

FROM THE CO-CHAIRS: CHRIS RENZI AND JULIE MCKINLEY

## PTSO Forum Series Opens with Regional School Principals

Parents and guardians gathered to hear our two principals speak at our first forum of the school year on Tuesday, October 14. Both Craig Hardimon, Principal of RJ Grey Junior High, and Alixe Callen, Principal of AB Regional High School, shared brief remarks about the start of the academic year in each of their schools and then entertained a few questions from the audience.

Craig Hardimon said that RJ Grey student enrollment is at 1,003 this year, with 502 students in grade 7 and 501 students in grade 8. Average team size is 114 students for grade 7, and 125 for grade 8. The half team has 45 students.

School opening went well at RJ Grey, and the school has followed up with a survey of students, staff, and parents (at Back to School night and through the web site). Generally families reported that the school was supportive and understanding, and the teachers were great. Kids were surprised at how easy it was to get acclimated and to find their way around the school. Families expressed concerns about the size of lockers, and the size of backpacks that students were carrying. Others said that they would have liked to receive information about student assignments and required school supplies earlier.

Mr. Hardimon highlighted the many opportunities for students to become involved at RJ Grey. Students will be asked to complete a survey on bullying and teasing, and student leaders were able to attend a session about bullying prevention (see RJ Grey updates article).

Alix Callen, principal of ABRHS, thanked the community for its warm welcome and for its own strong sense of community. She was able to meet many parents and guard-

ians through a series of meetings she held in early September, and has been spending as much time in classrooms as possible this fall. She commented on the quality of the teaching and curriculum, and on the quality of the student work. The high school enrollment totals 1,959 this year, with 478 freshmen, 521 sophomores, 465 juniors and 495 seniors. Class sizes continue to be a concern, especially among honors level courses at the freshmen level.

Dr. Callen noted the new attendance policy, adapted from a faculty study last year, which has resulted in less tardiness and missing of classes by students. The high school is beginning to prepare for re-accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (see ABRHS article later), which will incorporate work by staff, families, and students. The faculty has undertaken a

study to recommend ways for students to develop stress management skills and to become better advocates for themselves. Students received a document on the "Top 10 Ways to Reduce Stress" (see [abrptso.ab.mec.edu](http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu)).

We would love to hear your suggestions about topics that you'd like to see addressed this year at our forums, and what time of day might be convenient for you to meet. We are planning an evening session in January to hear more about the high school staff's work to reduce stress for our students, and would welcome any thoughts you have about additional topics.

Chris Renzi and Julie McKinley  
[ChrisRenzi@comcast.net](mailto:ChrisRenzi@comcast.net)  
[Julie.McKinley@verizon.net](mailto:Julie.McKinley@verizon.net)

Sign up for Weekly Chatter at  
[abrptso.ab.mec.edu](http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu)

### Sign Up For CAFY's SAFE HOMES

For the second year Acton-Boxborough Community Alliance for Youth is sponsoring the Safe Homes Program. Through this program, CAFY is encouraging parents of teens to make a pledge that they will provide a safe environment for teens when they have parties or gatherings in their homes - safe from alcohol, drugs, firearms and other hazardous items.

The names of those who make the pledge will be included in the Safe Homes Directory—including the grade level of their teens, address and telephone number (unless individual parents choose not to provide all of that information). E-mail addresses are also requested in order to enable CAFY to communicate with the parents; but they are not included in the Directory. The Directory is e-mailed only to those who have made the pledge.

Last year, the parents of 210 families signed the pledge, and CAFY hopes to double that number this year. If you made the pledge last year, your name will remain in the directory, with an update to your childrens' grade levels, unless you request that it be removed.

If you have not already done so, please join the Safe Homes Program and make it clear that you are committed to providing a safe environment for teen parties and gatherings. To sign up online or download a form to mail, visit [www.CAFY.net](http://www.CAFY.net).

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

---

**Alix Callen**

The October 23 Back to School Night drew a great crowd and gave parents and staff an opportunity to share information on some of the exciting things happening at A-B.

**ABRHS was awarded the Division 1A Dalton Trophy**, given to the school with the highest winning percentage across its athletic program for the previous school year. We are proud of this indication of the overall excellence of our athletic program and salute Athletic Director Steve Desy, our hardworking coaches, our dedicated student athletes and our supportive community of parents and others for their contributions to this important activity.

