

PTSO News

March 2006
Volume 19
Number 6



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

Assistant Superintendent Susan Horn was the February PTSO Forum speaker. The write up of her presentation will be in the April newsletter due to our publishing deadline.

Thank you to everyone who attended the recent presentation on “**Recognizing Teenage Depression and Anxiety**”, and to all those who could not attend but asked for more information. This has been an annual event, co-sponsored by the Regional PTSO, CAFY (Community Alliance for Youth), RJG Staff Members, and NAMI (The National Association for Mental Illness) for the past six years. Thank you also to Dr. Carolyn Imperato, Wellness Coordinator and former RJG school psychologist, and Dr. Cathy Schen, a local psychiatrist, who were presenters.

“Why all the talk about depression and anxiety?”

Depression and anxiety are very real issues in today's society, even for our teenagers. 28 of our AB High School students were referred to the Student Assistance Team last year for "mental health issues". According to the Student Assistance Team Summary for '04-'05, among these 28 children, "Faculty, administrators, counselors, and parents most commonly made referrals for concerns involving depression and anxiety." These students were not receiving special education services at the time that they were referred for assistance. Special Education Students dealing with depression/anxiety would be in addition to this number.

This annual presentation has typically been "standing room only". Many parents and guardians realize that if their own children do not suffer from depression/anxiety, their children's friends, or their friends' children, or even extended family members may be dealing with it. The National Mental Health Association says, “As many as one in every 33 children may have depression. Two-

thirds of children with mental health problems do not get the help they need.”

More information can be found on the Wellness website section of the school site, <http://www.ab.mec.edu/> Click on APS-AB Wellness Web under Community links.

Other good sources of online information include:

CAFY: www.cafy.net

Teens: www.teenshealth.org

Kids: www.kidshealth.org

Parents: www.aacap.org and www.samhsa.gov/

Please consider learning more about how to recognize and deal with this treatable illness of depression/anxiety.

Our next PTSO Forum will be on March 14 and Mr. David McClung, Chairperson of the Science Department at the High School will be presenting. In addition to what is happening in Science at AB, Mr. McClung will talk about how technology is being used in his department, including a new on-line course being offered to students. His presentation will begin at 12:45, after the Principals' updates, in the Acton Memorial Library.

If anyone is interested in getting more involved by joining the PTSO Board for next year, please feel free to give either of us a call. We are looking for some new faces! See the nominations article inside.

Have a great vacation everyone,

Beth (High School questions)

978-263-7208

and

Jan (Junior High questions)

978-263-2118

Nominations Open for the 2006-2007 Regional PTSO Board

Nominations are now open for Board positions for next year's Regional PTSO. If you would like to be involved, or would like to nominate someone else (with their prior approval!), please contact the Nominating Committee via Beth at BPetr@verizon.net or 978-263-7208 by April 10. The proposed slate of Board members will be distributed in the May PTSO Newsletter and voted on at our Annual PTSO Business Meeting in May. Job descriptions of each of these positions should be posted on our website very soon. Feel free to contact any Board member with questions about a particular position.

PTSO Board positions include:

Co-Chairpersons (HS/JH),
Secretary,
Treasurer,
Directories (HS /JH),
Gardening (HS),
Interschool Council (HS/JH),
Membership (HS/JH),
Newcomer Welcoming (HS/JH),
Newsletter,
Nominating,
Project Graduation,
Volunteer Coordinators (HS/JH) and
Fundraising.

2006-2007 PTSO Budget Planning

A budget committee is being formed to generate a proposed PTSO budget for the 2006-2007 school year. The budget will be presented and voted on at the Annual PTSO Business Meeting in May. As always, all PTSO members - parents, guardians, staff, and students are welcome to attend. Members of the school community who are interested in serving on the Budget Committee should contact PTSO Treasurer Caroline Crosby at 978-266-2955 by March 15.

Thank you to everyone who paid their dues!

Thank you to everyone who paid their 2005-2006 annual \$25 PTSO dues including those who responded to the recent reminder letter. The response in past years to this gentle reminder has been very successful. Last year we generated an additional \$10,000 that was given to our two Principals to be spent on educational needs. Thank you for your generosity. We will send an update in the next newsletter.

