

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

## “Math, math, and more math...”

Bill Noeth, Regional Department leader for Math, presented curriculum and placement information to the PTSO forum on Tuesday, October 18. Recognizing that there were many junior high parents and guardians in attendance, Mr. Noeth focused most of his remarks to decisions made at the junior high regarding placement. Seventh graders take a pre-test early in the school year in math, and then their progress is monitored for the first two-and-a-half months of school through a series of “accelerated questions” which are part of each typical chapter test. These questions are designed to assess whether a student is “mathematically insightful” enough to attack problems that have not been taught. Teachers use these accelerated questions to determine which students should be placed in an “accelerated and enriched” (AE) pre-algebra class in November for the remainder of their seventh grade. This initial placement combined with the grade that a student achieves in the class serve as the primary determinants of where a student is placed thereafter.

To illustrate the various paths available, Mr. Noeth distributed a chart from page 7 of “Understanding Course Selection at the Regional Schools” (available at <http://ab.mec.edu/pdf/ABselection.pdf>). Although “where you start will lead to where you can go,” Mr. Noeth emphasized that there is “upward mobility” but the student has to be willing to put in the effort. He said that going to summer school has proven to be a very effective catch-up strategy.

Mr. Noeth described the various types of courses that are offered at the regional

schools. He said that the philosophy is that all of our courses are for students who are college-bound. College prep, or CP, level courses, while rigorous, are more “user friendly.” The teacher moves through the material at a comfortable pace, and takes several days to review material before testing Accelerated and Enriched, or AE, courses expect students to be more independent and to review material on their own. The teacher covers material at a much more accelerated pace. Honors classes are very theoretical. Students are expected to prove the mathematical concepts they encounter and cover much more material.

Curriculum outlines for the mathematics courses are all available on the school district web site (see <http://ab.mec.edu/curriculum/abmath.shtml> and <http://ab.mec.edu/rjweb/programstud/math.htm>).

Audience members asked more questions about placement. Mr. Noeth clarified that a teacher would initiate a conversation about “moving up” if a student were doing well in a math class. Another question was about the linkage between a math Honors placement and science Honors placement.

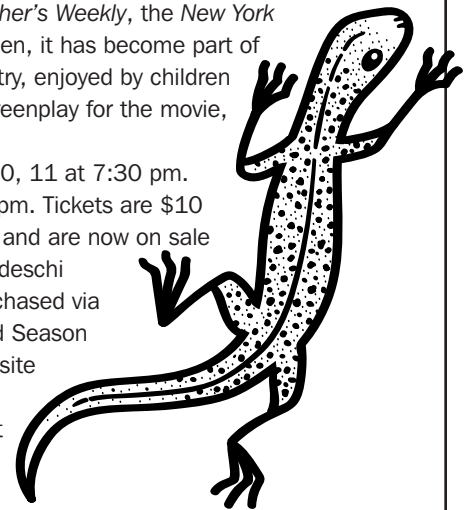
Asked if he recommended any particular outside programs, Mr. Noeth said he

CHAIRS CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### Don't Miss “Holes” – November 3–11

Tickets are selling quickly for “Holes,” a play by Louis Sachar, based on his award-winning book. The show is directed by Linda Potter and presented by Proscenium Circus, the drama club at A-B, from November 3-11. Originally published in 1998, Sachar's book received the National Book Award, the Newbery Medal of Honor, and “Best Book of the Year” awards from *Publisher's Weekly*, the *New York Times*, and *School Library Journal*. Since then, it has become part of the reading list for schools across the country, enjoyed by children and adults alike. Sachar also wrote the screenplay for the movie, produced by Disney in 2003.

Evening shows are on November 3, 4, 10, 11 at 7:30 pm. Matinees are November 5 and 11 at 3:00 pm. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and seniors, and are now on sale at Roche Bros., West Acton Market, and Tedeschi Food Store on 2A. Tickets may also be purchased via credit card at [MKTix.com](http://MKTix.com). ABSAF, Staff, and Season tickets may be ordered through the PC website ([www.ABDrama.org](http://www.ABDrama.org)). The show runs about two hours including intermission. It may not be appropriate for children under age six. For more information, contact Linda Potter at (978) 264-4700 x3584 or check the PC website.



