

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOLS

UNDERSTANDING

COURSE SELECTION AT

R. J. GREY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

AND

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

IMPORTANT

KEEP THIS DOCUMENT FOR

FUTURE REFERENCE

Out of a desire to help parents make informed decisions about the appropriate course placements for their children, we provide parents of incoming 7th graders with information regarding the course selection process in general, and also information from the mathematics, English, history/social studies, science, world language, performing arts, and visual arts departments, in time for the spring course selection process.

This is the only hard copy of the document that you will receive. We update it annually; updated versions are posted on the A/B website, <http://ab.mec.edu>

Questions about how to navigate course selection within a given subject area should be directed to the contact person/s identified in each section. Please refer any general comments or concerns about this document to:

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Parents and educators are keenly aware that each child undergoes social, physical and intellectual development on his/her own unique timetable. During early adolescence – the time encompassed by the end of elementary school, the move through junior high and on to high school – that divergence of timetables both between and within individual youth can be truly breathtaking. Visualize, for example, the thirteen-year-old boy who looks like his father and is already shaving, playing touch football with his buddy who could pass for a fifth grader . . . or the teenage girl who has yet to enter puberty but who is intellectually ready for college.

Against this reality of physical and personal development, the schools attempt the challenging task of providing every student with an academic program consistent with his/her skills, learning needs, and interests. To meet the needs of developmentally and otherwise diverse learners, teachers have developed an array of classroom strategies. Through group work, independent projects, cooperative learning, and numerous other techniques, teachers support students' use of varied aspects of their intelligence and, thus, enable students with varied learning styles opportunities to achieve. By providing varying levels of challenge within a given heterogeneous classroom, teachers often meet the needs of diverse learners within a single classroom.

Such strategies are the mark of good teaching in this day and age and can be extremely successful. However, there are limits to what flexible teaching techniques can achieve. Thus, in addition to employing a range of teaching approaches in classrooms, the Junior High Mathematics Department begins to level its academic courses. "Leveling" is distinct from the much-maligned practice of "tracking." In a "tracked" system, once students are placed in courses at a particular level, it becomes nearly impossible to get back out. In traditional tracked systems, students tended to be placed in the same track for all subjects. In a "leveled" system like ours, students have many and ongoing opportunities to move up or down through levels when doing so becomes appropriate. Students are likely to take classes at different levels in different subject areas. And in a leveled system, parents also have the right to override the placement decisions of their children's teachers.

In this document, we seek to provide parents with background information about the course leveling approach in each department that clarifies:

- How leveled courses differ from one another.
- The criteria upon which teachers recommend students for leveled courses.
- Important academic/curricular implications associated with being placed in a course at a given level.
- The process by which parents can influence and/or override level placements.

Issues to Keep in Mind as You Consider the “Right” Level Placement for Your Child

- Some students achieve at the same level across all subject areas. Many others have stronger aptitude or achievement in one or two areas and are weaker in others. Even when students have comparable aptitudes across a variety of disciplines, they are typically more interested in some subjects than others. Therefore, it often makes sense for students to take classes in different subjects at different levels. By varying the level of challenge across subjects, students can challenge themselves appropriately, and they can leave time in their lives for extracurricular activities, family, and social activity. Among the district’s highest achieving students, only a small percentage take all-honors schedules. Doing so is extremely demanding and could be a potential source of stress.
- Students' abilities, interests and commitments evolve over time. Those who would like to move, at some future date, to a higher-level course in a particular subject area may be able to do so. This document describes what is entailed in each subject area to make such a switch.
- Outside reading makes a difference. If you want to help your child make a transition to higher academic achievement and higher-level courses, encourage reading and model reading yourself. Reading broadens horizons, deepens understanding, and sharpens intellectual faculties. If your child makes a habit of it, reading will also improve his/her academic achievement. The instructional leaders of the system agree that the paramount skill for academic success is reading.
- Proficient readers tend to succeed across many subjects because they have good comprehension: of text in general, of textbooks, of test questions. Their breadth of vocabulary enhances their grasp of nuance. Habitual pleasure readers bring a breadth of context to many subjects – literature, history, the social sciences, science, the arts, world language – to which they can more easily add new knowledge. Skillful reading tends to kindle the curiosity and imagination required for successful completion of upper-level courses. Writing and reasoning skills, maturity, and motivation all play a role in academic success at the high school level, but reading above all provides a grounding for academic success as maturity and motivation grow.
- **“Doubling Up”**: Within a given academic year, students at the high school often “double up” (i.e., take more than one course within a single department). Thus, a student enrolled in AE Chemistry might also enroll in Marine Biology; another student enrolled in U.S. History might double up by enrolling in Psychology; a third might enroll in Spanish and French simultaneously. Given the number of courses that most students must take within each discipline in order to meet college entrance requirements, there are limits to how much doubling up is possible within a given subject area. But doubling up is one of the best ways for a student to “dig deeper” within a given academic area.

Teacher Level Recommendation and Override Processes at R. J. Grey



Prior to the conclusion of grade 6, students will be recommended for placement into one of the two mathematics levels offered in 7th grade at R. J. Grey Junior High School: Standard or Accelerated. Both of these levels are Pre-Algebra courses, using the same textbook. The Standard Pre-Algebra course covers about 90% of the material covered in the Accelerated course, with a pace that focuses on applications and practice of the concepts. Both the Standard and Accelerated classes experience enrichment lessons to accompany the text.

The factors used to make the level recommendation will be the student's performance in grade 6 mathematics and his/her performance on the placement examination, administered in early June while the students are in grade 6. The grade 7 mathematics teachers grade this exam in early June and make the level determinations for the upcoming September. Parents/guardians are notified as to the specific placement for their child by mail.

If parents/guardians disagree with the recommendation, they have a specified period of time to pursue the override process. To do so, they must:

- a. Obtain an override form from the Junior High Counseling Department.
- b. Complete the form and return it to Mr. Philip Stameris, Building Department Leader for Mathematics at R. J. Grey Junior High School, within the specified period. By completing and returning this form, parents/guardians are indicating that they realize this was not the recommended placement.

It is important to submit the override by the due date. Immediately after this period, the number of math levels is determined, and the process of scheduling students for the next year begins. In most cases, late overrides will not be approved.

- c. Direct questions by email to either Mr. Stameris or Mr. William Noeth, Regional Department Leader for Mathematics.

Note

To perform well on the placement exam described, students need to have proficient knowledge of the basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of fractions, decimals, and percents and must be able to accurately perform calculations without a calculator. In order to perform well in the accelerated Pre-Algebra course in grade 7, students must also have developed requisite problem-solving capabilities and be committed to accurately completing home assignments and class work.

In April, 7th grade mathematics teachers make level-placement recommendations for grade 8. For 8th graders preparing to move to 9th grade, mathematics, science, English, and world language teachers will be making level-placement recommendations. In early April, a form

will be sent home to parents detailing these recommendations; parents will have a specified period of time to either accept or reject the placement recommendations.

