

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Below is a letter from Assistant Superintendent Susan Horn regarding our participation in the MCAS process.

- Craig



**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ♦ ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**Susan Horn**  
*Assistant Superintendent  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Community Education*

September 8, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian:

In addition to meeting the requirements of the state's education reform law of 1993, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) fulfills the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, which requires schools to demonstrate that students are making academic progress. Every year a school's target Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) is re-established and goes up by a certain number of points. Students pass an MCAS exam by scoring in the top three of the four scoring categories, advanced, proficient, and needs improvement. Only grade 10 tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics are required as one condition of eligibility for a high school diploma, however, assessing students in earlier grades allow our school district to target areas where student learning and achievement can be enhanced.

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) is determined by both aggregate and subgroup scores. Subgroups consist of 20 or more students in categories such as special education, low income, limited English proficiency, and by race/ethnicity. AYP is determined by both the aggregate and subgroup scores. A school that fails to show AYP for two consecutive years in English language arts/reading or math, either in the aggregate or any subgroup, is put on notice by the state to make improvements. Currently, the science and technology test does not count towards a school's AYP.

The R.J. Grey JH has been identified for improvement, in mathematics for our Special Education subgroup, under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The purpose of this letter is to explain what the designation means, what we are doing to improve teaching and learning in the school, and how you can become involved in helping the school improve.

To enhance support to all students in mathematics, the R.J. Grey will immediately initiate a student centered analysis to determine, in collaboration with the home/school partnership, the need for alternative MCAS testing, additional MCAS accommodations, and/or a plan to increase the actual time spent on teaching and learning.

Specifically, these areas are described as follows:

### **Consideration of Alternative Assessment for MCAS**

Through the student centered analysis, we expect that certain students, due to the nature of their disabilities, require re-consideration for alternative MCAS portfolio assessment. This will be addressed through the special education Team meeting process. Meetings for targeted students will be coordinated by the Pupil Services Coordinators (K-6 and 7-12) and will occur by November 2009 of this academic school year.

### **Time on Learning and/or MCAS Accommodations:**

Again, through the student centered analysis, specialized service delivery for identified special education students may require a temporary increase in specialized instruction and/or additional non-standard accommodations to address MCAS mastery. Following MCAS testing, these services may be re-evaluated.

### **Professional Development and Tutorial Services**

Finally, in addition to individualized tutorials, additional special educator training regarding math standards and instruction will be provided, offering a formatted curriculum to meet MCAS standards as well as an additional set of skills to this targeted group of teachers. This training will enhance our teachers' already strong foundation in math pedagogy for special education children addressing a wide range of learning styles. We are confident that our efforts to improve what is already a strong math program at R.J. Grey JH will have a positive impact on all our students, as well as meet the state's expectations for the performance levels of each subgroup of our population

Involving families as full partners in the education of their children is a cornerstone of Acton-Boxborough and determining a reasonable approach for these identified students to be successful within the MCAS testing process is paramount. Within the IEP process, we will be thinking through realistic expectations for student achievement, always with a vision of hope, good teaching, and tenacity.

For more information or questions regarding this issue, please feel free to contact: Craig Hardimon, R.J. Grey JH Principal, at 978-264-4700 ext. 3304.

Sincerely,

Susan Horn