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, in fall 2001 we provided parents of 7th and 8th graders with a memorandum from the Mathematics Department, “Understanding Mathematics Course Selection at R. J. Grey and Acton-Boxborough Regional High School.” This memorandum expands on that earlier document. It repeats the information provided regarding the course selection process in general, and regarding mathematics. This memorandum also provides information from the English, History/Social Studies, Science, World Language, Music, and Visual Arts Departments in time for the spring course selection process.

We ask that you put this document in a safe place – where you will be able to retrieve it next year and the year after. We will update this memorandum annually. Updates will be posted on the A/B website, at http://ab.mec.edu/.

Questions about how to navigate course selection within a given subject area should be directed to the contact persons identified in each section of the memorandum. Please refer any general comments or concerns about this memorandum 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, in the Junior High the Mathematics and World Language Departments begin to level their 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 memo, we seek to provide parents with background information about the course leveling approach in each department that clarifies:

- how differently-leveled courses differ from one another;
- the bases upon which teachers recommend students for differently-leveled courses;
- important academic/curricular implications associated with being placed in a course at a given level; and
- 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 – a potential source of stress even for the most able and disciplined students – and can result in lowering a student’s GPA.

• At the high school (but not at R. J. Grey), across all subject areas, the level of a course determines its “weight” in the calculation of students’ “QPA,” or Quality Point Average. The QPA is used to determine students’ rank in class (RIC). RIC is one piece of information used by colleges and universities in their admissions decisions. The relationship between course level and calculation of QPA is illustrated by the following table. Students’ grades in heterogeneously-grouped classes are not included in the calculation of their QPAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>H/AP</th>
<th>AE</th>
<th>CP</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>Heterogeneous</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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• Students' abilities, interests and commitments evolve over time. Those who would, at some future date, like to move 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 to 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 BioForum; 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 Parental Override Processes at R. J. Grey

The criteria by which students are placed in particular levels vary from subject to subject. Also, the implications of placements are different in each subject area. However, some aspects of the placement process apply across subject areas.

In the second quarter of 7th grade, based upon varied sources of data and with the goal of placing students in classes that best meet their individual learning needs, students are recommended for placement at one of two mathematics course levels. In March, for 7th graders preparing to move to 8th grade, mathematics and world language teachers will be making level-placement recommendations. 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 regarding level placements. Parents will have two weeks 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; and
  • 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. Once submitted, the override form must be signed by the teacher, BDL and counselor.

Teacher Level Recommendation/Parental Override Processes at the High School

The scheduling process at the high school is designed to involve students to the fullest extent. Students are given more control over their course loads and planning. The process begins in late winter when the Program of Studies booklets are distributed to students.

Students are given several days to review the Program of Studies’ course listings with their parents. Students will be given a Pupil Course Request (PCR) Form, and they will be asked to bring it to each one of their teachers. Teachers will make course and level recommendations for the next year, based on students’ performance in their classes. For some heterogeneously-grouped courses, no teacher placement recommendation is necessary. At the end of this process, students are asked to take home for parental review a copy of the PCR form with the teachers’ recommendations and signatures. Once the data from all students’ PCR forms has been compiled, a list of the student’s course requests will also be mailed home to parents (mid-March for students in grades 9 through 11; mid-April for 8th-grade students). The same computer-generated list of course requests is also distributed to students in homeroom.

Students wishing to add or drop a course will need to pick up in the Counseling Department a Pupil Course Request Change Form, which will require a parent’s signature and can be dropped off with the student’s counselor.

Level changes to a higher level course than a student was recommended for will require going through the override process. Forms can be picked up in the Counseling Department and require student, counselor, teacher and Department Leader meetings.

There are deadlines that apply for all course change requests. Please see current information to determine this year’s deadlines.
Understanding the Distinct Approach to Course Leveling and Course Selection in the Five Leveled Subject Areas

*Given changes in such areas as curriculum, staff, demography and standardized testing, the information provided in this section is subject to change on an annual basis.*

Mathematics
The Mathematics Department is the first department in the secondary system to separate students into homogeneously-grouped levels.

At R. J. Grey

- In the fall, all 7th graders begin the year in heterogeneously-grouped math classes. In order to perform well in the first term of grade 7 mathematics, students need to come from elementary school with very strong knowledge of the basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division – with integers, fractions, decimals, and percents – and must be able to perform calculations accurately *without a calculator*. They must also have developed requisite problem-solving capabilities and be committed to properly completing home assignments and class work.