- If a parent has concerns about any teacher’s placement recommendation, s/he is strongly urged to call the teacher about the concerns.
- If, after the conversation between the parent and teacher, the parent continues to disagree with the teacher’s recommendation, the parent has the right to initiate a placement override. To do so, the parent must:
 - ✓ Obtain an override form from the Counseling Department.
 - ✓ Fill it out and submit it by the deadline specified on the form.

Parents may wish to call either the Building Department Leader (BDL) or the Regional Department Leader (RDL) if they have any questions about course expectations in a particular department.

Teacher Level Recommendation/Parental Override Processes at the High School

Our hope is that all of our students will develop schedules that provide an appropriate level of challenge for them. Because there are no single “right” answers about what courses to take, we have tried to design a process that allows for thoughtful communication and interaction among students and adults in order to ensure that each student has a collection of courses that is appropriate, balanced, interesting, and challenging.

Scheduling Process

Our Pupil Course Request (PCR) process is designed to meet the goals outlined above. The process begins in late winter when the on-line Program of Studies is made available to students.

As a first step, students should discuss their goals and interests with their teachers, who will make recommendations for course levels based on the student’s performance in their classes. (For some heterogeneously grouped courses, no teacher placement recommendation is necessary.) Those recommendations will be available to students and families via the PowerSchool Parent Portal. Students, with the help of their parents, will then choose elective courses to round out the core courses recommended by teachers.

On occasion, students become interested in “overriding” a teacher recommendation. Those overrides should be undertaken thoughtfully after significant discussion with school personnel and parents. **Students in grades 9-11** must obtain an Override Form from the Counseling Center and complete it with approvals from the Department Leader, his/her teacher and counselor. **Parents/Guardians of students in grade 8** must obtain an Override Form from the JH Counseling Center and complete it, as described. In addition, they must meet with a HS Department Leader on Override Night.

All changes after registration week must be made through the Counseling Center using the correct form. Change forms (non-override) will be available in the Counseling Center.

There are deadlines that apply for all course change requests. Please see current information to determine those for the coming year. Go to the high school website: <http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/> for this and other information.

Understanding the Distinct Approach to Course Leveling and Course Selection in the Five Leveled-Subject Areas



Mathematics

At R. J. Grey

Below is an outline of the grades required to advance from one course to another. Readers may refer to the chart, *Potential Sequences of Mathematics Courses, 7-12*, on page 8.

7th Grade Placement

Students entering grade 7 are placed into levels as described earlier (see page 3).

8th Grade Placement

- **Algebra 1 Honors** (largely parallels the Algebra 1AE course at ABRHS)
Requires an A- or higher in Grade 7 AE Pre-Algebra
- **Math AE** (largely parallels the Algebra 1 CP course at ABRHS)
Requires a B+ or lower in Grade 7 AE Pre-Algebra
Requires a B or higher in Grade 7 Standard Pre-Algebra
- **Standard (STD) Math** (reviews and extends the basics of Algebra begun in Grade 7)
Requires a B- or lower in Grade 7 Standard Pre-Algebra

9th Grade Placement

- **Geometry Honors**
Requires a B+ or higher in 8th grade Algebra 1 Honors
- **Geometry AE**
Requires a B+ to C- in 8th grade Algebra 1 Honors
- **Algebra 1 Honors**
Requires an A or higher in 8th grade Algebra AE
- **Algebra 1 AE**
Requires an A- to B- in 8th grade Algebra AE
- **Algebra 1 CP**
Requires a C+ or below in 8th grade Algebra AE
Requires an B- or higher in 8th grade Standard Algebra
- **Algebra 1 Part 1 SP** (Part 1 and Part 2 are equivalent to Algebra 1 CP.)
Requires a C+ or below in 8th grade Standard Algebra
- **SP Foundations for Algebra** (Reviews 7th grade material)
By teacher recommendation only

- **Transitions Program**

By teacher recommendation only

In addition to meeting the grade requirements, students must also demonstrate the ability to 1. complete homework regularly, 2. perform on exams at a consistent grade level without major grade fluctuations, 3. have the ability to work independently and advocate for themselves when necessary, and 4. have requisite problem-solving abilities to apply previously taught concepts to new situations.

For descriptions of specific high school math courses, see the link for the High School *Program of Studies*: <http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/academics/index.shtml>.

Some special situations/information:

1. Students in grade 8 Standard who would like to take Algebra I AE the following year need to learn the material that the grade 8 AE students learned. This can be done by taking Algebra I CP in summer school or by learning the equivalent material with a qualified math tutor during the summer after grade 8. The Algebra I AE course does use an Algebra I text, but it moves very quickly through the first half of the text, since students from grade 8 Math AE have already covered that material, and then proceeds to cover the rest of the text in its entirety, along with a good amount of supplementary material from other texts.
2. Students who attained A grades in grade 8 Math AE and who would like to take Algebra I AE in the A-B Summer School can be placed in Geometry H (if space permits) or AE if they complete that summer course with at least an 87. (Students who attain an average over 97 are placed in Geometry H, if space permits).
3. At the high school, all H and AE mathematics classes beginning with Geometry use the same text. The difference between H and AE lies in the number of chapters covered (H does the whole book and AE does about 85%) and the depth of the problems assigned. For example, in the Jurgenson geometry text, the “C” exercises, which are quite difficult, are assigned in class and are given on tests, whereas they are not done routinely in AE courses.

At A.B.R.H.S.

From Algebra I on at the high school, students are recommended for level placement based on their performance in the present math course, as follows:

- At the H level, students who attain B or higher grades for the year may continue at that level, whereas students who cannot attain B grades are recommended for follow-up AE classes.
- At the AE level, students who attain C+ or higher grades for the year are recommended to stay at that level; students with C or C- grades are recommended to take the next course at the CP level. Students at the AE level in Algebra I or Geometry or Algebra II who maintain consistent A grades are asked if they would like to try H the following year; the extra material covered at the H level in these classes is not critical for success in the next H course.

- Students at the CP level who attain the needed C- average for the year are moved into the next course. If they maintain high A averages in Algebra I CP or Geometry CP, they are invited to attend our summer school to take the Algebra I AE course so that they can learn the missing algebra material that will allow them to successfully handle Geometry AE or Algebra II AE.
- Students who take Elementary Algebra I Part 1 SP proceed to Elementary Algebra I Part 2 SP and then to Geometry SP or CP, depending on their performance in the two-year algebra sequence, and then to Algebra II CP in grade 12.
- Students in Foundations for Algebra SP are recommended for an algebra class depending on their mastery of the pre-algebra material, and then move along the sequence as far as possible.

Mathematics teachers make a placement recommendation for each student based on the student's academic performance, as described above. However, according to procedures detailed in the *High School Handbook*, if a student meets or exceeds the indicated minimum average to continue to the next course in the sequence, his or her parents have the right to override teacher course-level recommendations.

