about 25 years.

The Budget

Superintendent Ryan said, "An agreement was made with the Acton voters that we wouldn't ask for an override next Spring for 2006–2007, although it is needed." Current estimates from the Acton Leadership Group (ALG) predict a \$950,000 gap between revenue and expenses for our schools (Acton K-6 and Acton's share of Acton Boxborough 7–12) for next year. Hopefully state aid will come in higher than estimated due to a state surplus, and some of our costs might decrease. Mr. Ryan is urging that all reserves be used by the towns. School fees may be increased, again, and more school choice students may be added strictly for revenue. These issues will all be discussed at length with the Principals, the School Committees, other Boards, and citizens between now and the Town Meetings in the Spring.

Superintendent Ryan concluded by emphasizing that our towns have a structural problem, created by Proposition 2 ½'s limit on tax increases, that we can't really solve on our own. A fairer distribution of state aid money is needed. He urged everyone to get involved in learning about the budget issues and voicing their opinions. He encouraged people to go to our school website and review School Committee member Marie Altieri's recent testimony at a hearing of the Legislature's Joint Committee for Education about education reform and state aid to education. Senator Resor and Representatives Eldridge and Atkins have been asked to help pursue the outlined proposal. If this proposal were adopted, Acton and Acton-Boxborough would receive an additional \$4 million in state aid for education (chapter 70 aid) each year – 40% more than we are receiving now. This important information can be found at <http://ab.mec.edu>

Finally, the PTSO would like to CONGRATULATE and THANK Superintendent Bill Ryan on his recent anniversary of 30 years of service working in our school system. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated and caring person leading our schools. Thank you, Superintendent Ryan!

– Beth and Jan

Important CORI Changes

Under the original CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) statute, we are required to renew CORI checks on all volunteers every three years. We will reach the three year point next spring! In addition, there have been recent amendments that mandate us to gather more information and to confirm identification with a picture I.D. Because of these changes, we have determined that the most effective process will be to do a new CORI certification for all volunteers. We will begin this process after January 1, 2006.

Please keep the following points in mind:

- If you are currently an approved CORI volunteer you will be able to volunteer through June 30, 2006
- We will request new CORI forms be completed in the winter/spring for the period July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009.
- We will only request one form be completed for all schools in Acton Public/Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools.
- We will work hard to make this be the least cumbersome process possible by having multiple opportunities to complete the form in accordance with the law.

If you have any questions, please contact Deputy Superintendent of Schools George Frost at 978-264-4700 ext. 3209.

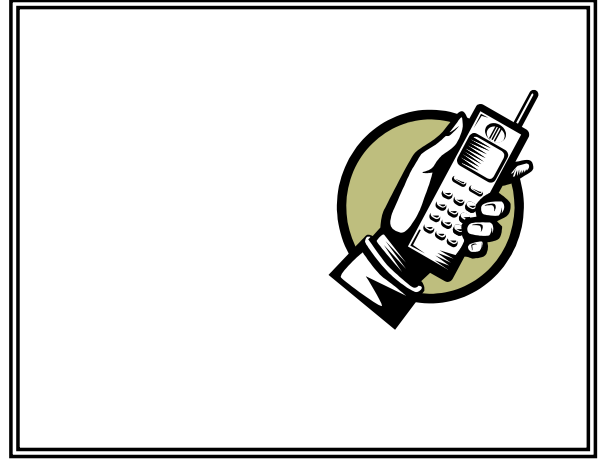
Proscenium Circus Presents “42nd Street”

This year’s musical, 42nd Street will be directed by Proscenium Circus Advisor Linda Potter, with musical direction by Jeanie Furlan and choreography by Melinda Samperi. Set in 1933, this Tony-award winning show is the story of new Broadway musical, a hard-nosed director who needs a hit, the hard-working cast who need their jobs, and a chorus girl who happened to be in the right place at the right time. Based on the movie of the same name, the show features big production numbers and tap dancing by the entire cast. Familiar songs include: “Lullaby of Broadway,” “We’re in the Money,” “Shuffle Off to Buffalo,” and “42nd Street.”

Students who have been cast for the musical are: Jenna Agule, Scott Ames, Kenzie Bartlett, Matt Bauer, Eric Bell, Jackie Berkley, Sean Berkwitz, Kara Blaney, Nicole Boyajian, Isobel Brown, Jenny Carrington, Ben Cesare, Anna Christo, Robert Duggan, Taylor Ferry, Connor Finnegan, Dani Forshay, Maddie Fuller, Beth Gillispie, Matt Grazewski, Madeline Green, Alison Herdeg, Brian Herdeg, Elyse Lebel, Andre Lenox, Evan Lenox, Anisa McCree, Tori McGovern, Nora Murphy, Emily O’Brien, Travis Porth, Cecilia Potter, Juliana Potter, Anna Read, Craig Reid, Emily Reuman, Garrett Richardson, Kate Rodophele, Hayley Samperi, Matt Samperi, Jeff Shane, Eric Sheehan, Noah Simes, Jeff Taylor, Meghan Venno, Katherine Voss, Ana Walker and Ty Wilson.