**A-B's 2008 yearbook, The Torch, has been named a Silver Medalist in the Columbia Scholastic Press Association high school yearbook review.** This process recognizes outstanding student publications and sends a critique containing detailed guidance on how a publication could be improved during the following year. Class of 2008 co-editors Emily Feldmann and Amy Longwell led an enthusiastic staff in producing the school's first all-color yearbook. Art teacher Jeremy Flagg is the yearbook advisor.

**The Principal's Recognition Award** for service to school and community is given to four students each month. The September recipients were Shiva Devarajan, Emily Dreckshage, Kristiane Fiore and Amrita Mehta. Recognized in October were Kelsey Bond, Patrick Gordon, Val Michelman and Tina Sun.

**Twelve seniors were named National Merit Semifinalists** and will continue in the competition for Merit Scholarship awards to be offered next spring. They are: Ankit Gupta, Bob Huang, Zachary Judd, Yuan Kang, Matthew Lim, Stephen McCree, Amrit Narasimhan, Jordan Nelson, Andrew Qian, Diyang Tang, Sergey Tsitlenko and Elaine Xu. In addition, 63 students were recognized as Commended Students in this program.

### Get involved with Project Graduation

For the past 19 years, undergraduate parents and other members of our community have produced Project Graduation, an all-night, alcohol and drug-free party exclusively for graduating seniors. Traditionally, this event is planned and carried out by parents/guardians of ABRHS juniors with participation and support from the Acton-Boxborough community.

Project Graduation 2009 is looking for volunteers to chair various committees. All committee chairpersons will be provided adequate guidance and assistance. Most tasks can be completed from home via email and phone. Project Graduation is in need of chairpersons for the following committees: fundraising, Roche Bros. fundraiser, challenges, prizes, junior trunk, clean-up. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please contact Shaila Golikeri, PG 2009 committee chairperson, at [ABprojgrad09@gmail.com](mailto:ABprojgrad09@gmail.com)

Proscenium Circus advisor Linda Potter and her talented **cast of students wowed audiences with this year's fall play, Peter Pan.** These performances kicked off another ambitious season for our drama program.

### NEASC Accreditation

Over the coming months, the high school will be undergoing a self-study in preparation for a visit and evaluation by our accrediting agency, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

There are a couple of components to this self-study. Our first task is to review our mission statement. We have begun this work and are in the midst of gathering input from various student, parent and staff groups. Once we have collected that data, our newly formed Mission Development Committee will draft a new statement, which will then be vetted by various school and community groups. Upon the completion of that work, we will begin the study itself, during which we will review our practices in light of both our mission and the standards set forth by NEASC.

We have *many* opportunities for parents to get involved with this process. If you are interested in volunteering, please

contact Susan Sousa in the Principal's Office – (978) 264-4700 x3405.

### Help To Reduce Thefts

Unfortunately we have had a number of thefts at the high school in recent weeks. Please remind your children that if they make a choice to bring an iPod, cell phone or large amounts of cash to school, they are responsible for keeping their belongings safe and in their possession at all times.

In addition, students taking Physical Education should purchase a padlock from the school store and use it on a locker in the locker room during their scheduled class. They should lock up clothes and belongings in the locker during class and not leave gym bags on the floor of the locker room. We ask for your help with this concern.

### Reminder About Student Drop-offs

There are two drop off/pick up areas:

- In the BACK CIRCLE of the high school, students can be dropped off by the auditorium entrance where the picnic tables are located off Hayward Road.

---

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 PRINCIPAL

### Craig Hardimon

#### Bullying Prevention

On Thursday, October 16, 2008, 21 RJ Grey Junior High School students traveled to Bridgewater State College to participate in a day-long bullying prevention training program hosted by MARC. MARC, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, housed at the college, brings low- or no-cost services to K-12 schools in the areas of cyberbullying education and prevention of bullying, cyberbullying, and violence. Before determining how to best work with their classmates, the students will first need to come up with a name for their group. They will take on this initial task when they meet next week.

MARC was founded and is directed by Dr. Elizabeth Englander, a professor of Psychology at Bridgewater State College, and an expert in the field. Dr. Englander, who spoke to the school district's entire faculty at last year's Professional Day, will return to the junior high school later this month to present a workshop at a staff meeting.

#### Community Service Projects

This year, students participated in the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce 5K Run/Walk, (formerly known as the Sarah Lynn Hughes Memorial). We had a total of 46 runners from RJ Grey, raising money to support the Chamber's Scholarship Fund and RJ Grey. This is the first year that the Chamber gave area non-profit organizations an opportunity to use this race as a fundraiser, donating \$5.00 of each entrant's fee to our school. It was a beautiful day for a run or a walk and students seemed to really enjoy themselves. Thank you to all the RJ Grey runners who supported our school!