# Welcome Mrs. Nelson

**“Kirsten Nelson replaced Mary Branon as Director of Food Services in July of 2005, following Mrs. Branon’s retirement after many years of service. Mrs. Nelson is responsible for all seven of our school cafeterias (each has their own manager), offering lunch and healthy snacks to 5500 students and about 500 teachers and staff members every day. We are happy to share this letter of introduction with the families of R.J. Gray and ABRHS:”**

I am pleased to be entering my second year in Acton and Acton-Boxborough. Having grown up in Acton and graduating from ABRHS back in 1984 it seems strange to run into my gym teacher in the hallway! I can also recall a cooking class in High School with a teacher named Mrs. Boyle that helped influence my life. After graduating from Johnson & Wales University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Hotel Restaurant Management, I have worked in the

Food Service Industry ever since and have thoroughly enjoyed it!

My first year as the Food Service Director was terrific! We coordinated a Wellness Committee that met regularly to develop a Wellness Policy for the District. This was a great way to have School Nurses, Dieticians, Administrators, The Wellness Coordinator and Parents/Guardians representing both Acton and Acton-Boxborough come together for one purpose: Our students’ health and well being. Take a minute to check out the Wellness section of the school website at <http://ab.mec.edu/wellness/wellness.shtml>. This can also be found by clicking on the “APS-AB Wellness Web” link found under the “Community” heading on the left side of <http://ab.mec.edu>. This includes a monthly calendar of presentations and resources to help your family stay healthy.

Hopefully you have noticed some of the positive changes in the menus and the a la carte offerings throughout the District.

Menus are published weekly in the local newspapers and are online at <http://ab.mec.edu/departments/food/foodstaff.shtml> or under “Lunch Menus” found under the “Popular Pages” heading on the left side of <http://ab.mec.edu>. This includes a list of wonderful offerings served at the High School cafeteria and snack bar everyday. The main thing that is important to all of us is to provide well balanced meals and healthy snacks, as well as sharing meals with our families. The things we do on a daily basis are imbedded in our children, and hopefully they will have these “core values” when they go off to college.

**I look forward to serving a healthy lunch to your children! If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me.**

Kirsten Nelson  
Food Service Director, APS and ABRSD  
Phone# 978-264-4700x3221  
E-mail: [Knelson@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:Knelson@mail.ab.mec.edu)

## From the Chairs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

was reluctant to do so, because in his experience students have had mixed experiences with different outside services. In response to a question about why tests and quizzes don’t come home, Mr. Noeth said about half of the math teachers allow students to keep tests, and the other half intend to recycle the tests. He would be happy to assist a parent with obtaining the test to review. Another audience member asked about review for MCAS tests; Mr. Noeth responded that AB regional students are very well equipped for the MCAS questions. As illustration, he pointed to the fact that 82 percent of last year’s sophomores placed in the Advanced or Proficient category.

**Mary Ann Ashton**, ABRHS Co-Chair  
[MABAshton@aol.com](mailto:MABAshton@aol.com), 978.263.4399

**Jan Couch**, RJGJHS Co-Chair  
[JCCouch@comcast.net](mailto:JCCouch@comcast.net), 978.263.2118

## PTSO Board Meeting

**Tuesday, November 14  
7:30 - 9:00 PM at the High School**

All are welcome! This is a great way to get involved with your children’s school. Current openings on the Board include: Alumni Liaison, Interschool Council (a High School position is open), Nominating Chair, and Project Graduation Chair.

If you are interested in any of these, please contact Mary Ann Ashton (978-263-7208) or Jan Couch (978-263-2118).

If you are just interested in learning more about the PTSO, please join us for this quarterly meeting. It is open to all parents and guardians of children in grades 7–12.

### Next PTSO Forum

The next PTSO Forum will take place on Tuesday, November 14th at noon in the Acton Memorial Library. Stephen Hitzrot, Chairperson of Counseling and Psychological Services at ABRHS will be our speaker.

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Steve Donovan

### Back to School Night

It was good to see so many of you at Back to School Night. I hope that those of you who attended were able to get a good feel for the courses your son or daughter is involved in this year and to meet the teachers and other school staff.