The show will run Fridays and Saturdays, Jan 27, 28 and February 3, 4, at 7:30 pm and Sunday, January 29, at 3:00 pm. A snow date is reserved for February 5. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and senior citizens and will go on

sale January 2nd at: Roche Bros., West Acton Market, Tedeschi Market (Rt. 2A) and on line at www.MKTix.com.



Project Graduation: What Is It? & How Can You Help?

What It Is

For the past 16 years, ABRHS undergraduate parents, with tremendous support from the community, have produced Acton-Boxborough’s Project Graduation. This all-night “lock-in” is exclusively for ABRHS seniors. The event is always a huge success; almost 90% of the senior class attends.

The night features live entertainment, games, food, prizes, scholarships, and a surprise theme. The only other people allowed to attend are the unobtrusive chaperones, limited to undergraduate parents and community members. The program is designed to provide a safe, fun, alcohol free and drug-free way to celebrate this important milestone.

How You Can Help

Preparations for this year’s Project Graduation have not yet started. Help is needed in lots of areas – Theme Design & Decorations, Food, Logistics, Fundraising, Chaperones, and Set-up. We encourage all parents of underclassmen (grades 7–11) to participate. Support the Class of 2006 now and **your** future graduates will have the opportunity to celebrate in this exciting and safe way.

To volunteer, or for more information, please contact ABProjGrad05@aol.com or 978-263-8014.

ABRHS NEWS

FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Steve Donovan

Report cards

November 21 was the distribution date for first term report cards. For security reasons, these reports are printed on colored paper with a visible school seal. Therefore, any reports without the seal are copies, not originals. Any questions about a student's grades or comments should be directed to the teacher of the course. Questions about attendance should be directed to the student's assistant principal (Susan Atwater-Rhodes for grade 11 and grade 10 A-G, Larry Dorey for grade 12 and grade 10 P-Z, and JoAnn Campbell for grade 9 and grade 10 H-O).

Recognition

Each year the faculty nominates three students from whom the seniors select one to receive the DAR Good Citizenship Award. I am pleased to announce that this year's recipient is Rashmi Jasrasaria.

Senior Kostya Kashin was named a regional finalist in the Siemens Westinghouse Competition in Math, Science and Technology and presented his project at MIT on November 12. Only three entries from Massachusetts (two individuals and one team) advanced to this level, so this was quite an honor.

The first recipients this year of the Principal's Recognition Award for service to school and community are seniors Andrew Emerson and Debleena Mitra and juniors David Estabrook and Anton Li.

The ABRHS 2005 production of "Anything Goes" has won an Honorable Mention in the Moss Hart Competition of the New England Theater Conference. "Anything Goes" was selected as the first runner up high school in the competition, which is composed of schools from the entire New England Region. The award was presented at the New England Conference Annual Convention on November, 13. Congratulations to all of those involved in this production.

As this newsletter goes to press, many of our fall athletic teams are winding up impressive seasons. We applaud the efforts and results of all of our student athletes.

– Steve Donovan, Principal

Community Service Activities

Our annual Community Service Awards Night is scheduled for Monday, January 16th (the Martin Luther King holiday), at 7:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium. Because of the large number of students qualifying for recognition, some of the awards will be presented at the January 16th Awards Night and others will be presented through class assemblies during January and February.

Students who have done at least 25 hours of community service during 2005 should report their hours by December 5th

using the form that was distributed in homeroom on November 21. Additional forms are available in the Counseling Center. Everyone is invited to attend the awards ceremony to share in recognizing student volunteers.

On January 10th and 11th, the Volunteer Opportunities Fair at all lunches will kick off community service activities for 2006. Students are encouraged to stop by the tables to find out about school year and summer volunteer opportunities.

Senior Diploma List

The diploma list for the Class of 2006 will be posted on the window of the Administration Office (147S) the first week of December. Seniors should check this list for proper spelling. Any name changes that need to be made on diplomas should be directed to Susan Sousa in the Administration Office.

NAEP Testing

ABRHS has been selected to participate in the 2006 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as *The Nation's Report Card*. The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 requires participation of those selected Massachusetts schools.

Approximately 95 seniors will be randomly selected to participate in this testing on February 9, 2006. Student participation in NAEP is voluntary. However, in order to ensure that Massachusetts is part of the NAEP, we ask that you support your child's participation. If you have any questions, please contact Susan Atwater-Rhodes at the high school (978-264-4700 or Susan_Atwater-Rhodes@mail.ab.mec.edu).