Generally, a student must attain an average of 70 or higher in this year's mathematics course in order to continue to the next course in the sequence; for a few upper-level courses, to move on students must attain an average of 80 or higher. Some parents choose to override teacher recommendations and then hire a private mathematics tutor to support their child. In some cases this method has been successful; in others it has not.

Factors to Keep in Mind as You Consider the “Right” Mathematics Level Placement for Your High School Student

1. We believe that mastery of the material in Algebra I is absolutely critical for future success in mathematics. As the following course-sequencing map indicates, students who do not take Algebra I H in 8th grade and who do not shift levels upwards at some later juncture in high school (see below) will not be eligible to take calculus in their senior year. However, we do not encourage families to override teacher recommendations and reach for Algebra I early in order to reach calculus by senior year. Rushing to take more advanced math classes too early can undermine a student's developing mathematical understanding, enjoyment of the subject, and self-confidence as a learner.

Many students who do not take the most challenging math track available at the high school will enroll in senior year in either Trigonometry/Analytic Geometry/Introduction to Calculus H or AE. The last two months of these courses is calculus; the last two units are titled “Introduction to Limits” and “Introduction to Differential Calculus.” When they arrive in college, students from these classes have found themselves quite well prepared for collegiate Calculus I.

2. Students who do not take Honors Algebra I in grade 8 have two avenues later on if they do want to get to calculus in high school.

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After 8th grade, they can attend the summer class in Algebra I AE, described above. Alternatively, they can take Algebra I H or AE in grade 9 and then, if they demonstrate in grade 9 by their high grades and strong work ethic that they are capable and interested, take two math courses – Geometry (H or AE) and Algebra II (H or AE) in grade 10.

3. Movement from CP to AE at the high school *requires* summer catch-up work. For example, Algebra I CP covers about 2/3 of the content in Algebra I AE and does not cover the more difficult problems covered in AE. Thus, in any given year, students could not possibly go from CP to AE without filling the gaps. Likewise – and this is illustrative of various pedagogical differences between the course levels – at the SP and CP levels, teachers provide a supported, structured review process and “practice test” before every test and most quizzes after first term. This level of support is not provided at the AE or H level. For these reasons, a move from CP to AE must be considered very carefully.

Math Textbooks

Junior High School

Grade 7:		<i>Glencoe Pre-Algebra</i> , 2008
Grade 8:	H:	<i>McDougal Littell Algebra I</i> , 2001
	AE:	<i>DC Heath Algebra I</i> , 1998
	STD:	<i>Mathematics Course 3, McDougall Littell</i> , 2003

High School

Foundations for Algebra SP:		<i>Mathematical Connections</i> , 1997
Algebra I H:		<i>Dolciani Algebra I</i> , 1992
Algebra I AE:		<i>Glencoe Algebra I</i> , 2003
Algebra I CP:		<i>Glencoe Algebra I</i> , 2000
Elementary Algebra I-1 and I-2 SP:		<i>Glencoe Algebra I</i> , 2000
Geometry H and AE:		<i>Jurgensen Geometry</i> , 2004
Geometry CP:		<i>Glencoe Geometry</i> , 2000
Algebra II H:		<i>Dolciani Algebra II</i> , 1992
Algebra II AE:		<i>Brown Algebra II</i> , 2010
Algebra II CP:		<i>Glencoe Algebra II</i> , 2001
Advanced Algebra/Trigonometry CP, & Trigonometry/Analytic Geometry/ Intro. to Calculus H or AE:		<i>Advanced Mathematics, Precalculus and Discrete Mathematics with Data Analysis</i> , 2004
BC Calculus H or AB Calculus AE:		<i>Calculus: Analytic, Geometric, and Numerical</i> , Finney et al, 2007

For further information, please contact:

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English

At R. J. Grey

The continuing development of communication skills is the primary focus of the R. J. Grey English curriculum. The overall goals for the students are the following:

- To write well in a variety of forms.
- To read accurately and with critical insight and analytical judgment.
- To participate effectively in discussions and other oral activities.
- To demonstrate an understanding of the nature of language in writing, reading, and speaking.
- To demonstrate personal involvement in and enjoyment of the spoken and written word.

Essential Skills and Objectives for reading, writing, speaking, and grammar have been determined for the students at R. J. Grey and are on the district website. In general, these skills are developed in grade seven and reviewed, reinforced, and expanded in grade eight. They are the foundation of every activity and align with the state learning standards.

Thematic units and genre studies comprise the curriculum content. Each unit consists of focus questions about the theme or genre and activities that address these questions. These units also provide opportunities for students to develop and address the essential skills. Students are actively involved in a range of activities within the communication spectrum, either individually or with groups of varying sizes. The units, from which teachers choose according to their needs and interests, are divided between grades seven and eight. Thematic units include: Conflict, Family Relationships, The Environment, Historical Perspectives, Self-awareness/ Identity, Cultural Perspectives, Justice, War and Peace, Memoirs, and Science Fiction. Genre studies include: Short Story, Poetry, Biography, Mystery, and Drama/ Shakespeare.

Each unit is designed to reflect the interests and needs of the early adolescent. In many units, to provide for individual differences and interests, students have a choice of readings. They are introduced to several novels, varying in story line and reading difficulty but all on the unit theme. Students also may have independent reading opportunities throughout the year. The choice of thematic units and the literature involved in the unit may vary from team to team and year to year; however, the *Essential Skills and Objectives* are consistent for all students.

At A.B.R.H.S.

Four years of high school English are required to graduate from A.B.R.H.S. As students prepare to leave R. J. Grey, English teachers will recommend most of the 8th grade class for English I, a heterogeneous class. A smaller number of students will be recommended for honors-level English. Students who require more substantial instructional supports will be recommended for placement in more-specialized English programs.

Students in honors and heterogeneous classes read the same set of core texts. Beyond the required works, students in advanced classes will read additional, more challenging titles and will be expected to read in greater depth and with a greater degree of independence.

In all 9th grade English classes, students are regularly expected to complete writing assignments. At the heterogeneous level, writing instruction is focused on developing students' organization and expanding the use of evidence to support an argument. At the honors level, in addition to reinforcing these skills, teachers expect students to build more complex, nuanced arguments and to attend to matters of style.

Teachers recommend students for honors English based on criteria we have found to be reliable predictors of success. These criteria include:

- A proficiency with language, both spoken and written.
- An ability to compose a statement of argument and support it logically and fully with evidence from a text.
- A love of reading.
- The skill to read with insight, coupled with the maturity to consider a variety of points of view regarding a piece of literature.

After 9th grade, English courses are offered at the Honors/AP (H), the Accelerated/Enriched (AE), the College Preparatory (CP) and the Standard Preparatory (SP) levels. As in the 9th grade, to succeed at the Honors and AE levels in subsequent grades, students must typically be independent learners who love to read and talk about what is read; in addition, these students write well and easily. Often, AE and Honors English students write outside of school as a means of personal expression.