- During the first six to eight weeks of the school year, teachers methodically assess each student’s math skills and aptitude. All students are given a pre-test based upon skills and concepts they learned through grade six. This helps teachers to establish a baseline for review and indicates which students have retained mastery of their previous math curriculum. As the first term continues, the 7th-grade math teachers use questioning techniques and a variety of assessment tools to determine which students are capable of handling an accelerated pre-algebra program. Tests and quizzes are written with optional extension questions that require a higher level of thinking.

- Within each team, students who have performed well on the pre-test and on the optional questions, both in class and on tests and quizzes – typically between 40% and 60% of 7th graders – are recommended for the accelerated 7th-grade course. The others are recommended for the standard 7th-grade pre-algebra program.

- Two weeks prior to the start of second quarter, parents of 7th graders will receive a letter from their child’s math teacher, informing them of the teacher’s recommendation for their child. When the letter with the placement recommendation arrives, parents/guardians must review, sign, and return it within one week. As with all later level-placement recommendations in math and in other subjects, parents have the opportunity to accept or reject the teacher’s recommendation (see *Teacher Level Recommendation and Parental Override Processes at R J Grey*, above).

- Starting with second quarter, students are divided into the two leveled-math groupings. The same book (Glencoe Pre-Algebra) is used in both 7th-grade mathematics courses. The accelerated classes cover almost the entire text, and the regular classes do about 2/3 of the book.
• Students who have maintained an A- or higher in grade 7 Accelerated Pre-Algebra are placed into Honors Algebra I in grade 8. The other students in that level are placed into grade 8 Accelerated/Enriched (AE) mathematics, along with the top students from the Standard Pre-Algebra classes. The grade 8 AE course uses a regular algebra textbook and largely parallels the Algebra I College Preparatory (CP) class taught in grade 9. The rest of the students in Standard Pre-Algebra are placed in grade 8 Standard mathematics, which reviews and extends the basics of algebra begun in the 7th-grade standard level. (From here on, readers may want to refer to Potential Sequences of Mathematics Courses, 7-12, below.)

• Based on their performance in grade 8, students will be recommended for grade 9 mathematics classes. For descriptions of specific high school math courses, see the High School Program of Studies (http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/academics.html). Students in Honors Algebra I who attain B+ or higher grades are recommended for Honors Geometry. The remainder of the Algebra I students are placed into Geometry AE. Students in grade 8 AE Algebra are placed into Algebra I H if they attain an A for the year, into Algebra I AE if they attain grades between C+ and A- for the year, and into Algebra I CP otherwise. Students in grade 8 Standard who attain C+ or higher grades are placed into Algebra I CP. (See “special situations,” below.) Those with grades from D to C are placed into Standard Preparatory (SP) Elementary Algebra I-1, and students with D- or F grades are placed into Foundations for Algebra SP. Elementary Algebra I Part 1 SP and Elementary Algebra I Part 2 SP each do one-half of the Algebra I CP course, and so completion of those two years is equivalent content-wise to one year of Algebra I CP. Foundations for Algebra reviews the grade 7 material. By teacher recommendation only, a small number of students will take mathematics in the Transition Program.

Some special situations/information:

1. Students who are 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, as students from grade 8 AE math 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 Algebra AE and who would like to take Algebra I AE in the A-B Summer School can be placed into Geometry H or AE if they complete that summer course with at least an 80. (Students who attain an average over 90 are placed in Geometry H).

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.
The above chart lists the Mathematics 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 math 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: A/E = Accelerated/Enriched       CP = College Preparatory       SP = Standard Preparatory

Note: Parental overrides are accepted so long as the parent(s) meet with the Math teacher in the junior high or Mr. Noeth in the high school to discuss the change.
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 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 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 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-1 SP proceed to Elementary Algebra I-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 attached 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, however.

   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:

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<th>Grade 7:</th>
<th>Glencoe Pre-Algebra, 1999</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>DC Heath Algebra I, 1998</td>
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<td>Mathematics Course 3, McDougall Littell, 2003</td>
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<td>Grade 8:</td>
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High School:

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<td>Algebra I H:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Algebra I CP:</td>
<td>Glencoe Algebra I, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Algebra I-1 and I-2 SP:</td>
<td>Glencoe Algebra I, 2000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Geometry H and AE: Jurgensen Geometry, 2000
Geometry CP: Glencoe Geometry, 2000
Algebra II H and AE: Dolciani Algebra II, 1992
Algebra II CP: Glencoe Algebra II, 1999
Advanced Algebra/Trigonometry CP, & Trigonometry/Analytic Geometry/Intro. to Calculus H or AE: Advanced Mathematics, Precalculus and Discrete Mathematics with Data Analysis, 2000
BC Calculus H or AB Calculus AE: Calculus: Analytic, Geometric, and Numerical, Finney et al, 1999