Reminder to Parents About Dismissal Policy

(From the ABRHS Student Handbook)

If a student has an appointment requiring that he/she be released early, he/she must bring a note signed by a parent or legal guardian. The student needs to take the note to the Main Office prior to third period. The student will be dismissed without a note from home only in the case of an emergency. Students returning to school must check in at the Main Office when they arrive. Classes missed due to a student's failure to comply with the dismissal procedure will be considered truanancies. Notes from parents dismissing their child after the absence has occurred will not be accepted.

If a student is sick, and the nurse determines that he/she should go home, the nurse will coordinate communication with home and officially dismiss the student. If the student arranges to go home directly with the parent, the parent must come into the Main Office, or call, to dismiss the student.

Students leaving campus with privileges are expected to return to class on time. In the event that a student is unable to return to a scheduled class, his/her parent must contact the Main Office on that day to excuse the absence.

RJGJHS NEWS

FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Larry Fliegelman and Megan Hatt

Early adolescent students need opportunities to explore new ideas, to form new peer relationships, and to engage in a variety of physical, intellectual, creative, and social activities. Throughout the school day at R.J. Grey, these needs are met in academic classes where students acquire basic skills and knowledge. The exploratory courses, X-Block classes, band, chorus, and physical education classes provide additional opportunities for learning, utilizing a wide variety of individual teaching and learning styles.

Learning and connecting with members of the R.J. Grey community also happens after school, as many students participate in one or more of the extracurricular activities that are offered. In addition, there are many ongoing school-sponsored clubs and activities that meet on a regular basis at our school. These include:

- **AB Blueprint**

Advisors: Lisa Beebe and Sandy Egnatz

The AB Blueprint is the school newspaper/literary magazine of R.J. Grey Junior High. It is published three times a year and is distributed free to all students and staff at our school. We meet every Wednesday after school in the PC lab from 2:15 until 3:30. This year the club has been so popular that the “overflow” uses the library computers.

- **Adopt-a-Grandparent**

Advisors: Judy McKendry, Becky Hadden and Laurie Blagdon

Students make weekly visits to residents of the Life Care of Acton nursing home, forming intergenerational friendships.

- **Art Club**

Advisor: Heather Pochatek

Students meet every Thursday after school till 3:30 for various art experiences in an open studio atmosphere. Each week the advisor will introduce a new art experience. Students can choose to participate in the lesson or work on their own on a self initiated project. The art experiences include: painting, drawing, ceramics and crafts.

- **Chess and Board Games Club**

Advisor: Mike Balulescu

Students gather every Wednesday to play chess, checkers, and any other board games they wish to bring to our meetings. This club is informal and is open to anyone who would like to attend.

- **Dungeons and Dragons**

Advisor: Elizabeth Broadwater

Students meet weekly to play student organized games. There are groups playing Dungeons and Dragons and a group playing Gurps.

- **Jazz Band**

Advisor: Mark Hickey

The Jazz Band is open to members of the band or chorus program. Auditions are called as needed. Music will be chosen from the swing band era through today’s popular music, arranged for a swing band. It will perform in two evening concerts, as well as school and community events. The ensemble meets one day a week after school.

- **Mathcounts**

Advisor: Michael Berry

Students meet weekly to work on challenging math problems. Club is open to all students who enjoy math.

- **Musical**

Each year, an active group of parents produce a musical, which involves many R.J. Grey students. This year’s show, “HONK!” is directed by Perry Alison. Auditions will be held in November, rehearsals will run through the winter, and the performances will be in March. Besides performing, students can participate in other aspects of the show.

- **Science Olympiad**

Advisors: Elizabeth Broadwater and Dave Palmer

This group is part of a national program to foster scientific competition. Students prepare for events in regional and state Science Olympiad meets. They can choose from 20 or so science events in which to participate.

- **Speech and Debate Team**

Advisor: Dot Keyworth

The members of the Speech Team practice on Monday, and participate in tournaments at area schools on one Sunday each month. The performance events at these tournaments include reading poetry or prose, reading a prepared speech, and “extemporaneous speaking” where the student is given a prompt and organizes a speech on the spot.

- **Student Council**

Advisors: Kellie Carter and Gabrielle Berberian

Elected officers and homeroom representatives meet once or twice a month during X-Block to plan activities. Participation in Student Council committees is open to all students. Some of these committees are: community connections, community service, mix-it-up, principal advisory board, publicity, recycling, school council, social, and school spirit.

- **Yearbook**

Advisors: Vicki Weeks and Holly Vlainac

The yearbook committee meets Wednesdays on an as-needed basis. Participants make posters, take photos, assemble pages, and help with sales.

As the year goes on, we expect many more activities to be added to accommodate students’ needs and wishes. As you can see, R.J. Grey Junior High School is a busy place in the afternoons.