There are differences in the level of challenge in Honors, AE, and CP English classes. Students who have been succeeding in upper-level English classes during their freshman and sophomore years have developed a facility with language that ensures their progress as they continue in advanced English courses in the junior and senior years. However, by its nature, English allows for more movement among levels than is possible in math and science where, in order to make sense of the next set of concepts, one must first have sequentially acquired the previous sets. In English classes, whenever a student acquires the core reading, communication, and thinking skills and whenever s/he develops sufficient interest in the subject and combines all of these with strong work habits and a willingness to take responsibility for the additional work load – and often, a student will develop these capacities and work habits during high school – s/he can succeed in upper-level English courses.

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History and Social Studies

Social Studies **at the junior high** is comprised of a seventh grade American studies course entitled, *Voices of America*, and an eighth grade course entitled, *World Cultures*. Through a variety of sources, with special emphasis on primary sources, the courses encourage students to think critically, be respectful of differences and varied points of view, draw connections between history and the events of today, and be informed active citizens. Social studies classes at the junior high are heterogeneously grouped.

In Grade 7, students are first introduced to the concept of identity, a theme throughout the school year. They begin to understand the numerous factors that shape their own identities. Through this discovery, students coming from many different elementary schools come to recognize similarities and shared interests with their classmates, providing opportunities for establishing connections and friendships. At the same time, students will conclude that each individual is unique. This understanding allows for a safe and respectful classroom environment that encourages various perspectives and points of view. It also helps create a sense of community throughout the school. Students begin to examine how identity impacts the experience of individuals and various groups in American society. They explore our identity as a nation as they study the founding documents as the foundation and promise of the American Dream. Identity continues to be a core theme, as students learn about the immigrant experience over the course of 175 years – both the rewards and the struggles in gaining access to the American Dream. Immigration is studied within the context of a nation undergoing many dramatic changes – changes in population, industrialization and the rise of labor. Students also focus on the experiences of immigrants of the later twentieth century through the present, mainly Asian and Latino immigrants. Students learn about the increased rights that came from these struggles, as well as the complex societal challenges that immigration presents. Our identity as a nation built by immigrants, their contributions to our country, and the rich diversity discovered in each classroom are celebrated. Throughout the school year, a broad spectrum of voices and important current events are also integrated into the curriculum.

In Grade 7, students are introduced to the use of primary sources and critical thinking skills, including: drawing conclusions, making inferences, and using supporting evidence. Organization, study skills, and map skills are also emphasized. These skills are reinforced in Grade 8.

The World Cultures curriculum in Grade 8 reinforces the environment of respect established in Grade 7 and explores the experiences of individuals and groups in three diverse cultures/regions of the world: India, China, and the Middle East. An initial goal of the eighth grade curriculum is for students to appreciate the “universals” of culture – the ideas and activities common to *all* cultures – as well as the roles that people, products, and ideas of other cultures have played in the development of our own. Each of the three major cultures/regions studied in the Grade 8 curriculum has a rich and complex history and plays an important role in current events. Students learn important elements of the physical and human geography, key historical developments, and unique aspects of each culture, including traditions, major belief systems, and forms of artistic expression. Students learn about and come to appreciate the contributions that each culture has made to world culture. Aspects of contemporary life, including the roles of young people, are also studied. This process of discovery broadens the students’ understanding and appreciation of different cultures of the

world and helps enrich their understanding of their own cultures. An underlying goal is that students will become more interested and excited about world culture as a whole and will explore opportunities to make positive connections and build productive relationships with peoples all over the globe.

The considerations that help to guide level-placement recommendations for English classes are a good starting point for determining the most appropriate level in **high school social studies** classes as well: proficiency with language, strength as a reader and writer, enthusiasm for the subject matter, capacity to attend to multiple points of view on an issue.

All students are required to take a three-year social studies core curriculum, which begins with World History and continues with a two-year sequence of U.S. History and Government. This configuration allows for an in-depth consideration of the development of the American governmental system. The core curriculum is offered at the H/AP, AE, CP, and SP levels. In the 9th grade, the World History course is also offered through the Transition Program, by teacher recommendation only. The chronologically sequenced units and uniting themes are consistent across levels. The major differences across levels are the amount of reading required, the expectations regarding written work, the level of detail and abstraction that students must handle, and the sophistication of classroom discussion.

As the eighth grade staff makes level recommendations, they will evaluate students' demonstrated abilities in reading and writing. In addition they will consider students' consistency of performance, ability to organize materials and thoughts, and level of enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Leveling decisions in Social Studies are often more flexible than in the other subject areas and may reflect a student's interests and needs in a given year. Students may successfully move from a lower- to a higher-level course from one year to the next, so long as they have the reading and writing skills – plus the enthusiasm – to support a more-detailed and abstract approach to the work.

A special option exists for sophomores: American Studies AE. Team-taught by a social studies teacher and an English teacher, the history and English classes are taught during two contiguous periods. Although the curriculum includes the same major units from the two disciplines that students would encounter in “regular” sophomore English and social studies classes, the American Studies faculty is also able to illustrate American history through works of literature. Conversely, English teachers are able to place their literature offerings in a more complete historical context. Class work – including presentations, testing and field trips – can be more flexibly scheduled.

Freshmen and sophomores may take the semester elective: Current Events – A Global Perspective. In contrast to the established curriculum of the core courses, it will emphasize a geographic and data-based approach to significant recent events. Additionally sophomores, juniors and seniors may elect Facing History and Ourselves, a semester course offered at the AE level.

Beginning in the junior year, students may select from a wide variety of elective courses offered by the department. Leveled courses include Psychology (H/AP, AE and CP), European History (H/AP), and International Relations (H and AE for seniors only). Non-leveled courses include the yearlong Economics class and semester classes: You and the

Law, Political Science, and Sociology. The former requires considerable reading and research and/or integration of concepts. The latter tend to focus more on current events and projects. Consequently, appropriate level decisions reflect a combination of individual skills, available time, and enthusiasm.

