

FROM THE CO-CHAIRS: MARY ANN ASHTON (HS) & JAN COUCH (JH)

What Is the Student Assistance Team?

Our November PTSO forum with Stephen Hitzrot, head of the Counseling Department, took place on November 14 as the *PTSO Newsletter* was going to print. We'll provide you with more information about what Mr. Hitzrot had to say in our January newsletter, but below will provide you with some information about activities in the Counseling Department.

Student Assistance Team

Part of Principal Steve Donovan's education report to the School Committee in October included a summary of the Student Assistance Team during the 2005-2006 school year. The Student Assistance Team (SAT), a multidisciplinary team which meets twice weekly during the school year, accepts referrals from school community members who are concerned about a particular student. The Team gathers information by examining school records, obtaining feedback from current and past teachers and administrators, and consulting the school counselor about the student's and parent's perspectives to better understand the pupil's needs and to make recommendations that are appropriate and non-punitive. In some cases, students are referred to counseling supports, or may be evaluated for special education. The SAT assists students in reaching their full potential through early intervention. This year's SAT discussed 152 students; 104 of the students were new referrals, representing a significant increase in new referrals for a school year. The remaining 48 students were "carried over" from the previous year and the team continued to monitor their progress.

Students are most often referred by teachers because of failing grades or a significant drop in academic performance. Of the 152 students, 98 students had academic concerns as one of their issues. Mental health issues, most prevalently depression and anxiety, were a concern for 41 students. These students were referred for in-school as well as community support through mental health resources and physicians. Referrals were also made for 32 students for issues involving drug and/or alcohol, as evidenced by a violation of the extracurricular chemical health policy, sus-

pension for use or possession, or suspicion of substance abuse. Additionally, 23 students were referred for behavioral issues, which marked a significant increase in this area.

Members of the Student Assistance Team for the 2005-2006 school year included Nancy Cohen, team leader, school psychologist; Tim Malloy, special educator; teachers Liz Mackay and Abigail Buffum; Colleen McGovern, school nurse; school psychology interns Elizabeth Meade and Lauren Midon; and Susan Atwater-Rhodes, administrative liaison.

CHAIRS CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PROJECT GRADUATION **What Is It? & How Can You Help?**

What It Is

For the past 17 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. It begins at 10pm on graduation night and ends at 5am the next morning.

The night features live entertainment, games, food, prizes, scholarships, a surprise theme, and unbelievable decorations. 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 already started! Help is needed in lots of areas – Theme Design & Decorations, Food, Logistics, Fundraising, Chaperones, set up, and clean up. We encourage all parents of underclassmen (grades 7-11) to participate. (Seniors' families are not allowed!) Support the Class of 2007 now and **your** future graduates will have the opportunity to celebrate in this exciting and safe way.

For more information, please contact Mary Ann Ashton at 978-263-4399 or MABAshton@aol.com

From the Chairs

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Naviance

The Counseling Department has begun to use the Naviance Family Connection computer program this fall to help students with decisions about college and career opportunities, and course selections that will help them attain these goals. The program is able to track student interests, goals and achievements, and tests. For students beginning to plan for college, the program provides information about visits to AB by college representatives, transcript requests, college choices and admissions decisions, and scholarship applications.

The classes of 2007 and 2008 have been introduced to the program and have set up personal accounts with user e-mail logins and passwords. If you are a parent of a junior or senior and would like to have parent access to the Naviance program, please e-mail Andy Palmer at apalmer@mail.ab.mec.edu. Be sure to identify the name of your child in the request. A registration code will be e-mailed to you.

PTSO Information

Thank you to those of you who have sent in your \$25 per family membership dues. Because of your generosity, the PTSO presented grants to the principals at our November forum: \$2,000 for the high school, and a \$1,000 for the junior high.

If you would like a copy of the student directory for the year, the high school directories are available for \$3 each from the School Store and the junior high directories are available from the main office at R. J. Grey.

Next Forum

Superintendent Bill Ryan will speak at our next PTSO Forum on Tuesday, January 9, at noon, in the Acton Memorial Library. We hope to see you there!

FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Michael Coppolino, Chair

The Regional School Committee met on Thursday Nov. 2 and heard the annual report on the Junior High School that was presented by Principal Craig Hardimon and two students. Posed for consideration by the Committee were a draft of a Social Climate Survey, its School Improvement Plan, as well as upcoming budget considerations, including adding another half or full team. Additionally, the administration at RJ Grey is recommending a self-assessment in lieu of an outside review by NEASC or NELMS, which the Committee is considering. The School Committee also voted to hire 2.0 full time equivalent high school staff (four teachers) in January to begin the process of meeting the 990-hour requirement. Funding will come from current Chapter 70 monies.

Acton's annual State of the Town Meeting will be held on Nov. 20 at 7:00PM at the RJ Grey Auditorium. Two major topics to be addressed include the Municipal and School's Capital Plan, and the State's 990-hour mandate for high school students. There will also be brief updates about the Acton Neighborhood Network and W. R. Grace. Acton residents will be receiving a booklet of information explaining each of these topics. Please consider attending to ask questions and help guide

Save The Date

Mark your calendars now so you won't miss the annual high school musical, "Once Upon A Mattress," February 2-10, 2007. Directed by Linda Potter, with music direction by Jeanie Furlan and choreography by Christine Campbell, this is the musical comedy version of the fairy tale, Princess and the Pea. 'Mattress' first opened on Broadway in 1959 starring, the then unknown actress, Carol Burnett, which catapulted Burnett into her career as comedienne extraordinaire.

For more information, visit www.ABDrama.org or call Linda Potter, (978) 264-4700 x3584.

Upcoming School Committee Meetings

DECEMBER

- 7** ABRSC: Thursday, December 7, 7:30 PM, RJ Grey JHS Library
- 21** Acton Public SC: Thursday, December 21, 7:30 PM in the RJ Grey Library

the Town in setting its priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

As always, the public is welcome to attend. All School Committee Members can be contacted at AB_School_Committee@mail.ab.mec.edu

Acton School Committee Members:

Marie Altieri, altierim@aol.com
Jonathan Chinitz, jchinitz@gmail.com
Michael Coppolino, copp@verizon.net
Terry Lindgren, terry.lindgren@comcast.net
Sharon Smith McManus, ssmcmamus@rcn.net
John Ryder, johnry92261@verizon.net

Boxborough School Committee Members:

Brigid Bieber, tbbieber@comcast.net
Becky Neville, neville317@juno.com
Bruce Sabot, bruce_sabot@comcast.net

Congratulations Marie

Congratulations to School Committee member, Marie Altieri, for her selection as a member of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees "All Massachusetts School Committee" for 2006. MASC's Board selects nine individuals who "have made a significant contribution to their community or their school committee either through specific action or as an inspiration and role model for their peers and constituents." Marie was nominated by her fellow school committee members, and received the award last week at MASC's annual conference. Marie has a son at the high school and twin sons at Gates School.

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Steve Donovan

990 Planning

We are in the process of determining how best to comply with the Massachusetts Department of Education mandate for 990 hours of structured learning time for all students while maintaining the atmosphere of our school and meeting our students' needs as we see them. In November, I visited many sophomore and junior English classes to get student input to be used in the planning process. We expect to pilot some new courses during second semester and will also try to offer some other afternoon and evening learning experiences which students could count toward next year's 990 hours. We will also work to quantify existing student activities for 990 credit. We believe that we can meet this challenge in a way that will be positive for the students and for our school system, and we will provide more information to parents as the planning proceeds.

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 12 and grade 11 A-G, Larry Dorey for grade 9 and grade 11 P-Z, and JoAnn Campbell for grade 10 and grade 11 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 **Anton Li**.

Senior **Lauren Levine** has been selected as the Acton-Boxborough recipient of the **Principal's Leadership Award**. As the school award winner, Lauren is now eligible to consideration for recognition at the national level in a scholarship program co-sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and Herff Jones Inc.

Seniors **Prabhat Putchakayala** and **George Mossessian** were recently named regional semi-finalists in the **Siemens Westinghouse Competition** in Math, Science and Technology.

The first recipients this year of the **Principal's Recognition Award** for service to school and community are seniors **Doug Breuer, Alexandra Essman, Beth Gillispie** and **Kelsey Meidell**.

Congratulations to the cast, crew, staff and director Linda Potter for the outstanding Proscenium Circus fall play, "**Holes**." This entertaining show was a great kickoff to the PC year.

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.