Regional School Calendars

High School Dates of Interest

December

- 3 SAT I & II
- 7 Term 2 Interim Reports issued
- 7 Financial Aid Night, 7:00 p.m.
- 9 Radio Station Dance, 7:00 p.m.
- 13 ABRHS Winter Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- 15 Career Speaker Series, first period
- 19 School Council Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
- 22 Alumni Holiday Reception
(for Class of 2005), 1:30 p.m.
- 26 Winter Recess (through January 2)

January

- 3 School Reopens
- 9&10 Math Midterms
- 10&11 Volunteer Opportunities Fair, all lunches
- 16 No School – Martin Luther King Holiday
- 20 End of Term 2
- 23 School Council Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
- 27–29 Musical, 7:30 p.m.
- 28 SAT I&II
- 31 Science Midterms (also February 1)

Junior High School Dates of Interest

December

- 7 Student Council Meeting, 12:22 p.m.
- 8 Early Dismissal, 10:40 a.m.
- 8 Parent/Guardian Conferences, 11:30–2:30 p.m.
- 9 Grade 7 Social, 2:30–4:30 p.m.
- 13 School Council Meeting, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
- 15 Early Dismissal, 10:40 a.m.
- 15 Parent/Guardian Conferences, 11:30–2:30 p.m.
- 19 Midterm Reports Mailed
- 26 Winter Recess (through January 2)

January

- 3 School Reopens
- 4 School Council Meeting, 12:22 p.m.
- 5 Early Dismissal, 10:40 a.m.
- 5 Parent/Guardian Conferences, 11:30–2:30 p.m.
- 10 School Council Meeting, 6:00–7:30 p.m.
- 10 Winter Band Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- 11 Spelling Bee, 7:00 p.m.
- 16 No School – Martin Luther King Holiday
- 17 Winter Choral Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- 18 Spelling Bee Snow Date
- 20 End of Term 2
- 27 Grade 8 Dance, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE NEWS

FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Michael J. Coppolino, Chair

The Regional School Committee, in November, received a comprehensive report on the status of R.J. Grey Junior High School from Principal, Craig Hardimon. Thorough coverage of the school's many course offerings featured electives, including Minuteman Tech Ed, art and music. Additionally, we learned that the Boxborough School Committee decided to not pursue regionalization with Acton at this time.

Another topic that is currently being debated is the 2006–2007 school calendar. A number of parents have expressed concerns regarding the choppiness of the fall schedule with numerous days in and out of school. Discussion followed regarding the possible elimination of many religious holidays, including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday. The central administration is surveying teachers in this regard, and we are seeking input from all citizens. Some considerations are costs, as well as availability of substitute teachers to cover for those teachers and staff members who choose to not attend school on those days. We have heard from some concerned parents and hope to hear from more as we plan to vote on the upcoming calendar at our next regional meeting on December 1st at 7:30 p.m. in the Junior High School Library.

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, school and town officials worked together to provide testimony to State

legislators on two occasions this fall, both in Tyngsboro and Boston. Both events were heavily attended by representatives from numerous cities and towns throughout the State, urging legislators to revamp the current Chapter 70 distribution formula so that towns, such as Acton and Boxboro, receive increased State funding to offset spiraling real estate property taxes. One example of the formula's enigma is that Boxborough receives twice as much money per student who attends its elementary school than it does for those who attend the Regional Junior and Senior High Schools. The full text of the testimony delivered by your local representatives, which in my opinion, was the most objective, digestible presentation that was made, can be found at:

<http://ab.mec.edu/about/chap70report.shtml>.

The next two A–B Regional School Committee meetings will be Thursday, December 1, 2005 and January 5, 2006 both at 7:30 p.m. in the R.J. Grey Junior High School library where, among other topics, we will continue to discuss budget planning. Please contact me, as well as other school committee members, via phone or e-mail at any time. All of our contact information can be found on the District website at: <http://www.ab.mec.edu/about/members.shtml>.

– Michael J. Coppolino

Chairman, Acton-Boxboro Regional School Committee

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PTSO News
Acton-Boxborough Regional High School
Acton, MA 01720

Tuesday, January 10th
PTSO forum

12:00 Noon
Acton Memorial Library

PTSO CALENDAR



January 10	Noon	PTSO Forum Acton Memorial Library
February 8	7:00 p.m.	PTSO Board Meeting ABRHS Library, Open to All
February 14	Noon	PTSO Forum Assistant Superintendent Susan Horn, presenting Acton Memorial Library

JOIN THE PTSO EMAIL LIST! Sign up at <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/>

THE DEADLINE FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION FOR THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER IS JANUARY 13.

This issue is scheduled to be mailed to families on January 26.

Articles for consideration may be sent to BPetr@verizon.net or JCCouch@comcast.net.