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Science

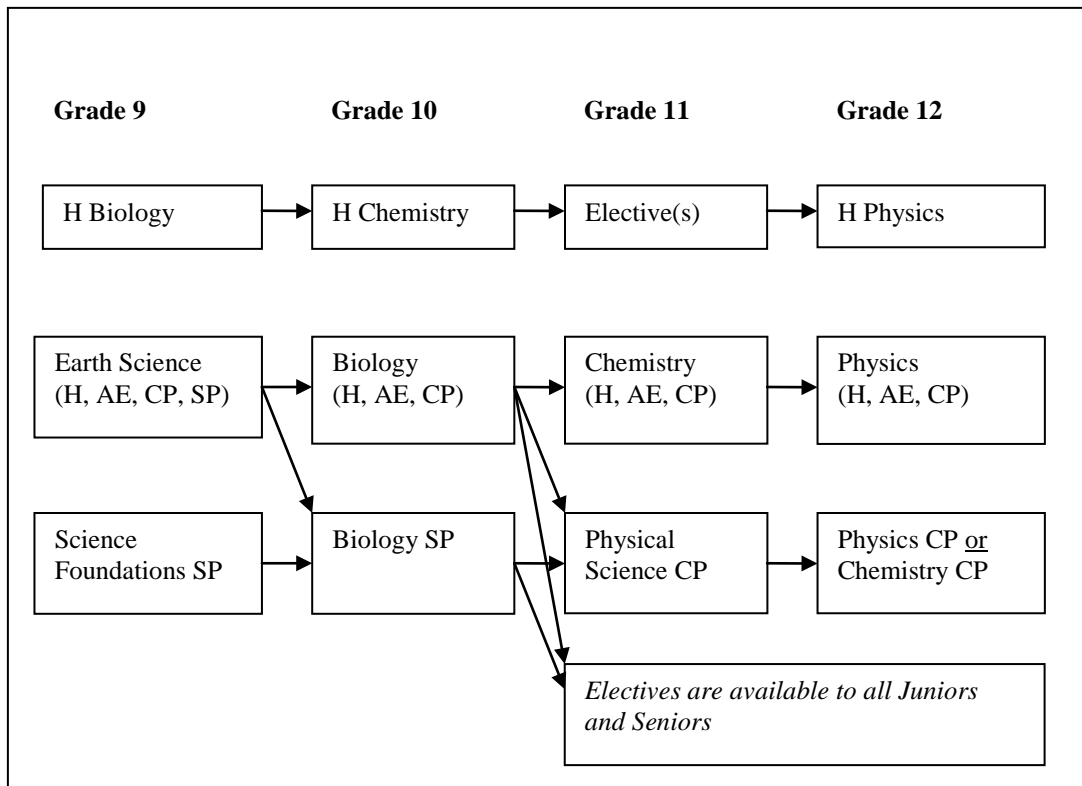
The science curriculum 7–12 encourages students to utilize the process of scientific inquiry to discover and interpret scientific knowledge. The curriculum is designed to support a variety of teaching strategies, including cooperative, peer, and project-based learning; lecture; group discussions; and audio-visual presentations. Throughout all grades and courses, we emphasize the laboratory as a focal point for learning.

In the 7th and 8th grade, all science classes are heterogeneously grouped. The 7th- and 8th-grade science curriculum promotes conceptual and skill development, as well as student interaction. A range of topics in physical, biological, earth/space, and environmental science is covered; in addition, the curriculum aims to explore the interrelationships between disciplines. Our junior high science program introduces the students to myriad scientific themes and topics, imparts the fundamentals necessary for a successful transition to the 9th grade, and prepares them for the 8th-grade MCAS exam.

Two years of science, including Biology, are required to graduate from A.B.R.H.S. Most four-year colleges require at least three years of high school science, including two lab courses, as a prerequisite for admission. In contrast to the generalized nature of the junior high science curriculum, high school course offerings are specialized. The core curriculum in the high school begins with Earth Science in the 9th grade, followed by Biology in the 10th grade, Chemistry in the 11th grade, and lastly Physics in the 12th grade. All of the core curriculum courses are leveled: Honors (H), Accelerated & Enriched (AE), and College Preparatory (CP). In addition, there is a fourth level, Standard Preparatory (SP), offered in Earth Science and Biology. While the higher-level classes cover material in greater depth, with more applications and at a faster pace, the basic curriculum is similar between the levels. The entire core curriculum is aligned with the Science Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Biology and Earth Science are descriptive in nature and consequently rely more heavily on language skills. Chemistry and Physics, on the other hand, are more quantitative; therefore, mathematics plays a more critical role. Since the high school science courses are not rigidly sequential, students have some choice regarding how to sequence their courses. (See *Potential Sequences of Science Courses, 9-12*, below, for an illustration of some – but by no means all – of the sequencing possibilities.)

Potential Sequences of Science Courses, 9-12



In addition to the core curriculum, students in grades 11 and 12 have a number of electives from which to choose. Some are full-year leveled courses, while others are semester courses and unlevleled. (See the table below for a complete listing.) Students may take these electives in addition to the Chemistry or Physics that most juniors and seniors take.

Elective Options for Grades 11 & 12

Full Year Courses

Advanced Biology (H/AP)*
Advanced Chemistry (H/AP)*
Environmental Science (H/AP)*
SciTech (SP)*

Semester Courses

Anatomy & Physiology*	Forensic Science **
Astronomy **	Human Body (SP) **
BioEthics*	Marine Biology *
Engineering Principles *	Science & Environment (SP) **

* Courses being offered in 2011-2012 school year.

** Courses not being offered in 2011-2012 school year.

Leveling and Teacher Recommendations

All science placement recommendations are made in an attempt to ensure that the student will have a positive and successful experience.

In the spring of 8th grade, science teachers will recommend all students for a 9th grade science course. Most students will be recommended for Earth Science in H, AE, or CP level. A few students will be recommended for the Transition Program's Earth Science course, and a few others will be placed in Science Foundations. The most advanced students will be recommended for Honors Biology.

Student placement is recommended based on their performance in both science and mathematics in the 8th grade. Factors that are considered in the placement process are term averages (which are based on tests, quizzes, homework, and various other assignments), class participation, teachers' perceptions of the students' ability to work independently and of their motivation, and teachers' overall assessment of students' critical thinking skills. The 8th grade science teachers will also take into account the recommendations made by the 8th grade mathematics teachers.

As in the other subject areas, parents do have the right to override a science teacher's level placement recommendation. We believe that the study of earth science is an important element of a well-rounded science education. Earth and space sciences are also emphasized in our Massachusetts Curriculum Framework. We **strongly** recommend that parents whose children are recommended for Honors Earth Science rather than Honors Biology do not override the teachers' recommendations. Students in Honors Biology progress to Honors Chemistry in 10th grade. Typically, only those students who are capable of excelling in Honors Geometry at the 9th grade level and who progress to Honors Algebra II in 10th grade are ready for the mathematical and abstract reasoning challenges of 10th grade Honors Chemistry. Taking Honors Earth Science in 9th grade does not lock a student out of a rigorous science course sequence. Students placed in 9th grade Honors Earth Science still have the opportunity to remain in honors-level science straight through to senior year. If they choose to double-up in science, they can still take up to two A.P. science courses before they graduate. By starting in Earth Science, they simply allow themselves an additional year to develop the mathematical reasoning skills necessary for success in Chemistry and Physics.

For any override, parents and students need to schedule a meeting with the Regional Department Leader at the high school. Except for unusual circumstances, overrides of more than one step above the recommendation are not allowed.

In order to enroll in AE Earth Science in the 9th grade, students must have no grade below a B- in 8th grade science. In order to enroll in Honors Earth Science in the 9th grade, students must have a minimum of an A- average in 8th grade science. In addition, they should also be recommended for at least AE Algebra I in the 9th grade. In order to enroll in Honors Biology in the 9th grade, students must have a minimum of an A average in 8th grade science and be recommended for Honors Geometry in the 9th grade. It should be noted that Honors Biology is a mixture of 9th and 10th grade students, because students who successfully complete Honors Earth Science go on to take Honors Biology in the 10th grade. (After Honors Biology, students would typically take Honors Chemistry, which is, therefore, a mixture of 10th and 11th grade students.)