Community Service Activities

Our annual Community Service Awards Night is scheduled for Monday, January 15th (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 15 Awards Night and others will be presented later in the month during the school day.

Students who have done at least 25 hours of community service during 2006 should report their hours by December 6th using the form that was distributed in

It's a Date / ABRHS

DECEMBER

- 2** SAT and Subject Tests
- 6** Financial Aid Night
7:00 pm
- 11** School Council Meeting – 6:00 p.m.
- 12** Career Speaker Series
First period
- 12** ABRHS Winter Concert
7:30 pm
- 21** Alumni Holiday Reception – 1:30 p.m.
(for the Class of 2006)
- 25** Winter recess
(through January 1)

JANUARY

- 2** School reopens
- 9** Volunteers Opportunities Fair
All lunches
- 15** No School
MLK Holiday
- 15** Community Service Awards Night –
7:30 pm
- 17 & 18** Math midyear exams
- 22** School Council Meeting – 6:00 p.m.
- 26** End of Term 2

homeroom in November. Additional forms are available in the Counseling Center. Everyone is invited to attend the awards ceremony to share in recognizing student volunteers.

On January 9th, the Volunteer Opportunities Fair at all lunches will kick off community service activities for 2007. Students are encouraged to stop by the tables to find out about school year and summer volunteer opportunities.

ABRHS CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Daily announcements at the High School are posted on the website at <http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/>.
(Click on *Announcements* to the right of *Quick Links*.) They are not emailed out as they are at the Junior High School.

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Senior Diploma List

The diploma list for the Class of 2007 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 for the diploma should be directed to Susan Sousa in the Administration Office.

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 trancies. 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.

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, 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: Heidi Porten

The AB Blueprint is the school newspaper/literary magazine of RJ 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 Tuesday 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.

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: Kaisheng Du

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, "Annie Warbucks" is directed by Samantha Hamel and produced by Bonnie Maserang. 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.

Speech Team

ADVISOR: Dot Keyworth and Pat Higgins

The members of the Speech Team practice on Wednesday, 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.

Star Wars Club

ADVISOR: Melanie Scalice

Students meet every other Wednesday to share their enthusiasm for all things Star Wars. The club is open to all students.

Student Council

ADVISOR: Maureen Lin 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

ADVISOR: Vicki Weeks and Holly Vlajinac

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

As the school 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.

It's a Date / RJGJHS

DECEMBER

- 6** Student Council Meeting, 12:22 PM
- 7** Early Dismissal 10:40 AM; Parent/Guardian Conferences 11:30-2:30 PM
- 8** Grade 7 Social 2:30-4:30 PM
- 12** School Council Meeting 7-8:30 PM
- 14** Early Dismissal 10:40 AM; Parent/Guardian Conferences 11:30-2:30 PM
- 21** Mid Term Reports Mailed
- 25-1/1** No School Winter Recess



JANUARY

- 2** School Reopens
- 3** Student Council Meeting, 12:22 PM
- 4** Early Dismissal 10:40 AM
Parent/Guardian Conferences 11:30-2:30 PM
- 9** School Council Meeting 6-7:30 PM
- 10** Spelling Bee - 7:00 PM
- 11** Spelling Bee Snow Date
- 15** No School - Martin Luther King Day
- 16** Winter Choral Concert 7:30 PM
- 23** Winter Band Concert 7:30 PM
- 25** End of Term 2
- 26** Grade 8 Dance 6:30-8:30 PM

prestidigitation



PTSO News

<http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu>

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

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School
Acton, MA 01720

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PTSO CALENDAR

Tues, January 9

Noon

Acton Memorial Library

Superintendent Bill Ryan
is our speaker

Tues, February 13

Noon

Acton Memorial Library

Tues, March 13

Noon

Acton Memorial Library

Tuesday, April 10

Noon

Acton Memorial Library

Thursday, May 10

7:00 PM

**Annual PTSO Business
Meeting**

(vote on board & budget)

7:30 PM

**“Surviving the College
Search” presentation**

sponsored by the
PTSO and Counseling
Department

Are you reading this newsletter online?

**If not, check it out at <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/newsletters.htm>
From this site, you can also join the PTSO email list!**

**Submission DEADLINE for the February 1 Newsletter is January 16.
Please contact Beth at BPetr@verizon.net or 978-263-7208.**