High School Orientation For Parents/Guardians of Eighth Graders

ABRHS will hold its annual orientation for the parents and guardians of current eighth grade students on Wednesday, March 15, at 7:00 p.m. in the high school auditorium. The purpose of the meeting is to ease student transition to ninth grade by providing parents with information about the high school's academic program, including available electives, and school activities. Parents will receive information about the sequence of academic courses presented by each department leader. The roles of parents and students in the course selection process will also be described. Administrators, department leaders and counselors will be available to answer questions after the presentation.

Eighth grade students at R. J. Grey Junior High will attend an assembly on Wednesday, March 22, to receive scheduling information as well as other information about ABRHS.

A-B Spring Play Set for March 24 – 26

After wrapping up a successful run of 42nd Street, the Proscenium Circus Drama Club will continue in March with Derelicts, Dancers, Dreamers and Chimps, an evening of four short plays by contemporary American playwrights. The show is directed by Andrea Southwick, an Acton resident who is also a professional actor, director, teacher and coach. This is her first time directing at the high school and she is very excited to be working with A-B students. A graduate of Lesley University and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York, Ms. Southwick is the founder and director of Southwick Studio for Theatre Arts & Expression in Watertown and Acton.

The cast of The Midnight Caller will first perform at the Massachusetts Drama Guild Festival, competing against 104 other state high schools in Attleboro on March 4th. If successful, the ABRHS cast will advance to the semi-finals held on March 18th and the finals March 30 – 31 and April 1st.

Performances of Derelicts, Dancers, Dreamers and Chimps, will be presented for one weekend only in the ABRHS auditorium, March 24, 25 at 7:30 p.m. and March 26th at 3:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 each and will be available in late February at www.MKTix.com, Roche Bros., West Acton Market, and Tedeshia's on Rt. 2A. For more information, please check www.ABDrama.org.

ABRHS NEWS

FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Steve Donovan

● Course Planning

Students are in the process of choosing courses for next school year. Please see the accompanying articles for information on dates, how you can help in this process, and course options that you should know about.

● Professional Development Day

On Friday, March 10th we will have our system-wide Professional Development Day during which staff will work on curriculum documentation and other school issues. Students will have the day off.

● Local Scholarships for Seniors

All seniors are eligible for the local scholarships that are awarded during graduation week, but students must complete a local scholarship application in order to be considered for these awards. Parents of seniors: Please remind your students to complete the form they received in English class on Tuesday, February 7 and to return it to the Counseling Center before the March 9 deadline (this is a firm deadline). Extra copies of the form are available in the Counseling Center.

● Student Recognition

The following students have recently been accepted to the Massachusetts All State Music festival. They will be performing at Boston Symphony Hall later this spring with the best high school musicians in Massachusetts.

Congratulations to: Rosanna Xia and Yi Liu – flute and Rashmi Jasrasaria and Michelle Frazee – chorus.

We are also pleased to announce the ABRHS students recognized in the annual Boston Globe Scholastics Art Competition. Gold Key work will be sent to New York for the Scholastics national judging.

Portfolio (Gold Key): Alex Brockway, Joshua Harris, Yaejin Hong and Alisa Javits.

Individual Work -Gold Key: Maryn Jones and Celeste Wilson

Individual Work - Silver Key: Lauren Corke, Michelle Frazee, Kate Hanselman, Joshua Harris, Diane Hwang, Evan Lenox, Jennifer Mak, Rebecca Willis, Daphne Xiao and Diane Xiao.

Individual Work - Honorable Mention: Min Kim, Sara Krol, Amy Margolius, Samantha Pappin, Svetlana Romanova and Daniel Shirley.

● Calendar of events for seniors

The calendar of senior events that was distributed to seniors on February 8 is posted on the high school web site (click on Seniors under Quick Links).

● MCAS information for parents of sophomores

As you know, all tenth grade students are required to participate in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

(MCAS) testing taking place this spring. The first MCAS test, the English Long Composition, will be given on Monday, March 28, periods 2, 3 and 4. The English Language Arts test (ELA) will be administered on March 28 and 30. The remaining tests will be given during the weeks of May 22 and May 29.