If you *are* considering requesting an override, please take into consideration all of the factors outlined above, as well as the comfort level of your child. We share your desire to see your student succeed.

For further information, please contact:

- Mr. David Palmer, Regional Department Leader for grades 7–12
(978) 264-4700, x3442; dpalmer@mail.ab.mec.edu
- Ms. Mary-Frances Doiron, Building Department Leader for grades 7–8
(978) 264-4700, x3353; mdoiron@mail.ab.mec.edu

World Languages

Acton and Boxborough students typically begin their formal language studies at Raymond J. Grey Junior High School, where they elect French or Spanish in grade seven. It is a two-year program, equivalent to French I or Spanish I at the high school. The curriculum is designed for the middle school child by allowing more time for practice, hands-on activities, games, music, and cultural experiences. The students will learn the rudiments of the language that they have selected, while practicing the four communicative skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Seventh and eighth graders study language as a core subject on their junior high team. In grade 8 the students will complete the French I or Spanish I curriculum.

1. By the conclusion of their junior high language studies, successful language students (*those who have earned a final grade of 70 or higher in grade eight*) are ready to continue their study of French II or Spanish II at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. In the spring of grade eight, during the pupil course request process, world language teachers will recommend grade eight students for French II or Spanish II at the appropriate ability level grouping: College Preparatory, Accelerated/Enriched, or Honors. (See *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses, 7–12*, below.) This recommendation will be based upon a student's grade, as well as other factors: motivation, work ethic, writing and reading proficiency, and speaking ability. Grade eight students generally transition well into the recommended course, since the French II and Spanish II programs build upon the R. J. Grey Junior High curriculum. Teachers in both buildings work collaboratively to properly sequence students from grade seven through twelve.
2. At Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, most students will continue their language of choice from the junior high. They also have the option of beginning the study of another or of “doubling up” by starting an additional language, may it be French, Spanish, Latin or Italian. (See #4 and *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses, 9-12*, below.) *Grade eight students who would like to elect two languages for their freshman year* should plan their schedule carefully with their grade eight counselor, since carrying six demanding courses in one's freshman year is not recommended. In order to accommodate two world languages, it may be advisable to postpone a required course.
3. *For students who have not met with success in their junior high language studies (those who have earned a final grade of 69 or lower in grade eight)*, world language teachers will recommend French I, Mandarin Chinese I, Spanish I AE, or Spanish I CP (either Part I or Part II) at the high school. With added maturity and the further development of study, organizational, and/or language skills, these students may indeed be successful at the high school.
4. *Students who have not begun their language studies in junior high* also have options for beginning their studies at ABRHS (see *Potential Sequence of World Language Courses: 9-12*, below). In an effort to meet the different needs of our beginning language learners, the department offers several options for studying first-year Latin, French, Spanish, Italian or Chinese.

For students who prefer to study a classical language that focuses on reading, grammar, vocabulary and Roman culture, the department offers **Latin**. These courses are recommended for the student with strong language skills – that is, for those with grades of B- or higher in their English language courses.

Latin I (non-leveled) is an introductory course, with heavy influence upon grammar, vocabulary, writing and reading comprehension. Units in mythology, history and Roman culture are also integral parts.

For students who prefer to study a modern language that focuses on listening and speaking, as well as reading, writing and culture, students may elect French, Spanish, Italian or Chinese.

French I (non-leveled) is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. This course teaches the equivalent of two years of junior high language instruction in one year. It is recommended for those with strong language skills – that is, for those with grades of B- or higher in their English courses.

Italian I (non-leveled) provides a foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. There is written and oral practice, as well as vocabulary building. Students are introduced to useful and practical expressions, in addition to grammatical structures. Some time is dedicated to Italian culture, geography, customs and routines found in Italy. Audiovisual material and ancillary materials are used regularly, and language lab activities are an integral part of the course. It is recommended for students with a grade of B- or better in a previously studied world language, or by permission of the department head.

Students who want to initiate their study of Spanish at the high school have two options.

Spanish I AE is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. This course teaches the equivalent of two years of junior high instruction in one year. It is recommended for those with strong language skills – that is, for those with grades of B- or higher in their English courses.

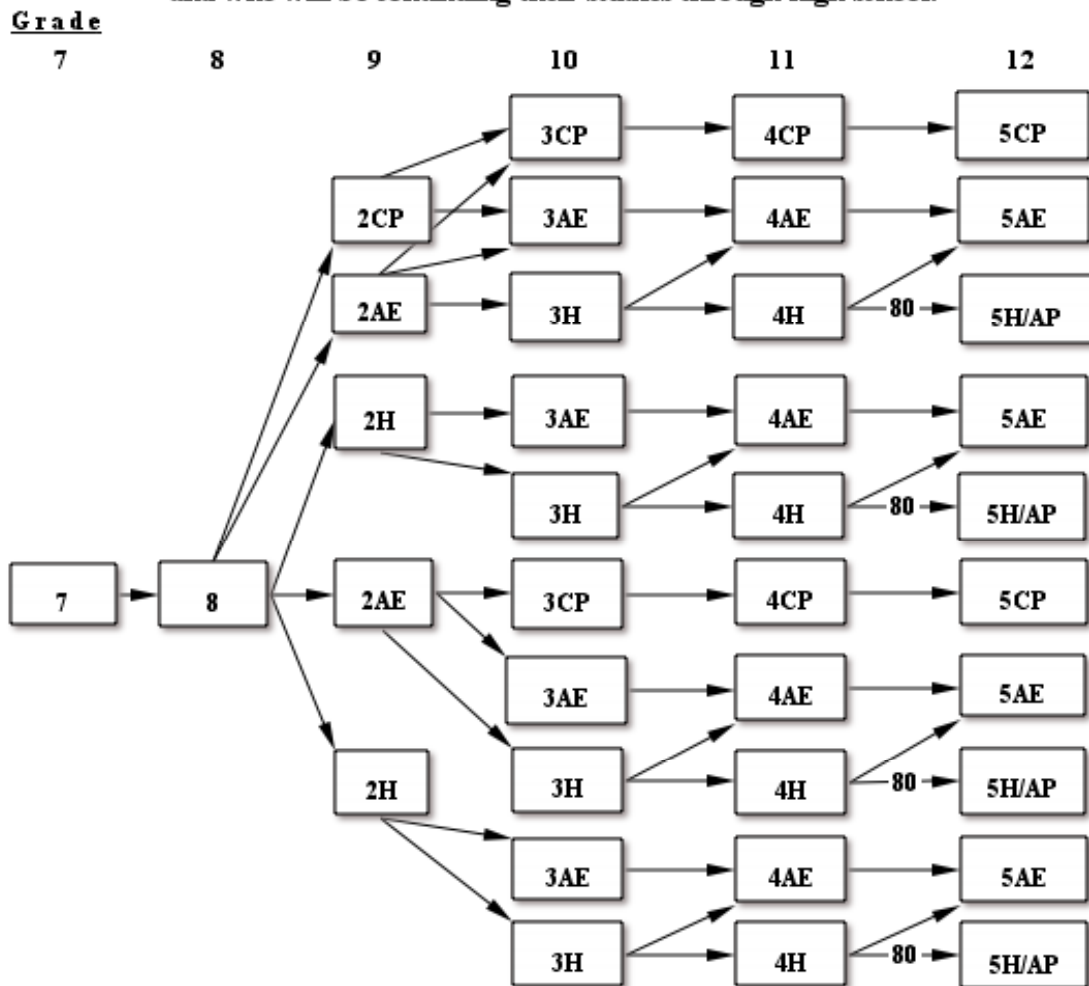
Spanish I CP, Part I, which is open to all language learners, is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. This course teaches language learning at a more moderate pace than the Spanish I AE. Students at the CP level finish one half of the textbook during the first year of study and complete the textbook at the end of Spanish I CP, Part II. Slower-paced instruction and repetition help the students to acquire vocabulary and structure. Students begin to speak, read and write Spanish by understanding, retelling, expanding, revising, and creating stories, dialogues and visual presentations. Spanish I CP, Part I students will continue at this moderate pace in Spanish I CP, Part II.