### National Merit Recognition

Twenty-one members of the senior class were recently named semi-finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Competition. These semi-finalists are: Alison Herdeg, George Hong, Daniel Hunton, Anton Li, Kelsey Meidell, Julie Michelman, George Mossessian, Barish Poole, Prabhat Putchakayala, Alice Ren, Lauren Rodda, Anandh Swaminathan, Maksim Tabachnik, Emily Williams, Patrick Wu, Daphne Xiao, Dianne Xiao, Alice Yang, Jiang Zhang, Sarah Zhang and Sue Zhang.

In addition to the semi-finalists, the following members of the Class of 2007 have been named as commended students in this program. They are Laura Adelman, Jennifer Alsen, Mark Amoroso, Akshaya Annavajhala, Stephen Bi, Katherine Blancha, Douglas Breuer, Geoffrey Brown, Julie Brown, Christopher Cesarini, Scott Chen, Bonnie Cherner, Albert Chuang, Tanen Clark, Lauren Crofton-MacDonald, Amelia Curtis, Gwendolyn Davis, Thomas Dionesotes, Amy Du, Daniel Duquette, Caitlin Eisenberg, David Estabrook, Kathleen Fallon, Danielle Forshay, Richard Gedick, Amy Geehan, Olga Guzovsky, Brett Herrick, Deepti Kalluri, Maya Khasin, Steven Kubiak, Andrew Lai, Alex Levine, Lauren Levine, Stephanie Li, Lynn Liu, Robert Liu, Mikhail Lomakin, Kerry Loria, Jeffrey Marrion, Christopher McVeigh, Maria Moy, Gautam Naishadham, Rand Nashi, Mathias Nittmann, Brynna Patel, Jonathan Patten, Jessica Poppe, Isabel Protasowicki,

David Richards, Ariana Rosa, Katelyn Saaristo, Michael Sestrich, Wendy Shung, Christopher Skayne, Bryan St. Amand, Adam Steger, Alexandra Sweeney, Carmen Tam, Anna Tarakanova, Rebecca Usoff, Sruthi Valluri, Christopher Walter, Alan Wang, Tyler Wilson, Rosanna Xia, Nina Xue, Yi Zhang and Lijian Zhou.

### Grade 9 Elections

At the end of September our freshman class elected officers and Student Council representatives. These include: John Lee, president; Bowen Tibbetts, vice president; Sarah St. Amand, secretary; Kevin Clancy, treasurer and Chris Altieri, Maccauley Brooks, Meryl Cherner and Scott Maxwell, Student Council representatives.

### Academic Support Center

The Academic Support Center, located in Room 242S, offers assistance in all subject areas, in addition to study and organizational skills. Staff and Peer Tutors are available to help on a long or short-term basis. During the first term, the Peer Tutors have offered invaluable expertise and we gratefully appreciate their contributions. We admire and thank the following students: Alisa Brennan, Kiki Boyles, Kate Brady, Doug Breuer, Geoff Brown, Erika Buckle, Charlotte Davis, Matt Finley, Matt Ford, Theresa Glaser, Michael Gruet, Alison Herdeg, Tiffany Ho, Elyse Lebel, Andrew Lai, Anton Li, Mary Li, Zach Luz, Bryan MacDonald, Sophie Matyas, Kelsey Meidell, Emily O'Brien, Elizabeth Olliver, Louisa Paine, Viraj Parikh, Esther Park, Kate Pellegriti, Jessica Poppe, Christina Proulx, Thanmayi Rachapudi, Jackie Ritter, Lauren Rodda, Katelyn Saaristo, Scott Seger, Sergy Tsitlenko, Maksim Tabachnik, Alan Wang, and Jessica Xiong.

## It's a Date / ABRHS

### NOVEMBER

- 3** Red Cross Blood Drive sponsored by Student Council
- 3-5** Fall play – "Holes"
- 4** SAT & Subject Tests
- 7** School Council meeting – 6:00 p.m.
- 8-9** MCAS retests
- 9** End of Term 1
- 10** Veterans Day holiday no school
- 10-11** Fall play – "Holes"
- 13-16** Auditions for musical
- 14** Job Shadowing Kickoff
- 15-17** MCAS retests
- 17-18** Cabaret Night – Parker Damon Building 7:30 p.m.
- 21** Report card distribution
- 22** Senior Dress-up Day
- 22** Fall Recognition Assembly/Early Dismissal
- 23-24** Thanksgiving Recess



### Student Phone Books

\$3.00 EACH

Get One at  
the School Store!