Course Planning for 2006 - 2007

The process of course planning for next school year has begun. The *Program of Studies* booklet listing courses to be offered was distributed to freshmen, sophomores, and juniors on February 6th.

On Pupil Course Request Day, March 1st, students will receive PCR forms in homeroom, discuss course recommendations with their current teachers, and return their completed PCR forms to their homeroom teachers at the end of the day. One copy will be taken home to be reviewed by parents. Any changes that are necessary must be made through the Counseling Department by April 28th.

Eighth grade students will complete the scheduling process after Eighth Grade Parents' Night, which is scheduled for Wednesday, March 15th, at 7:00 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

Program of Studies Notes

An interdisciplinary offering available to sophomores is the American Studies program, a team-taught alternative to English II and U.S. History I at the AE level. This course covers the same curriculum content as the traditional sophomore English and history courses (preparing students for the MCAS and department finals), but American Studies has some unique advantages. The two classes are scheduled back to back, which allows the two teachers to reconfigure course content, student groupings, time, and testing in a variety of ways, as well as offering an interdisciplinary approach.

New courses in the 2006-07 Program of Studies: Intro to Acting, Advanced Acting, Intro to Musical Theater, Intro to Directing, Digital Imagery I, Digital Imagery II, Latin I H, Latin I AE, Italian I H and Statistics H/AP. Computer Networking I (Cisco Academy) will return as a course offering.

Annual Show ABRHS Girls Gymnastics Team

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Girls Gymnastics Team will present their annual gym show Friday, March 10th, at 7:00 p.m. in the upper gym of the high school. The theme is "Wild, Wild West". After a successful season, the team is ready to show their stuff in their highly anticipated fundraiser with some rootin' tootin' cowboy fun. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$4 for students and are available at the door or from gymnastic team members. Purchasers of advanced tickets will receive two free raffle tickets for prizes raffled during the show. All proceeds support AB gymnastics. Snow date: Sunday, March 12th, 7:00 p.m. in the high school lower gym.

RJGJHS NEWS

FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Larry Fliegelman and Megan Hatt

Throughout this cold winter, the Junior High continues to be a busy place with events and activities during and after school.

● Academic Competitions

The RJG Spelling Bee was held the night of January 11th. Winner of the RJG Spelling Bee was Stephen Forgo, an 8 Green student, who spelled “serendipitous” and “napalm” correctly to take the championship. He will compete in the 66th Annual Northern Middlesex Spelling Bee, sponsored by the Lowell Sun, on Saturday, March 25th in Lowell, MA. Runner-up in the competition was Isabel Krakoff, who is an 8 Orange student. Thanks to teachers Bob Specian and Pat Higgins for organizing this event, and to Melanie Scalice, Maureen Lin, and last year's winner, Amol Mehta (now a 9th grader at ABRHS), who acted as announcers and judges.

● Student Council Events

During the week of February 6th, in the cafeteria, Student Council representatives collected money to purchase phone cards for members of the Massachusetts National Guard serving in Iraq. There was a banner for students to sign that was sent to Iraq, and Student Council members wrote notes to the soldiers to receive with their phone cards. Colonel Richard Hens, a social studies teacher who retired from R. J. Grey last year, is in Iraq, and he distributed the phone cards to the soldiers. The High School Student Council also participated in this fundraiser, and our goal was to raise enough money to send phone cards to 150 soldiers to help them stay connected to their family members and friends.

● Team Activities

The 8 Orange team went on a field trip to the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, on Friday, January 20. The museum's excellent collections of East Asian export art allowed students to reflect upon themes from the China unit, and students were able to relax and explore the many other galleries and exhibits.

Students on 7 Green and 8 Orange participated in an activity called Independent Reading through their English classes. Each student on 7 Green was partnered with a student on 8 Orange. Each term, individual students on both teams choose a book to read, and at the end of each term, they write letters to their partners describing and critiquing the books they chose. Then, shortly after this, the two teams meet for lunch. Students eat lunch with their partners, exchange letters, talk about their books, and get to know one another. This continues all year long and culminates with an outdoor end-of-year special luncheon in the spring. This activity is a great way for student to get to know one another across grade levels and discuss good books!