Chinese I (non-leveled) is an integrated approach to language learning that includes the study of grammar. It is an introduction to spoken Chinese, using the Pinyin system of Roman letters. Students learn to converse simply and are introduced to the writing of Chinese in simplified characters. Students will begin to develop an appreciation of Chinese culture that will better prepare them to interact in a global society.

To determine which language offering best meets the needs of a student initiating new language study at the high school, a junior high student should meet with the R. J. Grey World Language Building Department Leader in the spring of grade 8 for a course recommendation.

cont. on page 21

Potential Sequence of World Language Courses, 7-12
for students who initiated world language study in the 7th grade
and who will be continuing their studies through high school.



A grade of 70 or higher is required to continue to next year,
with the exception of honors courses, for which a grade of 80 is required .

The above chart lists the World Language courses Grade 7 through Grade 12. Advancement to the next course is based upon student achievement. Each subsequent course in a level sequence is based upon the curriculum from the previous World Language course in that same level at the High School. To continue in a course sequence, students need a C- or better grade.

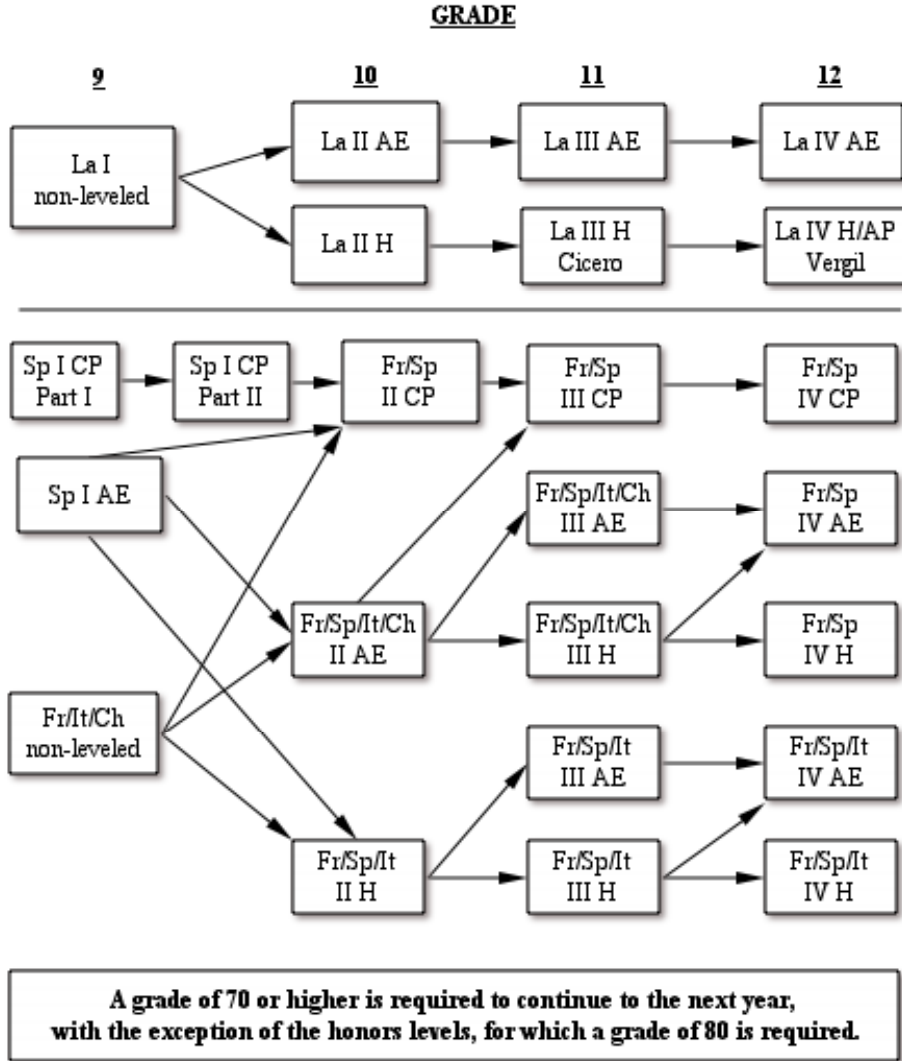
If students wish to advance up a level (e.g., A/E to Honors), they may need to make up material they have missed due to the increased pacing and depth of the higher level courses. To advance a level, students need an A or A+ in their present level and their present teacher's recommendation.

Key: H = Honors A/E = Accelerated/Enriched CP = College Preparatory

Note: Parental overrides are accepted so long as the parent(s) meet with the World Language teacher in the Junior High and Mrs. Dix in the High School to discuss the change.

Potential Sequence of World Language Courses for:

- A. Students who are initiating the study of a world language for the first time in 9th grade or later.
- B. Students who are initiating the study of a second language (either because they are adding a second language or because they are changing their language of choice).
- C. Students who did not successfully complete their world language studies at the Junior High.



For advancement from a first-year non-leveled course and/or Spanish IAE, a student must achieve a 90-100 in order to be placed in the honors level; an 80-89 is needed for placement in the AE level. All other students will be placed in the CP level.

NOTE: At this time, Chinese I (non-leveled) advances to Chinese 2 AE only. Chinese 3, at the honors level, is open only to those students who take a placement exam given by the World Language RDL in the spring.

Once at the high school, students will progress through language courses as indicated on the *World Language Course Sequence Chart*. World language teachers will recommend an appropriate course and level for their students. World language students are not “tracked”; there are many instances of students who move to a higher or lower ability-level grouping throughout their sequence of language studies. However, due to the building-block nature of language learning, it becomes increasingly difficult to move to a higher ability level after year two of language study. In addition, there are some courses that are sequential in curriculum content (Spanish I CP, Part I – I CP, Part II; Spanish II CP – III CP; Spanish IV CP – V CP; French II CP – III CP; Spanish III AE – IV AE; French III AE/IV CP – IV AE/VCP). In these courses, students master one textbook program over the course of two years. Therefore, a teacher would not recommend that a student progress, for example, from II CP to III AE unless the student were prepared to master a year’s coursework over the summer. Even when a teacher recommends that a student move to a higher ability level, a student should prepare himself or herself for the next course with study over the summer in order to avoid any gaps in the understanding of structure or mastery of vocabulary.