For further information, please contact:

- Mr. William Noeth, Regional Department Leader for grades 7-12; (978) 264–4700, x3411; bnoeth@mail.ab.mec.edu
- Ms. Joyce Kelly, Building Department Leader for grades 7-8; (978) 264–4700, x3384; jkelly@mail.ab.mec.edu

English
At R. J. Grey

The continuing development of communication skills is the primary focus of the RJ 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 RJ Grey and are listed at the RJ Grey 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 that integrate reading and literature activities with the essential skills comprise the curriculum content. These units, from which teachers select three to five each year, are divided between grades seven and eight. The seventh-grade units are: Conflict, Family Relationships, Poetry, Drama, America’s Past, Biography, World Literature, and Mystery. The eighth-grade units are Self-awareness/Identity, Justice, Drama/Shakespeare, Other Worlds/Science Fiction, Historical Perspectives, War and Peace, and World Cultures. 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.
Several of the units and titles connect to the social studies curriculum at the grade
level. 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 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 are students who 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.
As would be expected, those students who have been succeeding in upper-level
English classes during their freshman and sophomore years have developed a
facility with language which will give them an advantage 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 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 inclinations sometime during high school – he can succeed in upper-level English courses.

For further information, please contact:

- Ms. Dianne Telicki, Regional Department Leader for grades 7–12; (978) 264-4700, x3410; dtelicki@mail.ab.mec.edu
- Ms. Melanie Scalice, Faculty Contact for Grades 7–8; (978) 264-4700, x3310; mscalice@mail.ab.mec.edu

**History and Social Studies**

Social Studies at the junior high is comprised of a grade 7 U.S. studies course, which focuses on the theme of identity and the U.S. immigration experience, and a grade 8 World Cultures course, which features in-depth units on East Asia (Japan and China), Russia, and the Middle East, with Latin America soon to be added. Social Studies classes at the junior high are heterogeneously grouped.

The initial goal of the 7th-grade curriculum is to establish a cooperative and comfortable environment in which students coming from many different elementary schools learn to recognize and respect differences that exist in our classrooms and community. Skills and concepts developed in this unit carry throughout the entire Social Studies curriculum and help create a sense of community throughout the school. The major focus of the grade 7 curriculum is on the experiences of immigrants and African Americans in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries and their continued search for full participation in the American Dream. Students are introduced to the use of primary sources and critical thinking skills (including generalizing, inferring, and using supporting evidence); these are reinforced in grade 8.

Students in grade 8 learn to recognize the unique qualities and important contributions of each of the featured cultures/regions. An initial goal of the grade 8 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 culture. Students thereby develop an open-minded approach to the study of different cultures. Physical and human geography are emphasized in each of the units.

Underlying goals for grade 7 are for students to respect differences among people and to cultivate active citizenship in our representative democracy. These goals are developed further in grade 8, as students learn to respect and appreciate the diversity of our global community and determine ways they can make a positive difference as citizens of that global community.
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 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, American Studies faculty are 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 – are more flexibly scheduled.

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 year-long Economics class and semester classes: You and the Law, Political Science, and Sociology.

The former require 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.
For further information, please contact:

• Ms. Pamela Lynn, Regional Department Leader for grades 7–12; (978) 264-4700, x3413; plynn@mail.ab.mec.edu

• Ms. Lynne Bover, Building Department Leader for grades 7–8; (978) 264-4700, x3313; lbover@mail.ab.mec.edu

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 curriculum is based upon the text SciencePlus, Technology and Society (Red and Blue Versions respectively). The SciencePlus series promotes conceptual and skill development, as well as student interaction. A range of topics in physical, biological, earth/space and environmental science are covered; in addition, the curriculum aims to explore the interrelationships among science, technology and society. Our junior high science program introduces the students to myriad scientific themes and topics in preparation for the 8th-grade MCAS exam; it also imparts the fundamentals necessary for a successful transition to the 9th grade.

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 includes full-year courses in earth science, biology, chemistry and physics. All of the high school’s full-year science courses are homogeneously grouped. Some semester electives are leveled; others are heterogeneously grouped.

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.)

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. Students with an average of A or higher in science and a math recommendation for Honors Geometry may be recommended for 9th-grade Biology Honors. Students with an A- average or higher in 8th-grade science and an AE level or higher recommendation in math may be recommended for Earth Science Honors.
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 Earth Science Honors rather than Biology Honors do not over-ride the teachers’ recommendations. Students in Biology Honors progress to Chemistry Honors 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 Chemistry Honors. Taking Earth Science Honors in 9th grade in no way locks a student out of a rigorous science course sequence. Students placed in 9th-grade Earth Science Honors 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.