The 8 Gold team enjoyed a field trip to the Acton Bowladrome. Each student bowled two strings and then used the data to produce a poster for math class, which included a

graph of scatter points and a best fit line of direct variation to determine his/her bowling average. This was a fun way to learn about graphing equations.

8 Red “mixed it up” in the cafeteria on “Adopt an Element T-shirt Day.” Students had studied the particle theory of matter in science, and each adopted an element to research. They created T-shirts representing their elements, which they proudly wore on that day.

8 Green culminated their study of China and Japan with calligraphy workshops in February. Ms. Finnegan of Kaji Aso Studio came to R. J. Grey and conducted small group workshops for 8 Green. In these sessions, each student completed about five calligraphy pieces. This was a great opportunity for a hands-on cultural experience. Other teams will hold similar events in the months ahead.

● ABRHS Registration

In March, the High School registration process for our 8th graders will begin. There will be a meeting at ABRHS on March 15th for parents/guardians of 8th graders. You are encouraged to attend this meeting. On Thursday, March 16th students will receive the “Program of Studies” booklet and on Wednesday, March 22nd they will attend an assembly at the High School to review the scheduling process. Feel free to contact our school if you have questions about this process.

● Blue and Gold Day

The entire school joined together for a celebration of school spirit on February 16th, Blue and Gold Day. The purpose of this annual event is to celebrate those things that make our school unique and to recognize the importance of the activities in which our students participate. Students and staff members proudly displayed their spirit by wearing the school colors in many creative ways. (It was very difficult for teams to select only one winner for best costume since there were so many excellent outfits!)

Student Council members planned the day's events and assembly, under the guidance of advisors Gabrielle Berberian and Kellie Carter. Student Council Vice President Paige McDonald, Secretary Alex Diorio and Treasurer Kevin Clancy ran the program, which began with teams entering the gym to the spirited music of the band. The entire combined chorus performed. The cheerleaders showed off their talent in a performance of cheers. During the assembly, all participants and advisors of extracurricular activities were recognized. As students rose to stand when their club or athletic team was announced, it was easy to see what an active student body we have at RJG.

Blue and Gold Day was fun for everyone in our school community. Our school is made stronger by the connections that students make to each other through the activities that are recognized this day.



Project Graduation 2006 Update

Volunteers

Mark your calendars for Project Graduation coming up on Friday, June 2nd!! We need volunteers for almost every committee. No special talent is needed, just a desire to work on this rewarding project. We encourage all parents of underclassmen (grades 7-11) to help with this wonderful and successful event. It's a lot of fun!! Support the class of 2006 now and your future graduates will have the opportunity to celebrate in this exciting and rewarding (and safe) way.

To volunteers, please complete the form below or send the requested information to ABProjGrad06@gmail.com. If you have already signed up, called or sent an e-mail, we will be contacting you soon. Thanks for your patience!!

CORI Forms

Any adult planning on working at Project Graduation during the event has to have a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) form processed by the High School. A CORI certification is good for 3 years. Because processing can take up to several weeks, it's important to fill out the form as soon as possible. Please stop by the high school between 7:00am and 3:15pm, Monday - Friday and fill out a CORI form. You will need to have your driver's license with you for the administration to make a copy.

Matching Donations

Did you know that the Project Graduation is a "501c3 Tax-Exempt Organization"? This means that not only are your generous contributions tax deductible, but if your company or business has a matching donation program, Project Graduation can benefit with an additional gift. Check with your HR department and see if they offer such a program. If so, simply send in your company's matching donation form with your own donation check and we'll handle the rest.

Send donations to: Project Graduation, c/o ABRPTSO, P.O Box 912, Acton, MA 01720. Make checks payable to Project Graduation. We are funded entirely through contributions and receive no financial support from the school budget.

Project Graduation Volunteer Form

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Set up | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Serving | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Casino | <input type="checkbox"/> Chaperone | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme Design/Decorating | |

OR

- No preference, just want to help out.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Please send this form to: Project Graduation, c/o ABRPTSO, P.O Box 912, Acton, MA 01720.