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.

## FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Larry Fliegelman and Megan Hatt

Welcome to RJGJHS News. In each issue, we will present some of the wonderful events and activities that have taken place here at RJ Grey. We will also present some information about issues that our students face throughout the year. If you have any questions about what is happening at RJ Grey, please do not hesitate to contact either of us ([lfliegelman@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:lfliegelman@mail.ab.mec.edu) or [mhatt@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:mhatt@mail.ab.mec.edu) or 978-264-4700 ext 3303).

### Team Field Trips

8 Green cleaned up sites around Acton and Boxborough in their annual Community Service Day. They are also planning a trip to the Museum of Science. The entire eighth grade visited Minuteman Technology High School to learn about the school's programs and course offerings. Each of the seventh grade teams has visited the Christa McAuliffe Center at Framingham State College where they participated in a simulation of a mission to the moon and attended a show at the planetarium.

### School Dance/Social

At the end of September, we held our first eighth grade dance of the year. The Student Council, Parent Volunteers and Staff

Chaperones did a wonderful job. Just over 200 students danced, ate, and socialized on Friday, September 29. The first seventh grade social is scheduled for October 27th at 2:30. Considering how fantastic this class has been so far this year, we are expecting a wonderful social. If you are interested in volunteering at the concession table, please contact Jan Couch.

### School Activities/Clubs

The following activities have already begun:

- Adopt-a-Grandparent
- Art Club
- Chess and Board games
- Interscholastic sports teams (e.g. cross-country, field hockey, soccer)
- Jazz Band
- Musical
- Student Council
- Speech and Debate
- Star Wars Club

As the year goes on, we expect many more activities, such as the musical and the yearbook, to get going as well.

### Cafeteria Message Board

Since we run so many activities and clubs each week, we need to inform students of

## It's a Date / RJGJHS

### NOVEMBER

- |              |                                   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>     | Student Council Meeting, 12:22 PM |
| <b>9</b>     | End of Term 1                     |
| <b>10</b>    | No School<br>Veterans Day         |
| <b>14</b>    | School Council Meeting, 7-8:30 PM |
| <b>17</b>    | Grade 8 Dance, 6:30-8:30 PM       |
| <b>22</b>    | Early Dismissal, 10:40 AM         |
| <b>23-26</b> | No School<br>Thanksgiving Recess  |

all the news. So, with co-funding from Student Council, we installed an electronic message board in the cafeteria. Students love to see that we are now listing each day's birthdays. Most of the rest of the messages on this board are restatements of the morning announcements. Of course, any parents who want this same information can either look at the *Announcements* link on the RJ Grey web page ([ab.mec.edu/rjweb](http://ab.mec.edu/rjweb)) or contact Marcia Charter to sign up for the principal's email list ([mcharter@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:mcharter@mail.ab.mec.edu)).

## New Project Wellness Steering Committee – Open Position

The new PW steering committee held its first meeting for the March 14th event. Steering committee members include parents: Chris Renzi, Pam Rogers, Jean Pilecki Smith, Jan Couch, Linda Minkoff, RJG School Psychologist; Dr. Carolyn Imperato, Asst. Principal: Megan Hatt, and Principal Craig Hardimon.

To complete the committee, one or two parents are needed for facility coordination. After 6 years, procedures have been established and the former parent coordinator is available for assistance. Please contact Jan Couch at [jccouch@comcast.net](mailto:jccouch@comcast.net) or Megan Hatt at [mhatt@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:mhatt@mail.ab.mec.edu) if you are interested. Below is a description of this event.

**PROJECT WELLNESS:** Using the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and through discussions between parents, community, and school staff, the RJG Project Wellness Day was created 6 years ago for 7th grade students. This year, Project Wellness Day will be held on March 14 at Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts. This is a day that offers students and their parents an opportunity to participate in a day of workshops specific to the topics noted above. It is clear that as much as the school can help educate our students about good decision making, nothing is more influential than the relationship between children and their parents or guardians. Statistics and common sense has shown us that, as much as middle school aged youngsters need to start developing their independence, they still need to keep the lines of communication open with their parents or guardians. Simply put, the goal of Project Wellness is to foster the habit of open family communication around these important topics.