This year and in the future, students who are not recommended for honors will be recommended for Earth Science AE or CP. (A few students will be recommended for the Transition Program’s Earth Science course. Entry to the Transition Program requires R. J. Grey staff recommendation.)

Though both AE and CP cover the same core curriculum, the AE level is considered more comprehensive, provides greater depth, and proceeds at a faster rate. The CP level provides the student with more time to reinforce basic scientific principles and concepts.

Recommendations for the AE and CP levels are made by 8th-grade science teachers based on student performance in the 8th-grade curriculum. 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.

Important!
As in the other subject areas, parents do have the right to override a science teacher’s level-placement recommendation. Although science teachers do take your child’s math level-placement recommendation into consideration when making a level-placement recommendation for science, you do not have to override your child’s math teacher’s placement recommendation in order to override a science teacher’s placement recommendation! In fact it would be imprudent to do so. If overriding the teacher’s science placement recommendation will mean that your child is “reaching” to succeed in science, overriding both math and science will mean that your child must “reach” in two settings.

If you are considering making 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 all students succeed.
After 9th Grade
The Potential Sequences of Science Courses, 9-12 diagram indicates that, between 9th and 10th grades, students who do well at one level may be recommended to move up for the following year. Please note, however, that between 10th and 11th grades, it is unlikely that a teacher will recommend that a strong student move up from one level to the next. This is because the mathematics required in the different levels of the chemistry curriculum is likely to present problems for students shifting up levels after biology. This is likewise the reason why 9th-grade Earth Science H students are unlikely to be recommended for 10th-grade Chemistry H.

Potential Sequences of Science Courses: 9-12
– Many Possible Variations –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Biology (H)*</th>
<th>Earth Science (H)</th>
<th>Earth Science (AE)</th>
<th>Earth Science (CP)</th>
<th>Earth Science (SP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chemistry (H)</td>
<td>Biology (AE)</td>
<td>Biology (CP)</td>
<td>Biology (SP)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Elective Options**</td>
<td>Chemistry (AE) &amp;/or Elective Options**</td>
<td>Chemistry (CP) &amp;/or Elective Options**</td>
<td>(SP) Electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Physics (H)</td>
<td>Physics (AE) &amp;/or Elective Options**</td>
<td>Physics (CP) &amp;/or Elective Options**</td>
<td>(SP) Electives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students in Biology Honors with lower math and/or biology grades may be recommended for Chemistry AE in grade 10.

**Elective Options: Choice may involve doubling-up; in addition, students must have the qualifications/prerequisites to be eligible.

Electives (Semester): Grades 11/12
- Anatomy/Physiology: Alternate year offering
- Environmental Studies: Alternate year offering
- Bioforum
- Human Biology (SP)
- Environmental Science (SP)

Electives (Full Year): Grades 11/12
- AP Biology
- AP Chemistry
- AP Environmental Science
- Earth Science (H)
- SciTech (SP)
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. They begin by learning the rudiments of the language that they have selected and practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing this language. Seventh graders study language as a core subject on their junior high team. Students continue their language studies in grade eight. In the spring of grade seven, students will be recommended either to continue at the heterogeneous level or to move to the honors level. Grade seven teachers will make this recommendation based upon the students’ grades, as well as student interest, work ethic, and proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. As with other subject areas, parents do have the right to override teacher recommendations. In such cases, the World Language Department recommends that parents consider how they might support their child in the more challenging course – for example, through tutoring.

In grade eight, language classes meet five times per week. All students will have opportunities to enroll in national language examinations and to participate in extensive language and cultural activities during National Foreign Language Week in March.

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 or Spanish at Acton-Boxborough Regional High, having earned five high school credits for their junior high language studies. 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). As in grade seven, this recommendation will be based upon a student’s grade, as well as other factors: motivation, ability to retain vocabulary and linguistic structures, and oral comprehension and fluency. Grade eight students generally transition well into the recommended course, since the senior high French and Spanish programs build directly from the Raymond J. Grey curriculum. Teachers in both buildings work collaboratively to select comprehensive grade seven through twelve French and Spanish programs.

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, or Latin (in 2006-2007). (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, Spanish I AE, or Spanish I CP 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 (2006-2007), French or Spanish.

For students who prefer to study a classical language that focuses on reading, grammar, vocabulary and Roman culture, the department will offer Latin I AE in 2006-07; it will not be available in 2005-06. This course is recommended for the student with strong language skills – that is, for those with grades of B- or higher in their English language courses.