Regional School Calendars

High School Dates of Interest

March

March 1	PCR Day (student select courses for next year)
March 1	Third Term Interim Reports
March 2	Performance of State Festival Play, 7:30 p.m.
March 6	Blood Drive sponsored by Student Council
March 6 – 9	MCAS Retests
March 8	College Night for Juniors and Parents, 7:00 p.m.
March 9	Predeparture marching band concert, 7:30 p.m. (Band is going to Ireland on March 14.)
March 10	Professional Day – No school for students
March 10	Gymnastics Show, 7:00 p.m.
March 14	Career Breakfast, 7:30 a.m.
March 15	Information Night for parents of 8 th graders, 7:00 p.m.
March 20	School Council meeting, 6:00 p.m.
March 22	National Spanish Exam
March 22	HS information assembly for 8 th graders

Junior High School Dates of Interest

March

March 1	Student Council meeting, 12:22 p.m.
March 3	Junior High Musical, 7:00 p.m.
March 4	Junior High Musical, 7:00 p.m.
March 5	Junior High Musical, 1:30 p.m.
March 7	Pan Choral Concert, 7:00 p.m.
March 10	Professional Day – No school for students
March 10	Junior High Musical, 7:00 p.m.
March 11	Junior High Musical, 7:00 p.m.
March 12	Junior High Musical, 1:30 p.m.
March 13	Midterm Reports mailed
March 14	School Council meeting, 7-8:30 p.m.
March 15	Project Wellness – Grade 7
March 24	Grade 7 Social, 2:30–4:30 p.m.
March 27– Apr 7	MCAS testing Grade 7 & 8
March 28	MCAS – ELA Long Composition – Grade 7
March 31	End of Term 3

SCHOOL COMMITTEE NEWS

FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Michael J. Coppolino, Chair

At its February meeting, the Regional School Committee received some encouraging news regarding the governor's proposed budget. After having Chapter 70 funds cut severely in 2004, Acton has struggled to maintain the same level of educational services, even with the passage of two substantial operating overrides in the last three years. Despite both burgeoning student populations and their outstanding achievement on common state and national assessments, including the SATs and MCAS exams, Acton has received much less than most other communities in MA on a per student basis.

Typically the Governor's Budget, known as House 1, is the most conservative estimate of what the final numbers from the State will be, however this year that may not be the case. Recognizing extreme inequities based on the past formulation of how dollars should be divvied up to the cities and towns in the Commonwealth, the Department of Education made a recommendation to the governor that has now been put forth to the state legislators, which, if accepted, would increase the Region's share of Chapter 70 funds by some \$1.4M (a 46% increase) this year. We are optimistic, though not convinced, that both chambers will approve this formula.

Due to the likelihood that some additional funds will come our way, the ABRSC voted to accept Superintendent Ryan's FY '07 proposed budget at its annual Open Budget Hearing. The budget includes five new teachers at the high school, to help stem the growth of class sizes that are among the highest in the state. We also accepted a second proposal by Principal Steve Donovan, to limit to fifteen the number of new Choice students who will be accepted for the '06-'07 school year. The Committee reserved the right to make modifications in both of these, as well as other areas, should State funds promised be less than anticipated.

The next A-B Regional School Committee meetings will be March 2 and March 30, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High School library. Please contact me, as well as other school committee members, via phone or email at any time. All of our contact information can be found on the District web site at:
<http://www.ab.mec.edu/about/members.shtml>.

– Michael J. Coppolino
Chairman, Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee

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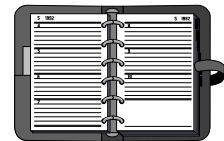
PTSO News
Acton-Boxborough Regional High School
Acton, MA 01720

Tuesday, March 14th
PTSO Forum

Dave McClung
Science Dept. Chair

12:00 Noon
Acton Memorial Library

PTSO CALENDAR



March 14	Noon	PTSO Forum Dave McClung, Science Department Chair, presenting Acton Memorial Library
April 11	Noon	PTSO Forum Acton Memorial Library

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

THE DEADLINE FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION FOR THE APRIL NEWSLETTER IS MARCH 9.

This issue is scheduled to be mailed to families on March 23.

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