A frequently asked question is: “How many years of language study are required for graduation from A.B.R.H.S.?” The answer is “none at this time.” Of course, many colleges have entrance requirements in world languages. For example, the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education has established a minimum requirement in languages for admission to the four-year state colleges and universities: two years of one foreign language. Very competitive schools look for students who have studied one language in depth – i.e., for four or five years. Students are advised to consult particular colleges of interest for their specific admission and placement requirements in order to keep their options open.

All A.B.R.H.S. world language students will have opportunities to participate in Exchange Programs, Community Service activities, and study/travel abroad when offered. In addition, A.B.R.H.S. offers students some opportunities that they may not have had before. First of all, students will access the Digital multi-media language laboratory, both as part of their language class and also outside of class for individual practice.

In recognition of achievement in language studies, the high school supports local chapters of the National French, Latin, Spanish, and Italian Honor Societies. Recipients of our outstanding course achievement awards in each level are recognized at the end of the school year.

The school district’s program is, of course, only the beginning. The long-term goal of our grade seven through twelve program is that our students use and enjoy their world languages beyond the confines of the Acton-Boxborough School District. Our intent is to offer them an excellent start toward this end.

For further information about World Language, please contact:

- Ms. Claire Dix, Regional Department Leader for grades 7–12
(978) 264-4700, x3473; cdix@mail.ab.mec.edu
- Ms. Robin Crown, Building Department Leader for grades 7–8
(978) 264-4700, x3378; rcrown@mail.ab.mec.edu

Performing Arts Department

Within the Performing Arts Department, courses are not leveled. The department offers courses that fall into the “heterogeneous” category in determining class rank. These grades do not contribute to a student’s “Q.P.A.”; however, they do contribute to a student’s “G.P.A.” A wide range of students will be involved in these courses; for example, our band will have a range of musicians from beginner to highly advanced. The band director is able to assign parts that will suit all students’ needs and abilities.

The following junior high school courses are taught pass/fail and have no prerequisites:

- Grade 7 Chorus
- Grade 8 Chorus
- Music 7 – Exploratory
- Drama – Grade 8 Exploratory
- Grade 7 Band (It is recommended but not required that students have prior experience on a band instrument.)
- Grade 8 Band (It is recommended but not required that students have prior experience on a band instrument.)

The following junior high school programs have some entry requirements.

- ✓ Dramatic productions are offered as an after-school activity. Open auditions are held for all interested students.
- ✓ Jazz Band is offered as an after-school activity. Students must be members of the band program to participate. Some auditioning may be required depending on instrumentation.

The following high school Performing Arts courses have no prerequisites or requirements:

- Band (It is recommended but not required that students have prior experience on a band instrument.)
- Color Guard
- Concert Choir
- Women’s Ensemble (freshman)
- Sophtones (sophomore women’s ensemble)
- Music Theory and Technology I
- History of Rock & Roll and Contemporary Music
- Introduction to Directing
- Introduction to Acting
- Introduction to Technical Theater
- Audio-Visual Media Technology

The following high school courses have some kind of prerequisite or requirement:

- ✓ Advanced Music Theory and Technology (Music Theory and Technology I or by permission)
- ✓ Jazz Band (by audition only)
- ✓ Madrigal Singers (by audition only)
- ✓ Advanced Acting (Intro. to Acting or by permission of instructor)

For further information, please contact:

- Mr. Mark W. Hickey, Director of Performing Arts, K–12
(978) 264-4700, x3415; mhickey@mail.ab.mec.edu

Visual Arts Department

Philosophy

Art is essential in a complete education. Students engage in art production, art history, art criticism and aesthetics to broaden their understanding of self and community, to place the arts in an historical and cultural context, and to experience the arts as a universal form of human expression and communication.

At R. J. Grey

All grade 7 and grade 8 students are required to take an Art Exploratory each year: Art 1 in grade 7, Art 2 in grade 8. The units of study in these courses explore drawing, painting, sculpture, hand building with clay, printmaking and computer-generated graphic design. While many of the high school art courses require no prerequisites, the R. J. Grey program provides a broad experience so that students may make informed choices from the high school course offerings.

Courses Offered in 2011-2012

- Art 1 Exploratory – Grade 7 – every other day ½ year (*meets for 45 class periods*)
- Art 2 Exploratory – Grade 8 – 1/5 of the year (*meets for 36 class periods*)

At ABRHS

The Visual Arts program at the high school offers a variety of traditional and new media courses in two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms. Students experiment with a wide range of media while studying the Elements of Art and Art Principles.

The ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from images is essential given the significance of visual literacy in 21st century culture. Learning to think critically, to generate new ideas, to develop multiple solutions to a problem, to evaluate possibilities and consequences are important thought processes enhanced in the visual arts curriculum.

Courses Offered in 2011-2012

A. Courses Open to Grades 9 through 12

- Ceramics I and II
- Sculpture
- Drawing and Painting I
- Photography I (35 mm camera required)
- Advanced Photography (prerequisite, Photography I; 35 mm camera required)
- Digital Photography (DSLR camera required)
- Digital Imagery I
- Digital Imagery II (prerequisite, Digital Imagery I)
- Web Page Design I
- Animation I
- Animation II (prerequisite Animation I)
- Art History: From Impressionism to Today

B. Courses Open to Grades 10 through 12

- All courses listed in A. above
- Advanced Drawing and Painting (prerequisite Drawing and Painting I)

C. Courses Open to Grades 11 and 12

- All courses listed in A. and B. above
- Junior/Senior Portfolio (prerequisite 10 credits - Drawing and Painting I, and Advanced Drawing and Painting)

D. Courses Open to Grade 12 Only

- Advanced Portfolio (prerequisite 15 credits - Drawing and Painting I, Advanced Drawing and Painting, and Junior/Senior Portfolio)
- Studio Assistant (with faculty recommendation)

For further information, please contact:

- Ms. Diana Woodruff, Director of Visual Arts, K-12
(978) 264-4700, x3671; dwoodruff@mail.ab.mec.edu

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOLS**

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, limited English proficient, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, handicap or homeless in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs, and activities.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts' compliance with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, ADA or MGL ch. 76, sec.5 is directed to contact the Director of Pupil Services, Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton, MA, telephone number 978-264-4700, x3265, who has been designated by the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts to coordinate the Districts' efforts to comply with these laws, or write to:

Office for Civil Rights

J. F. Kennedy Federal Building, Room 1875

Boston, MA 02203

or

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of Program Quality Assurance Services

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148.

Revised 10/21/10