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 or Spanish.

**French I** 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.

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 1CP** is open to all language learners. Spanish 1CP 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 1AE. 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 2CP. 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 1CP students will continue at this moderate pace in Spanish IICP.

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 R. J. Grey World Language Building Department Leader, Joanne Lazdowski, in the spring of grade 8 for a course recommendation.
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 three of language study. In addition, there are some courses that are sequential in curriculum content (Spanish ICP – IICP and Spanish IIIICP – IVCP, French IICP – IIICP, Spanish IIIAE – IVAE, French IIIAE/IVCP – IVAE/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 IICP to IIIAE 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,” although a future language requirement is under consideration. 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.
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 noted exceptions)

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 or Mrs. Dix in the High School to discuss the change.
Potential Sequence of 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); or

C. students who did not successfully complete their world language studies at the Junior High.

A grade of 70 or higher is required to continue to next year (with the noted exceptions)
As at Raymond J. Grey, all A.B.R.H.S. world language students will have opportunities to enroll in national language examinations and participate in National Foreign Language Week or VOICE Day activities. 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 outside of class for individual practice.

We are also eager to have our students share their knowledge of languages in their community. Therefore, on alternate years, upperclassmen may enroll in a French or Spanish Practicum and Field Work course that enables them to teach introductory language units in some local elementary school classrooms. Finally, in recognition of achievement in language studies, the high school supports local chapters of the National French, Latin, and Spanish Honor Societies. Society members are honored at a World Language Awards’ Night ceremony, along with our local winners of national language examinations and recipients of our outstanding course achievement awards.

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, please contact:**

- Ms. Claire Dix, Regional Department Leader for grades 7–12; (978) 264-4700, x3473; cdix@mail.ab.mec.edu
- Ms. Joanne Lazdowski, Building Department Leader for grades 7–8; (978) 264-4700, x3377; jlazdowski@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
• 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.
  □ Select Choir is offered as an after-school activity. Students must be members of the band or chorus program to participate. Auditions are required.

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
• Basic Keyboard Skills
• History of Rock & Roll and Contemporary Music
• Introduction to Drama (Fall Semester)
• Introduction to Acting (Spring Semester – It is recommended but not required that this course follow Introduction to Drama.)
• Music Theory and Technology
• Public Speaking and Debate

The following high school courses have some kind of prerequisite or requirement:
  □ Jazz Band (by audition only)
  □ Madrigal Singers (by audition only)

For further information, please contact:
• Mark W. Hickey, Director of Performing Arts, K–12; (978) 264-4700, x3415; mhickey@mail.ab.mec.edu
Visual Arts Department

All grade 7 and grade 8 students are required to take an Art Exploratory each year: Art 1 in grade 7, based on the Art Elements; Art 2 in grade 8, based on the Art Principles. These courses explore units of drawing, painting, clay sculpture, and computer-generated graphic design. While many of the high school art courses require no prerequisites, the RJG program does provide a broad experience so that students may make informed choices from the high school course offerings.

The Visual Arts program in the high school offers a variety of studio 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. Learning how to communicate visually is essential, given the importance and significance of visual media in our technological society. 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. An overview of the high school Visual Arts program is found below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
<th>Column C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courses Open to Grade 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Courses Open to Grades 10-12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Courses Open to Grades 11-12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pottery</td>
<td>• Any course from Column A</td>
<td>• Any course from Column A</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sculpture</td>
<td>• Advanced Drawing/Painting (Prerequisite: Drawing/Painting I)</td>
<td>• Junior–Senior Portfolio (Prerequisite: 10 or more credits in art; 5 credits in Drawing/Painting strongly recommended)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mixed Media Studio*</td>
<td>• Advanced Photography (Prerequisite: Photography I)</td>
<td>Open to Grade 12 only</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Drawing/Painting I</td>
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<td>• Studio Assistant (Faculty Recommendation)</td>
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<td>• Photography I</td>
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<td>• Computer-Aided Graphic Design I</td>
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<td>• Web Page Design</td>
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<td>• Digital Photography</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Art History</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Advanced Computer-Aided Graphic Design* (Prerequisite: CAGD I)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Advanced Web Page Design* (Prerequisite: WPD I)</td>
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</table>

* Courses not offered for the 2005-06 school year.

For further information, please contact:

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

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Districts do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or handicap 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 Chapter 622 is directed to contact Nancy M. Kolb, 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**
John W. McCormack Post Office and Court House
Room 701
Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109

or

Massachusetts Department of Education
Office of Program Quality Assurance
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

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