# School Committee News

## FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

**Michael Coppolino, Chair**

The Regional School Committee met in the “little theatre” at ABRHS on Thursday, October 5th and Principal Steve Donovan presented his annual report. Mr. Donovan, along with HS teacher Karen Drowne and Assistant Principal Joanne Campbell, explained the work that the high school staff has completed in preparation for meeting the state mandate of having all students in class for 990 hours each school year. Currently, only 16% of our students are meeting the 990-hour requirement. There was an extensive discussion involving School Committee members, student representatives and the presenters. Here are some of the highlights:

- One way to attain 990 hours of structured learning, in the traditional sense, would be for every student in the high school to take seven courses each day, for all four years of high school. Their only non-scheduled period would be lunch. This is not a realistic solution.
- The School Committee has some flexibility in the types of activities that count towards structured learning. For example, a regular study hall or free period would not count, but a “writing lab” in which a teacher supervises students working on homework and school projects would. Straight community service

## Upcoming School Committee Meetings

### NOVEMBER

- 2** Thursday, November 2, 7:30 PM RJ Grey JHS Library  
Annual Jr. High School Report by Principal Craig Hardimon

### DECEMBER

- 7** Thursday, December 7, 7:30 PM, RJ Grey JHS Library

would not be accepted, but if it were part of a “community service learning” program, it would. These are only two examples of “non-traditional” ways to attain the requisite 990 hours of student learning, which would not necessarily require students to be in class all seven periods each day.

- It is possible that many other extracurricular activities could be designed in ways that could be considered structured learning. Examples include academic decathlon and speech and debate team.
- Some of our students are taking 6-6 ½ classes, and have only one free period once a day, or once every other day. These students need to be able to add between thirty minutes and one hour per day of structured learning time, without overloading their already busy schedules. Many of the non-traditional ideas that are being considered could help them.

- There are also a number of students who are well below 990 hours because they are only taking four or five classes per day. Many of these students do not take more courses, simply because there aren't courses offered that would be appropriate for them. We will be adding courses in several areas that we do not currently offer, such as hands-on courses like: culinary arts, printing/graphic arts, drafting; life skills, global studies, independent studies and internships. Some of these courses will begin to be offered this coming January, and more will be available starting in September 2007.

The School Committee and High School Administration will be continuing this dialogue throughout the year. Feel free to contact us with thoughts on this or any other matters.

## School Committee Policy Website

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

This section of the school website contains the official policies of the Acton School Committee and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee. Policy development in a modern, forward-looking school system is a dynamic, ongoing process. New problems, issues, and needs give rise to the continuing need to develop new policies or to revise existing ones.

The school department operates according to policies established by the school committee. The committee then appraises the effects of its policies and makes revisions as necessary. The district will make a diligent effort to keep this section of the website up to date as new policies, regulations, and exhibits are distributed by the central office.

Questions concerning these policies should be addressed to Superintendent William Ryan at 978-264-4700.

# 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

Nonprofit Org  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 25  
Acton MA 01720

**Tuesday, Nov 14  
Noon  
Acton Memorial Library**

**PTSO FORUM**

**Stephen Hitzrot**

Chairperson of Counseling  
and Psychological  
Services at ABRHS

## **New Traffic Procedures for the Tuesday, November 7th State Election**

- All Acton precincts will now vote at the Junior High School
- Charter Road between the Junior High and High School will be closed for bus traffic only, from 7–8 AM
- The Senior High School's only entrance/exit will be from Hayward Road, from 7–8 AM
- The Junior High School's only entrance will be by the Blanchard gym on Rte 111 from 7–8 AM
- The Junior High School's only exit will be from Charter Road at the tennis courts on Rte 111 from 7–8 AM
- The Junior High School student drop off will be in the Lower Parking Lot only
- There will be no access to the Junior High main entrance loop all day

**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 December 1 Newsletter is November 6.**

**Please contact Beth at [BPetr@verizon.net](mailto:BPetr@verizon.net) or 978-263-7208.**