Tuesday, September 23 was Community Service Day for the students of 8 Green. Nine teams of students traveled to 9 separate locations in Acton and Boxborough to help town organizations maintain, beautify, and improve recreation and conservation properties. This team has engaged in a Community Service Day for five years to allow the students to give something back to the towns that support them in their recreational and scholastic activities, and to build new

friendships and team spirit. Thank you to all parent chaperones and volunteer supervisors for contributing to this important day.

RJG Student Council held a bake sale one day after-school this month to raise \$346.56, which will be donated to the Acton Food Pantry. Thank you to all of our student council representatives and to our two faculty advisors, Mrs. Debbie Ahl and Mrs. Allison Warren, for your hard work organizing this event. We also extend our thanks to all of our bakers and those who contributed all the yummy treats!

Don't forget our November Coat Drive! Coats will be collected in the lobby of RJ Grey during the month of November. Please keep this in mind as you start to look through your winter coats and jackets. Coats for all ages that are in good, wearable condition may be donated. Cleaning is done free of charge by Anton's Cleaners. Boxes will be in the JH lobby beginning on Monday, November 3.

#### Field Trip Update

During October, all seventh grade teams visited the Christa McAuliffe Center at Framingham State College where they participated in space missions and attended a show at the planetarium.

Several of our 8th grade teams, as team building exercise, hiked one local favorite, Mount Wachusett. Teams enjoyed the weather, being outdoors and the out-of-school camaraderie.

#### Communication

In our continued efforts to provide ways for all RJG families to be updated on important school events, activities, and announcements, we are now posting all daily announcements on our website. If you go to the RJG homepage and go to the "Communications" bar on the left, you will find the "Daily Announcements" link. It is important to note that these announcements are the same as those that are sent via Constant Contact. If you prefer one method over another, please be assured that you are receiving the same information from both sources.

- In the front of the school, please come down Charter Road and take a left into the drop off area by the WEST WING ENTRANCE.

Please do not cut through the parking lot. Faculty and staff are trying to park and to walk to the building. Please stay with the traffic pattern and follow the directions of the campus monitors before and after school. Thank you for your cooperation!

### Community Service Photos

Plans are in the works for a Community Service slide show featuring pictures of some of the many volunteer activities in which A-B students are involved. The slide show will be shown at the Community Service Awards Night in January and on local cable television. Families are invited to submit up to three photos (digital or hard copy) to Kay Steeves, Community Service Coordinator, in the Counseling Center (email to [ksteeves@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:ksteeves@mail.ab.mec.edu)). Please include the student's name and basic information about the volunteer activity. Photos can be of individual or group projects, school year or summer, local or international—anything as long as it took place in 2008.

### Senior Portrait Dates

Lifetouch photographers will be at the high school one more time on November 19, 20 and 21 to photograph seniors who have not had their yearbook pictures taken. Students should receive new appointment cards from Lifetouch for one of these days.

## Save the Date

Proscenium Circus Presents

## CABARET

Tony Award-winning musical  
by Kander & Ebb

**January 30, 31 & February 1, 6, 7**

Tickets are on sale now at [MKTix.com](http://MKTix.com).

For more information,  
visit [www.ABDrama.org](http://www.ABDrama.org).

**November 4  
Election Day/Professional Day  
No School**

**November 6  
PTSO Board Meeting**

**November 7  
End of First Term**

**Coming in January  
PTSO Forum on Student Stress  
Management—watch for  
details!**

---

## School Committee News

---

### **FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

---

**Jonathan Chinitz, Chair**

#### **AB Regional School Committee Searches for Superintendent, Begins Budget Work**

**T**he current school year is well underway. Our biggest challenge this year will be to find a replacement for our Superintendent, Bill Ryan. After 35 years Bill announced his intention to retire at the end of this school year. The school committee has formed a 15-person search committee, made up of a broad coalition of faculty members, professional and support staff, school committee members and parents from both the Acton and Boxborough communities. The committee is chaired by Heather Harer, this year's APS chair. The committee will be using an outside firm to assist in the search. Once the firm is selected the committee will hold focus group meet-

ings with members of the public to gather your input and feedback on what you would like to see in the next Superintendent. As parents your participation in this process is vital to the successful selection of the person who will lead our schools in the future.

The recent economic news is also at the forefront of our minds. The Governor has announced emergency measures for this fiscal year, cutting the state's budget by over \$1.0 billion. While most of our local aid survived this first round of cuts, the school committee recognizes that the severity of this situation requires us to act in similar fashion at the local level. Looking at our budgets for next fiscal year, the committee, at the recommendation of the Superintendent and his staff, is revising downward our estimates for Chapter 70 aid for the upcoming school year that begins in July 2009. In the past three years we have enjoyed sizeable double digit increases in state aid, which have allowed us to address

needed class size issues throughout our system. For next fiscal year we are projecting level funding of state aid, which represents a 12% drop from our earlier estimates. At the same time, the committee has authorized Superintendent Ryan to implement a hiring freeze for all positions that have not been filled, and to review any expenditures over \$500. Our budget process will continue in November with presentations from the principals and department heads on the impact these decisions will have and what this means for the coming year. We urge all of you to come to our meetings and lend your voice to this process.

Whether you choose to come to our monthly meetings, your opinions and feedback are very important to us. You can reach the members of the regional school committee by sending email to [abrsc@acton-ma.gov](mailto:abrsc@acton-ma.gov) or by visiting the district's website at <http://www.ab.mec.edu>.

# NOVEMBER 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<input type="checkbox"/> High School Schedule  <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School Schedule						<b>1</b> SATs Peter Pan – 1 and 7 p.m.
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Faculty Meeting, 2:30 p.m.	<b>4</b> Professional Day No School	<b>5</b> MCAS Retest – ELA	<b>6</b> MCAS Retest - ELA ABRPTSO Board Mtg, 6:30 p.m., HS Library	<b>7</b> MCAS Retest – ELA Sophomores order rings during lunches Quarter 1 ends	<b>8</b>
				Student Council, 12:22 p.m. ABRPTSO Board Mtg, 6:30 p.m., HS Library	Quarter 1 ends	
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Musical auditions	<b>11</b> Veterans Day – No School	<b>12</b> Grades due MCAS Retest – Math Musical auditions	<b>13</b> MCAS Retest – Math Musical auditions	<b>14</b> Student Council Hypnotist Musical auditions AB Parents of Children w/ Challenges, ABRHS, Rm 131E, 9:30 a.m.	<b>15</b>
					AB Parents of Children w/ Challenges, ABRHS, Rm 131E, 9:30 a.m.	
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> School Council, 6 p.m.	<b>18</b> Job Shadowing Kickoff	<b>19</b> Homeroom Report Card distribution	<b>20</b> Senior Portraits PC, 2:30–6:00 p.m. Supporting Sibs of Children w/ Special Needs, 7:30 p.m., Parker Damon Library	<b>21</b> Senior Portraits Cabaret Night, 7 p.m.	<b>22</b> Cabaret Night, 7 p.m.
		Principal's Drop-In Hour, 6–7 p.m. School Council, 7–8:30 p.m.		Supporting Sibs of Children w/ Special Needs, 7:30 p.m., Parker Damon Library		
<b>23/30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Fall Recognition Day Early Dismissal	<b>27</b> Thanksgiving – No School	<b>28</b> No School	<b>29</b>
			Early Dismissal			

**For updated information on events, check [ab.mec.edu](http://ab.mec.edu) calendars.**

# DECEMBER 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> <input type="checkbox"/> High School Schedule  <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School Schedule	<b>1</b> Faculty Meeting, 2:30 p.m.	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>  Student Council, 12:22 p.m.	<b>4</b> Financial Aid Night  Early Dismissal, 10:40 a.m.	<b>5</b> Dance sponsored by Class of 2010	<b>6</b> SATs
	<b>7</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Winter Concert, 7 p.m.  Principal's Drop-In Hour, 6-7 p.m. School Council, 7-8:30 p.m.	<b>10</b> Play auditions Snow date – Winter Concert, 7 p.m. ABSpedPac Meeting, 7 p.m., RJ Grey Library  ABSpedPac Meeting, 7 p.m., RJ Grey Library	<b>11</b> Career Breakfast, 7:23 a.m. Play auditions  Early Dismissal, 10:40 a.m.
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Student Council, 6 p.m.	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Faculty Holiday Coffee	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Alumni Reception, 1:30 p.m., Counseling Center PC Holiday Party, 6-9 p.m.  Mid-Term Reports Mailed		<b>23</b>			
<b>28</b> No School	<b>29</b> No School	<b>30</b> No School	<b>31</b> No School	<b>1</b> No School	<b>2</b> No School	<b>3</b> No School School resumes January 5

**For updated information on events, check [ab.mec.edu](http://ab.mec.edu) calendars.**